

Petræa. This includes, besides the Sinaitic Peninsula, the Bâdîet et Tîh (literally signifying 'the desert of the wanderings'), and some portion of Idumæa and Moab.

"The desert of Et Tîh is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea and the mountains of Judah; on the west by the Isthmus of Suez; and on the east by the 'Arabah, that large valley or depression which runs between the Gulf of 'Akabah and the Dead Sea."

Of Jebel el Magrâh he says: "The mountain plateau in the north-east of the Tîh is full of interest. . . . It is about seventy miles in length, and from forty to fifty miles broad, commencing at Jebel 'Araif, and extending northward by a series of steps or terraces to within a short distance of Beersheba. . . . It projects into the Tîh, much in the same way as the Tîh projects into Sinai, and, like it, also terminates in steep escarpments towards the south, falling away to a lower level on the south-eastern side. On the west it is chiefly drained by two main valleys, Wâdy Garaiyeh and Wâdy el Abyadh, which ultimately combine their streams, and, flowing into Wâdy el 'Arîsh, are carried on to the Mediterranean. On the east Wâdy Ghamr and Wâdy Marreh receive the greater part of the water-supply, and bear it down to the 'Arabah into the Dead Sea. This mountain plateau is the Negeb, or "south country," of the Bible. The watershed of the 'Arabah on its eastern limit is some twenty-five or thirty miles more to the south than the southern boundary of the Magrâh plateau.

C. PICKERING CLARKE.

THORNHAM, EYE,

August 28th, 1883.

LARGE MILLSTONE ON THE SHITTIM PLAIN.

SPEAKING of certain peculiar stones in the part of Moab examined by Captain Conder he says: "The stone is yet more remarkable: it lies in the Ghor south of Kefrein, beside a thorn tree; it is $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter, and 3 feet 6 inches thick, being far too large and heavy ever to have been used as a millstone. It is pierced by a cylindrical hole in the middle, 2 feet in diameter. The Arabs call it *Mensef Abu Zeid* ("the dish of Abu Zeid"), and relate that this mythical hero here sacrificed a whole camel which he gave as a feast to the local Arabs when he was about to leave the Ghor" (*Quarterly Statement*, April 1882, p. 74).

This is the same stone which I examined early in 1876, and of which I gave an account in my report to the American Society, which was published in the winter of 1876-7. In my volume "East of the Jordan," p. 231, after having spoken of the dolmens in this vicinity, which Conder has since described, I say, "about half-way between these two places (*i.e.*, Tell Ektanu and Tell el Hammam) I found an immense circular stone lying

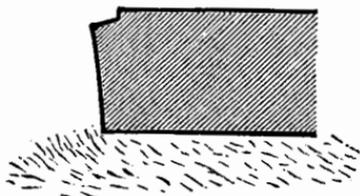
on the top of the ground ; it is 11 feet 4 inches in diameter and 44 inches thick."

Now a difference of 10 inches in the diameter of a stone of this size is considerable, and a similar remark may be made of the difference in our measurements of its thickness, although that is not so remarkable. Hence I ask myself "can I have been mistaken in my measurements?"

In April of the present year I spent nearly ten days east of the Jordan, and took occasion to revisit the stone in question, and to make accurate measurements of it. I found the diameter to be exactly as I had given it, 11 feet 4 inches. The thickness, however, cannot be so accurately determined, owing to the fact that the upper surface of the stone is uneven, and portions of the edge have been badly chipped ; besides, one side of the stone is a little thicker than the other, varying from 3 feet 4 inches plump to 3 feet 8 inches scant.

Two interesting facts connected with the stone remain to be mentioned. I noticed that it appeared to flare a little from the bottom towards the top, and upon measuring I found the circumference at the bottom to be 34 feet 7 inches, and at the top to be 35 feet 8 inches, making a difference of 13 inches.

The other fact is that around the outer edge of the upper surface there was a border about 5 inches in width, as seen in the accompanying cut.



Around this border a curb of wood was fastened tightly to the stone. This curb would be 1 or 2 feet high, according as necessity required, and thus the entire surface of the stone would be left free for the crushing of whatever the mill was designed for. Millstones arranged as now described with a border and a curb of wood are still in use in the country at the present day. All the indications seem to me to point to the inevitable conclusion that this particular stone was designed for a millstone and for nothing else.

On the same page (p. 74), Captain Conder describes certain "disk-stones," one of which is 6 feet in diameter and the other is 9 feet 6 inches in diameter, which "are much like millstones in appearance." "Their great size," he says, "and the absence of any remains of a foundation or other parts of a mill in their vicinity, is, however, a reason for regarding them as having some other purpose." These stones have "no hole in the centre."

Millstones that are brought to market at the present day are not always perforated by a hole in the centre, and as to the size of these stones

being an objection to their having been designed for millstones, it is sufficient to say that stones larger than the largest of these two are still in use in the country as millstones.

An American who visited this region some years since appears to have seen and described these identical stones. He asserts that on account of their size, and because they have no hole in the centre, they could never have been designed for millstones, and his antiquarian zeal leads him to see in them mysterious "solar disks," connected with the worship of Baal. But this same gentleman is famous in Palestine for having "discovered" a lot of "rude stone monuments of a high antiquity," "connected with early Phœnician worship." He even points out what part was "employed for the fire of wood or coals" and "where the victim was laid across." It turned out, however, that these were nothing but old oil presses, which even his elaborate description could not change into ancient altars.

SELAH MERRILL.

THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED CHURCH.

THE work of excavation at the newly-discovered church north of the Damascus-Gate, has been carried so far since Captain Conder and Lieutenant Mantell made their brief reports in the *Quarterly Statement* for April, 1882, pp. 116-120, that it needs to be described again. The ruin has proved to be one of great extent, and of special interest.

The way in which it was brought to light is worth recording. In an uneven field, which rose considerably above the land about it, parts of which appearing, indeed, like little hillocks, the owner of the soil tried to maintain a vegetable garden, but the ground was so dry that neither grain nor vegetables would flourish, and even irrigation did little or no good; besides, here and there large holes appeared in the ground which could not be accounted for. At last the owner determined to dig and see what there was below the surface of his field, and to his surprise he very soon came upon fine walls and a pavement. The excavations being followed up have laid bare a church with some of the surrounding buildings.

The amount of *débris* which had accumulated above the floor of these buildings was 10 to 20 feet in depth. To remove this mass of earth has required much time and labour, and the work is not yet completed.

The piece of ground in question has about 60 yards frontage on the main road (see the plan of this section in *Quarterly Statement*, April 1882, p. 119), and extends, so far as the excavations go, about the same distance back from the road, that is, to the east.

The church itself is situated on the south side of this plot, and is very near the street. The ground in front of the church is paved with fine slabs of stone, on one of which is the inscription given by Lieutenant Mantell on page 120. The steps by which the church was entered were 5 feet wide, but the doorway itself was somewhat wider. From the