

## WHERE WAS "THE PLACE CALLED CALVARY"?



IN the morning of the first day that our party spent in Jerusalem, as soon as the tents were pitched out upon the hill near the Russian convent, and a home thus established for the week's sojourn, three of us set forth for a walk around the city, with but a small sense of the force of hot sunshine falling upon white paths and glowing walls when the full strength of a Syrian noontide should be attained. We entered the town by the Damascus gate and pursued our way along the narrow and tortuous streets until we came out through St. Stephen's gate upon the slope leading down across the Kidron valley: we followed the path that passes the Tomb of the Virgin Mary and the Garden of Gethsemane, working our steps up the middle road to the very top of Mount Olivet.

The story of this trip appears quite simple, and one would hardly suppose that we should find its accomplishment so fatiguing. It is a surprise to most tourists to discover the steepness of some of these paths: that which runs down from the spot where one tradition says that Stephen was stoned is actually precipitous; the track for horses is cut in angular zigzags with acute turnings so as to render it possible for the animals to climb up, or to keep from slipping headlong on the descent.

We were conducted in this instance by a young man from the mission of the English Church, an Armenian by birth but a Protestant by belief and experience, being one of the converts God has given for the fidelity of those laborers in the Gospel who so long have been working in Jerusalem. He wore his usual costume—a long worsted robe of a maroon color, girt around the waist, and edged with a variegated border. He could understand and speak our language readily, and was constantly of help to us in giving us the names of localities and buildings along the course. His strength was terribly tested by the sinewy impetuosity and tirelessness of our enthusiasm; and long before we relaxed that zeal of exploration which only Americans exercise, we discovered pitifully that his lagging limbs sought rest at every chance pause for conversation and debate. He was cheerful on every demand; but, like Eastern people generally in that region, enervate and weak in his muscles.

Our little trio was made up of Professor John A. Paine of Robert College in Constan-

tinople, Mr. Alfred H. Hall, then a student in preparation for the ministry, and, since, the able and well-known pastor of one of the Congregational churches in Connecticut, in company with the writer of this article. We agreed in the interest we took in the amiable young man who showed us the objects of common investigation. When, in the years that have since flitted away, we have talked over that walk, the conversation has often turned upon his pleasant, gentle manner, with an affectionate recollection of his simple-minded faith and trustful joyousness of spirit. He was entirely free, so far as we could observe, from any superstition or formality, and his regard for Jesus as his Saviour was personal and devout; and I am bound to say that intimacy with him on that occasion led me into a more satisfied and a less exacting mood concerning what are reported as Christian converts in an ordinary course of missionary endeavor in heathen countries.

At last we reached the small church building planted professedly—quite mistakenly as to locality, however—to mark the spot of Christ's ascension to heaven. We mounted the dirty staircase, and worried ourselves along into a little chairless room in the steeple, where a quiet old man gave us an awkward welcome to a seat on the floor. I pulled up a piece of straw matting for our seat, and so we ranged ourselves close to a narrow window looking down on the entire city. An inimitably fine view is that spread out before one who is studying details of streets, walls, domes, minarets, public edifices, hills, and valleys.

Directly in front lay "the joy of the whole earth." The exclamation which one first makes concerning this pathetic old town has only wonder in it—Where are the suburbs? The buildings run up to the wall in most places, though in one or two of the corners they do not appear to reach it quite. Outside of the inclosure there are no houses to be seen at all: the slopes of Zion, Ophel, Bezetha, are really attractive as sites, but no such thing as a villa has been erected upon them. It looks as if all the people had, from time immemorial, lived on the inside of a stone line of masonry; in literal as well as scriptural language, "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together."

And now, for a small space in this article, the narration has to become somewhat personal—more so than pleases the writer. But I



must put myself in the place of a witness for the object I have in view.

I confessed afterwards to my companions that I had purposely brought them to this outlook, and that I now led the conversation with the utmost semblance of artlessness, for a single reason. We talked a little while about the points of compass, the lay of the land, the elevations of the surrounding hills, the towers and walls, the gates and sites; and so in the sweep of our eyes we came around to the north side of the parallelogram on the plan of which the place is outlined. Suddenly, in a tranquil sort of comment, as if a conceit had struck his fancy, Mr. Hall said, "That is a very curious conformation of rocks off there beyond the Damascus gate." We turned our eyes in the direction he indicated. "It looks as much like a skull as anything I ever saw," continued he. Professor Paine, alert and eager as ever after, in the days when he identified Mount Nebo, sprang to his feet, straining his gaze with amazement, and positively quivering with the passionate thought that he had made a new discovery.

What we all saw was this: in the immediate vicinity of that gate he mentioned, the yellow wall of the city appeared to have been built steeply up over what seemed a quarried cliff, through the strata of which was cut a path, leading on the outside around to the main road crossing from east to west along the north frontier, down out of vision from where we sat. We had to look over the corner of the city, across the angle formed by the east wall and the north, in order to see it. A deep excavation had been made, the bottom of which, leveled for the use of men and beasts, we could not reach; we could only trace the lines of cutting on the stone. The bare face of the precipice opposite the entrance was distinctly exposed; and the top—that is, the original surface of the hill—was rounded so as to present against the sky the almost exact outline of a human skull. Moreover, there were visible two cavities or holes in the rock; these served as eyeless sockets. Thus a sort of side view, the forehead fronting south-west, was offered. The name of Golgotha came at once to our remembrance. This must have been "the place of a skull," if likeness to a skull was enough to prove it.

So startling was this resemblance that it made a deep impression on the minds of all of us. I had noticed the same thing some years before, on the occasion of my first visit to Jerusalem, in 1867. And this was just my purpose in bringing those intelligent observers out on the hillside that clear morning, without warning or explanation. I intended to test their accuracy and quickness in discovering

for themselves the configuration and markings of that singular spot, without the prompting of any suggestion of my own. I said to Professor Paine: "Sit down and quiet yourself now. This is what I gave you your tough walk for: I had a letter just before I left home in Paris, which I want to read to you."

This communication had been addressed to me by an old and trusted friend in the city of Brooklyn, Mr. Fisher Howe. He had been known and loved for many years as an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of that place, of which I was the pastor at the time. Sir J. William Dawson has referred to Mr. Howe with merited commendation, and evidently with sincere respect. But that he does not know just who he was, a mere mention of his name reveals; twice he calls him "Dr. Fisher Howe." My good and dear friend had cultivation and education, and some erudite acquisitions that were worth having; but he never bore anything like a literary or professional title growing out of an advanced college honor or degree. But, practically, he was a good scholar in New Testament Greek, and could manage Hebrew as well as some clergymen who have misused better chances. He read widely in the best sorts of reading, and what he read he generally kept where it was available. He died several years ago, having done what he could for his generation in all such ways of usefulness as are open to genuine zeal. But he never expected to be put into literature by the President of the British Association. He was simply a gentleman of wealth, high social position, real intellectual force, self-educated in the matters of advanced scholarship he loved to study, refined in manners, enthusiastic in Oriental travel—as any one grows to be who has journeyed through the countries of the Bible—and has given to the world a book full of his gains and his wistful wishes. As I write now there lies before me a copy of a volume he issued in 1853, entitled "Oriental and Sacred Scenes." It was published by M. W. Dodd of New York City, and was welcomed as a good book. A notable fact is this in the present discussion; for that work shows he then was eagerly planning and studying about the true site of Calvary. Still, he was an active business man through his life; in his late and maturer years he was President of the Brooklyn White Lead Company, and honored in the City of Churches as one of the best citizens it claimed for worth and public spirit. But in literature he was only a layman.

That letter which I referred to, and which now I read to my companions, was written to me with a definite purpose by Mr. Howe; he desired me to make some observations and report to him the results. The subject that



interested him most was this identification of Calvary as the place of our Lord's crucifixion. We had talked it over more than a hundred times together during the three or four years previous to this journey I was then making in the East. The paragraph explains itself. He says:

I may have mentioned to you, previous to your first visit to Jerusalem, a lingering thought in regard to the place of crucifixion. When we lodged on Acra, we had from the roof of our house a full view of the rocky eminence near the Damascus gate; it is known by designation as the Grotto of Jeremiah. I believe it lies outside of what was the line of the second wall, but "nigh" unto it; and that it may not have been materially changed during the last eighteen centuries. As seen from a distance, the elevation is a "*kranion*" in shape, and might well, in common parlance, have the cognomen of "a skull."

Now, all this may seem childish as seen by you, for I am not certain when the thought got into my head. I did examine the locality of the Damascus gate in regard to the evidences of the second wall, and well remember to have noted the wide and deep excavations between the present wall and the knoll referred to, and to have marked the curvatures of the strata of limestone rock; and came to the conclusion that the excavation dated back to the Christian era. The curvatures are marked on either side, showing the same original formation; and with the evidence then before me, I believed that the present wall at the place in question occupied the line of the second wall.

This is all that needs quoting from that particular letter. But as we read it over up there on the hillside, we could not forbear surprise and compliment at the evidence of careful observation and tenacious memory in his thus giving minute details of a visit that had been made so many years before. The reply which I sent to this letter when the conclusions of our little party had been reached was embodied partly in the book that Mr. Howe published the next year. This was called "The True Site of Calvary." It was a thin octavo of sixty-eight pages, issued by A. D. F. Randolph, New York City, 1871. So modest was it in look and size that it raised no popular enthusiasm in the notice taken of it, and after the first edition was exhausted it fell out of print. Of late it has been called for again; for now the site seems to be actually accepted, and there is a sort of competition among explorers as to the credit of having first suggested the knoll by the Damascus gate as being probably the exact place where our Lord was crucified.

Mr. Howe's object in his publication was to set forth the plainest arguments for his conjecture in the plainest way. No one can make light of his work; he writes calmly, and attempts nothing eloquent—is, indeed, rather too terse and dry for popular rhetoric. But Sir J. William Dawson testifies to his having summed up the Scripture proofs for his purpose "with great care," and calls his argument "able." If

real students choose to read what he has said, they will go with him to his conclusions now; but when he wrote that volume all the world seemed afraid to challenge the absurd tradition which fixed the crucifixion up in the air over a graded hill, under the roof of an old structure that contains everything, and the burial-place of Jesus not far from it, beneath the same dome. Mr. Howe was in Jerusalem in 1853. For eighteen years thereafter he was occupied with studying all the authorities that he could find upon the subject; his mind was full of the theme. In 1870 he writes that he does not know how long ago the thoughts got into his mind; and within a twelvemonth he lays his book before the public. It is simply candid to assert that he was first in the field with his orderly proofs, seven or eight years before any of those who now seek to pass his volume by had given their slow adhesion to his arguments and begun to claim the credit of having supplied them to the public.

The necessity of this case required in the outset that he should state what the evangelists have to say, and what other allusions found in the New Testament demand in reference to the site. He makes, with a conspicuous italicizing of his words, six points in their turn:

*First.* That the place of the crucifixion was outside the walls of Jerusalem; and he adduces Hebrews xiii. 12; Matthew xxvii. 31, 32; John xix. 16, 17, with parallel passages from other gospels saying the same.

*Second.* That this place was nigh to the city. (John xix. 20.)

*Third.* That it was popularly known under the general designation of *Kranion*. He notes the meaning of *Golgotha* and of *Calvary*, and then he quotes Matthew xxvii. 33; Luke xxiii. 33; and John xix. 20.

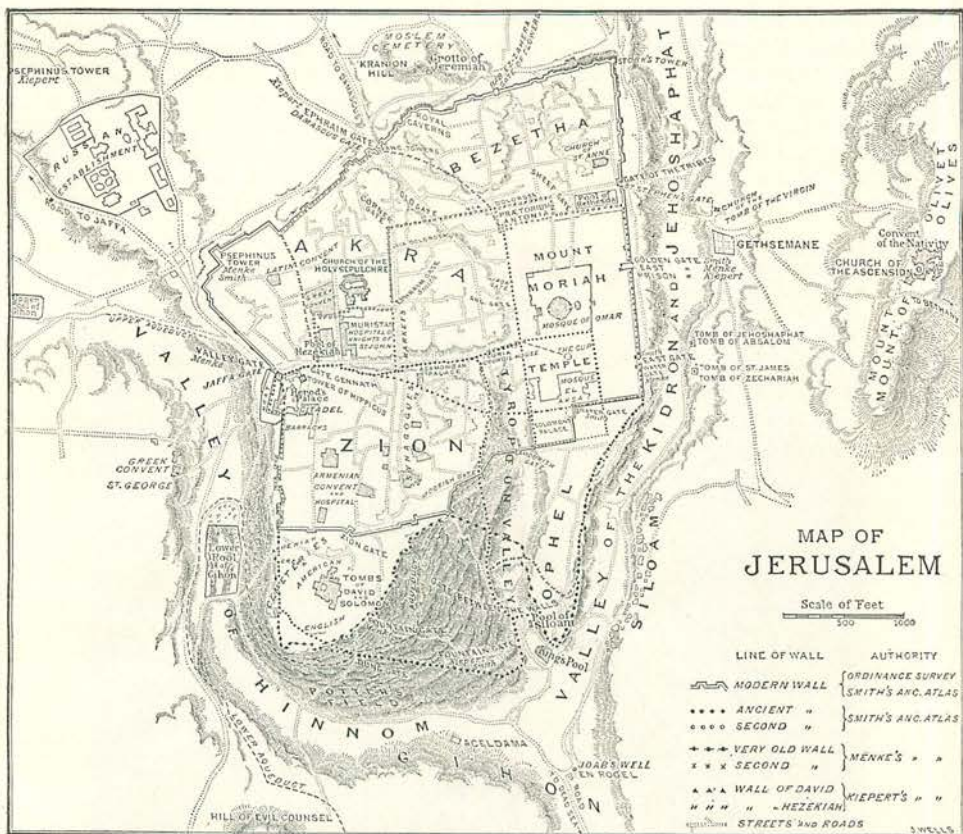
*Fourth.* That it was obviously nigh to one of the leading thoroughfares to and from Jerusalem. (Matthew xxvii. 39; Mark xv. 29.)

*Fifth.* That this spot was very conspicuous; that is, it could be seen by those at a distance. (Matthew xxvii. 55; Luke xxiii. 35; John xix. 20.)

*Sixth.* That it was nigh to, not only sepulchers, but also gardens. (John xix. 38-42.) Then to these enumerations of proofs he adds his entire conclusion: "No sophistry, or interposed traditional authority or belief, can be allowed to evade these plain demands of the written word of God. Failure to meet one of them is proper ground for suspicion; failure in all is good cause for rejecting any site, traditional or hypothetical." With these propositions he proceeds to apply his tests.

Of course, therefore, the earliest thing this author was obliged to set himself definitely to accomplish was to destroy the force of an





established tradition in favor of the so-called Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He marshaled his proofs to show that this building could not be reckoned as ever having been outside of the city. Hence he entered into the controversy about the walls of that historic old capital with a map and a Bible in his hands. And it is precisely there that an article like this for a popular magazine will be shy in attempting to go along his tracks. The map which accompanies this sketch of Mr. Howe's process of reasoning is a great deal better than the one he copied from a guide-book of his time. It will do its own work in exhibiting how utterly impossible it is to twist Jerusalem into a straggling figure of awkwardness sufficiently wretched to allow of that rambling and mysterious piece of architecture being considered outside the wall. If one would take his stand upon the knoll by the Damascus gate and look over on the city, finding the domes and towers of the church conspicuous in the grouping almost at the center of the town, he would own the difficulty instantly. Mr. Howe discusses this in his "Oriental and Sacred Scenes," and throws all his force against that traditional theory even from the beginning. It is useless

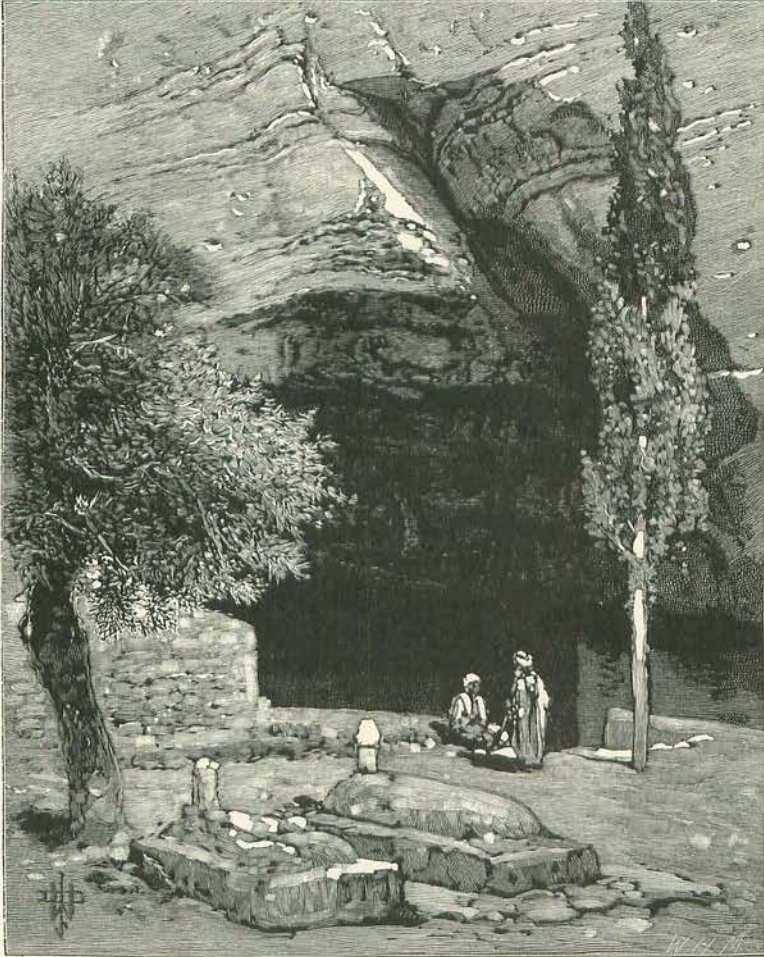
here to waste space in argument; it is enough to say that nobody has ever answered the objections of such scholars as Dr. Edward Robinson, Dr. William M. Thomson, and scores of other writers of more or less repute. It is impossible to meet the scriptural conditions with that locality; and there is no other in Jerusalem which will meet them except that by the Grotto of Jeremiah.

The only representative site for Calvary now offered pilgrims in Jerusalem is found in a couple of rooms inside the old edifice; one is owned and exhibited by the Greeks, another by the Latins. These share the same disability; both—since the church is already so full of traditions on the ground floor—had to go up a flight of stairs into free space nearer the roof. And there it is, amidst tawdry curtains and gilt bedizennments of candles and altar-shrines, that this ancient spot upon which the cross of Jesus Christ rested is pointed out, and the veritable hole is shown in which it was planted. And the thieves' crosses—a decorous but rather inadequate distance of five feet between them on the right and left of the middle one—are ranged alongside. And down underneath, far below across some intervening space left by



grading away the actual soil of the hill, so we are sagely told, is the grave of Adam! Tradition has related that at the crucifixion of Jesus some drops of blood fell through upon Adam's skull and raised him suddenly to life; and there are commentators who declare that so the prophecy quoted by the apostle Paul (Ephesians v. 14) was well fulfilled: "Awake, thou Adam

enough: it would put an end to the awkward and offensive impostures daily exhibited under the roof of that filthy old church. They are a standing mockery of the claims of the Christianity they profess to uphold. Those ceremonies of Easter at the tomb where our Lord is declared to have been buried are a caricature of an event so glad and holy. The struggle



GROTTO OF JEREMIAH.

that sleepest [for thus the former versions read in the text], and arise from the dead, for Christ shall touch thee." The art-people say that this is the origin of the fact that in those early rude representations of the death of our Lord a skull is introduced.

Can any man of sensibility be blamed if he makes an imperious demand that something more — something else at least — shall greet him in answer to his question, Where was our Lord crucified? If there should be no other advantage gained by the acceptance of a new site as now proposed, this would be

around the flames that are chemically forced out of the smoky hole in the sepulcher, so that devotees in frantic zeal may light their lamps, brings death from the trampling of thousands, fills the house with howls that put heathenism to shame, and sends true believers away with an infinite disgust and horror deep in their hearts. How long must such a scandal be patiently endured?

Mr. James Fergusson, certainly one of the highest authorities on all architectural subjects, says plainly he thinks that the idea of an interior building like that of the Church of the



Sepulcher containing the site of the crucifixion and burial is too absurd to merit serious refutation; and he does not believe it would require it but for the open admission in all opposing arguments of the lack of any one's being able to say, or even to hint, where the true site is. To this remark he is willing to add his conviction that the present traditional notion will never be broken up until this practical want is supplied. Here is the real flaw in the logic: "Men will twist and torment facts and evidence until they make it quite clear, to their own minds, that what they wish to be true must be so." It is not necessary to accept this conclusion as absolute; some delusions concerning sites have been surrendered, and still the places emptied of them in the popular folly have not been as yet authentically filled. There is a positive advantage always in the settlement which common sense makes in putting down an imposture, just for its own sake; and we hope this has become possible, in these later times, with that church of Helena's building in the city of Jerusalem.

But there is still greater gain in putting down an imposture and erecting in the place of it a truth and a fact. In his bright book of letters from Palestine entitled "Haifa," Mr. Laurence Oliphant offers the results of modern observation and discussion with swift and intelligible words that are very welcome; especially in this instance it is worth our while to find and note the present posture of thought. He says:

Every indication goes to show that Golgotha, or Calvary, was a knoll outside the Damascus gate, exactly in the opposite direction to that affixed by Christian tradition, and which would do away with the *Via Dolorosa* as a sacred thoroughfare, the street shown as that along which Christ bore his cross on his way to execution. It is only probable that Calvary was the ordinary execution ground of Jerusalem, which is called in the Talmud "the House of Stoning" about A. D. 150, and which current tradition among the Jews identifies with this knoll — a tradition borne out by the account of it contained in the *Mishnah*, or text of the Talmud, which describes a cliff over which the condemned was thrown by the first witness. If he was not killed by the fall, the second witness cast a stone upon him, and the crowd on the cliff, or beneath it, completed his execution. It was outside the gate, at some distance from the judgment-hall. The knoll in question is just outside the gate, with a cliff about fifty feet high. Moreover, we are informed that sometimes they sunk a beam in the ground, and a cross-beam extended from it, and they bound his hands one over the other, and hung him up. Thus the House of Stoning was a recognized place of crucifixion. It is curious that an early Christian tradition pointed to this site as the place of stoning of Stephen, the proto-martyr. The vicinity has apparently always been considered unlucky. An Arab writer in the Middle Ages pronounces a barren tract adjoining accursed and haunted, so that the traveler should not pass at night.

Many modern explorers have accepted the conclusion noted above; most of those who

have written on the theme have marshaled their arguments to give it proof. And what is remarkable beyond anything else is the fact that these arguments are the same as those used by my old and dear friend Mr. Fisher Howe more than a quarter of a century ago.

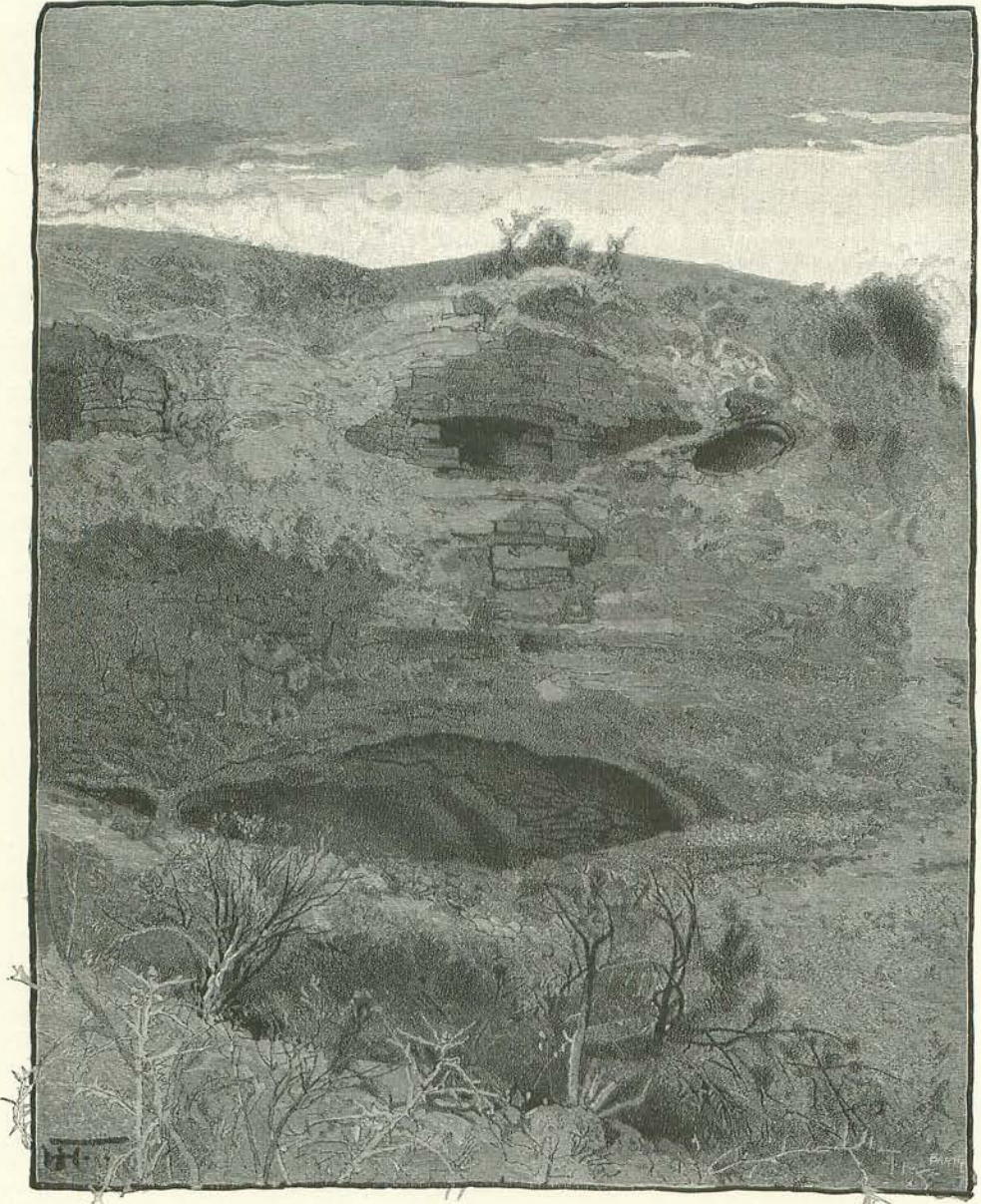
The spot has been named the "Grotto of Jeremiah" for no reason that has any sense in it. The story was that the old prophet lived inside of the strange cavern at the base, as a hermit would live in some cleft of the hillside; that he penned his commentaries there, and composed his prophetic book, and sang his melancholy Lamentations. Still, this proves nothing; and history says that this prophet lived in Egypt for the later years of his career, and wrote his messages back to his loved people who exiled him, dwelling in Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes.

But the cave is wonderfully extensive; some say it is a hundred feet deep. Indeed, the excavations under the entire hill must have been the work of ages, and would be considered a wonder anywhere else than in the vicinity of Jerusalem. The cliff is shorn sheer down, as if cut with a chisel, and presents a perpendicular façade fifty feet high. Close by it are many graves, and underneath the so-called grotto are vast cisterns of pure water. The whole hillside is venerable and majestic. It looks like one of the oldest and most imperishable landmarks of that suburb, and could not fail to have been from time immemorial a notable place to all who went out or in by the gate leading towards the north.

Among those who have written most ably and most recently on this subject is Dr. Selah Merrill, for some time the American consul at Jerusalem. He there enjoyed very rare opportunities for his study, and whatever he offers is worthy of profound respect. This testimony is from his pen:

For some years past there has been a growing conviction that the hill in which Jeremiah's Grotto is shown, situated a little to the north-east of the Damascus gate, satisfied the conditions as to the site of Calvary better than any other spot in or around Jerusalem. Indeed, a large number of competent scholars have already accepted this hill as Golgotha. From the Mount of Olives and Scopus, from the road leading north past the Russian buildings west of the city, from many points north of the town, and from many of the house-tops within Jerusalem itself, this hill attracts the eye by its prominence. On the north slope of the hill the slaughter-house of Jerusalem stood until two years since (1883), when it was removed to a more suitable locality north-east of the town. In its place two buildings have been erected, one of which is used as a residence. From these a high wall has been constructed, running past the large "Meis" tree still standing there, which many will remember, and on towards the foot of the hill on the west. The western slope is composed of barren earth and broken rock, but at the bottom on this side there is a large garden, where, some feet below the surface of the





PLACE OF THE SKULL.

ground, ruins have been found which are marked in the maps as an "asneric"—a term, however, which conveys no adequate idea of the extent and character of the ruins.

The south face is vertical, and has in it the so-called "Grotto of Jeremiah." Farther along in this southern face, which does not run in a straight line, great quantities of stone have been quarried within the past few years. Towards the east the hill does not fall in a single slope, but, as it were, in two terraces. The hill may be said to be prolonged in this direction, the eastern knoll or second terrace being a little lower than the other.

The entire summit of the hill is covered with Moslem graves. This fact has no doubt prevented

the hill from being bought up and built upon hitherto, and this alone still prevents the ground from passing into the hands of foreigners. This graveyard is an old one; and who can say that the hand of Providence is not specially visible in the preservation of this spot, in this strange manner, from the disgusting and degrading monkish traditions which would otherwise have sprung up about it?

The brisk rehearsal of Mr. Howe's argument is, therefore, all that at present is needed to complete the exhibition I have been trying to make of what he has done in the direction of establishment and proofs.



*First.* This spot is certainly outside the walls of the city. No one will ever have to make crooked pictures, and distort circumvallations, in order with such a site to meet this text: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

*Second.* The place of the crucifixion was nigh to the city. No time needs to be lost in saying that this knoll is close beside the gate on the north, which has for unreckoned years been unchanged and changeless in location. All the lay of the land there is as old as any part of Jerusalem can be. Historic proof can be offered that this wide chasm was fashioned by the engineers of King Hezekiah himself long and long before Jesus Christ was born. The conformation of that "skull shape" must have existed just so for ages. All scholars are agreed that the rock, cut through at that time for the path, is the original base of the wall. So lofty are the parapets in this direction that besiegers never have ventured an attack on the northern side. The structures, therefore, are almost unbroken. Wall and hill together form a perpendicular face seventy or eighty feet high. Hence armies, in all the fitful fortunes of Jerusalem, have chosen easier places for undertaking breaches of entrance. And the cliff directly facing the wall, with its rounded cranium and its black sockets, suggesting a skull now so plainly, has been there in all the years to make the same suggestion.

*Third.* The hill is noticeably skull shaped, so that in popular habit it may have been called by the name. It is well enough to say just at this point that the revisers of the New Testament have done, of their own accord, what Mr. Howe used often to tell me ought to have been done before. They have changed the Latin designation for the proper English in the gospel of Luke (xxiii. 33): "And when they came unto the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him." So in Matthew's story (xxvii. 33): "And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha," the article is changed to definite instead of indefinite—"the place called Golgotha." It was a known spot,— "in the place was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulcher,"—as if close by and familiar.

I choose to touch this point with a single illustration. We are all acquainted with these curious freaks of nature that after long ages become landmarks just because of their singularity. Who will ever forget the "Profile" in the White Mountains? One has to go to the exact spot, however, in order to see it, or it will evade his observation in every case, and he will have to join the innumerable throng of incredulous tourists who insist that there is

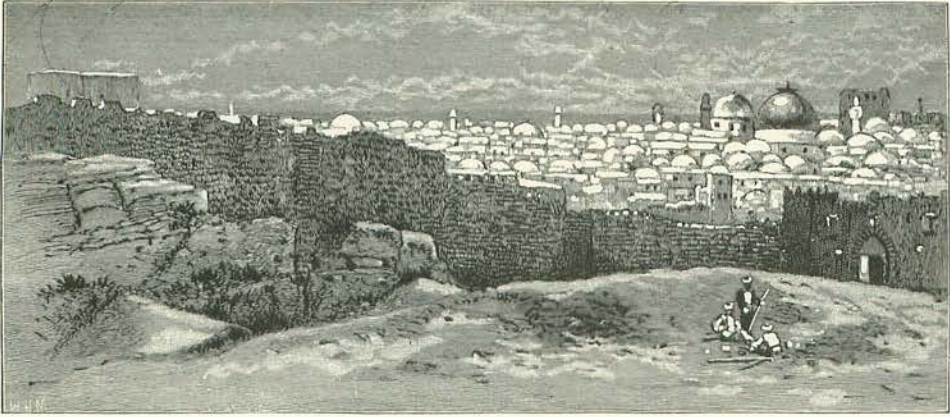
no semblance of a face in the cliff, or anywhere else outside of the imagination of some young people. The portrait of the "White Horse" across the Saco River in front of the fine Intervale House in North Conway affords another example. It is visible and intelligible to everybody; and yet it has to be looked for and looked at when the sunlight strikes it at a particular angle. For unreckoned years these two landmarks have been there in the rocks, and they will stay there until doomsday, for all we know. Because they are so odd, popular imagination takes them up, and makes use of them forever. There is nothing more certain and unalterable than the "Pulpit," or the "Cathedral," or the "Old Man of the Mountain," to fix a site and a name.

So Mr. Howe used to consider this shape of a *kranton*, there in an elevated conspicuousness beside the Damascus gate, one of his strongest arguments for the spot he preferred. I might perhaps add that the only way to catch the whole effect is to choose a position of some reach of distance away to the southeast. Afterward, on another walk, with the rest of our company to give further witness, we found that the observation was more successful from near the point where our Lord looked down upon Jerusalem when he wept over the prospect of its destruction. There are three roads that appear on the map as leading across the summit of the Mount of Olives: the southern one goes around rather than over the ridge, taking a sharp bend almost like a right-angle; it is just there that the full view of Jerusalem bursts most gloriously on the sight. We thought the appearance of the skull shape was more distinct at this point than even at the belfry of the Church of the Ascension.

Now it is freely admitted by everybody that there is no documentary or historic proof that this place bore such a name at the time when Jesus was crucified. But some place there was close by and just outside of Jerusalem which did bear that name then. Where was it? Our Sunday-school teachers are all told in the popular commentaries to answer the children, when they ask why the spot where Jesus was crucified was called *Golgotha*, that it was either because the place was shaped like a skull, or because—being the ordinary place of execution or burial of criminals—skulls might be discovered there. Both of these may have been true; and both of these are true of this knoll of the Damascus gate, so far as the shape and graves are concerned.

*Fourth.* This place must have been nigh to one of the leading thoroughfares of Jerusalem. The passers-by "railed on him." These persons, in all likelihood, were the ordinary traffic-people, or the villagers coming in and out, or





JERUSALEM FROM MOUNT CALVARY.

the sojourners who were in the suburbs in tents or booths, having journeyed up to the feast. The northern road, reaching out over the country towards Shechem, Tyre, Damascus, was one of the oldest and most fixed in Palestine. The Damascus gate was named after it.

*Fifth.* The site of the crucifixion must have been very conspicuous. "And the people stood beholding." Some of these were females, to whom it would have been perilous to force their way through the crowds of soldiers and coarse creatures present at crucifixions. Possibly an anxious few of such as had been helped and healed by the Lord were desiring to keep watch of the sad spectacle: "There were also women looking on afar off." There is an excellent diorama now upon exhibition in New York showing, in the modern form of half-picture and half-figure, the crucifixion scene; and the most striking feature of the representation, so far as the populace is concerned, is the crowd upon the long reach of wall, gazing off at those crosses on the knoll. The unusually elevated portion of the fortifications at the Damascus gate affords an outlook to be found nowhere else in the city. Indeed, this spot satisfies all the needs of the sacred narrative. It is a high, conspicuous place, at no very great distance from the governor's house. The way to it would be along the streets of the city, where the crowds would be met, the daughters of Jerusalem thronging Jesus as he passed. It is situated precisely where he, sinking under his cross, would most need help. The hill in front of the Damascus gate is so steep that the path winds in order to get up to the top of the knoll; and there is where the countryman, Simon the Cyrenean, would be caught, just as he was entering, and forced to aid in carrying the cross up the slope.

*Sixth.* The place of crucifixion must have been nigh to gardens and sepulchers. Sir J. William Dawson says he visited the vicinity

in the company of Dr. Selah Merrill, and found that to this day small gardens occupy the level ground at the foot of the skull-shaped knoll, and upon the borders of such gardens are tombs. This same writer, in common with others, dwells forcibly upon the fact that, when Jesus was raised, two angels appeared standing at the head and foot of the sepulcher, so as to be visible to those who came to the place; moreover, the door of the opening was low, so that one had to stoop to look into it, and the great stone which kept the mouth closed was rolled along in grooves to fall into its position. Such structures, it is claimed, are not to be found anywhere else in the suburbs of Jerusalem; but some have been in later times found on that hill beside the Damascus gate. The customary manner of building the places of interment was to fashion a series of long, narrow receptacles, not dissimilar to our own way in vaults of cemeteries—chambers into which the bodies were slid with the head far back in utter darkness, and only the feet seen when the door was opened. Much importance is attached to this statement; and it is generally accepted as quite true as a matter of fact by those who know best.

With this rehearsal it is well enough to leave the argument just where Mr. Fisher Howe left it. One characteristic of his unpretending volume will be noticeable upon each page of it—the author was devoted to his task, and emboldened by his enthusiasm to deliver a little book in its behalf; but he was personally diffident, and almost painfully a modest man in literature. He tried his hardest, from the beginning to the end of the volume, to commit somebody or anybody responsibly to an indorsement of his conviction. He never wished to make a sensation in such a matter; what he desired was that people should give up the former absurdities as to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and accept this sane and sensible



conclusion that Jesus Christ was crucified on that elevated spot beside the Damascus gate. If only he could have forced words out of old Dr. Edward Robinson's tomes declaring the truth of what the heart of hearts within him believed, he would have given over the matter gladly to him. This will explain some crude allusions to authors and public men of repute that appear among his quotations. Dr. Selah Merrill has published this little paragraph in an excellent article:

As regards the question, Who first suggested the hill above Jeremiah's Grotto as the probable site of the crucifixion? it may be that this honor belongs to an American who was distinguished in quite another department than that of biblical geography, namely, to the eminent Rev. Rufus Anderson, D. D., who, when walking out of the Damascus gate, in the year 1845, in company with his friend Dr. Eli Smith, pointed to this hill, and spoke of it to his companion as in his judgment the site of the true Calvary.

It would be a matter of interest to know how he became acquainted with such a fact. All the authority that is in existence, I think, is in Mr. Fisher Howe's volume. The reference is so peculiar that one grows interested to know the whole of it. Mr. Howe wrote to Dr. Rufus Anderson, as he wrote to me, and to many others, doubtless, seeking an understanding with them, sympathy and information; communicating recklessly and exhaustively everything he knew, and asking for some pleasant interchange. And I knew him well

enough to be sure, now as I write these words, that he told his correspondents tenfold more than he ever got back. I have an affectionate appreciation of the delight he felt when he had put this brilliant testimonial and corroboration into type on his final page, and linked together two names he so truly honored.

But I say unhesitatingly that Dr. Anderson knew what he was then writing when he said, "I thank you for *your suggestions* with regard to the true Calvary." Mr. Howe had been writing and studying for enthusiastic years before he received the knowledge of Dr. Anderson's tentative remark to Dr. Smith; he did not know that any one had ever spoken even casually about such a thing; and he was glad to have it published that so great a man had made the remark to another man so great.

I end this notice of a very valuable small book, and this affectionate reminiscence of a beloved friend, by saying in all simplicity that, since Dr. Anderson died without the sign, and Dr. Eli Smith died without the sign, and Mr. Fisher Howe, having made the best sign he could, then died (*nulli flebilior quam mihi*), I sometimes have had a wish that before he died he might have known a little of the grateful gladness with which the world is now mentioning his name as the one who first gave out the orderly argument to establish what good men now believe is "The True Site of Calvary."

Charles S. Robinson.



THE DAMASCUS GATE.