

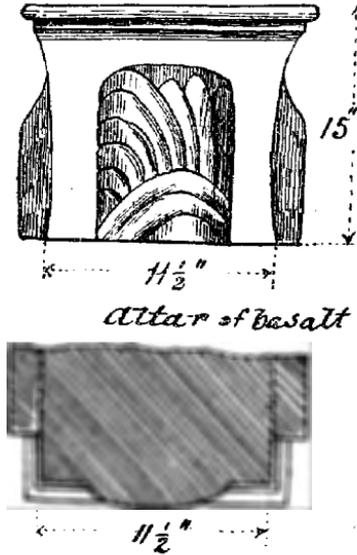
NOTES FROM JEDÛR.

By Dr. G. SCHUMACHER.

IN the country north of Haurân lies the district of Jedûr, renowned for its abundance of water and pasture fields, and especially for its well-bred, tall (long-legged) cattle, known in the market as those of S'asa'¹ or Bakr Khêsi. The north of Jedûr is hilly, the south a continuation of the Haurân plateau. In the plain of Jedûr, where the country begins to rise towards Mount Hermon, we find a very conspicuous elevation, visible throughout Haurân and even on the borders of the Syrian steppe el-Hamâd, the *Tell el-Hârra*. A recent trip through Haurân to Damascus occasioned me to explore this spot and to spend a night in the village Kh. el-Hârra. The railway train running from el-Mezeirib to Damascus stops at el-Kuneiyeh, القنيطرة, a station 36 miles south of Damascus-Midân; from here we turn due west and ride over a rolling country, covered with lava and sîar or sheepfolds; in 35 minutes we reach the village *Inkhil*, أنخل, a small place numbering 55 to 60 huts, and thence strike a paved Roman road leading from el-Kuneitrah around the foot of Tell el-Hârra towards Nawa. The track along which we ride is hardly beaten, and often we were compelled to consult the shepherds watching their numerous flocks in finding our way out of the heaps of lava and mounds composed of loose stones, gathered by an ancient people who evidently once cultivated this stony but fertile spot. Several brooks were crossed until we arrived, after a good three hours' ride from the station, at the village Kh. el-Hârra. The village is built round the eastern part of a small crater lying in front of the south-eastern foot of Tell el-Hârra; between this crater and the tell itself we find a narrow, hollow plain, which is, as well as the steep slopes of the tell, cultivated. The village is the property of Mr. Selim Freige, of Beirût, and the large area of cultivated land belonging to it is administered by his agent, Yûsef Effendi Mansûr Hâtim, whose hospitality we enjoyed. The huts are built of stone, and number 126 in all, the population being about 500 souls. The fellahîn are natives from Jâzem and Zimrîn settled down among the Bedawîn; a part of the latter still camp on their old grazing fields. They are all Mohammedans, except a Christian storekeeper from Damascus, and his brother, who has opened a dry goods shop in the village, and occasionally performs the duty of a butcher. The place is healthy, but the water is filthy as usual, and must be brought from a distant spring. The climate is cool; snow falls regularly in January and February. The elevation of the village is, according to my aneroid, 3,120 feet above the Mediterranean. Kh. el-Hârra contains heaps of ancient building stones, some of which are covered with the

¹ Probably the Biblical "bulls of Baskan" were brought hence.

leading Haurân ornament : vine-leaves and grapes, wreaths and a fair representation of the local acanthus-like thistles, called Khurfêsh and Sunnâri. In the yard of the so-called Jâm'a I copied the following head of an altar, representing a raised feather ornament :—



On the lintels of doors, ancient Arabic inscriptions, mostly much weathered, are seen. The following was partly legible, and seems to represent an apophthegm ; the year indicated may be 304 (?) of the Hejra :—

وكفلاء طمير وهدى
 صائل نا بو لعل وسلعد الله سنة بلعوا
 ر ع

In the dukkâneh or shop we find a Greek inscription on a basalt gravestone, measuring 3 feet by 1 foot 1 inch, now used as a pavestone, which runs thus :—

ΡΟΥΜΑ
 ΝΟC ΜΑ
 CCIKA
 ΕΤΩΝ
 3

The spelling of the name of the village and tell is, el-Hârra, الحارة, the hot, the glow-fire, and not el-Hara, الحاري, as given in the present maps of Jedûr, and may allude to the volcanic actions of the region. Between the village and the neighbouring range of volcanic hills to the west, dominated by the highest peaks of Hâmi Kursu and Tell Abu Neda, extends a fertile high plateau, intersected by lava streams and perennial brooks, the greatest part of which is claimed by the Circassian colonists who settled at Surramân, el-Breikah and el-Kuneitrah ("The Jaulân," pp. 113, 207, 243); the huge haystacks around their settlements give a proof of its fertility as pasture land. These Russian colonists do very well; the number of their villages has been increased to 18; the area of their lands under cultivation grows steadily; Kuneitrah, their head place, and residence of the Kaimakam of Jaulân, has become a populous and flourishing town; the colonists occupy most of the Government positions in the Kada of Jaulân; their young men serve in the regular army, in the Circassian regiment at Damascus, or in the "Corps de Gendarmerie" (the mounted police or zaptiehs), a detachment of which is stationed at Kuneitrah. They have improved their relations with the local Bedawin tribes, and it is said that they even begin to intermarry; but, when the large tribes of the Syrian desert begin to overflow the high plateaus of Haurân and Jaulân in July, the Circassians must have a watchful eye on these old adversaries, to prevent their crops from being trodden down, or eaten up by the thousands of camels of the Ruwâla tribe, who linger to feed on the succulent herbs of Jaulân after a fast of eight months in the arid desert.

From the village of el-Hârra, the *Tell el Hârra* can be easily ascended. This mount belongs, as well as the neighbouring peaks, to the class of extinct volcanoes. A large crater opens on the top, the summit of which reaches an altitude of 3,660 feet above the Mediterranean, and is crowned by a simple Mohammedan shrine, the weli 'Omar *esh-Shehid*, ولي عمر الشهيد. On the western foot of the tell we find the ruins of important Arabian buildings, the *Dér es Sûj*, دير السوج, which may originate from the Haurân kings of the Ghassanites or Jefnites; unfortunately I had not sufficient time at my disposal for a thorough exploration of these remains.

The view gained from both village and Tell el-Hârra is the finest I know in that part of the country. The wide plateau of Haurân and Jaulân lies like a map before us; in the dim south rise the mighty heights of the woody Jebel 'Ajlûn, in the east the Lejjah or Trachonitis presents itself as a flat land, slightly raised above the surrounding plain and gradually passes over to the Jebel ed-Drûz, the site of the bloody encounters of last year, and culminates in the peaks of Tell el-Klêb and Tell Jenâ; in the Haurân plain we easily distinguish the sites of Dera'ah, Sahwet el-Kameh, Tsîl Sahem ej-Jaulân, and the near Nawâ, with their characteristic old square towers, while in the far south-east we just see a black spot seated at the foot of the Druze

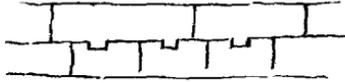
Mountains : it is the ancient metropolis, Bosra eski Shâm ; behind us, to the north, rises the majestic Hermon, our Syrian Himalayah or abode of snow. Beyond the Jordan, Mount Tabor, ed-Dahi (small Hermon) are visible, whereas the Safed and Galilee hills are hidden by the range of volcanoes near Kuneitrah. Nine miles N.W.N. we see the volcano called *Tulâl esh-Sha'âr*, and a few miles to the south-west of it the tall mēdanet, or minaret, of *Jiba'*, جمع, the shrine of *Sa'd ed-Dîn*, a hospice or convent (Antûsh, أنتوش) for Dervishes. No explorer of northern Jedŭr should miss this commanding view of Tell el-Hârra.

Shekhab, شقحب.—This village is situated on the main road from el-Hârra to Damascus, about halfway between Hârra and Kisweh ; it contains 70 huts, and may have a population of 350 Mohammedan souls ; the houses are built of stone. A good spring supplies them with water. Its barometrical altitude is 2,510 feet above the sea. Over against the village we saw a small hill, also called Shekhab, which is supposed to represent the ancient site. The present village has only been founded during the last decades ; it contains several ornamented building stones and some sarcophagi ; the spring shows ancient masonry. The area of land under cultivation at Shekhab is equal to 100 feddans or 2,220 acres. Situate a few miles south of S'asa' the village *Kendkir*, كندكر, was pointed out to us ; it is said to contain 2,000 inhabitants and many ruins. In its neighbourhood lies the village *Dêr Bukht*, دير بخت. *Tell Mer'ai*, تل مرعي, a moderate-sized village on the high road from Shekhab and Nawâ. Unexplored.

Dêr el-'Adas دير العدس.—A large place on the same high road, about nine miles south of Shekhab ; number of huts, 110 ; population, about 500 Mohammedan souls ; altitude above sea, 2,620 feet. The village is well built, and contains many ancient remains. The Jâm'a is an old building, divided into three partitions by arches supported by four pillars ; the roof is covered and formed in the old Haurân style of architecture by basalt stone slabs. Prayer niche in the southern wall. The exterior carefully-dressed building stones contain passages from the Koran in modern Arabic and Cufic letters. Close to this mosque a second more ancient building was pointed out to me as the one to which the name *Dêr el-'Adas* has always been attached ; according to local tradition it represents the Kasr or residence of the Arabian Melek (King) el-'Adas. Consul Wetzstein, in his "Reisebericht" of Haurân (p. 131), mentions a *Dwêr el-'Adas*¹ of Christian origin, built by the Ghassanite kings, probably in the fifth or sixth century ; there is little doubt that the two places are identical, and that tradition once more is supported by historical facts. The building is a large square surrounded by native huts, the

¹ Dwêr = the diminutive of dêr, convent or castle.

royal palace is now turned into a public inn or *menzûl*, in which we were offered a cup of Mocha. The basalt building stones of the *Kasr* are carefully hewn, and show a peculiar tooth-bond in certain layers. In



other parts of the village we came across numerous subterranean arches, covered by long slabs and other *débris*, indicating the importance of the town. The water supply is obtained from an open reservoir east of the village; the climate is healthy; the people agreeable and hospitable.

Kefr esh Shems.—Village on the same road, four miles south of Dêr el-'Adas; altitude, 2,600 feet; number of huts, 120 to 130; population, about 600 souls. Mohammedans. Many subterranean arches and other important ruins. Careful masonry, large building stones and ornamented lintels on doors and windows of two buildings, each called *ed-Dêr*; two rows of three and six basalt columns placed above each other and combined by arches, are still *in situ*; their column heads are Ionic and Doric; in other places several columns are combined by long, ornamented slabs of basalt. These remains belong to temples. On the spring stone of one of their arches I found the following ornamented Greek letters:—



Outside of the present village an ancient cemetery was discovered by the natives, and quantities of human bones, and gold and silver ornaments, brought to light. One and a half miles south we cross *Wady Kom Kiriéh*, وادي كوم قرية. Four miles south of K. esh Shems, along the same road, we strike the village of *Zimrin*, زميرين, written erroneously *Simlin* on the maps of Haurân. Altitude, 2,550 feet; number of huts, 65; population, 300 souls. Some ruins, but evidently none of importance. Five miles and a half still southwards, we reach the largest village on our present excursion, *Jâsem*, جاسم. Altitude, 2,450 feet; number of huts, 215; population, about 1,000 souls. Several water basins, ancient remains, many Byzantine \times and other crosses \dagger on the building stones. From *Jâsem* we reached the well-known village of *Nawa* in 1 hour 50 minutes slow ride. In returning from Damascus I followed the ancient "via

maris," the sultâni leading over S'asa' and Kuneitrah to the Jisr benât Y'akûb on the Jordan, and passed by the old ruin of *Nu'arân*, which I described in "The Jaulân" (pp. 63, 224). This site has now been built up, and contains some 40 huts, partly inhabited, partly again abandoned by the Bedawin settlers. In addition to the ancient remains which I reproduced in "The Jaulân," the following Greek Christian inscriptions have been discovered on lintels (*Nu'arân*, Basalt) of doors on one of the main grain stores:—



Other buildings contain numerous crosses and leaf ornaments. The inhabitants are continuously excavating in the hope of finding treasures, but have so far not been very successful. The villagers of Fik in Jaulân have had more success: they excavate around the hill of Sûsiyeh, the ancient Susitha of Talmud, at Kal'at el-Husn, and Fik itself, and have brought baskets full of Roman gold, silver, and copper ornaments and coins to daylight, heaps of copper and bronze tools, ancient glass and pretty gems, and are doing a regular trade with merchants from Saida and Beirût. Some of the specimens of golden bracelets, earrings, chains, &c., shown to me are really handsome and valuable.

Jisr benât Y'akub.—Whilst at Safed I was informed by the learned Kâdi there, a native of Safed and a member of the distinguished family of *en Nahawy*, that the expression "benât" was a late corruption of the original spelling *benâ*, בְּנֵי , or *ibnâ Y'akûb*, the sons of Jacob. This statement was confirmed to me by a rabbi of Safed, who added that Jacob only having one daughter, Dinah, the spelling *benâ* instead of *bendt* (daughters) was surely the original.

HAIFA, January—March, 1897.