NOTES AND QUERIES.

Hebrew Inscription at Fik.—The small Hebrew inscription at Fik, referred to in the Quarterly Statement, 1902, January, p. 26, is here reproduced through the courtesy of Professor George Adam Smith from his article in the "Critical Review," 1892, pp. 55 seq. It is figured upon a small basalt column, underneath the conventional seven-branched candlestick.

As Professor Clermont-Ganneau has pointed out to the present writer (in a private communication), the last three characters, like the first three, are doubtless to be read הנים. The inscription would accordingly run:

":i: (??) ה יהויה ה

"I am Jehudah, the (?) (am) I."

It is very difficult to make anything of the doubtful letter. On the assumption that it is imperfect, it is conceivable that the character should be read א (i.e., הנייהב, "the fig tree"), or better, פ or צ. In the latter eventuality it might be conjectured that ו or ב is an abbreviation respectively of בזרע, "the righteous," or זוכות, "the holy," But all this is pure conjecture.

As regards the paleography, we need only note that the turn given to the lower part of the א approximates to the ligature found in the inscription of the Bene Hezir (Mount of Olives). The slightly diverging forms of the א do not altogether form an insurmountable difficulty in the reading proposed.

Finally, as regards the translation, the objection has been raised that in a Hebrew inscription בָּיָה would have been expected for the pronoun "I" in place of the Jewish-Aramaic form הב. This criticism would, of course, hold good if it were certain that pure Hebrew was spoken in the Jaulan in, let us say, the second century of the Christian era. But when we find Aramaisms in the Mishnic Hebrew of the same period, and later in the Samaritan

1 See below, note 7, p. 186.
2 The nun in the first word resembles that in the last more closely than appears in the above reproduction.
dialect, the translation adopted above will, I think, appear perfectly defensible. Besides, it is of course not unlikely that the inscription is really Jewish-Aramaic. At all events, it is not easy to see what other plausible rendering could be ascribed to the word נְטִישָׁה. A derivation from the Hebrew נְטִיאָה, "to lament," has, indeed, been suggested, but this, like the Palmyrene בֵּנוּן, "alas!" is to be expected only upon a funereal inscription.

The seven-branched candlestick which is figured above this little inscription is too familiar a motive in Jewish art to need comment. We may, however, note that the branches are not necessarily curved, and that the artist will often allow himself considerable latitude in his representations. Occasionally, too, the candlestick has nine branches, though this seems to be quite exceptional. This motive can scarcely be severed from that of the palm tree, which is found varying from the plainest outline (e.g., Quarterly Statement, 1893, p. 217, cf. p. 216) to the more artistic designs, such as that found by Schumacher at er-Rumsanjeh. In fact, it may perhaps be laid down as a rule that the candlestick and sacred tree inevitably tend to merge into one another, and the present writer has elsewhere suggested that the idea of the famous temple candlestick was derived in the first instance from the sacred seven-branched tree of Assyria and Babylonia. In addition to the evidence there adduced, we may point to the parallel between the candelabrum, with its lights, and the custom of hanging lamps upon the sacred tree, and it is worth noting that the arms of the candlestick instead of ending in a straight line, as is usually the case, are occasionally represented as tapering off, thus presenting to some extent a faithful outline of a tree.

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1 Thus, to give an example bearing upon the question at issue, the pronoun of the first person in Samaritan has the four forms יְהוּד, יְהֹוא (Heb.), יְהוּד, יְהֹוא (Aram.).
2 Compare, e.g., Schumacher, "The Jaulin," p. 115, Fig. 23.
3 Compare op. cit., p. 71, Fig. 7; p. 116, Fig. 27.
4 Op. cit., p. 234, Fig. 123; p. 235, Fig. 125 (both nine-branched); Madden "Coins," p. 71, cf. also Quarterly Statement, 1900, p. 113.
7 The fig tree, as well as the date palm, was a sacred tree. It is not proposed, however, to associate this circumstance with the conjectured reading, נְטִישָׁה, "the fig tree," in the inscription from Fik.