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ART. III.—*Notes on the Ruins of Muqeyer.* By

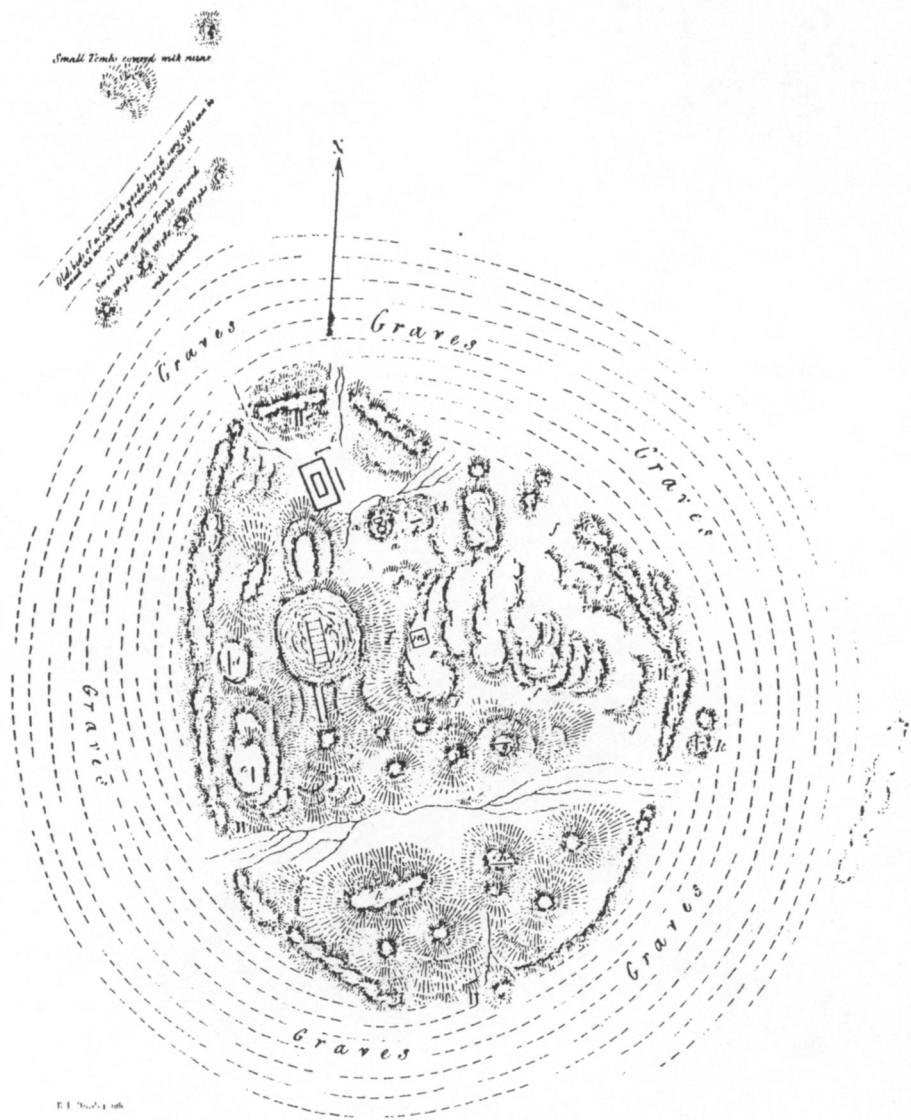
J. E. TAYLOR, Esq.

[Read 8th July, 1854.]

MUQEYER, in Arabic, signifies "bituminous," or "covered with bitumen," its root being قير. The Arabs of the country about Baghdad, Sūk ush Shuyúkh, and Busrah, universally give the Arabic ق (Qaf) the sound of the English *g*, and *muqeyer* then with them becomes *mugeyer*. This corrupt pronunciation has led foreign travellers astray as to the real meaning of the word, which they have interpreted "overturned;" "changed," spelling the name of the ruins *Megheyer*, *Meghair*, and sometimes also *Umgheir*. The reason for its present name, which is modern, is obvious to the visitor, as everywhere are to be seen large pieces of bitumen, and remains of masonry, formed by kiln burnt bricks, imbedded in the same material. The ruins are situated sixteen miles N.W. by N. from Sūk ush Shuyúkh, and six miles due west from the northern end of Arjè village, on the right bank of the Euphrates. Muqeyer itself is built upon a slight elevation; the country all about it is, however, so low, that, during the annual flood of the Euphrates, the whole becomes a marsh, and the ruins themselves an island in the middle. Seven miles west of Muqeyer is a long, low range of sand hills (abounding in sand stones and pebbles), which bounds the district known by the Arabs as the Hejerra, and which terminates about eight miles N.W. of Semaweh. Between the ruins and this ridge the ground gradually descends for five miles; it then as gradually ascends for two, up to the summit of the ridge. At the other side is the valley or hollow of Abu Shahrezar. This ridge is called the Hazem. The plan will, I hope, convey a good idea of the general shape of the ruins and of the mounds composing them, together with the spots at which excavations were made. Plate 1 is a sketch of the principal building from the northern face. This is not, I must observe, exact in detail, and was only made to give an idea of the building as it at present exists. To these (and Plate 2, which is a sketch of a part of the same building) I shall refer, to elucidate my report, and to point out the different spots where the most interesting relics were discovered.

On referring to the plan, the principal ruin will be seen at the northern end; this is surrounded by low mounds. On the right hand, towards the south, are two lines of large high mounds, with another range of high mounds running to them at a right angle; these are

Small Tomb covered with ruins

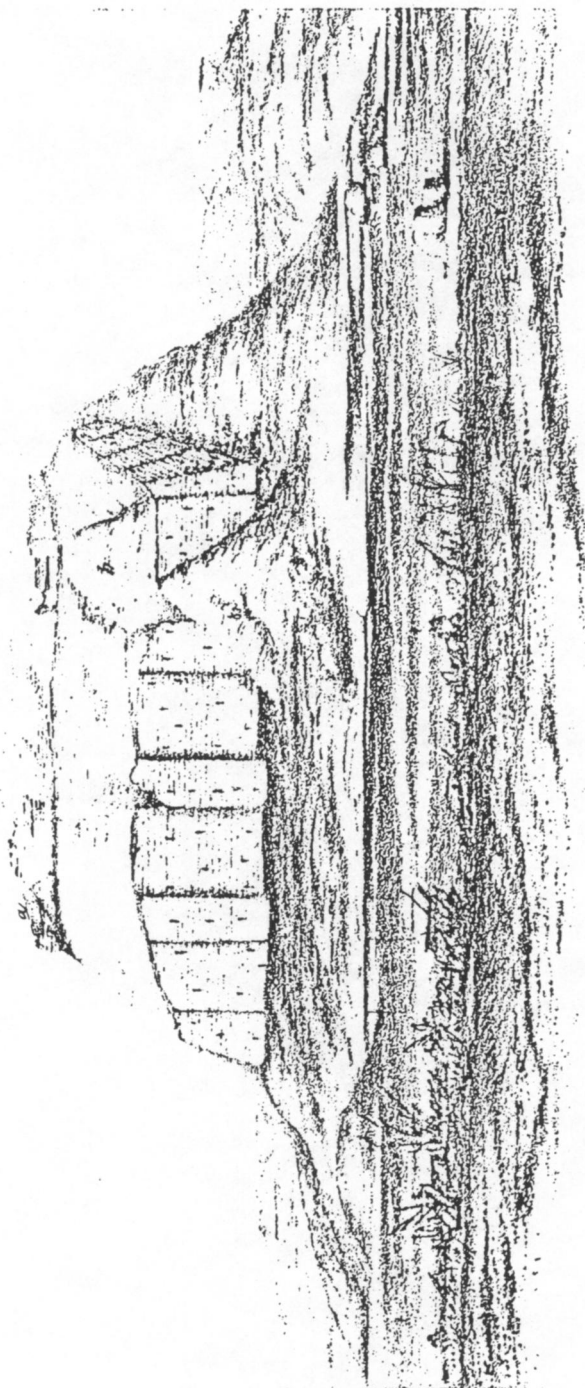


E. J. ...

- HHH 2946 yards round
- a a Platform on which the house a' is built
- a' House cleared (See Plan 3)
- b Pavement at edge of Platform a 12 feet below surface
- CCC Comparatively open space of very low mound
- Michewer big two-storied ruin
- c Tomb Mound
- d, e, g, h, k, l m Points at which excavations were made

# PLAN OF MICHEWER RUINS.

Scale of 1/4" = one yard to 50 yards

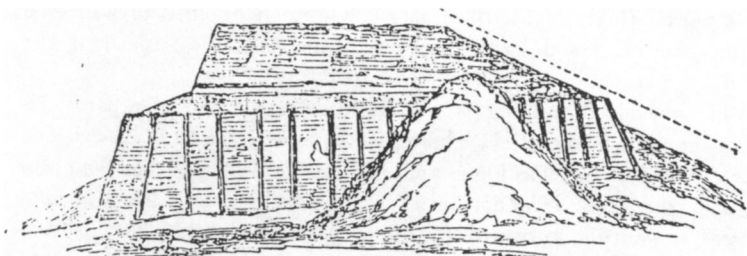


separated from the extreme southern portion of the ruins by a large and broad ravine running completely through them from east to west. This latter is a perfect chaos of mounds, running one into the other, and forming a large confused mass. The small range of mounds to the east has a wall-like appearance, and preserves the same breadth and height throughout its length. Close to the S.E. end of the principal building is the mound from which I disinterred the house. The ruin is surrounded by broken ground and hillocks, covered with the *débris* of small vaults and coffins. About 500 yards N.W. of the mounds is the bed of a canal, but extremely indistinct in consequence of the inroads and ravages of the marsh. A mile east of Muqeyer are several mounds covered with scorix and slag. The whole circumference of the ruins round the top of the extreme defined mounds is 2946 yards; their length, 1056 yards; and their greatest breadth 825 yards. I shall now describe the ruins in the order they appear in the plan.

The principal building is a two-storied structure, of a parallelogram shape, the longest sides being to the east and west. The second story is 16 feet 8 inches high, and its base is 18 feet from the outer edge of the first. The northern face of the first story has four buttresses, in addition to two corner ones; the western side has also the two corner ones and seven others. The entire building is perforated with numerous air-holes (as in the Kasr at Babylon), which run in a straight line right through the ruins, and the whole seems to me a solid mass of partially burnt and sun-dried bricks, coated with a wall of kiln-burnt inscribed bricks, 4 feet thick. At the eastern side is a staircase, 3 yards broad, with sides or balustrades 1 yard broad, shooting out of two supporting buttresses, 2 yards broad, which leads up to the edge of the basement of the second story. The bricks composing the coating of the first story are totally different from those of the second, in size, shape, and in the inscription; those in the first being  $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches square,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches thick, and having a small stamp  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches square; while those in the second story are 13 inches square, 3 inches thick, and bearing a stamp 8 inches long and 4 broad. Another difference is, that the bricks of the first story are imbedded in bitumen, while those of the second, with, however, the exception of its northern face, which is also imbedded in bitumen, are placed in a cement formed of lime and ashes.<sup>1</sup> The summit of the second story is slightly dome-shaped, and depressed at each corner; this, however, I am inclined to think is the effect of rain and wind, as on excavating,

<sup>1</sup> This kind of cement is still in use in these parts and is called "charoor."

I found it a solid mass of partially burnt bricks, 13 inches square and 5 inches thick. The depression at the corners is very abrupt, and at each of these corners there was a breach or opening in the wall, as if some kind of entrance had formerly existed at these points; at present, however, these parts seem as solid as any other part of the ruin. The fourth corner would, I have no doubt, have presented the same aspect, but it is now in such a total state of ruin, that the termination of the eastern wall is hardly visible, while none of the southern wall remains. A curious feature in the building is the position of the second story, which is close up to the northern end of the first story, the southern side being an inclined plane from the base of the first to the summit of the second story, and presenting a shape like the sketch below.



At a distance of about twenty yards from the base of the first story are the remains of a species of outer wall; this, however, I could only observe at the eastern side, and it was also nearly covered by the *débris* and fragments constantly accumulating from the big ruin. The first point at which I commenced excavating upon the big ruin was at the head of the staircase. The sketch (No. 2) will give some idea of the excavation here: (*c b*) is a breach I found in the wall, the space behind it filled with rubbish, and backed, as will be seen in the sketch, by the solid sun-dried brick mass inside. At (*c*) I commenced sinking the shaft, which I worked for a depth of 14 feet through the same kind of loose *débris*; I then tunnelled straight into the centre of the mound for 36 feet, and for a breadth of 8, gradually diminishing to 4 feet. At this point I desisted from any further attempts, the entire ruin seeming one solid mass. The whole excavation at the head of the staircase presented one mass of rubbish, similar to the heap at the right hand of the sketch. In clearing this rubbish away, I found nothing of any interest up to (*d d*), with the exception of pieces of blue enamelled bricks and large copper nails. At (*d d*), and also immediately below them, on the ground, I found the fragments of the barrel cylinder, which were resting for the most part on



THE GREAT HALL, 1900

the ledge of the solid mass of masonry, commencing at *e*. These must have fallen either from the top of the building or from one of the niches (*f g*). I must note, however, that these relics were found more than 6 feet from the wall (*c*).

I first passed between two solid masses of stone masonry, about 4 feet high and 10 broad; at the other side was a passage, 6 feet broad; passing this, we came to a solid piece of masonry, which is continued up to the wall. The passage I cleared was 12 feet broad at the commencement, for 25 feet; it then narrowed to 6 for a few feet, after which it gradually narrowed to 3 feet, this last part having the appearance of an arch, broken through the centre. The mass of masonry (*e d*, plate 2) is perfectly incomprehensible; from the corner (*h*) to (*i*), the mass seems separated from the opposite piece (*k*), as both walls (inside) are perfectly smooth and distinct, and 2 inches distinctly apart from each other; from (*i*) onwards, however, the whole seems blended in one common mass of alternate thick layers of kiln-burnt and sun-dried bricks, presenting the form of a ruined arch. This is plainly seen running into the mass at the back of the breach, the bricks there being in thinner layers, and one overlapping the other, till it is reduced to a single brick. The passages seem to run entirely to the end of the ruin. Had I cleared away the heaps of rubbish to the right, I have no doubt I should have found the ruin presenting the same features as the masses I had already cleared. I found the interior of the ruin to be a solid mass, consisting of—firstly, a layer, 10 feet thick, of partially burnt bricks, 13 inches square and 5 thick; after this were layers of sun-dried bricks, diminishing in size to 6 inches square and 2 inches thick, and so firmly built, that the whole seemed a compact mass, extremely difficult to demolish; our progress here being scarcely 3 feet a day.

I mentioned before that, at each corner of the second story, there was a breach in the wall, as if some kind of entrance had formerly existed. I began excavating the S.W. corner, clearing away large masses of rubbish formed of the remains of burnt mingled with sun-dried bricks. I worked along, at a depth of 10 feet and a breadth of 6, without finding anything. I then returned, and worked a few feet north along the brick casing of the western wall; here, 6 feet below the surface, I found a perfect inscribed cylinder. This relic was in the solid masonry; it had been placed in a niche, formed by the omission of one of the bricks in the layer, and was found standing on one end. I excavated some little distance further without any success, and then relinquished this corner for the N.W. one. Here, also, I found a second cylinder, similar to the one above mentioned, but at 12



feet from the surface. At this corner I sank a shaft 21 feet deep by 12 broad. The sun-dried bricks, composing this solid mass within, were here of an amazing thickness; their size was 16 inches square and 7 inches thick. Just below the cylinder were two rough logs of wood, apparently teak, which ran across the whole breadth of the shaft. Below the base of the brick casing of the second story here, I came upon a wall 10 feet deep, built of smaller and uninscribed bricks; I dug out both ends, and pursued my work a little further without any success. I found, however, that the space between the second story and first was paved, and I presume the same arrangement was carried out for the whole breadth and length of the space between the edge of the base of second story and the edge of the top of the first.

Having thus found two cylinders in the solid masonry in two corners, I naturally concluded the same objects would be found in the two corners still remaining. I sank a shaft in each, and found two other cylinders precisely in the same position, and in the same kind of structure, one at 6 and the other at 2 feet from the surface. This is easily accounted for, when looking at the irregular surface of the ruin, which, at the S.E. corner and S. side generally, has been subject to greater ravages from rain than the other sides, owing to the greater depression of the surface towards these points.

From the irregular position of the second story, and the difference of the materials employed in the construction of each, it is, I think, probable that the first story was constructed some time antecedent to the second. In the first place, the staircase at the eastern face leads simply up to the edge of the top of the first story; I excavated right up to the base of the wall of the second, but could find no trace of a door or passage of any sort leading upwards. The bricks are also totally different in size, colour, and in the inscription<sup>1</sup>. They are also imbedded in bitumen; those in the second story in a mixed lime and ash cement. The inclined plane leading up to the second story, without any connection with the first, is also additional ground for such a theory. Two or three old men of the pastoral tribes who congregate in winter and spring about the ruins, informed me that between forty and fifty years ago there was a kind of room or chamber at the top of the second story, and I think their assertion is borne out by the remains of glazed bricks and nails I found in excavating close up to the wall at (c), in plate 2, and which were too high up to have been the remains of the high portion of the second story wall. In addition to

<sup>1</sup> A few of the bricks in the second story have the same inscription as those of the first.

this, before commencing my work here, the mounds of rubbish, which completely buried the whole of this face, were higher, if anything than the top of the wall at (a). The barrel cylinder was, I have no doubt, originally placed in this upper room, or third story.

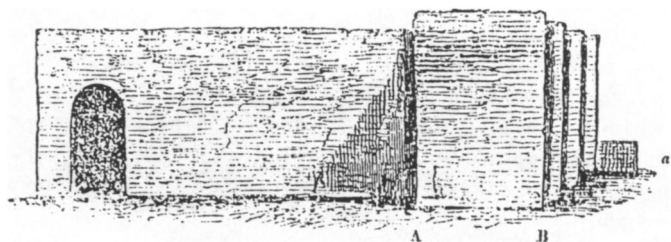
I had almost forgotten to state that, amongst the dust and rubbish on the summit of the second story, I found several small clay lamps, and fragments of fine chased pottery, which would scarcely have been found there had there not been a chamber or structure of some sort formerly existing at the top. The whole building is built of sun-dried bricks in the centre, with a thick coating of massive, partially burnt bricks, of a light red colour, with layers of reeds between them; the whole being cased by a wall of kiln-burnt bricks. The bricks composing the staircase are different in size and in the inscription from the rest, and I have pasted a small label upon each, to denote the locality I procured them from.

Close to the S.E. corner of the large ruin (45 yards off) is the low platform and Tel from which I disinterred the house. The whole is 400 yards round, and composed of a mass of sun-dried bricks, at the top of which is a pavement of kiln-burnt bricks, of which some are inscribed. I began excavating at the paved court at the N.W. corner of the mound, and worked up along the mud wall as far as the opposite brick wall, with the two drains or gutters. I then broke into the corner of the mud wall, and had not proceeded 3 feet before finding a small black stone inscribed on both sides; I entirely closed this chamber up to the arch. Passing through—the passage was entirely choked up with sand—I came into the outer court, and then following up the walls on both sides, I eventually cleared the whole building of the rubbish it contained.

The structure of this house is extremely irregular, every wall being somewhat longer or shorter than the other. The whole, together with the outer rooms, is paved throughout with kiln-burnt uninscribed bricks, imbedded in bitumen. The house, with the exception of the parts I have noted, is built of large, inscribed, burnt bricks; the outer layer imbedded in bitumen; the inner ones in mud. Many of the bricks are inscribed on their sides. Some, which are presented with the inscribed side outwards, in the two courts and arches, have a thin coating of enamel or gypsum, upon which the characters have been stamped. These are remarkably fine, and I took great pains to preserve them, and clean them thoroughly; but they were so rotten, either from age or neglect in their burning, that I found it a task of some difficulty. In the outer court I found some large irregular pieces of black stone, each of them bearing an inscrip-

tion, but in a damaged state. At the top of each is a hole, as if they had formerly been placed under a door-post. The arched ways or passages are perfect, and run through the entire thickness of the walls; the form of the arch is nearly a semicircle, the bricks being cut away towards their ends, so as to give the whole the shape required for the formation of this circular arch. Those places in the walls which I have called gutters or drains, are extremely well and finely formed, their sides coated with bitumen; they run through the entire height of the walls.

To preserve regularity and strength in the corners of the walls, the bricks are of a triangular shape, and those composing the body of the walls are of different sizes; some 13 inches square and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  thick; others  $11\frac{1}{4}$  by  $12\frac{1}{4}$ , and 3 inches thick. Those covering the sun-dried brick erection, upon which the building is raised, and of which the platform consists, are  $14\frac{1}{4}$  inches square and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  thick. Great quantities of charred date-wood were found all throughout this house; they were probably the remains of the rafters that supported the roof. Below is a sketch of a portion of the wall of the outer court and the adjoining buttress, with the three niches. The space from A B to the



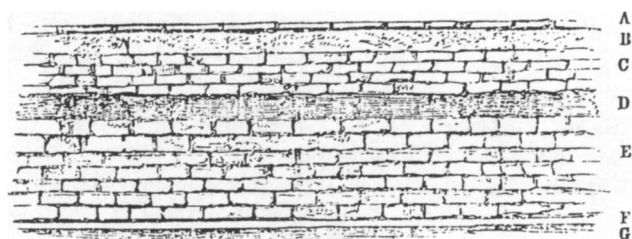
a—Step running along the whole breadth of the wall. Other side the same.

opposite buttress is paved, and about a foot above the pavement of the outer court.

With the exception of the inscribed stones and bricks already noticed, I found nothing of any interest in this ruin. In clearing out the heaps of rubbish, I got a few copper nails and pieces of date-wood rafters perfectly charred by fire. When cleared, the house, with the exception of the roof, was perfect, none of the walls having given way; and a party of my workmen eventually occupied it during the rest of my stay here. The drains or gutters already mentioned were coated thickly with bitumen; and some parts of the walls seem to have been plastered over with the same material, which made the cleaning

of the side-inscribed bricks very difficult. It may have happened that a fire destroyed this building, in which case the bitumen, used as cement for the bricks, melted by the heat, would have oozed out, and covered the walls, as I have stated. Some of the most perfect of the inscribed bricks, with the gypsum or enamel coating, were picked out from this part of the wall.

Part of the outer court, when compared with the rest of the pavement around it, presented a domed appearance. I therefore sank a shaft here, in the hope of penetrating a vault or subterranean chamber. I dug to a depth of 12 feet, and till I had reached the tenacious clay bottom, but found nothing. The construction of this building—it could scarcely have been the foundation—was sufficiently curious to deserve some explanation. At the southern end of the shaft I dug down a circular piece of wall (for about 3 feet), formed of burnt brick imbedded in bitumen; after this, for 3 feet, sun-dried brick; and then a plain wall, of burnt brick imbedded in bitumen, for 5 feet. After this was the clay bottom. All the bricks were inscribed; some on the sides, as well as the face; they were  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches by 12 inches, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick. At the sides of the shaft were also masses of brick-work, but they did not join on to the foundation of the side walls of the outer court. At the northern end of the shaft, after pulling up the pavement, was a layer of sand; after this a layer of sun-dried bricks; then a layer of bitumen; a layer of sun-dried bricks again; and, lastly, a pavement of kiln-burnt bricks: all these layers and the pavement extended of course to the southern end of the shaft. Below is a section of the northern end.



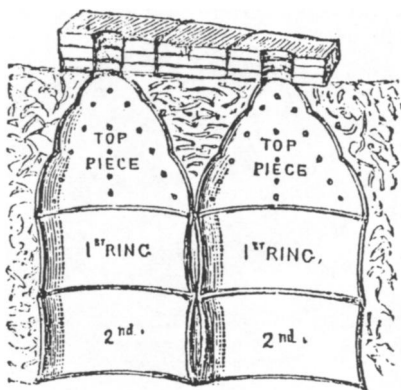
- A—Brick pavement, imbedded in bitumen.
- B—Layer of sand, 3 inches thick.
- C—Layer of sun-dried bricks, 6 inches thick.
- D—Layer of bitumen, 3 inches thick.
- E—Layer of sun-dried bricks, 18 inches thick.
- F—Brick pavement, imbedded in bitumen; bricks inscribed.
- G—Clay bottom.

At the eastern end of the platform I sank a shaft down the side of

a wall, which had the appearance of being the remnant of an arched or domed building. At a depth of 10 feet, I came to the end of this wall; digging, however, 3 feet deeper, I came upon a pavement, which I followed up for 40 feet, tunnelling through the ground, without however, any success. The bricks of this pavement are 14 inches long,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  broad, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  thick; most of them have the impression of the tips of two fingers at the back; none were inscribed: the whole imbedded in bitumen. The brick wall did not go far north; it was then succeeded by a sun-dried brick wall, which ran along as far as I dug, 3 feet above, however, the level of the pavement. This excavation was at the extreme end of the platform, and considerably lower, I thought, than the foundation; it might have been formerly a sewer. Immediately above the brick wall, but at one side, I dug into square buildings, having the appearance of being the remains of rooms; the walls had, however, dwindled down to a height of 3 feet. The bricks I dug out of these chambers were painted red, and had an inscription over nearly the whole length and breadth, in a small neat character. I was not lucky enough to procure one of these bricks whole. On one portion of them was the symbol of two crescents, back to back. Some of these portions had the remains of plaster still on them, also painted red. None of the bricks composing the walls were inscribed. The whole of the above was *débris*, filling the chambers. From here, too, I procured a curious conical-shaped piece of baked clay, bearing a small inscription round the base; the whole about 5 inches long.

The next site of excavation was at the mound (c) in the plan, which, for the sake of distinction, I have called the Tomb Mound. Here I commenced, about half up at the black line, by sinking a broad shaft. This led, for 10 feet, down a piece of solid masonry, 4 feet broad and 10 deep; it then ceased. I dug for a further depth of 6 feet, and then tunnelled into the centre of the mound for 40 feet. Throughout all this work I did not succeed in finding a single thing of interest, with the exception of two double shafts, formed of rings of baked clay, 2 feet in diameter, and which subsequent experience proved to be drains for carrying off the rain-water lodging on the flat surface of the mound. For a space of 1 foot right round these shafts, and throughout their whole length, were pieces of broken pottery, the more effectually to drain the mound. Each ring was about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  foot broad, one resting upon the other, and in some instances with a thin layer of bitumen between each. Above the mouth of the top ring, which is of a different shape from the others, were layers of perforated bricks, leading up to the top of the mound. Below is a section of one

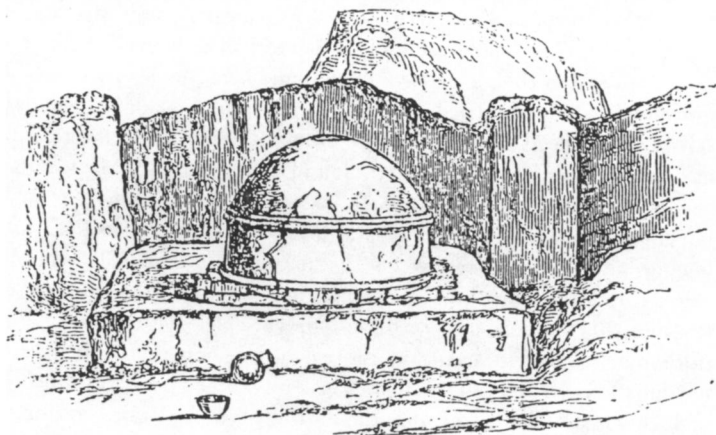
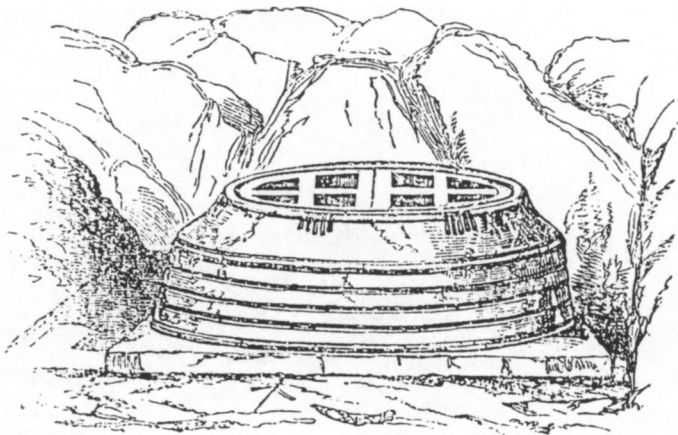
of these double shafts, which consist sometimes of forty successive rings. I procured the top piece and first ring of one whole, which I



forward with the other antiques. The top pieces and first rings are generally full of small holes.

Not having found anything as yet, I began excavating the mound at a higher level, and ran trenches 10 feet deep through the top in all directions. This mound I found to be full of coffins (if I can apply that term to the covers enclosing the remains of the dead), which were imbedded in the sun-dried bricks, of which the mound is composed. All these were at about a depth of 8 feet from the surface. Long narrow strips of masonry were found going about 4 feet into the ground, which may have formerly been used to separate the private burying grounds of different families. The whole surface of the mound, and the spaces between the masonry, are paved with single bricks; and the apertures of the numerous drains which run right through this mound in every direction, were clearly to be distinguished (although of course entirely choked up) communicating with the pavement which served to lead the rain-water and damp into them, and so effectually preserving the burial-place in a dry state. The masonry was composed of small thick bricks, bearing a small inscription in relief. Owing to this, I procured but few with a perfect legible inscription, particularly as no bitumen was used in the structure. I found a few others in good preservation, bearing a different inscription; two of the best I brought away with me. The remains of the dead I found generally disposed under baked clay covers, and in arched brick vaults. I shall describe one of each, with the articles found in them, which will suffice for the whole. I found no such things as coffins, properly so called, in the whole of this mound.

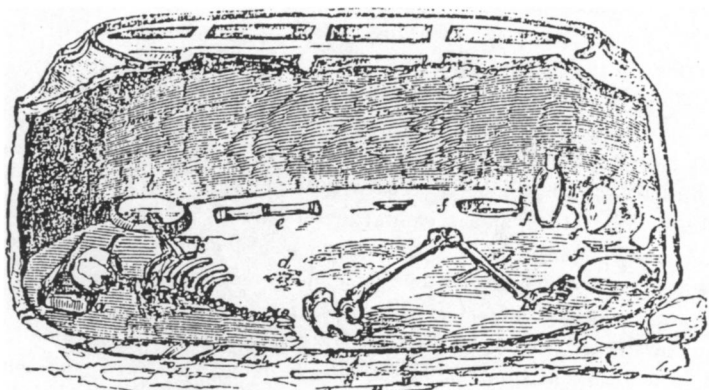
The two following sketches represent the shape and form of the covers for the dead, and the third is a sketch of a similar cover, with a piece broken out of the side, showing the position of the skeleton, and the articles found with it.



The first cover is 3 feet high, 7 feet long, and about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad at the bottom. It has seven rings going completely round, and in relief, the hollow space between them filled up by a band<sup>1</sup> formed of dry sedge steeped in bitumen. The top of this cover was ornamented by eight shallow indentations (as seen in the sketch) and five

<sup>1</sup> Similar to an English hay-band used for tying trusses of hay. Strabo mentions that the people of Chaldrea used to wrap these bands, steeped in bitumen, round their date-wood pillars.

raised stripes at the head, foot, and in two places at each side of the top. The whole cover is one piece, and formed of clay burnt in a kiln. The skeletons are found resting upon a platform of sun-dried brick, on the top of which, and beneath the skeleton, is a mat exactly similar to the common ones in use to this day among the Arabs for huts and covering grain. Pieces of linen are observed about the bones, and the whole skeleton seems to have been bound with a species of thong. Remnants of stuff, which I take to be metal—for they are too heavy for cloth or linen—are also seen about the skull.



*a*—Sun-dried brick, head resting on it.

*b*—Copper bowl.

*c*—Small cylinder of meteoric stone; remains of thread through it, going round arm-bone.

*d*—Pieces of cylindrical meteoric stone.

*e*—A piece of a bamboo truncheon.

*f*—Different jars and utensils for food and water, made of burnt clay: remains of date-stones in the shallow dish.

The body is always found lying on one side, generally the left, the skull resting on a sun-dried brick, which, in some cases, is seen covered by the remnants of a tasselled cushion of tapestry; the legs drawn up in the position described in the sketch. At the left side is a copper bowl, the arm-bones of right hand resting on the edge, the finger-bones, in every instance being found inside the bowl; the left arm and hand are stretched out, and the bowl, generally speaking, lies upon the palm of the left hand. On the arm is sometimes found an inscribed cylinder of meteoric stone. I have procured them with the remains of the string still existing, and I always observed that the ends went round the wrist. In some cases I have found a second engraved (rudely) but uninscribed cylinder of sand-stone between the



feet. Just below the ribs, in many of the collins, in the top as it were, are also several pieces of cylindrical meteoric stones, of all sizes, but uninscribed. Near the copper bowl, in this case, was a truncheon, formed of bamboo; in other cases I found a saw-fish's snout. Below this, and near the feet, are several shallow clay dishes, usually containing fish and chicken bones,<sup>1</sup> and the remains of date-stones. Near the dishes are big water jars, and near them a smaller kind for drinking out of, and similar to the Baghdad sherbels of the present day. The number of these utensils differ in every case, but there are never less than three, viz.: a large clay jar for holding water, a smaller one for drinking out of, and a shallow clay dish, in addition to the usual copper bowl.

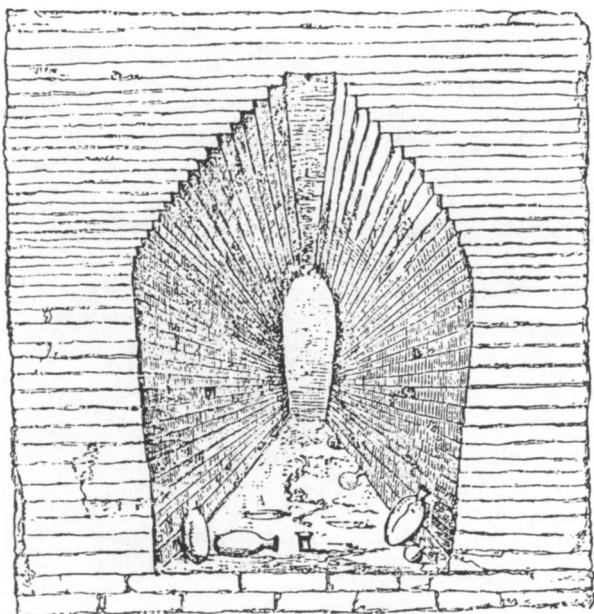
Directly on opening these covers, were I to attempt to touch the skulls or bones, they would fall into dust almost immediately; but I found, on exposing them for a few days to the air, that they became quite hard, and could be handled with impunity. The teeth in every case were beautiful, and in capital preservation. In covers to female skeletons I procured gold beads, agate beads, copper bangles, and a few trifling ornaments. In one I found a whole mass of rings<sup>2</sup> for the ear and toes, small bracelets, &c., all blended and sticking together in one mass; the remains of a piece of rag covering still exist round the whole. Different kinds of shells were frequent, and, in some, small elongated vases, filled with rings, formed by rubbing down a small kind of shell. In some of the covers, of the shape described in No. 2, were two, and in one case three, large skulls, which must have belonged to grown-up men. The cover contained three skulls and a few bones; these remains must have been previously interred in some other cemetery, and then disinterred and finally deposited here.<sup>3</sup> Covers containing a male and female skeleton were also frequent. Receptacles for the reception of the remains of children were formed of two shallow dishes, one covering the other, although in some cases they were of the same shape (but smaller) as those in sketch No. 1.

The vaults found in the same mound were generally 5 feet high, 7 feet long at the bottom, and 5 feet at the top, with a breadth of 3 feet 7 inches. They were arched, the arch being nearly the same shape as the one at Ctesiphon; the arch was formed by each successive layer of bricks, from a distance of half way up, overlapping the other, till the whole was formed, the aperture at the top being closed by a single brick.

<sup>1</sup> In one I found part of the lower jaw of a boar, the big tusk still remaining.

<sup>2</sup> In this one was also a fish-hook of copper.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps from the fact of its being holy ground, as at Meshed and Kerbela at this day.



Above is a front view of the vault. In this one I found the skeleton disposed as usual, lying, however, on a matting formed of thin whole reeds, steeped in bitumen; one end was placed over the body, a basket of the same material was at the feet, and there were about fourteen different descriptions of clay vessels all about. There was of course the usual copper bowl (but broken), and a beautifully perfect inscribed cylinder of meteoric stone was fastened round the wrist; close to this were the remains of a gold fillet or band, formed of pure beaten metal, about an inch broad. At the extremity of the ribs numerous plain meteoric stones, four statuettes of ducks in the same material, and one in agate, besides a small cat's-eye stone. At its feet was a cylinder, in common white sand-stone (but much damaged), without an inscription.<sup>1</sup> The vault was perfectly free from damp, and it was in such good repair that no dust or extraneous matter had been able to get into it. In a vault of this description and size, in the same mound, I found no less than eleven skeletons, one packed on the top of the other, and many had from three to four. In these cases there were no copper bowls or cylinders, nor bricks under the heads, but always a profusion of vessels for containing water, and

<sup>1</sup> All the small articles found in this vault I collected in one vase, and forwarded them in that. The cylinder is with Colonel Rawlinson.

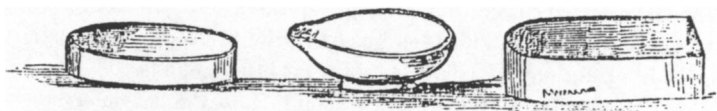
for drinking from. In some jars found near the vault above were several little clay figures, but extremely rudely executed. The floor of the vaults are paved in every case. The bricks composing them are white; towards the interior of the vault red; and they are imbedded in mud. The opening to the vault was closed or built up to the top by a double layer of bricks. About a foot below the surface, and under the pavement existing on the summit of the mound, I procured a large inscribed cone; fragments of these were very plentiful all about the graves here and in the other mounds; this was, however, the most perfect specimen. At the back of the vault described above I found, close to the foundation, a small unbaked inscribed clay tablet, and I also dug up, at two feet only below the surface, about thirty small and large fragments of the same. From being so close to the surface they were of course considerably damaged. The whole mound, which is nothing more than a burying ground, is perforated by numerous shafts of the kind already described. In burying the bodies, they were laid on a platform of sun-dried brick, and the same material was used in building round them to the top. I could not find any traces of a door or passage of any kind in it.

After completely dissecting the Tomb Mound, I made excavations in two or three places among the extreme southern Tels, and in another Tel, close to the Tomb Mound. In all these places, however, I found nothing but deep bricked graves,<sup>1</sup> one close to another, and filled entirely with the fragments of jars and vases. At the bottom of one of these bricked graves I dug out two collins, at a depth of 30 feet from the surface; I procured nothing but a few beads from them. The whole of the southern mounds are full of graves; I had not time, however, to investigate them so thoroughly as I could have wished, for I have no doubt that some very interesting relics would be there discovered. All over these mounds pieces of the inscribed cones<sup>2</sup> already described were plentiful, but all damaged, the original inscriptions being nearly obliterated. In these mounds at the north, and close to the surface, I procured a large black stone, with a small but perfect inscription. The surfaces of the collective mass of mounds are generally the same; long, narrow strips of masonry running right across them, and others meeting and crossing them at right angles, the same as in the Tomb Mound. Similar masonry is observed also on the slopes; and the whole of the mounds were perforated by the drains already described. From these southern mounds I procured

<sup>1</sup> Ten feet long, 7 broad, and 30 to 40 deep; three and also four of them in a line, separated by a brick wall.

<sup>2</sup> Priapi?

many coffins of the shape below.<sup>1</sup> These, in many instances, were found with the hollow upwards, and were of course filled with earth



and the remains of the dead. In these were found the usual clay dish and jars for holding water, but no copper vessels of any kind. Ornaments of copper, as bracelets, toe and finger rings, with beads, in coffins containing female skeletons, were frequent. From a coffin in these mounds I procured a figure of a priest in copper. Scattered over them I could distinguish numerous apertures and openings leading to the double-shafted drains.

The low range of mounds that seems like a low wall running nearly round the ruins is also nothing more than a line of graves and tombs; and from all that I saw, after excavating pretty generally over the ruins, I do not think that there are any remains of habitations, for the ruin I have called a house ought more properly, I conceive, to be called a temple or washing place for the dead. The most curious relic in the shape of a building exists at the point K outside the low range of graves. Here observing some masonry on the top of a small Tel, I dug down the face of it for a depth of 30 feet, without, however, coming to the foundation; about 4 feet from the point at which I left off excavating,<sup>2</sup> I came upon another brick wall, running at an oblique angle to the bastion I was digging along; this wall ran apparently into the ruins. The bastion or buttress was 5 yards 20 inches long, and 2 yards 23 inches broad. The bricks composing it (imbedded in bitumen) were 13 inches long, 12 broad, and 3 thick. There is a small Tel close to it, also displaying the same species of masonry on its top. These, therefore, supposing the above to be the top of a similar building as the one I laid bare, may have formed a kind of entrance into the ruins. The bricks were inscribed on the sides only, but so ruined that I did not procure one perfect. There are numerous circular bricked wells scattered amongst the ruins, the majority in the ground about the big ruin. Here, too, are several pieces of black granite, with defaced inscriptions on them: one of the best I brought away with me; those remaining seem to bear the same. In one of

<sup>1</sup> All the vases and coffins I dug up were without covers of any sort.

<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that this is the lowest point of the ruins; the long, low Tel here being only 6 feet high. I think that I must have dug below, or at all events to the level of, the surrounding descent.

the ravines, near the large ruin, is a black granite stone, which may have formed part of an altar. The other excavations that I have not particularly described, did not produce anything but a mass of broken pottery and jars, which had been buried in the bricked graves already described. I did not, however, go deep into the mounds.

Before concluding, I would draw attention to the enormous quantities of sea shells found all over the ruins, and in the graves. I have preserved one of each species, which I forward with the other articles. I did not procure a single glass vessel or fragment of glass. Copper was in abundance, probably the remains of bowls and ornaments, and was scattered about everywhere. I picked up in the Tomb Mound excavations a large spear-head, and two arrow-heads in this metal. I would call attention also to the fact of the existence of a breach in the second story, which I found on clearing away the rubbish at the end of the passage (Plate 2). This must have been made some time anterior to the ruin of the supposed third story, or upper room, from the fact of my finding the pieces of the barrel cylinder at (*d d*); the excavators of that time must also have sunk the shaft which I found filled with *débris*, but which I did not succeed in clearing. It appeared to me to be of considerable depth, but narrowing as it deepened. The inner court of the excavated house must, too, have been entered by foreigners not long after its ruin; for the stones of the paved court had been pulled up, and with these had been constructed the rude kind of fire-place common to the people of the country to this day. I have now, I believe, recounted all the discoveries and excavations at Muqeyer. I have attempted to render them as clear and intelligible as possible, although my time has been too limited for me to hope for success in dealing with subjects so new to me in every way.

*Busréh, March 31st, 1854.*

[N.B.—The preceding Memoir has been kindly communicated to the Society by the Authorities of the British Museum, where the articles transmitted by Mr. Taylor are deposited. Ed.]