

## Covington's Tomb



SERVICE DES ANTIQUITÉS DE L'ÉGYPTE  
ANNALES  
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TOME VI  
LE CAIRE  
IMPRIMERIE DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS  
D'ARCHEOLOGIE ORIENTALE

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MDCCCCV (1905)  
MASTABA MOUNT EXCAVATIONS  
BY  
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## **GHIZEH – TOMB NO 1 LOCATION**

The Mastaba Mount Excavations extend southwards from a point about 200 metres S. of the large cliff quarries just to the south of the Sphinx. For 600 metres the concession follows southwards the low broken ridge which borders the Libyan desert plateau, then, extending westwards for some 750 metres, terminates at a promontory which rises 1,400 metres due S. of the Great Pyramid. Just 350 metres to the north, and intersecting this Pyramid line, are the Ancient Causeway ruins, shown in Perring's Plates.



**View North from Covington's Tomb**

The above promontory is surmounted by this tomb no. 1 – an immense sub-brick structure (61 m. 27 cent. X 34 m. 53 cent.) of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty. In this great Memphian necropolis such a fine site would naturally be selected by the builders of such a monument.

Just 11 metres to the east are the picturesque ruins of a large bluish-grey stone mastaba (about 28 metres x 12 metres) excavated by Mariette.

This great structure was by far the most important of the 39 tombs. I discovered and cleared. It resembles as to exterior decoration the Royal tomb of Negadah discovered by M. J. de Morgan in 1897. These 39 tombs include : 15 various rock-cut burial shafts; 8 cave tombs (rock cut chambers with door entrances as distinct from shaft); 13 serdabs; 5 mastabas, and part of what seemed to be the outer court of a temple.

The entire concession seems to have been fully worked, many of the best savants having tested it. Mariette himself once referred to it as a *hopeless field*. From an Egyptological point of view, however, some of the tombs were interesting, and many of the objects and fragments we secured were of historical value. They represented the I, III, IV, V, VI and XXVI Dynasties.

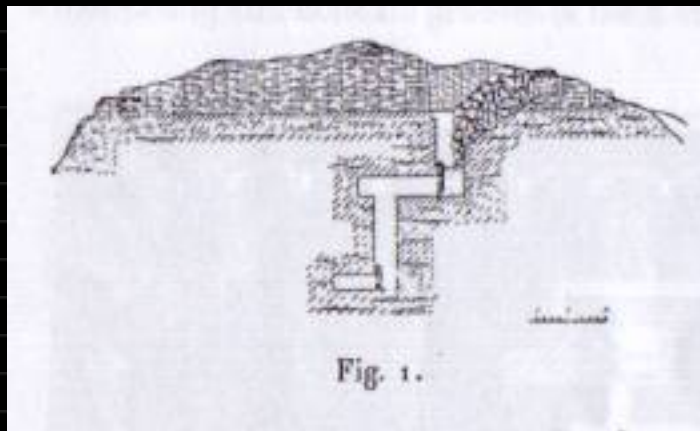
## DISCOVERY



**View South from Covington's Tomb**

Most of the eastward facing slopes of the hills in this district contain tombs which had been easily cut from the soft, sandy, fossiliferous limestone, and it was while following what I believed to be a serdab wall in the eastern face of the prominent hill which composed and yet concealed this great mastaba, that I discovered it. I first noticed a thin white broken streak of white casing mingled with the sand. This was peculiar, for the sand covering the hill and district was free from such discoloration but thickly strewn with fragments of brownish coloured boulders and pebbles. By merely brushing aside but 0 m. 02 cent. or 0 m. 03 cent. of sand, the dark coloured tomb brickwork was exposed. This we followed for over 61 metres on the E. side, and 34 m. 50 cent on the N.; thus revealing tomb outlines, which encompassed the entire hill. It was because the surface of the hill under which the great tomb reposed exactly resembled the pebbled dessert above which it rises that no one suspected its presence. The small bowl-shaped depression near the northern end, and the long sloping depression extending 17 metres to the south protective wall, though the results of former excavations, appeared but natural, and therefore attracted no attention. The hill, including the N. depression, is shown in the 1903 issue of Baedeker. It is remarkable that this large building, so conspicuously situated, should have remained so long undiscovered. It is said that Mariette Pasha sketched the large adjoining mastaba from the top of this one, never suspecting that just a centimetre or two beneath his feet there reposed this interesting structure.

## EXCAVATIONAL PROCESS



In early June 1902 with a force of 35 men and boys from the pyramid villages, and with Ibrahim Faid as Government reis, we cleared the upper part of the eastern, northern and small part of the western inner or main wall (as distinct from the outer or protective wall). We also cleared, but without result, the N. depression referred to, and the long deep 17 metres trench, terminating at the Roman tombs near the SE corner. The depression and the trench were very old excavations.

I then abandoned the tomb to excavate some smaller ones. This I did reluctantly, for recognizing the importance of the structure I desired to at once secure the details. However, 7 months later, in January the following year (1903) we resumed work there under much better, though far from perfect, conditions; instead of pyramid people we were able to secure, thanks to Prof. Maspero and Mr. Quibell, a staff of 30 experienced men from up the Nile who had been well trained by Messrs. Petrie, Reisner, Garstang and other. Above all we had the benefit of the invaluable services of Mr. JE Quibell.

We began by trenching towards the W. protective wall, about 20 metres of which we cleared from the NW corner. Then cleared much of the surface of the main brickwork, exposing the Roman tombs built into the structure at the NE and SE corners, and the large step-shaped depressions (probably also used as Roman tombs) above the NW corner. We then discovered and cleared the small 4-steps stairway leading into the N end of the great stairway passage. After which we cleared central portions of the outer faces of the N, S and E protective walls; thus securing the full dimensions of the tomb. A tremendous amount of heavy debris consisting of large stones, boulders, and caked sand in strata, filled the wide, deep stairway leading S into the main shaft. To avoid removing this we trenched through the brickwork on the E side 16 metres from the N and fortunately struck a crude rock stairway (no part of the original structure) which led down to the very top of the main shaft. We then cleared the 11 metres shaft, exposing at its base on the S side an immense oval limestone portcullis. Tunnelling around it we discovered and cleared a short passage leading into a large chamber, and several clay-cut galleries and tombs. Discovering an inner shaft sunk over 10 metres into the floor of the west chamber, we cleared it, exposing at its base a large flat square-cut portcullis which stood in its original position before the Sepulchral chamber. Passing over the stone without disturbing it we entered and partly

cleared the chamber; thus completing the excavation.

## MAIN STRUCTURE

Like all mastabas it is rectangular in shape, but the sides instead of sloping, are vertical; a distinguishing feature in this and other similar structures of the early archaic period.

The main structure orientated  $9^\circ$  E of true N measures 54 m 97 cent from N to S, and 27 m and 99 cent from E to W, but including the enclosing or protective walls, which are of course, a part of the monument, the dimensions are 61 m 72 cent N to S and 34 m 53 cent E to W (about 202 x 113 ft). It is therefore 7 metres larger each way than its sister tomb at Negadah; the burial place, according to Prof Petrie, of Neithotep, Mena's Queen.

From the north wall the tomb hill slopes rather abruptly for a few metres, then moderately for some 35 or 40 to the NE to a large sand plain almost entirely enclosed by low ridges.

From the south wall the incline for about 15 metres is greater than that at the N, for which reason, presumably, the S protective wall is much heavier than the others. From the foot of this heavy incline, a moderate slope extends SE to a ravine some 90 metres below.

From the east wall the short incline of a few metres terminates close to the interesting ruins of a large mastaba built of immense blocks of oyster-filled limestone, and previously referred to as having been excavated by Mariette Pasha.

The west wall: -While the ground level at the E of the tomb is just a little above the base of the protective wall there, the ground level at the west wall, and far beyond it, is almost even with the *top* of the protective wall, especially at the NW corner.

At and near the SW corner, however, there is a considerable slope. Now if the entire tomb, including, of course its protective walls, originally stood above the surrounding district, which is evident, then this great sweep of boulder covered desert, extending far west from the top of the west protective wall, must have formed there since the monument was founded – say 7,000 years ago (see E to W perspective sketch of tomb).

The entire hill was simply a huge mass of sun-dried brickwork. It rises in a somewhat regular slope on the N, E and W sides – particularly the W – while on the S side a rough 17 metres trench, about 4 metres wide and 6 deep at the northern or deeper end, had been cut right through the mass and deep into the red sand beneath it. It extended about 6 m 50 cent from, and parallel with, the E wall, terminating at the small Roman tombs at the SE corner.

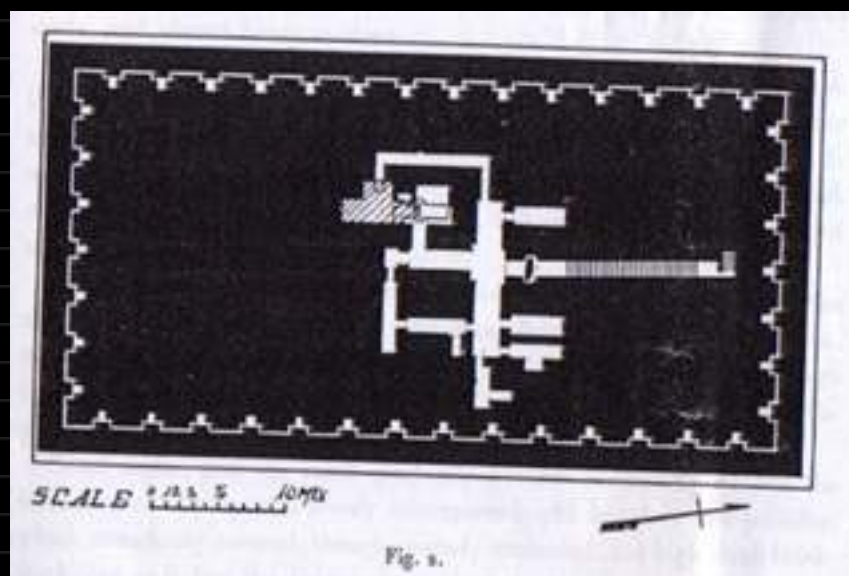
On the N.E. slope was another ancient excavation, a circular depression some 2m 26 cent deep, presumably made while searching for the shaft. *Ancient* because both the trench and depression were covered by the same peculiar firm sand formation, and strewn with the same kind of boulders and fragments of boulders, which entirely covered the hill and district, and which, consequently, had formed since the excavations were made. This deposit lightly, though effectually, concealed the entire tomb.

On the N. slope, near the N.E. corner of the tomb, were many large blueish-grey stones. These had formed no part of the structure, and had evidently come from some remote district. Many tons of them had been jammed into, and formed part of, the heavy debris in the great stairway and shaft. They were roughly quarried and none of them had been worked.

Now structural evidence justifies us in believing that the sloping faced protective walls, though at present covered, were intended to be permanently exposed; thus giving the delicate structure an air of stability, and greatly preserving it. They are compactly built; the bricks in the exposed parts being large and well plastered. They measure some 0m x 24 c x 0m 12 c x 0m 08 1/2 cent. The white cement covering these protective walls is noticeably heavier than that on the finely grooved inner tomb walls, though apparently of the same grade. This fact also warrants us in believing that for many centuries this grand old structure stood out clearly and boldly above the surrounding district.

## **BRICKWORK**

Time has wrought sad changes throughout the upper part of the tomb brickwork, including, of course, the fine white grooved walls. The great mass has been worn down and rounded by age, particularly at the NW corner where the height has been reduced to scarcely half a metre, also at the SE corner. However, with the exception of a shallow 0m 90 cent forced hole in the lower part of one of the N wall recesses, and a breach in the E protective wall, there were no wilful exterior mutilations. Even the thin white casing and delicate grooves of the main walls had remained undamaged;



as though they had always commanded admiration and respect. This is remarkable, considering to what a great extent such structures are subject to damage. The excessive scaling of the white casing as the higher and exposed parts was due to natural causes.

The best preserved part is on the E side from 20 to 30 metres from the NE corner, where the walls at places are 2 m 70 cent high –their greatest and perhaps their original height. But even here there is nothing to indicate the original height or shape of the structure – nothing to assist us in defining its first form. It is certain however, that the brickwork at the centre of the tomb was originally, and is now, much higher than at the recessed walls. At present, in its reduced state, it is nearly 4 metres higher, the greatest height being just S of the main shaft, where it measures nearly 7 metres, and had apparently been much higher. Then again the bricks at the top of the small 4-steps stairway leading into the stairway passage were intact and firm, having been preserved by the heavy debris which filled and covered the stairway. If then, the tomb brickwork is of its original height at this point (3m 39 cent from the N wall) in what manner did it slope up to the centre of the tomb, where the brickwork is at present some 3 metres higher, and may have been much more? There is nothing whatever to indicate the original height of the tomb.

Durability is of course a conspicuous feature in Egyptian tomb work. Now a vertical face in brickwork is not, naturally, so lasting as one of moderate slope; hence it seems reasonable to suppose that the brickwork, which even now in its denuded condition rises about 4 m 30 cent, above the top of the white vertical walls, and 7 metres above their base, was fashioned into, say, 2 sloping faced terraces or steps some 2 metres in depth, similar in shape to other step structures, and sloped at the same angle ( $75^\circ$ ) as the outer or protective wall, thus harmonizing with them, and forming a complete well balanced structure somewhat of a step-pyramid type. For when the entire tomb, including of course its protective walls, stood out clearly as it did for many centuries, any perceptible differences in its facing angles would have marred its general appearance. This  $75^\circ$  is also the face angle of the 7 successively built mastabas which compose the core of Sneferu's pyramid at Medum. Of course

the present open stairway and shaft would not be consistent with a step structure, but then they may have been in some manner covered or protected.

If we do not accept this theory but contend that this tomb, like that at Negadah, was fully flat topped, we must then admit that the finely grooved walls rose vertically for at least 7 metres – the present height of the tomb, and without allowing for any reduction in the tomb brickwork; but it does not seem likely that a perpendicular sunbrick wall, so delicately designed, would be raised to such a height. Besides, if the protective walls, which is but 3m 05 cent, wide at the base, rose as its present face angle of 75 ° to a height of 7 metres in order to harmonize with and fully cover the main walls, its top would be almost pointed and the wall thereby rendered too insecure to serve its apparent purpose. The flat-topped Negadah tomb in its reduced state was but 3 metres high. Its 26 chambers had been fashioned into the surface of the brickwork and covered by beams – there being no subterranean parts.

The bricks throughout varied but little in size, averaging 0m 24 cent x 0m 12 cent x 0m 08 1/2 cent. Those lining the walls, however, which carried the white casing, measured but 0m 15 cent x 0m 07 cent x 0m 06 1/2 cent. They are all sundried, of a dark grey shade, compactly made, and almost as heavy as stone.

For a space of some 2 1/2 square metres over the W side of the shaft, the usual brick coloured mortar had been discarded for that of a light yellow shade – heavier and finer. This light mortar was also found in the S wall of the SW open tomb chamber, which contained a single entire brick of the same material. So far as is known, this yellow plaster was confined to these two parts of the tomb.

A great quantity of bricks which had been thrown upon and outside the south and west protective walls had come from the excavated trenches, and had been taken out during the formation of the Roman tombs. Although they differed but little in size, it was easy to locate their dimensions the places from which they had been taken.

Sand drifts, and the tomb gradually became covered by it; but the formation of the layer of evenly interspersed split boulders and pebbles, which completely covered, though scarcely concealed, the high tomb brickwork, just as it does the district above which the tomb so prominently rises, appears difficult to explain.

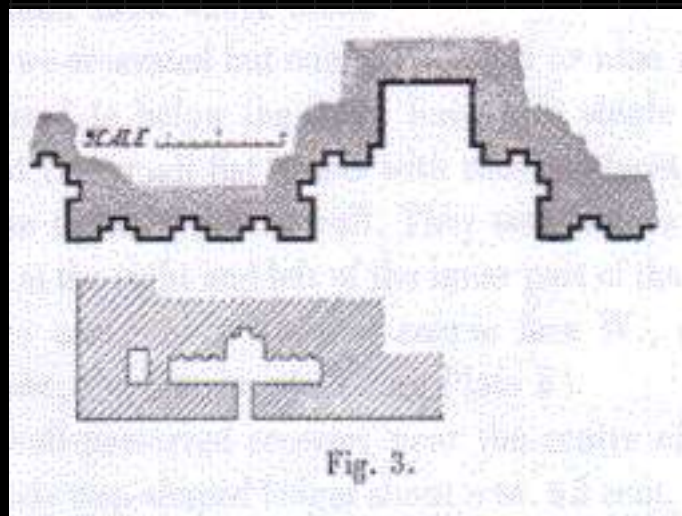
## **MAIN WALL**

The main walls throughout are vertical; those of the N and S, measuring 27 m 95 cent in length, contain 7 recesses (or chapels) and 8 abutements; while the E and W walls, measuring 54 m 97 cent, contains 14 recesses and 15 abutements, the recesses and abutements being of course alternately placed. Extending for 0 m 60 cent into each of these recesses is a firm inner abutement (1 m 30 cent wide) of the surrounding protective walls. M de Morgan believed that the recesses in the



Negadah tomb were used as chapels.

Aerial denudation and rain have so rounded off this great mass of brickwork that the walls at the corners are very low at the NW – corner, hardly a half metre in height, but they gradually rise to perhaps nearly their original height at the centre. Fortunately, a few of the E wall recesses show a height of 2 m 70 cent – probably their original height – the brickwork sloping up to a further height of over 4 metres towards the centre of the tomb.

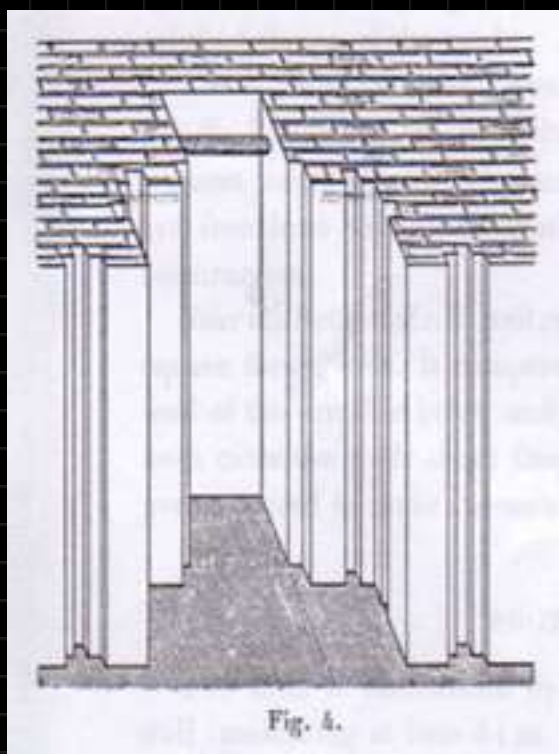


The recesses and abutments, regularly constructed, averaged in width 1 m 75 cent and 2m 01 cent respectively. A delicate type of structural beauty is shown in the long narrow (0m 07 1/2 cent) grooves which vertically line their faces, and which are strangely in contrast with the massiveness of the monument.

The walls are covered by a full half centimetre coating of crumbling but once firm white plaster. The upper parts, softened and swollen by rainwash and moisture, have flaked and fallen away; losing to some extent their first outlines. Their original delicacy of design, however is not lost. The small bricks (0m 07c x 0m 06 1/2c) carrying this white casing were specially adapted to the design. A brick mastaba, discovered by M Mariette at Sakkarah, contained a serdab, the west wall of which was of the same pattern as this. He states it was the most ancient tomb found at Sakkarah, and that there was no reason to believe that it is not of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

### TOMB NO. 1

Its orientation differed from this by one degree; it



being  $10^\circ$ , instead of  $9^\circ$ , E of true N. The main walls of M de Morgan's Royal tomb of Negadah were also exactly of this design, but instead of white casing they were covered by a brick coloured plaster, while M Amelineau found at Abydos an early Ancient empire mastaba whose exterior walls were also like these. But except that they were built in sun-dried bricks, the early dynasty structures discovered and cleared by Prof Petrie at Abydos, did not in any respect resemble this tomb no 1 at Ghizeh, although much of the pottery was similar.



The recesses in the N and S walls were without lintels, but of the 14 recesses in the E wall, five are known to have contained them, and it is likely that there were a few more.

Commencing at the N, we found them as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> recesses. Brickwork reduced to below lintel height or line (2m 35 cent).

3<sup>rd</sup>. The brickwork at the back of recess shows unmistakable imprint of lintel, and on either side a much damaged socket which was some 0m 17 cent in diameter and extended for 0m 35 cent into the sides of the recess.

4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> not excavated.

6<sup>th</sup> Distinct lintel outlines at back of recess, and clearly defined sockets at sides.

7<sup>th</sup> not excavated.

8<sup>th</sup> badly broken at lintel line.

9<sup>th</sup> back of recess at lintel line much damaged, but on either side was a distinct round socket – a full contour of the lintel it once held. That on the S extended for 0m 70 cent into the brickwork, and contained a few lintel fragments.

10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> – each contained the crumbling remains of a complete round wood lintel, one 0m 14 cent and the other 0m 17 cent in diameter. They extended across the recessed 2m 35 cent above the floor and 0m 21 cent below the top; slightly

sinking into the brickwork at the back of the recesses. The wood, which had broken into small, split squares, was of a silky, dark brown shade, and nothing but a very great age could have reduced it to its present condition.

12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> have never contained lintels.

14<sup>th</sup> brickwork reduced to below lintel height.

According to the present height of the protective walls (2m 45 cent) about half of the lintel would show above them.

Of the west main wall we excavated but one of the eight or nine recesses which had not been reduced to below the lintel line. This single recess, the 7<sup>th</sup> from the N contained two small flat lintels with rounded faces, which were better preserved than those in the E wall. They set up close to the top of the two narrow grooves at the right and left of the inner part of the recess, and are but 0m 07 1/2 cent thick. They of course face W and are above, and directly opposite, the interior shaft.

On either side of two well preserved recesses near the centre of the E wall are two small irregularly step-shaped ledges about 0m 23 cent square. They had been carefully cut into the brickwork; which though much worn, was not broken. The white casing on these ledges was thinner than that on the walls, and was tinged a dark red. They do not seem to be part of the original design of the tomb.

The N wall for some 8 metres and the E wall for some 22 metres from the NE corner are irregularly tinted pink with splotches of red, but without traces of either characters or ornamentation. The S and W walls are free from this discolouration, which was doubtless done long after the construction.

Near the bottom of a N wall recess near the NE corner was a 0m 90 cent square forced hole. It compared in manner of cutting with that in the E wall of the corridor below and was probably done by the same people. In both cases the walls about them were free from mutilation, as though the party desired to make the tests with as little damage as possible.

## **PROTECTIVE WALLS**

The tomb is surrounded by a heavy, well built enclosing or protective wall, measuring at base 61m 72 cent from N to S and 34m 53 cent from E to W – its full and original dimensions. It was evidently built to protect the inner or main walls, the architectural details of which it did not completely conceal; the main wall rising some 0m 25 cent above the top of the enclosing one. While serving its purpose a protection for the finely designed face of the tomb, this heavy outer wall also gave it an air of stability which fully harmonized with the general structure.

Owing to aerial and other destruction the upper corners and outer edges were much reduced. Fortunately the E. wall was in fairly good condition, thus enabling us to secure the full details. Several of its 14 inner abutments were of their original height (2 m. 45 cent.), and the walls at the base line, which were exposed at several places, showed white cement right down to the red sand bed upon which they rested. With the base width then (3 m. 0.5 cent.), and the height (2 m. 70 cent.) we only required the face angle, which was  $75^{\circ}$ .

The S. protective wall, however, although of the same height (2 m. 70 cent.), was nearly 3 metres across the top, and its outer face is almost vertical. This greater width is likely due to the heavy incline of the hill on that (the S.) side.

The inner faces of these enclosing walls vertically rise within 0 m. 25 cent. of the main wall, thus forming a deep narrow passage right round the tomb; at the recesses, however, the distance between the two walls is 1 m. 27 cent. It is remarkable that comparatively no heavy debris had been thrown into the dividing space between these walls, sand only having been found there. I consider this further evidence that previous visitors had desired to see the fragile white tomb walls remain unmutilated.

Abutments 1 m. 30 cent. in width regularly line the inner side of this heavy surrounding wall, extending for 0 m. 60 cent. into the recesses which they directly face, and greatly preserve.

The cement on the sloping exterior faces was apparently the same as that on the tomb itself, but much heavier; the inner face and abutments, however, were clean and unplastered. The bricks facing them were in even courses, and owing to their sheltered position, had received less damage than those at any other part of the tomb. But near the centre of the E. wall a great gap had been cut right through it, exposing the white plastered face of the tomb behind, which had not received the least injury.

The heavy, compactly made bricks, measure in the upper and lower courses 0 m. 24 cent. X 0 m. 12 cent. X 0 m. 08 1/2 cent. while at and near the centre they average 0 m. 20 cent. X 0 m. 10 cent. X 0 m. 07 cent. Where intact they appear as solid as when first placed, but where disturbed they have swollen somewhat out of shape. An immense quantity of brick refuse had been thrown upon and outside the S. and W. walls; the N. and E. being comparatively free from it.

I should perhaps note a peculiar arrangement above the base of the protective wall at the W. N. W. corner of the tomb, of 25 hard wood pegs; apparently of the same kind of wood as that in the lintels. They average some 0 m. 20 cent. in length and 0 m. 01 1/2 cent. in thickness, and are so deeply driven that but 0 m. 02 cent. or 0 m. 03 cent. protrude. When withdrawn, particles of white cement casing adhered to them as though they had been driven into new moist cement. Commencing at 2 m. 65 cent. from the N.W. corner of the protective wall, they

form a broken line some 5 m. 20 cent. long, and about 0 m. 30 cent. above the base. The first or most northern peg is therefore driven at a point nearly opposite the inner face of the N. protective wall. The first 8 pegs are grouped in couples, and although almost horizontal, are placed at irregular distances. The next 8 form an irregular line, but are placed more regularly. The remaining 9 take a decided zigzag course.

Now these pegs seem to have been placed with studied care, and perhaps for some important reason. They seem mysteriously to signify something, yet I cannot in any way associate them with either the exterior of the monument, or the tombs below.

## Part Two...

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# Covington's Tomb

## PART TWO

### SURFACE (ROMAN) TOMBS AND FINDS

#### S.E. CORNER GROUPS

Besides the 17 metres trench and the northern depression referred to, several other excavations had been made in the top of the tomb brickwork. This trench terminated close to 4 open Roman tomb chambers at the S.S.E. corner of the tomb, which had been cut from, and built upon, both the main brickwork and the S. protective wall; a considerable part (5 m. 40 cent.) of the fine white wall having been cut right through and destroyed.

These chambers were found filled with a great mass of broken bricks and rain-washed brickwork, and all were concealed by the same light layer of boulder covered desert sand which so effectually disguised the entire tomb. They are of irregular shape, but smoothly plastered with the same coloured plaster as the brickwork itself, and were in fairly good condition. They measured respectively 2 m. 68 cent. X 2 m. 55 cent. , 2 m. 42 cent. X 1 m. 64 cent. , 2 m. 10 cent. X 1 m. 61 cent. , and 2 m. 25 cent. X – metres, and were connected by a narrow open passage. They sloped from a depth of 1 m. 45 cent. at the N. to 0 m. 30 cent. at the south, but their original depth could not be secured.

In the N. wall of one chamber, and the W. wall of another, were 2 neatly shaped shelves, 0 m. 85 cent. and 0 m. 55 cent. in width, which were set some distance above the floor. Their use is not known, but perhaps they held Roman pottery – a great quantity of which was found in the debris at this point. According to this debris the tombs had been formed before the excavation of the trench.

Built into the S. wall of the corner chamber of this S.E. group of Roman tombs were two limestones; each measuring 0 m. 60 cent. X 0 m. 18 cent. X 0 m. 18 cent. They were placed one above the other, and just above the floor; their white dressed faces showing through the dark brickwork. They were not part of the structure.

#### N.E. CORNER GROUP

At the N.E. corner of the mastaba are 6 more of these chambers. Varying in shape, their smoothly plastered walls, like those of the S.E. corner group, are of the same colour as the brickwork from which they were fashioned. Also like the S.E. tombs,

they are connected by narrow doorways which were cut through the 0 m. 35 cent. thick walls which divide the chambers. They measure roughly: some 2 m. 75 cent. X 2 m. 70 cent. , 3 m. 30 cent. X 1 m. 75 cent. , 2 m. 70 cent. X --- metres, 2 m. 25 cent. X 2 metres, 1 m. 90 cent. X 1 m. 40 cent. , and 1 m. 05 cent. X 0 m. 90 cent. , and were partly cut from, and built upon, the structure. This is shown by the fact that bricks used in their construction differ in size from those used at this point. Besides, various sized hard bluish stones which had formed no part of the structure, had been built into the walls separating the chambers; their unplastered faces showing through them.

In the face of a narrow shoulder in the W. wall of the central chamber, and 0 m. 58 cent. above the floor, was a neat smoothly finished hole or pocket 0m. 11 cent. square and 0 m. 12 cent deep. Its use was not apparent.

The southern most of these N.E. tombs, unlike all others, contained a very broad deep step which extended right round the S. and W. sides. It was probably used for the same purpose as the 2 broad shelves in the S.E. group – to hold pottery. Much Roman pottery and some glassware were found here.

A large quantity of the same heavy debris which filled the great stairway completely filled and covered these N.E. tombs, and this in turn was concealed by the same boulder strewn layer of sand which covered the entire tomb district.

## **N. W. CORNER STEP CHAMBERS**

Some 3 m. 50 cent. from the W.N.W. corner of the building are 5 large step shaped open chambers which do not seem to have been constructed by the builders of the Roman tombs, but at a more remote period; they contained, however, a few fragments of Roman pottery. They consist of two small groups of 3 and 2 chambers: those of the three are 2 m. 45 cent. X 2 m. 20 cent. and 0 m. 73 cent. deep; 2 m. 45 cent. X 1 m. 35 cent. and 0 m 45 cent. deep; 2 m. 45 cent. X 1 m. 95 cent. and 0 m. 85 cent. deep; while those of the 2 group, measure 3 m. 55 cent. X 2 m. 65 cent. and 1 m. 25 cent. deep, and 3 m. 55 cent. X 2 m. 35 cent. and 0 m. 90 cent. deep.

The walls are unplastered, and the bricks facing them, which are complete and unbroken, are part of the undisturbed brickwork; thus conveying the impression that these N.W. step chambers were part of the original design. The 2 lowest ones are walled on all 4 sides; the chambers above forming large deep steps. As the structure has been greatly reduced at this N.W. corner, where it was most subject to aerial and other damage, these chambers were doubtless much deeper. The bricks at this point are the largest found in the tomb: 0 m. 25 cent. X 0 m. 12 cent. X 0 m. 09 cent.

## **SURFACE FINDS**

The debris in the Roman tomb chambers, and that above the shaft, contained several complete pieces and many fragments of Roman pottery ; also fragments of thin Roman glassware. The pottery was in grey or red clay, and dull or polished . we secured some 26 different designs, ranging from the minute to the medium size – from a few centimetres, to 50 and 60, but none were of exceptional interest. Some were crudely made, but many were fine examples of Roman skill in that line. A few in dull grey clay were roughly ornamented by square and scroll designs in black and red, the colours retaining almost all their original freshness. A few of the larger pointed jars held a small amount of bitumen, and a powder common to such pottery.

Unfortunately no complete object in glass was found, nor could we trace from the gathered fragments the original design of even one. Most of them, however, were of a circular and flat pattern, and would measure about 0 m. 40 cent. in diameter. Two flat circular fragments of a light green shade were extremely thin, and were bordered by a delicate narrow oval tube scarcely thicker than a card. These glass fragments were in light and dark green, and light brown, perfectly clear and unblemished.

Deep down in the heavy debris of brickwork, just outside the S. protective wall, we found a long, narrow, single edged steel knife (length 0 m. 33 1/2 cent.). The hard wooden handle was plainly carved and blunt pointed; while a thin, verdigris covered bronze ring encircled the blade close to the hilt. The blade, which tapered to a long point, was very heavily caked with rust; which might indicate in this dry climate, that it had been dropped or thrown away when in a moist condition. It would be interesting to know under what conditions this unique piece had been left in such a strange place.

### **STAIRWAY, SHAFT AND PORTCULLIS.**

While clearing the surface of the brickwork 3 m. 40 cent. from the N. wall and about the centre of it, we discovered 4 narrow steps (0 m. 86 cent. wide) leading downwards from W. to E. into an open passage 1 m. 58 cent. wide and 1 m. 47 cent. deep. This passage boldly spreads southwards for over 17 metres terminating in a squarely built almost vertical brick wall 5 m. 40 cent. wide at the top, and a tapering downwards for about 7 metres to the mouth of the large rock cut shaft. This shaft which is 2 m. 34 cent. wide at the top, in turn leading to the great portcullis nearly 8 metres below. The portcullis base would therefore be about 17 m. 50 cent. below the highest part of the tomb at this point. At nearly 3 metres from the N. end of this passage we discovered several of the upper steps of a large brick stairway which led southwards to the shaft below. They were 1 m. 58 cent. wide, and probably narrowed to 1 m. 26 cent. at the lower end; which is the width of the shaft at the point where the stairway would intersect it. According to the angle of the exposed upper part of this stairway it would measure in length some 12 m. 50 cent. and would strike the shaft some 7 metres above its base.

We did not clear the stairway owing to the immense mass of heavy debris which



blocked it, and therefore could not secure the full stairway and shaft details. However, from the size of the shaft at the top of the large portcullis (2 m. 30 cent. N. to S.) and from the angle of the upper part of the stairway, we were able to secure a fairly accurate sketch.

The stairway and shaft are not oriented with the mastaba walls, which are  $9^{\circ}$  E. of N., but are nearly true N.; the N. end of the passage at the 4 small steps being 0 m. 48 cent. W. of the centre of the tomb, while the portcullis is 0 m. 54 cent. E. of it.

To avoid clearing the compactly filled stairway and passage we made a cutting into the E. side of the tomb some 16 metres from the N., where we struck a roughly constructed stone stairway which fortunately led directly to the top of the shaft, about 7 metres below. The shaft was filled with somewhat clean sand containing few small stones, the debris being distinctly different from that which filled the great stairway. The stairway debris, composed almost entirely of heavy stones in soiled and caked sand, towered for over 12 metres above the bed of sand on which it rested at the portcullis, and was a constant menace to those using the shaft. At a point opposite the top of the portcullis I removed with my hands a little of the sand upon which the debris rested; exposing a small hollow, at the back of which could be seen the N. end of the shaft. As I made this discovery after we had finished the excavation, and was alone at the time, I could not continue the investigation; for the removal of another handful of sand might have brought down the entire mass upon me.

The shaft for nearly 8 metres is roughly hewn from sand stone containing much iron oxide, but throughout is regularly shaped. It is nearly 2 m. 40 cent. wide at the top, slightly narrowing towards the base; which for nearly 3 metres is cut from light streaked, brownish clay. Between the top of the shaft, and the great mass of tomb brickwork above it, is a metre deep course of light reddish sand, the colour due to much salts of iron. The S. wall just above this contained a 0 m. 70 cent. forced hole (depth unknown) blocked by large stones; which we did not remove.

On the western side of the shaft rough footholds had been cut at irregular distances, and had previously been but little used. Although difficult to use, we found them very helpful.

The portcullis, 4 m. 50 cent. high, 1 m. 92 cent. wide, and 0 m. 67 cent. thick, is an immense oval evenly chiselled from white limestone. The face and reverse are slightly rounded, but the sides, and the top and base, are cut almost into a half round. It is placed erect, before and against the short passage leading southwards directly into the main chamber of the tomb. It extends for 1 m. 40 cent. above that passage, and sinks for nearly half a metre into the clay below it. It is not truly placed; the west side being a little to the N., but this seems to have been its original position.

Much clay had previously been cut away from the west side of the portcullis by

explorers who desired to gain access to the tomb chambers without shifting the great white stone, and we entered by the same forced passage.

## MAIN TOMB CHAMBERS

The tomb chambers, which consist of a large main chamber, a central corridor and several galleries with and without tombs are, cut throughout from a firm brownish clay, showing at places grey and reddish grey streaks, which are often of a peculiar wavy pattern, similar to that in other tombs in the district.

They are oriented with the exterior tomb structure, and slope considerably from N. to S. There is a considerable irregularity in the construction; the corners and long lines seldom being true. The floors slope, and the walls when long, are noticeably curved.

The walls of the main chamber, corridor, and west chamber (the most important of the tomb), held patches of smooth, clear white plaster or cement; which would indicate that they had been entirely covered by it. The scaling of the clay had caused it to fall away. This cement resembles, and is probably similar to, that used on the exterior tomb walls. There were no decorations nor inscriptions of any kind. The little ornamentation, which is very plain, is confined to the corridor and the west chamber.

A short, level passage (1 m. 22 cent.) leads southwards from the portcullis directly into the main chamber of the tomb. This chamber, which measured 11 m. 90 cent. from E. to W., is only 2 m. 06 cent. wide, and of an average depth of 2 m. 62 cent. We found it about two thirds filled with debris of clay and stones, which contained many fragments of early Ancient Empire pottery. Sand had sifted in heavily upon this from the short passage leading to the portcullis.

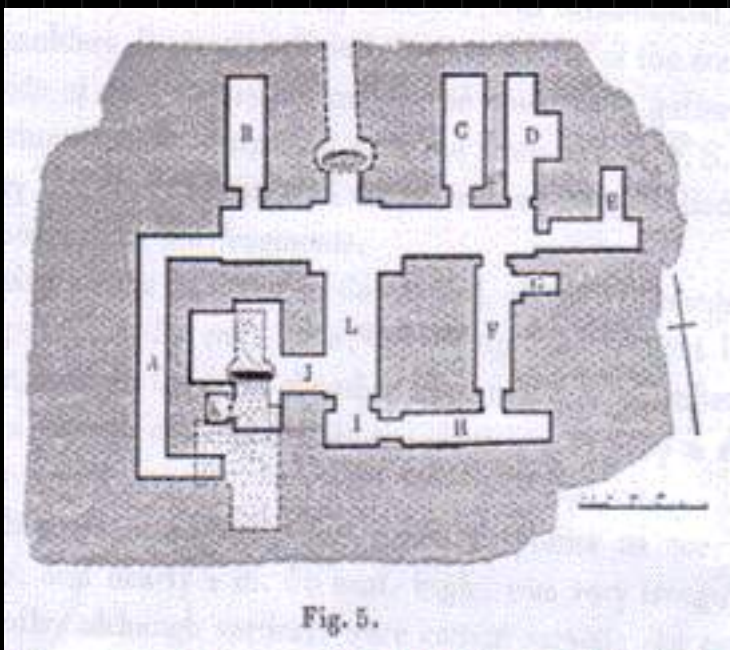


Fig. 5.

(letters in following text refer to this fig - see **larger version** for details)

The N. or portcullis side of the chamber contains 3 tombs some 4 m. 50 cent. long, 1 m. 50 cent. wide and 0 m. 80 cent. deep; their floors being some 1 m. 70 cent. above that of the main chamber. The end of the tomb to the W. of the portcullis (B) had been forced for 1 m. 75 cent. and so skilfully done that it was difficult to distinguish the forced part from the real. Over half the floor of the eastern tomb of these 3 (D) had been very roughly hewn away, and to the same floor level as the chamber.

From the E. end of the main chamber, and at the same level, a 4 m. 12 cent. gallery led to a tomb (E) nearly 2 metres long, 0 m. 80 cent. wide and 0 m. 80 cent. deep, which was cut into the N. wall of the gallery 1 m. 82 cent. above its floor.

From the W. end of the main chamber, and 1 m. 73 cent. above its floor, the long narrow west gallery (A), without tombs, extends W. for 3 m. 45 cent., then E. for 3 m. 30 cent.; thus almost enclosing the west chamber containing the interior shaft which leads to sepulchral chamber over 10 metres below. The floor of this west gallery was entirely but lightly covered by clay particles, which scaling from the walls, had fallen upon many fragments of pottery. These had been scattered somewhat evenly from the entrance to the remote end of the gallery. Over this layer of clay a light dust had settled.

From the S.S.E. corner of the main chamber, and at the same floor level, is a gallery (F) over 5 metres long, the E. side of which contains a medium sized tomb (G) 1 m. 72 cent. above the gallery floor. This gallery contained much loose clay which had been dumped into it from either end, leaving the centre clear. It extended S. to a similar one (the S.E. gallery), but which was without a tomb chamber.

The corridor (L), extending southwards from almost the centre of the main chamber, and opposite the portcullis passage, is nearly 5 metres long (exclusive of its extension), 1 m. 75 cent. wide and about the same height as the main chamber (2 m. 62 cent.). It slopes some  $8^\circ$  from N. to S., and was over half filled with clay and stones.

An irregular forced hole some 0 m. 60 cent. X 0 m. 80 cent. and 0 m. 40 cent. deep had been cut just above the floor near the centre of the E. side. Distinct marks showed that a 0 m. 019 mill. Or 3/4 inch chisel had been used. From the ceiling a thick mass of clay, nearly 2 metres X 1, had fallen, exposing the natural rock above it; otherwise the ceilings throughout were firm.

Extending from floor to ceiling on either side of the entrance to this corridor, and facing the portcullis, is a false door some 0 m. 95 cent. in width, on the E. side, and 60 only on the W. The panels are 0 m. 24 cent. wide, and cut 0 m. 02 cent. into the clay. Much of the wall at the base of these had fallen, or been broken

away. Great patches of white plaster still adhered to these and to the adjacent walls, and most likely the entire corridor was likewise covered.

The tops of the side walls of the corridor were bordered by a plain peculiar design which strangely exaggerates the corridor slope; and this seems to have been the intention of the designer. The borders, which are cut 0 m. 02 cent. into the clay, measure 0 m. 22 cent. wide at the N., or higher end, gradually increasing for 2 m. 40 cent. (just half the corridor length) to a width of 0 m. 39 cent. Here is a 0 m. 17 cent. ratchet shaped notch which reduces the border to its original width of 0 m. 22 cent. and the remaining half is throughout in this size. These unique side borders terminate at the lintel over the doorway of a small chamber (1) (1 m. 88 cent. X 1 m. 21 cent.) which is really an extension of the corridor. This 10 m. 05 cent. lintel, which was neatly rounded, was surmounted by two small square cut shoulders. It greatly relieved the severe lines of the corridor.

From the E. side of this linteled chamber the south east gallery (H) 6 metres long, without tombs, connected with the main chamber, S.S.E. gallery (F). Gallery (H) and the linteled chamber were nearly filled with debris, but contained only a few fragments.

From the W. side of the corridor a downward sloping passage (J) 1 m. 73 cent. long and 1 m. 35 cent. wide, the ceiling 0 m. 29 cent. below that of the corridor, led into the west chamber. The inner or chamber end of this passage was plainly ornamented at the sides and top by a single square cut shoulder.

The west chamber 4 m. 80 cent. long N. to S. (same as corridor) 1 m. 80 cent. wide, and nearly 2 m. 50 cent. high, was very irregularly constructed. The walls, although vertical, were rather curved; the ceiling and floor had a southward slope of some half a metre, and the corners were of course much out. Considerable white cement casing still adhered to the N. and E. walls. The debris of clay and heavy stones which nearly filled the chamber contained a great quantity of fragments.

The W. wall near the N. contained a squarely cut alcove 2 m. 73 cent. wide and 1 m. 77 cent. deep; across the top of which was a neatly turned lintel of the same diameter (0 m. 10 1/2 cent.) as that over the corridor extension. Like a protective arm the long, narrow tombless west gallery (A) referred to, almost surrounds this alcove.

On the S. side of the alcove, cut into the wall midway between the floor and ceiling, is a small recess chamber (K) 0 m. 98 cent. X 0 m. 75 cent. X 0 m. 82 cent. – the smallest in the tomb. The short roughly forced passage connecting this recess and the alcove may have been the enlargement of an original passage. The debris which almost filled this small chamber contained only the fragments of 4 different of discs; none of which were complete.

Sunk into the floor of this west chamber and just across the lintel-spanned alcove, is the interior shaft.

### **INTERIOR SHAFT AND PORTCULLIS.**

The interior shaft, squarely cut throughout from firm clay, and extending from side to side of the alcove above it (2 m. 72 cent.) is 1 m. 15 cent. wide, and nearly 10 m. 50 cent. deep – about the same depth as the upper or main shaft.

The debris of clay, which contained but few fragments, was so solidly packed in the shaft that its entire removal was not necessary. At three places great quantities of it extended almost across the shaft, and remained suspended while we worked beneath.

The 7<sup>th</sup> recess (from N.) in the wall of the tomb above, which contains two small wood lintels – the only linteled recess on the W. side – is at a point directly opposite this interior shaft. On the S. side of the shaft, before the short passage leading into the sepulchral chamber, stands the interior portcullis, the shaft having been enlarged from 1 m. 15 cent. to 1 m. 70 cent. to accommodate the stone.

This interior portcullis (measuring 2 m. 65 cent. deep, 1 m. 46 cent. wide, and 0 m. 28 cent. thick) is evenly chiselled from white limestone, which was of a finer quality than that of the upper or main portcullis; and, unlike that huge stone, its sides are perfectly flat, and the corners and edges cut square. It was in its original position E. to W. with the tomb, and apparently had never been disturbed, just enough clay, however, had been cut away from the top of it to enable one to enter the short sepulchral chamber passage. This opening was so small that neither a sarcophagus nor even an unbroken mummy could have passed through it.

### **SEPULCHRAL CHAMBER.**

The sepulchral chamber measures nearly 5 metres long, 2 wide, and 2 deep, and the walls, corners, etc., like those in the main tomb above, were not truly shaped. It should perhaps be noted that this lower chamber is about the same length as the west chamber and corridor above.

The west wall near the entrance passage contained a recess 2 m. 45 cent. long, 1 m. 50 cent. wide, and of the same height as the chamber. The chamber and recess which were hewn from the same kind of clay as the tombs above, had been cut right down to a bed of natural rock. Just before the recess this stone floor had been shattered in several places, and a small triangular piece removed.

The chamber was nearly half filled with particles of clay, containing few pottery fragments; but in the recess, which was most likely built for the reception of the remains of the person for whom the monument was built, we found a small deposit of

human bones. These were clear, dull white, and soft brittle, and were found upon and near the recess floor. It appears that the rest of the body had been entirely removed from the tomb, for these were the only human remains found there. It was doubtless a most important burial.

There was no trace of a sarcophagus, nor could one have been there; for its removal would have entailed the shifting of the interior and upper portcullis, neither of which had been disturbed. Besides, the construction of this tomb antedates the period at which that mode of burial was introduced.

## **FINDS.**

The exterior finds, which consisted of fragments of Roman pottery and glassware, were made in the surface tombs and upper part of the shaft, and have been referred to. Most of the objects belonging to the tomb proper, however, were found principally in the heavy debris of the main chamber, the corridor and in the west chamber. These were principally in limestone, alabaster, granite, red and white brescia; with some diorite, green schist, and porphyry.

The three smaller tombs (B), (C), (D) on the N. side of the main chamber held but a few fragments, but those found in the long west gallery (A) should be especially mentioned. The gallery contained but little debris; none having been thrown into it. It consisted of fine clay particles which had scaled from the walls and ceiling, and which lay at a light and even depth. This was covered in turn by a thin layer of peculiar dust. Beneath this light debris of dust covered clay were alabaster and other fragments of pottery which had been evenly strewn over the entire gallery floor (16 metres long), right to its extreme end. They do not seem to have been thrown there, but carefully spread. The gallery, which is without tombs, and which seems to have been built especially for such pottery, terminates, strangely enough, just above the centre of the sepulchral chamber recess in which we found part of the remains of the person for whom the monument was probably erected. (see Sepulchral Chamber).

Now according to the belief of several savants, in reference to which nothing has yet been published, it was a funeral ceremony during the early Ancient empire to sometimes break the offering vessels at the time of interment, and distribute the fragments over certain parts of the tomb. It is not improbable that it was due to this custom that the fragments found in the long west gallery (A) had been so carefully distributed throughout it; and which, according to the condition in which we found them, had apparently never been disturbed.

All the pottery in M. de Morgan's tomb at Negadah, was also found broken, but the condition of his tomb would indicate that its destruction was due to other causes. Owing to the abundance of the offerings placed in those vessels he considered his tomb a royal one. As this Ghizeh tomb exceeded the Negadah structure by some 7 metres in length and breadth, and as the quantity of objects taken out (some 40

full mactaves) probably exceeded that at Negadah, we are perhaps justified in believing that this number one tomb at Ghizeh is also a royal one, and that its occupant was of an equal or even a superior rank. Unfortunately there were but few objects showing inscriptions: the characters, which were roughly incised or red painted, made no reference as to the origin of the tomb. It must, therefore, at least for the present, remain a mystery.

Neither from the fragments in the west gallery, nor from those of other parts, which during the greater part of the excavation we kept separate, could we fit one complete object. Nor from all the fragments found in the entire tomb could we complete one single object. We occasionally found enough pieces to complete the third or even the half or more of one object, but only to find that the remaining parts had been removed from the tomb. In the case of several brescia (there was much brescia), and marble discs, pieces were found which completed say, a third or more – the fragments fitting in to their proper places, thus showing the outlines of the complete piece: but the missing parts could never be secured. Near the bottom of the depression at the N.E. corner of the brick work we found the fourth of a plain, tapering rimmed alabaster bowl: and nine months later found over a half of the same bowl in the debris of the main chamber below. This was the only fragment of antique pottery found outside the interior tomb chambers. I consider it remarkable that in taking out some forty mactaves of fragments, averaging twelve objects each – say five hundred in all – that we could not make up even one complete. There was somewhat of an exception however: a blue white and grey volcanic bowl, similar in design to one found by Prof. Petrie in the IInd Dynasty of King Khasekhemui at Abydos, had been twice severely struck without breaking and then thrown aside – the consistency of the stone alone saving it.

Among the broken articles we recognised nine designs of bowl, vases, etc, similar to those found by Prof. Petrie in early dynasty tombs at Abydos: especially in that of the above mentioned king.

Our tomb contained neither jar sealings nor ivory objects: recognising the historical value of these and of other materials as helps to finding the name of constructor, the location of the period etc, we kept a careful watch for same.

A complete double edged copper blade about 0m. 28 cent. long was taken from the corridor debris. It tapered from 0m. 04 cent. at the hilt up to about 0m. 05 3/4 cent. at the centre; then down to some 0m. 02 1/2 cent. at the rounded point. It was without a handle, but a thin, firm, sharp piece (0m. 04 1/2 cent.) at the hilt would indicate it had been removed. It was found contracted in to eight uneven folds and heavily coated with verdigris. One of the edges had been sharp, but the other was finely ridged like a saw. It most closely resembles a surgical instrument. The handful of copper fragments found were too small to show the design or size of the original object.

In the interior shaft we found the lower portion of a small cylinder shaped vial in

dull white alabaster. It was 0m. 017 mill. in diameter (length unknown), and contained the lower part of a 0m. 003 mill. drilled hole which had likely held some rare oil or dye.

In the West chamber, near the top of the interior shaft, our men found three small (0m. 01 cent.) round objects in dull white alabaster, and one in red. They resembled ordinary playing marbles, but probably were weights. In the corridor, we found the only piece of wood in the tomb. It was originally somewhat square (0m. 10 cent. x 0m. 07 cent. x 0m. 07 cent.) but had become round edged. It was of a light brown shade, -lighter than the wood in the exterior tomb lintels, and was so dried out and honeycombed by its great age as to be lighter than cork. Its use is not known. The four complete pieces of silex found were common to that remote period.

L Dow Covington

**COVINGTON**, Lorenzo Dow (fl. 1902-1910)

American excavator; being of independent means he made excavations at the Pyramids and the neighbouring mastabas of Gizeh, 1902 - 10; he also explored Wadi el-Kattar; he was assisted in his work by J.E. Quibell; he published reports of his discoveries in ASAE 6, 9, and 10.

From: **WHO WAS WHO IN EGYPTOLOGY**: Pub by The Egypt Exploration Society: 3 Doughty Mews, WC1



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