

EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE PAPER ENTITLED EL SAKHRA, PUBLISHED IN VOL. X.,  
 PAGE 131. *By the Author, Lieut.-General the Hon. Sir Edward Cust, D.C.L.,  
 President of the Society.*

In the sketch map (annexed to the above paper) of the presumed site of the Temples of Solomon and Herod at Jerusalem, there is named—"A void space at the time of the "second Temple presumed to be a cemetery of the Jews, and called Golgotha." This would appear from Lightfoot to be a mistake, for he says "it was a place of a skull, not "a place of graves;" and many annotators consider that the name was derived from the supposed resemblance of the form of the ground to a human skull. It is, however, important that it was never a cemetery. The fact has been probably altogether lost sight of, that the ground originally comprised in Solomon's Temple, and not covered by the second Temple, in which outer ground, as will be seen, El Sakhra was included, was in the time of Herod and at the period of our Blessed Lord's crucifixion covered with a new town called Bezetha, which contained the tower of Antonia, the Prætorium or Hall of Judgment, and the splendid palace built for himself by Herod. Whatever supposed sanctity might have attached to the locality which had been occupied by the Temple of Solomon, it is very probable that during the interval succeeding the government of the Maccabees, in which directly or indirectly the Roman rule had prevailed in Jerusalem, their soldiery had established itself in this very quarter, and accordingly all their military business had come to be transacted in this part of the city, while the Jewish government was established at Zion and in the Temple precincts; this would be an additional ground for the belief that the place of public execution was adjoining to the same vicinity, and will so far corroborate the position assumed that El Sakhra was the site of the crucifixion of Christ. This supposition is almost necessary to enable it to be possible to unite in so short a space of time as three hours all the several transactions that ensued after the death of Jesus—the petition of Joseph of Arimathæa, the taking down from the cross, the embalming, the entombment. If these several acts required a backward and forward transit of half a mile or so, the interval of time could have been scarcely sufficient for the purpose of so much movement, and therefore everything must have occurred within a very limited extent of ground; it was scarcely possible to carry it beyond the gates of Jerusalem. It must therefore be sufficient to fulfil the Scriptures that Christ suffered outside the gate of the Temple.