

## NOTES.

## I. A DOLMEN IN JUDÆA.

HAVING had occasion recently to ride from Jericho to Nablus, I decided to try and take a short cut from Khurbet 'Aūjah el Fōka (Sheet 15, O r) to El Mugheir (Sheet 15, N q). It will be seen by a reference to the map that there is no path marked, and that the region to be traversed is a desolate tract, upon which no habitations are indicated. It occurred to me that I might chance to stumble across something of interest in this deserted district, and such in fact proved to be the case. A peasant whom I picked up, tilling his land in the Wādy el Anjah, consented to serve as a guide, but said that he doubted whether the route would prove practicable on horseback. The ascent from the valley of the Jordan for the first 1,500 or 1,800 feet was one which did indeed tax my horse's powers to the utmost, even without a rider, as it involved a climb by a scarcely perceptible goat path, now up smooth steep inclines of limestone, now over jagged rocks. I then traversed for a distance of about five miles or more, taking the windings of our way into consideration, the wildest and most barren tract imaginable of rocky tableland, here and there intersected by deep wādies, offering from time to time views of considerable scenic grandeur, and in a north-easterly direction up the Jordan Valley, of great extent. Beyond this there was nothing to vary the monotony of ruggedness, and rarely an indication of a path, the guide simply selecting the line of country which seemed most practicable for my horse. It was while indulging in regrets at having ventured on an experiment which seemed likely to prove so uninteresting, that I made a discovery which afforded me some consolation. On the side of a bare hill I came upon four slabs of stone, which from their size and shape presented all the appearance of being the component slabs of an overturned dolmen—one, which was larger than the others, being about 9 feet by 5 feet, formed in all probability the covering slab. As I am not aware of any dolmen, or remains of one, having been found in Judæa, this would confirm the theory that they once existed there, but that the two Tribes were so scrupulous in their obedience to the order "to overturn the tables of stone," that traces of them have hitherto escaped observation. It is possible that a minute examination of this section of country would reveal interesting remains of early rude stone monuments. I roughly took the bearings of the spot by compass, but the whole place is such a wilderness of rocks that I doubt whether I could find it again. About half-a-mile distant from it I found another evidence of a most ancient period. This consisted of a square enclosure 24 yards each way, formed of huge unhewn blocks of stone, each of a ton weight or more, remaining in position to a height of three courses in some places, in others of two. Within this outer massive enclosure there was a circle formed of smaller stones, 12 feet in diameter, and in the centre of this circle was a single stone, but this consisted now of a large splintered fragment about 3 feet high, and it was difficult to form from it an idea of the original shape of the stone. There were also in the neighbourhood what

appeared to be alignments of stones, and numerous cairns. The spot, as nearly as I can judge, is about two miles to the south-east of El Mugheir. Near that place there is a very good Arab stone circle, with a miniature doorway about 2 feet high, and a horizontal club or lintel, facing west.

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## II. A SARCOPHAGUS AT ZIMMÂRÎN.

A FEW days ago the Jews of the colony of Zimmârîn, in excavating at the base of what appeared to be an artificial mound, suddenly struck a block of cement. Further investigation proved it to be a portion of a thick coating of that material, in which a leaden sarcophagus had been embedded. This was extracted and opened, and found to contain the bones of a human skeleton, and a quantity of dust, which was described to me by a colonist who had seen it as having the appearance of dust mixed with shining particles, which to his imagination resembled gold dust. I have had no opportunity of examining any of this dust, some of which is said still to have been preserved at Zimmârîn, where more accurate information could be obtained as to what actually was found in the coffin, about which there are conflicting accounts. On rumours of the discovery reaching the Caimakam here, he sent to have the sarcophagus brought to this place, where I have examined it. It weighs 250 pounds, is 6 feet 8 inches long, and 1 foot 8 inches in width. Down the whole length of the centre of the lid is an ornamental scroll  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide, including the narrow bands which border the design. This is very beautifully executed, and consists of a representation of grape vines, with fruit and leaves and other floral devices. All round the upper edge of the sides of the coffin is a similar border, but it is nearly  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. The artist has avoided repeating himself, and has varied the design, which is in a good state of preservation, so that no two sections of it are similar. The leaden bottom is in places much corroded.

In accordance with the general order regulating the discovery of antiquities, this sarcophagus will be sent to Constantinople. I have every reason to believe, however, that the mound in which it was found contains more, and I hope to be present in the event of further excavations in it taking place, when I shall also have an opportunity of examining the dust which has been already found.

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