

FROM MACHAERUS TO 'ATĀRŌTH.

By Professor GEORGE ADAM SMITH, D.D., LL.D.

ON April 20th, 1904, after examining anew the ruins of Mkawr or Machaerus, as recorded in a previous paper,¹ we took bearings from our camp at the south end of the ruins upon the Kuṣr el-Meshnekeh, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jebel eṣ-Ṣalt, and Khurbet 'Aṭṭārūs, which agree very well with the position of ruins marked on the Palestine Exploration Fund map.

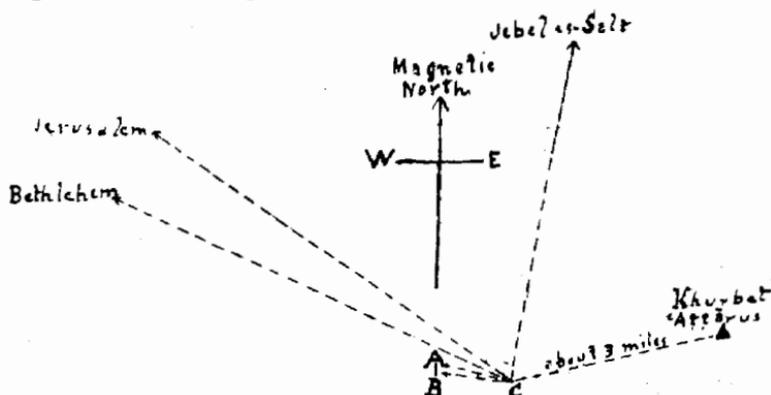


FIG. 1.—From our Camp at Mkawr, on south end of ridge on which the ruined city lies. A-B, Kuṣr el-Meshnekeh (fortress of Machaerus); C, Camp at Mkawr.

Khurbet 'Aṭṭārūs, our first goal for the day, lay thus, as the crow flies, some three miles E.N.E. across the Moabite plateau, but to reach it we had, in consequence of the broken nature of the country, to strike in almost the opposite direction S.S.W., and to follow one of the most winding roads I have traversed, even among the wadies of Palestine. We took in succession the direction of nearly every point of the compass, and all the morning seemed to be circling round the south, south-east, and east of Mkawr, without being able to get more than 2 to 3 miles away from it.

We started at 9.20, and held S.S.W. for about 20 minutes, then due east along the back of a ridge. From this Ma'in was very

¹ *Quarterly Statement* for July, 1905.

conspicuous across the plateau and over the Wady Zerka Ma'in. To the range on the north of the Wady, Khalil, our guide, gave the name of Umm el-Murêjib, أم المرجيب. On this same ridge we came for the first time on a well-marked road, about 12 feet broad, between lines of upright stones. By the right of the road stood the first of a long series of squares of masonry, which, as well as the road, we were to trace all the way to 'Attārūs. Each



FIG. 2.—Hamideh Bedawin at Mkawr (Machaerus).

consists of about 10 feet square of stones, apparently originally dressed on the outside, but now very much weathered. They rise 3 or 4 feet from the ground. The interior is filled with rubble (? or rubbish). For a photograph of one of these towers or platforms, see Fig. 3. On the highest part of the ridge is a stone circle, and within it a fallen menhir, about 7 feet long; its greatest breadth about 1 inch over 3 hands length. It is hewn conical from

the centre to one end. There is also a circular trough with a channel leading to it on the south side.

Upon this ridge, which bears many standing stones, we passed also seven or eight of the masonry blocks just described, at unequal intervals on both sides of the road. Khalil gave the ridge the name of Et Ṭeyr, الطير. It lies south-east of Mkawr. We reached the eastern end of it at 10.4 A.M., and still following the ancient road N.N.E. 10.10 A.M., more masonry blocks; soon after three more with standing stones about them. The road then

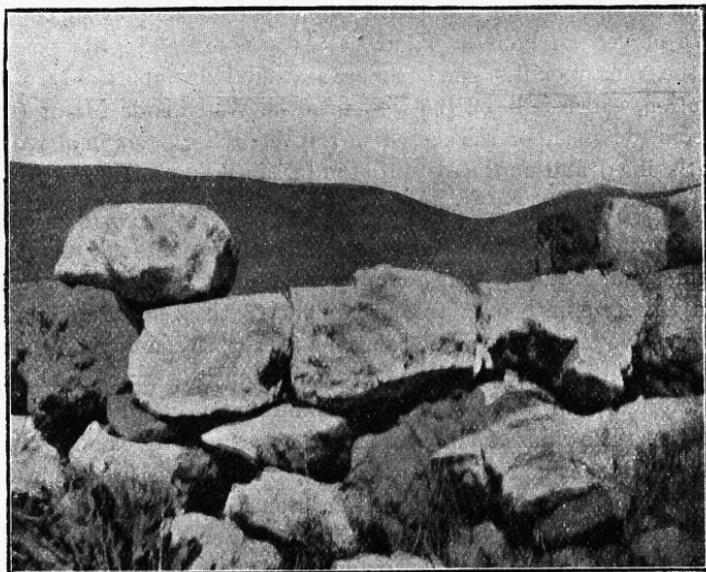


FIG. 3.—One side of one of the square Masonry Blocks on the road between Mkawr and Khurbet 'Atṭārūs.

turned due north; three more masonry blocks and a few large circles of standing stones. We held north till 10.30, passing similar blocks of masonry at intervals, the road still clearly marked by upright stones along both sides. At 10.50 we came on an elevation upon the ridge which Khalil called "Ḳuryāt 'Atṭārūs," covered with ruins. I verified the name by asking two Bedawee ploughmen, passing with a plough on an ass; they answered "Khurbet 'Atṭārūs." The road passes to the west of this elevation with two more masonry blocks on its west side.

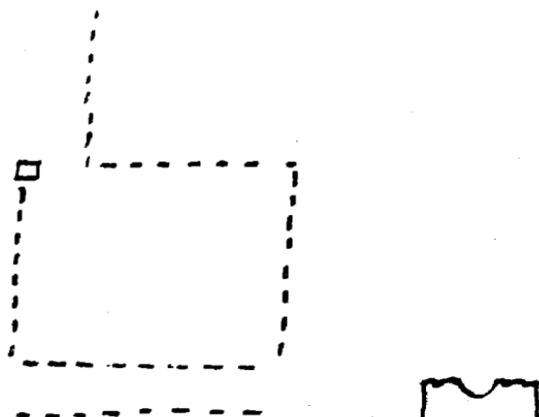
The ridge of Et-Ṭeyr and the other running north from it to Kh. 'Aṭṭārūs are thus very thickly covered with ancient monuments—more so than almost any other ridge I have examined in Moab. They must have formed an important religious centre, which (as we shall see) extended also to the north of Khurbet 'Aṭṭārūs. The masonry blocks seem too numerous to have been the bases of towers for the defence of the road; more probably they were platforms for some religious purpose. The remains imply a large population, but there appeared to be no traces of domestic buildings except at Mkawr and 'Aṭṭārūs. The whole district deserves a thorough examination, including the excavation of the masonry blocks.

We stayed an hour at Khurbet 'Aṭṭārūs examining its position and the ruins upon it. The latter are scattered down both sides of the elevation, which falls on the west into the Wady Hajr Manif (that appears to issue upon the shelves of the Wady Zerka Ma'in above the Hot Springs), and on the east into the fertile Wady Tala'at el-'Ara'is, نلعه العرايس.¹ On the summit of the elevation stands a terebinth tree, to which my companion, Dr. G. S. Buchanan, had taken the bearings from Mkawr, that he now verified. He also took a bearing from this terebinth on a tree prominent to the S.S.E. on another ridge, above the same Wady Tala'at el-'Ara'is, say, a little over two miles distant. To the pile of stones about this tree Khalil and the aforesaid Bedawee ploughmen independently gave the name *Ḳuriyāt*. The ruins of Khurbet 'Aṭṭārūs are more rude and confused than the Byzantine remains at Mkawr; but many of the stones are built on the same plan; the outside stones dressed only on their outside face with rubble between them. We did not notice any mortar. There are many caves and cisterns. On the south-west end of the Tell a deep cleft has been cut in the rock half-way across the ridge, from 12 to 14 feet wide, and 8 to 9 feet deep, with traces of a strong stone wall above it. On the north-east end of the Tell there is a corresponding cutting across the ridge. Among the ruins no pillars or other evidences of a public architecture are visible; but on the north-east slope lies a roofless stone building with a ruined arch across the centre. Temperature under the terebinth at 11.30, 82°.

We left Khurbet 'Aṭṭārūs at 11.50, and, descending the north-east slope of the Tell, followed the same direction towards a con-

¹ See *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1905.

spicuous pile of stones called the Rujm 'Aṭṭārūs. Almost immediately after leaving the Khurbet we digressed from the road to visit a level ridge to the east, on which lies a square enclosed by standing stones, and to the south of it and parallel with its southern side another line of standing stones, as thus :—



This is a section of one of the latter stones. The top bears signs of having been broken off, so that what is now a groove may originally have been a hole. One fallen dolmen, and perhaps more.

From this we held north for a little, and then turning north-east, came at 12.30 to Rujm 'Aṭṭārūs, a great mound of ruined stones, which from the west appears only a huge cairn, but on the north side bears evidence of having been enclosed by a wall, laid on an incline like some of the old Amorite walls I have seen at Tell 'Ashary in Hauran and elsewhere. Some of the stones have cup-markings. There are a few terebinth trees on the west foot of the ruins, and at least two cisterns, at one of which shepherds were watering goats (Fig. 4). Some of the stones bear cup-markings. Temperature at 2.30, 84°. Khurbet 'Aṭṭārūs lies due south-west from the Rujm, which lies on the brink of the W. Zerka Ma'in at the south end of its great stretch north and south. The Rujm thus forms the summit of what is called, as you look up to it from the bed of the great Wady, the Jebel 'Aṭṭārūs.

Two sites within 2 miles of each other thus bore the name 'Aṭṭārūs, the 'Aṭārôth of the O. T. and the Moabite stone (l. 11)—one of them distinguished as the Rujm, the other as the Khurbet

'Aṭṭārūs. Both appear to have been fortified in ancient times. May we suppose that one represents the 'Atārôth of Numbers xxxii, 3 and 34, a city of Gad, and the other, 'Atroth Shophan, of verse 35, also a city fortified by Gad? Both are called *fenced cities*.

We left Rujm 'Aṭṭārūs at 2.46, and followed an old road on the brink of the deep Wady Zerka Ma'in north-east, then east, and always bearing slightly south, mostly on the same contour of



FIG. 4.—Shepherds watering sheep and goats at cisterns beside the Rujm 'Aṭṭārūs, looking S.W.

round limestone ridges, till at last we struck (a welcome change!) up the bed of a shallow Wady through wheat, and so out eastward on a more flat and fertile country, across which we rode south-east to Libb. Leaving this to the left, we turned south on to the Roman road about 4 o'clock.

The winding road we had traversed all day from Mkawr had always been perfectly distinct, and was nearly always edged by

upright stones, but, unlike the main Roman road which we struck near Libb, was seldom paved. So far as we could see, it was the only road across the district, till in the afternoon we crossed a tiny footpath or two.

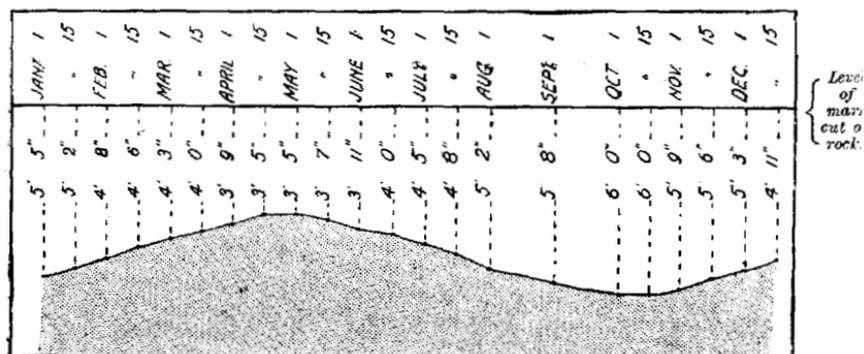
From Libb we followed the Roman road southwards¹ to our camp for the night on the Wady el-Waleh, reaching it at 5.25 P.M. Temperature at 9.30, 68°.

RISE AND FALL OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, 1904.

THE accompanying diagram shows the Rise and Fall of the Sea of Galilee during the year 1904. The measurements were taken, under the supervision of Dr. Torrance, regularly on the 1st and 15th of the month, between the mark cut on the rock and the surface of the water. It will be observed that the water was highest in May and lowest in October, being a rise and fall of 2 feet 7 inches.

RISE AND FALL OF THE SEA OF GALILEE IN 1904.

The measurements are to the surface of the water below the mark cut on the rock.



¹ As described in the *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1905.