

THE FELLAHHEEN OF PALESTINE.

NOTES ON THEIR CLANS, WARFARE, RELIGION, AND LAWS.

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It is impossible to live for any length of time in the Holy Land without being struck by the diverse character of its present inhabitants—that is to say, of the settled population, as distinguished from the pilgrims who annually resort to the Moslem and Christian sanctuaries.

Not only in Jerusalem, but in the rural districts all over the land, the careful observer perceives that in this small country are collected together people of differing creeds, and of various perfectly distinct races. Not now to dwell upon the peculiarities that mark the difference between Samaritans, Maronites, Druses, we pass on to those commonly classed together as “*Arabs*,” because the various dialects which they speak have been supposed to be “*Arabic*,” because they profess the faith of Islam propagated by Arabs from Arabia, and because of Oriental customs which they all have in common.

The inhabitants of Palestine are divided into three very distinct classes.

First, the *Bedaween*, “*Arabs of the Arabs*,” who live in tents and roam the deserts.

Second, the *Fellahheen*, “*Ploughmen*,” or agricultural peasantry, who live in villages, and are freehold owners of the soil which they cultivate.

Third, the *Belladeen*, “*Townfolk*,” who live, and who have lived from generation to generation, in cities, generally in their own freehold houses.

The first of these classes is fully entitled to be considered of Arab race. Many among the third class are also Arabs, being lineal descendants of the Arabs who came from Arabia as conquerors in and after the seventh century, and who settled in the towns, where we now find their children.

But we had not been long resident in Palestine before we found various reasons for doubting whether those specified in the second class, the *Fellahheen*, or peasantry, were Arabs at all. Both eye and ear began to note dissimilarities between them and the Arabs of the other two classes, those from the desert and those of the towns; and these differences were found in costume, features, stature, habits of life, and in speech. Nay, more, as we became better acquainted with the country, we found that, although known by the common name of *Fellahheen* everywhere, there were, in reality, many perfectly distinct clans, or rather tribes, inhabiting the land; and that these several clans could also be distinguished to some extent from each other. Their peculiarities were found, on a nearer acquaintance, to be very interesting, and well worthy of investigation.

Palestine is divided into districts, all existing independently of each other under the Turkish authority. The districts are after the Lebanon territory in the extreme north, and the Bekaa' or plain between the western range and the Anti-Lebanon.

(1) The country of the Metawila. (2) The district north of Esdraelon.
(3) The Jeneen District, including Northern Samaria. (4) “The

Mountain of Nablûs." (5) "The Mountain of Jerusalem," including "The Mountain of Hebron." (6) The Gaza or Philistine District. (7) The Plain of Sharon as far as the Bay of Acre.

The Jordan Valley is chiefly peopled by wild Bedaween, and is, therefore, not included in the above districts.

In the "Jerusalem Mountain" district the Fellahh clans are the following:—Beni Hassan, Beni Zaid, Beni Kurrah, Beni Sâlim, Beni Mâlik, Beni Harith.

Besides the Wadiyeh, or valley people, who are grouped around the Kedron Valley and its adjacent hills, the Beni Hassan on the south-west and the Beni Mâlik on the north-west were the clans with whom we came into most frequent contact in Jerusalem. We also saw a good deal of the Wâdiyeh, of Siloam, Olivet, Bethlehem, &c. In travelling we became acquainted, more or less, with the other more distant clans, and we had abundant opportunities for observing that the Fellahheen do not, properly speaking, form a nation. There is among them neither coherency nor spirit of patriotism. Just as the wild Bedaween are divided into distinct and generally hostile tribes, so the Fellahheen are divided into clans governed by their respective sheikhs. They speak a common language; they possess a common religion; their manners and customs are generally the same all over the country. Yet of national unity there is absolutely none. They never combine for any purpose, excepting when occasionally some clans aid each other in their faction fights. They are all classed, it is true, under the two great divisions of Yemeny or Kais, wearing white or red as the badge of these parties; but even then there is nothing among them approaching to the co-operation of patriots as a nation, ready and willing to join hand in hand for the mother country. The Turkish Government well understand this important fact, and take it into practical account in their method of ruling the land. This state of things is enough to explain, in great measure, the backward condition of the people at large. They have no national life. Every district lives in and for itself, and wages its own petty wars with its neighbours, but has neither interests nor action in common with any other. The people of the various districts differ considerably from each other in outward appearance, in character, and in speech. They resemble each other just so far as to indicate descent from a common stock. They differ as the fragments of a nation may which has been broken up at an extremely remote period into distinct and hostile clans. All are Fellahheen, and yet all are apart from each other, independent, and commonly at enmity.

Though they have with each other no national cohesion, the Fellahh Arab clans cleave to the land with the tenacity of aboriginal inhabitants. No clan has for a long time overpassed the boundaries of its own district, and they show no disposition to do so. The gradual decrease of population, moreover, renders it unnecessary for them to extend the limits of their territory. They cling to the hills and the plains where their fathers lived and died. Nothing but the strong arm of government can

ever induce a Fellahh to quit his native village, and this only for compulsory service in the army. From the moment that he finds himself drawn by lot under the rules of the conscription his one idea is how soon he may contrive to get back again.

They reverence the Sultan as the Khalif of Mohamed, as their civil and spiritual sovereign, but they care nothing for the empire of Turkey. Many of them do not even so much as know the names of the villages a district or so from their own homes. They are influenced by no patriotism for Turkey. The very name is unknown to them. The empire as a whole has no name. The Government, whose seat is at Stamboul, and whose head is the Sultan, is called *Dowlet el Osmanli* (the Ottoman Government), whose rule is respected. But the phrase *Belād et Trāk*, "Country of the Turks," is a popular term of contempt to mean "the world's end," the remote cradle of the Turkish hordes that overran the East in the middle ages. Nevertheless, as above mentioned, the Fellahheen are loyal to the Sultan.

When Ibrahim, Pasha of Egypt, took possession of Syria for his father, Mehemet Ali, he had a good deal of trouble with the Fellahheen in some districts, especially with those of Bethlehem, whom he found a very different kind of folk to the meek and dispirited Fellahheen of Egypt. The sturdy mountaineers of Palestine had never been subjected to the iron hand of despotism by their Turkish rulers in the fashion that the Egyptians were governed, and many of them resisted Ibrahim Pasha, not only when first he occupied Syria, but at all convenient opportunities afterwards.

In the outbreak of 1834 the Fellahheen actually got possession of Jerusalem for a while. They entered by the sewer, from the south-east, and thus got (after some little difficulty in enlarging a passage for exit) into the Armenian quarter. They broke their way out into a house where there was a mill at work grinding corn. Subbuhh Shokeh, one of the Bethlehem Fowagri chiefs, was one of the foremost to emerge. He seized the astonished miller by the throat and silenced him, while the rest of the band made good their entrance. There was great confusion in Jerusalem for some time, but the regular troops of Mehemet Ali were in possession of the citadel, and their cannon and musketry were too strong for the Fellahheen.

One of our own men who had been there in service in the Egyptian army used to tell with glee how effectually Ibrahim Pasha disposed of the Fellahheen when he was encountered on the heights of Scopus with his troops and one or two field pieces. Secing a crowd of the hostile Fellahheen, he would call his gunner, and bidding him drop a shot or two among them, disperse them like sheep. But it was not always so. Though in mortal fear of cannon shot, they would fight well when it came to a hand to hand encounter, as the Egyptians found on more than one occasion when the Fellahheen were only overpowered after a fierce struggle. The men of Lifta and those of Bethlehem fought well before they were subdued.

The introduction of the conscription was the measure which above all things embittered the Fellahheen of Palestine against the Egyptians, and caused them to favour the restoration of Syria to the direct rule of the Sultan, whose milder rule they greatly preferred to the tyranny of the Egyptians.

Fond of fighting as the Fellahheen are when they can fight in their own fashion and upon their own native mountains, they abhor being taken away from home to be put into the regular army, subjected to drill, and compelled to wear a uniform. Until lately the Sultan drew very few conscripts from Palestine. Indeed, in former years the attempt to levy any considerable number of recruits would have caused a popular insurrection. We witnessed one of the earliest attempts at a levy after the Turks regained the direct rule in Palestine. A couple of regiments were sent down from the north to obtain conscripts in place of those, whose time of service having expired, had been recently discharged. Great was the consternation among the natives, and yet the levy was in itself light enough. Very few were taken, and the term of service was only for five years. But the Moslem Fellahheen did not come in to market, and it was amusing to see, on the day that the regiments sent to make the levy arrived, while the troops were marching in at the Damascus Gate, north of Jerusalem, the Fellahheen were running out in streams at the opposite Gate of Zion the moment that they heard the soldiers' drums. Our two acquaintances, Khaleel of Lifta and his brother, owners of our camping ground, came and sat down on our doorstep to take sanctuary, and implore protection from the soldiers. When told that it was wrong to refuse to serve their Sultan the reply was, "On our head and our eyes be his service. He is our lord; but let us not go away as soldiers."

One of the sheikhs of Málhha brought his younger brother to the English hospital and begged the doctor to cut off a joint of his thumb in order to unfit him for service. On the doctor's refusal the lad went out of the city and actually laid his right hand on a stone and chopped off his thumb with his his own khanjar (short sword worn by all the Fellaheen).

So great was the terror of the conscription, that we were told some 1,500 of the Fellahheen had sought shelter (only for a time, of course) with the Bedaween on the other side of Jordan, having been met at Jericho by an Arab force which had encamped there to assist their flight.

Our Christian Fellaheh from Bethlehem fully shared in the joy of the Jerusalem Christians that their sons were ineligible. It was amusing to hear her by turns chuckling over and sympathising with the griefs of the Moslem mothers. Indeed, generally speaking, she agreed with her townsmen, the Christian Bethlehemites, that the Moslems were altogether an inferior people, and worse off than they, who had ever in time of need their sure refuge in the powerful protection of their convents, "which may God continue to build up!"

After the Crimean War, and when the prestige and moral strength of

Turkish government in Palestine had been considerably strengthened, conscription was enforced more thoroughly. The men were chosen by lot; and great was the grief of those who were so unfortunate as to draw the fatal paper consigning them to service and temporary exile.

But even then permission could be obtained to purchase substitutes, and the long hidden hoards of money, accumulated during a lifetime of saving, buried away in the ground, were resorted to. It was astonishing to find what large sums a mean-looking fellahh would command when engaged in the serious business of purchasing his exemption from foreign service, whether in engaging a substitute, or, in some cases, by simply bribing the officer in command to let him off. If all these means failed to effect a release, there was still a chance left of escaping during the march to the sea coast, where the conscripts were to be embarked. The conscription has fallen with far greater severity upon the Fellahheen of Palestine during the late war with Russia. Whole villages have been drained of their able-bodied men; the scenes during the period of recruiting were painful in the extreme—the despair of the men themselves, the agony of their wives and children, their aged fathers and mothers, when they were marched off manacled like criminals, to prevent escape. These poor people, after a brief period of military instruction, were sent into active service against the Russians. Hundreds of them perished in battle, hundreds more from the hardships of the campaign among the ice-bound fields and snowy defiles of Europe; in some cases they ended their days as wounded Turkish soldiers in the hospitals prepared by English kindness, blessing with tears in their eyes the noble lady who ministered to their dying hours, and could, alone of all around her, understand, because she had herself been in the Holy Land, what they meant, when in their own tongue, all unknown to their Turkish officers and comrades, they babbled of el Kuds esh Shereef—Jerusalem the Holy City—which they were never to see more, or the sunny vineyards and the mountains, now desolate for want of hands to till them.

And these men bore their sufferings patiently and bravely.

Under discipline, and especially under kind and firm treatment, the fellahh is capable of much good service, whether as a soldier or as a cultivator and builder. We found that they made excellent agricultural labourers and builders, and Captain Warren has spoken very highly of the Fellahheen who worked under his staff of English engineers in sinking shafts, driving galleries, and all the other arduous work connected with his excavations in Jerusalem.

These people are not the mere cowards which their unwillingness to serve in the regular army might lead one to suppose. The Fellahheen, though sometimes quite ready to run away and postpone the carrying on of a fight to some more propitious occasion, do, nevertheless, display considerable dash and bravery in warfare; and when beaten and taken prisoners they face death with fortitude.

It sometimes happens that the victorious side has many lives to claim from the vanquished enemy. The prisoners are well aware of the fate

before them, and they submit with almost apathetic resignation—in accordance with the cardinal doctrine of Islam—to the destiny ordained for them, as they firmly believe, by Divine decree.

They allow themselves—big brawny men—to be laid down in a row, with the foot of the enemy literally “on their neck,” to be slaughtered with the sword, like so many sheep, while, their faces turned towards Mecca, they pronounce the Moslem formula of faith, thus attesting with their last breath their belief in the Unity of God and the mission of the Prophet Mohamed.

The religion of the Fellahheen is nominally that of Islam, but they are generally speaking extremely ignorant of the Korân, being unable to read for themselves and dependent upon what they can pick up from their sheikhs, who are somewhat better instructed. There remain among them, however, superstitions and religious rites—relics of some ancient systems of religion—which are of the highest interest, and to which we shall refer again. There is generally a little mosque and a guest-chamber in every village, besides the “Place” (*Makâm*) of some ancient saint or hero. Lieut. Conder has drawn attention to the importance of these latter sanctuaries, for such they are.

The clans are governed by their own hereditary sheikhs. The succession does not always descend to the eldest son; a father will not unfrequently nominate one of his younger children to the chieftainship, if he seems to be fitter for the office; but, of course, the choice must be ratified by the Turkish Government, who occasionally regard or encourage the claims of rival claimants. Hence arises many a feud, and enmities exemplified by the fellah saying, “Though your sister’s son were but mortar (utterly weak and insignificant) choke him, for he is your bitterest enemy.”

The sheikh rules his people by a code of unwritten traditional laws, some of them derived from those of the Korân, called the “Laws of Mohamed” (*Sheriyat-Mohamed*). But there are many local and special rules. Among these the most interesting is the fellahh code of traditional laws in South Palestine, which is called the *Sheriyat Khaleel*—“Law of Abraham”—(literally “the friend,” this being the epithet by which Abraham is known in the country—*Khaleel Allah*, “the friend” of God). This code is thus called in distinction from the *Sheriyah Mohamediyeh* (“Law of Mahomed”), always administered in the courts of law in the great cities. The peasantry always prefer the law of Abraham to that of the Korân, and it is administered by the sheikh and the elders (*Ikhtiâriyeh*). They look upon it as peculiarly sacred, and even in towns it is so much respected that neither the *kadi* (“judge” of Mahomedan law) nor the courts of the Sultan’s *Tanzimât* will ever directly reverse a sentence of the law of Abraham pronounced by the elders of the peasantry. Indeed, we have heard of cases in which the civil authorities interfered to enforce the “Abrahamic” code as against that of Mahomed. For instance, in 1858 a certain number of families from Hhahhul Noba, Beit Umma, &c., preferring to follow the *Law of Mohamed* (which they

thought would be more favourable to them in a certain question of landed property), were expelled by their neighbours, and went to rebuild an ancient village at a distance. The effendies of Jerusalem, for some factious reason, induced the pasha to compel them to return. He accordingly went and destroyed their village, which they had newly rebuilt. (This kind of expulsion is called *Sahh't Mashhootin*.)

The courts of justice held by the sheikhs with the village elders are accompanied by well-known formalities, and are conducted with care. The sessions are in public, and open to all comers. The sheikh who obtains a character for legal acumen and impartiality is resorted to by litigants from the whole country side. On the other hand, should he utter a decision or express an opinion contrary to the traditionary code, he is liable to be corrected, and to have his sentence questioned by the merest child present.

For a lawsuit of Fellahheen the necessary preliminaries are—

1. The *Erzak*, or trifling deposit, representing a larger sum or "property," which is to be the real forfeiture if so decided.
2. The *kuf'lah*, or securities (two persons or more), that the case shall be begun and continued and the sentence be obeyed.
3. The *sâma'* ("listener") or assessor.
4. The *kadi* or judge (*i.e.*, the sheikh chosen to decide the cause).

Besides these there are the plaintiff and the defendant. The parties all appear before the judge. The plaintiff says, "I have come to thee, our judge—this and thus—and appealing to the seventy-two prophets from all crooked ways and path of crooked ways. May retribution not have to overtake thee in thy pastoral property, or in thy most desirable of sons."*

Then the plaintiff tells his tale. The defendant tells his afterwards.

The judge, after hearing all, and receiving the evidence of witnesses, if any are brought forward, sums up the matter to his assessor, the *sâma'*, in such a manner as, without pronouncing sentence, shows which way his mind lies.

The assessor turns to the two belligerent parties, and says, "Speak ye to each other in the way of reconciliation." If they do not make it up the judge gives sentence, and the fine is levied. This is divided between the judge and the assessor.

Appeal can be made to a new court by either party saying, "The truth of God is with another than thee." But this is rarely done, inasmuch as it reflects great disgrace on the first judge to have his sentence reversed, or even brought into suspicion.

It is always a subject for pride to a sheikh that his decisions are sought after and respected, and we have known cases in which profligate and unjust men have maintained their public character as shrewd and impartial judges. Many stories are told of the sagacity of the sheikhs in their mode of administering justice.

In the days of old *Abdu'l Hâdy*, grandfather of the present family,

* This is the form used by way of adjuration to the judge to act justly and impartially in hearing the cause and in giving sentence.

while he was governor in Nablûs, a shop in the town was robbed, and no one could discover by whom it had been done. So the old fellow—peace be upon him, for he was truly a wise man—commanded the door of the shop to be taken off its hinges, and to be well bastinadoed. This was done in his own presence. A crowd gathered round, and he continually ordered the punishment to be continued, until nearly all the town had assembled, marvelling at the strange proceeding.

At length Abdu'l Hâdy, the governor, leaned down, and asked the door who had done it? who was the thief? Then he put his ear to listen for the answer. Turning and addressing the multitude, the governor then said, "The door declares that it was done by a man who has a cobweb on the top of his tarboosh." The people looked at each other, but one man unconsciously put up his hand to feel the top of his tarboosh. The governor instantly laid hold of him, and the man in astonishment confessed that he had indeed done it. He was the thief.

Sometimes noble traits of humanity and generosity were shown in the fellahh character.

A remarkable instance occurred during the scarcity and famine in 1854, when the war had raised the prices of provisions, and when the effendis of the city, by buying up the wheat stores, had caused extreme distress, especially to the poor Jews.

A fellahh then resolved to do what in him lay to mitigate the sufferings of the poor, and, though he himself was not rich or powerful, to reduce the price of corn. He brought his little store of wheat, a single camel load, into the market of Jerusalem, and spreading his own aba (cloak) on the ground, emptied the grain out of the sacks, crying aloud to the poor to come and buy, for that he had "lifted up his hand to the Most High God" to sell this his corn at a cheap rate in small quantities to the poor, in order to bring down the price and succour the starving.

Blessings were poured upon that poor man's head, and he went home happy to his village.

We had many opportunities of observing the conduct of the Fellahheen when engaged in warfare. The clans inhabiting the country districts where our summer encampments were established, were constantly at feud, and when the Turkish pasha at Jerusalem happened to be old and weak, or when he had not sufficient soldiers or sufficient influence to enable him to maintain order among the rival sheikhs, they usually broke out into fighting. The immediate cause was often trivial enough, but there was sure to be some well nourished quarrel of old standing ready to be fought out, and only awaiting opportunity.

On one occasion we had noticed an unusual chattering among the women near our tents, and in the evening, just before dark, a number of goats, cows, donkeys, and camels, were driven up by some women and girls.

"Who are these, Haj Ali?" "Truly, my lord, I know not—Fellahheen," was our groom's reply on being questioned; but he soon brought us word that "there is a great fight; all the Aboo Ghosh people are at it

so the women have brought their cattle here for refuge till it is over. No one will take them from the Ingleez." As he spoke another party came up, and the women in command on either side began to abuse and curse each other as soon as they came in sight.

"Are these friends of the first people?" "Lā—ā," laughed our groom; "they are of the opposite side, but they come also to take shelter with the English."

We saw and heard no more of that fight except that the Aboo Ghosh side were defeated with the loss of forty men. When all was over both parties fetched away their cattle, and said "thank you" for the protection enjoyed.

Another time a fellahh came to our tents to carry off the young fellow—one of the owners of the land upon which our tents were pitched—who was our servant, to the war, as one of the contingent of 100 men required from his village. He said that 2,000 men were to march that day against the Ibr Simhhân territory.

That day there were none left to work upon the threshing-floor close by save an old man with white beard and the little boys his grandsons; all the middle aged and the young men had disappeared and gone to the war.

A fellahh family had taken up their summer quarters in a sepulchral cave close by their threshing-floor, and a very few days afterwards we saw one of their women standing mounted on the top of a bank screaming for nearly an hour: "Come, O ye brave, and take revenge!"

The Shafat people had been fighting those of Lifta, and had captured two goats. They had also attempted to take this woman's donkey from her. Blows had been exchanged, and at least one head broken. They fought their fight out, but did not molest us.

On another occasion we watched the actual progress of the fight going on between the villages north-west and those south-west of Jerusalem. Several hundred men were engaged on both sides. There was but little bloodshed, however, and, as in many other instances, the mediation of the British Consul was effectual in obtaining a temporary truce, and after some little time, a settlement of the disputes existing between the belligerents.

During this fight one of the enemy challenged the sheikh—Ali Shaikha—to single combat. The mode of challenge was characteristic; "Come on, thou rider of a *kadesh*" (hack horse); thus offering affront both to the rider and to his valued mare. Ali knew well what his beast could do, and put her at the loose stone wall several feet high, riding at his adversary with the retort, "At least, I am not the son of a gipsy." The mare scrambled up, carried her rider safely on, and his adversary fell pierced by the bullets of himself and his followers. The fighting was carried on in the early morning and forenoon, after which the men went to their agricultural labours.

The watch fires were burning at night in every village, and one could hear the shrill voices of the women as well as of the men joining in the

war, or war cry. In the morning by daybreak the forces mustered. When a well-known champion joined them, the women would break out as he rode forward into improvised verse:—

“ Oh, thou Khaleel, thou art welcome ;
 All these swords art thine, oh, Khaleel.
 We will defend thee and fight with thee.
 Welcome, welcome, oh, Khaleel,” &c., &c.

The men, and more especially the women, encourage the combatants during the actual fight, by improvised verses praising their favourite warriors and recounting their deeds of prowess. But in case of hesitation or of cowardice they fling at them every epithet of contempt or scorn that they can imagine or invent on the spur of the moment, and many a one has dashed afresh into the thickest of the fight, stung by the bitter jests and gibes of the girls and women from his village who were on the field carrying fresh supplies of gunpowder, succouring the wounded, and cheering on the men of their side with the invigorating scream of the “ El-el-el-el-loo.”

We always found that the women took the keenest interest in the warfare, that they acted as scouts and conveyed intelligence with great rapidity and accuracy over the hills, and that they were quick in detecting plots or secret movements of the enemy. Here is one of their impromptu battle songs:—

“ What does the coward’s wife say to her husband ?
 ‘ Oh, husband, remain in the hindermost ranks,
 For if thou shouldest press forward thou mayest be hit,
 And thus shall my children be made orphans.’
 These be the words of the coward’s wife to her husband.”

The custom, common among the Bedaween, was also known among the Fellahheen, by which women have the right and privilege of giving protection and of saving the life of any who might appeal to them, or whom they choose to claim as their *protegé*. Formerly, he who attempted to slay another in the presence of a woman would have been branded as a coward. The men also hurl opprobrious epithets at any warrior who evinces symptoms of fear or of hesitation. During a fight at Brit Nattey, one of the combatants seemed to his comrades in the fray to be hanging back. Immediately one of them shouted at him, “ Siknag !” which is the native form of the word “ Ashkenaz,” the appellation of the Russian or German Jews, as distinguished from the Sephardim, or Spanish Jews.

The Ashkenazim are generally small of stature, and are, for the most part, extremely timorous. They have only been recognised of late years as belonging to the same people as their proud, though also timid brethren, the Sephardim (who are the Jews recognised of old by the Turkish Government and by the natives). Hence the term “ Siknag” was meant to imply utter derision and contempt.

Before and during the fighting individual champions often challenge each other to single combat. Great interest naturally attaches to these

encounters, which are watched with keen attention by both sides. Sometimes the dispute is decided by the event, but more commonly the struggle between one or more pairs of champions on either side ends in a general *melée* of the excited hosts, who cannot restrain their ardour beyond a certain point when watching the efforts of their chosen heroes.

Sheikh Nimmer el Amleh was noted for his high courage. Many anecdotes were told of his *nonchalance*. One day, in the height of battle, he happened to look up at the sun, and saying "It is noon," he dismounted, spread his *aba* (cloak) on the ground, and began to say his prayers, though guns were levelled at him all round, and some not twelve paces off. Of course, no one would be so impious as to shoot him while actually saying his prayers. Another celebrated sheikh, Abd el Naby, coming up, found him thus engaged.—"Oh, Nimmer, what art thou doing? This is a time for fighting." Nimmer rejoined, "Why should fighting hinder praying? Let me finish, and then will I teach them." And so he did "teach" the enemy, as soon as he had finished prayer, leaping on his mare, rushing into the enemy's ranks, and slaying on all sides.

Of course, the victorious army are greeted, when they return home to their villages, by processions of the women, who go forth to meet them singing songs of triumph. The woman most skilled in improvisation leads the song with a couplet or so extolling the acts of the hero and of the victors. Her companions then take up the chorus, ending with the *Zughareet* (the shrill El-el-el-loo), waving their long sleeves over their heads, and clapping their hands with frantic joy. Another couplet is then given, followed by the chorus as before. The men, meanwhile, "burn as much powder" as they can, firing off their long guns at random in every direction, and as the guns are loaded to make the more noise, accidents sometimes occur. Each man carries, besides his gun, the short sword, or *khanjar*, of native manufacture, stuck in his leathern girdle. They are generally provided with powder of their own making. The wood of the vine, though useless generally, is considered to furnish the best charcoal for gunpowder. Brimstone and nitre are products of the country.

The combatants are for the most part infantry, only the sheikhs on either side being mounted, with perhaps their sons and cousins as retinue. The Fellahheen do not possess many horses or mares. The sheikhs, however, are usually well mounted, and their mares are not unfrequently thorough-bred Arabs, related to the desert race.

Prisoners are of course frequently taken in battle, and sometimes they are slain at the end of the fight. Any one considering himself "*a man*" would disdain to ask mercy. But if there be not much angry passion aroused, or if there be a mediator sufficiently honourable to command respect, lives are spared, and a council is held at which the claims for blood fines, &c., are heard and adjusted. Then the prisoners are only kept as hostages till the amount has been paid.

A computation is generally made of the losses on either side by death,

wounds, &c., &c., and the balance is paid to the victors. A truce is then made, or terms of peace adjusted. Of course, if the victory has not been decisive the fighting is continued—sometimes for weeks, sometimes for months, and even from one season to another—with intervals of formal truce, made and respected by both parties, in order to allow of crops being sown or reaped.

Fewer lives are lost in these fights than might be expected. There is but little deliberate aim taken. Most of the Fellahheen think it wrong to aim at the sheikh, and the casualties occur chiefly during a general *mélée* or charge, or the storming of a rising ground, sometimes, though more rarely, in assault on a village.

The dead are buried by their own relations as soon as possible after the engagement. But it sometimes happens, especially in the Nablús district, and we have also known it in the B'lad Arkob among the Beni Hassan, that the dead are injured after battle by their enemies. This only happens when bad passions have been called out by long-continued war or in retaliation for special acts of ferocity. A peculiarly savage and vindictive enemy will not only cut his fallen foe to pieces, but will prevent his burial, causing the body to be exposed to the sun by day and to the dews and cold of night. Sometimes the removal of the dead is not permitted, but a grave is dug on the spot where the man fell, and a cairn of stones is raised to mark the spot. This is sometimes done in cases of assassination, whether the deed was done to avenge a blood feud or gratify private enmity. But commonly the slain are taken to their own village by the relations, and there honourably buried amid the lamentations of the women.

The amount of the blood fine, according to fellahh usage, is 4,000 piastres for a man, and 2,000 for a woman (about £35). According to the law of the Kadi in the city, the amount is much greater—even 30,000 piastres—but in this, as in many other things, such as calculation of taxes and government dues, the fellahh proverb holds good—

“Fee fark bain
Hhusáb es-serai
Wa-Hhusáb el kurai”

(“There is a difference between palace-reckoning and village-reckoning”).

According to the Fellahheen, “Seraglio (Palace) Law” is “no law.” In various cases that we observed, the pasha for the time being happening to be strong and vigorous, imposed the blood fine, according to the Government Seraglio code. But this arrangement only lasted at the most till his time had expired; or till from some other cause the Turkish Government became weak. The Fellahheen, then taking advantage of the want of power manifested by the Turkish authorities, reverted to their own more ancient system. Those upon whom the blood fine had been imposed, and who had very rarely paid more than an instalment of the amount, refused to pay more than their own code required of them; and those on the opposite side, who had been compelled

to compound with their adversaries, and to accept money for life, or, as they would phrase it, for "blood," now seized the opportunity of vindicating their "honour" by exacting "blood" besides, and by slaughtering on that pretext any male relations of the man who had killed their relation, if they were unable to fall in with the criminal himself. They would often justify this procedure by means of a technical point. To make an arrangement by blood-fine valid, there should be "guarantors of the payment" (*Kufalah ed-defa'*), also "guarantors of the prohibition" (to shed blood), and further, "*Ashab el Arood*." In the absence of these (whom the Turkish officials, as being ignorant of native rules, had of course omitted to appoint), the avengers of blood claim the right to treat the compromise by mere payment of money as null and void, informal and invalid. Where all those persons have been duly appointed, the opposite party cannot exact blood for blood. Each of the guarantors is entitled to a fee: so that the expense of settlement is considerable. Should the person slain happen to have been a woman, the expense involved in the settlement is greater than in the case of a man, especially if she be a married woman; for in that case the slayer must provide another wife for her husband, as well as a wife for her brother or her nearest male relation. If she was unmarried, he has only to provide a wife for the nearest relation, and this, of course, lessens the expense.

But even after all this has been done, blood is sometimes exacted, and this by treachery, and it is supposed that the person thus acting is only vindicating his honour in taking life for life.

Cases have been known in which after the *Deeyeh* has been formally paid and accepted by a man for the murder of his brother, and after he had been apparently reconciled to the murderer, saying, "What has happened has happened; my brother has gone, let us be friends;" and all seemed to be settled and over, the avenger even going so far as to stay with his quondam enemy; that he would arrange with a friend who is trusty and able to keep his secret, to come at night in the dark and try to break open the door, the first man rushed out as if to drive off the intruder—who was informed where and how to fire—and killed the enemy, while the avenger of blood—the relation and instigator of the treachery—tore his garments, and pretended to deplore the sad event, and escaped suspicion, or at least punishment.

If the Bethlehemites who are Fellahheen kill a Ta'amri, it is not usual to pay *Deeyeh* ("blood fine") according to fellahh code, but *Khawweh* ("dues of brotherhood"), according to Bedawy or wild Arab code. For the Ta'amri, though cultivators of the soil, have among them many Bedawy usages.

Redress, or at least the payment of a fine, is considered to be due for bloodshed, even when injury short of actual loss of life has been inflicted.*

Until lately, if a man was pursued by the avenger of blood, and was

* The Thâr, or "blood revenge," is obligatory upon relatives of the slain to the fifth degree of consanguinity.

trying to escape, he was safe if he could succeed in catching hold of the dress of any woman, even though she might be his own wife. But times are altered, and that would probably be disregarded now. But a man in such circumstances could save himself even at the last moment by crying out, "I am the *Daheel*" ("one who has entered the abode of") "So-and-so," invoking some powerful person or one of high rank, whose protection is at once secured by the bare fact that he has been thus called upon. It is then accounted as if the fugitive had actually entered (*dakhal*) or taken sanctuary in the camp or in the abode of that person. (Compare with this usage the verse, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.") Supposing, however, that the pursuers disregarded the appeal, and slay their victim after all, paying no heed to the fact that he has invoked the aid of a protector, the personage called upon has certain rights which he must exercise, and duties which he must perform. Before the victim is slain he will call on some bystander in these words, "Ana *dakheel fulān, el amāneh andak*," "I am the *Dakheel* ("protégé") of So-and-so—this trust is with thee," meaning that he, the dying man, has committed to the other as a trust the duty of going and reporting to the protector invoked that his *protégé* had been killed in despite of the honour of his name. The bystander is bound to accept, even against his will, the trust laid upon him. To be faithless to an *amāneh* ("trust") is a sin unpardonable in this world and in the world to come. "*Khāyin el amāneh, Wa nākir el wadda*,"—"the breaker of a trust and the denier of a deposit" (*i.e.*, he who denies that he has a deposit left in his safe keeping), is the most infamous character that can be given to the vilest of men.

When the news reaches the ears of him who was invoked, he has the right of assembling all his allies to help him in vindicating his honour. "Who is on my side?—who?" is the cry with which he calls upon them to arise and join their forces with his. According to the unwritten code of honour by which these matters are determined, the affronted chieftain should now ride to the place where his *protégé* was slain, and should exact vengeance during three days and a third by killing every male and taking all their property. The offenders have no right afterwards to claim either revenge for blood or the price of blood, nor the value of their property—all is forfeited and lost. At the end of the three days and a third, the relatives of the man who was slain (the *protégé*) put up a white flag in honour of the protector who has thus avenged their loss and vindicated the honour of his own name. Those who remain alive of the offending party are now safe in returning to gather up whatever may be left of their property, or those of their people who may have escaped with their lives. Justice and honour are considered to have been satisfied.

The privileges of "sanctuary" are universally recognised. A person may either claim "sanctuary" or protection from a person as in the case above described, or from God or some saint by resorting to the mosque or *Makam* ("Place") dedicated to the saint. Stores of grain or fruit, and

even valuables, are sometimes deposited within some sanctuary under the supposed guardianship of the saint, and things thus deposited are safe.

We had once an interesting case of some Fellahheen (members of the family of one of the chiefs in the district) seeking sanctuary in the house of a British subject, Mr. Meshallam, in the valley of Urtas, near Bethlehem. They barely succeeded in crossing the threshold, or rather in falling over and within it, so close were the pursuers with drawn swords behind them—so close that one of Meshallam's servants got a sword-cut by accident from one of the enemy, in their pell-mell eagerness to come up with their intended victims. But the sanctuary was respected; the open door was not violated, or the threshold crossed, and the refugees were sheltered until the affair was so far settled that they could leave without danger to life. They then acknowledged the kindness shown to them, according to the custom of the country. Taking leave with great ceremony, they set out for their own village, parading a white flag on a pole (it is sometimes tied to a spear), amid rejoicings and the firing of guns, and proclaiming as they went, "Here goes the honour, 'the white flag,' for Meshallam. May God increase his good," &c., &c. Thus all the country round was informed that the appeal for refuge and protection had been duly met. They then invited their late host to a feast specially prepared for him.

But had the latter failed in his duties, or in honourable treatment of his guests, or in any way broken faith or trust with them, a black flag would have been hoisted instead of the white one, and would have been carried through the district amid jeers and curses, as representing the *dis*-honour of the offenders. His name would thenceforward be a scorn and a by-word among men. We knew of a similar instance in which the black flag was put up over the Khān at Solomon's Pools. Proclamation was at the same time made aloud, "Here is the honour of Sheikh So-and-so, of So-and-so; and this disgrace will cleave to him unless he make amends, and thus repair the good name he has lost." A black-and-white dog with a black tip to his tail was then taken and publicly named after the offender. The news spread all over the country, and he became a proverb even to his own slaves. "Sheikh So-and-so a man! Let him go and make his honour white; let him go and take his name off that black-and-white dog—then will we hear what he has to say. Till then who will receive his testimony or accept his suretyship?"

To take and give suretyship is very common in all kinds of transactions among both the Fellahheen and the Arabs.

Not only is a *kafeel* (or rather more than one *kafeel*) required in transactions involving the payment of money, but in many other things, the performance of a promise, the carrying out of a contract, the execution of any stipulated agreement; all these are very commonly strengthened by the nomination of sureties, "*kufalah*" on either side, for the parties engaged. No man is considered worthy to be a *kafeel*, unless he has good reputation for honour and honesty, and he must moreover be competent to execute his obligations if necessary, or power-

ful enough to oblige the person for whom he has given his *kufālah* ("suretyship"), to fulfil his agreement, whatever it may be.

A builder will give the guarantee of sureties for the due completion of his contract. A seller, for the strict observance of the terms of the sale. The parties to a truce after war, or a treaty or agreement of peace, each give the guarantee of responsible *kufālah* that all will be done as has been stipulated.

It is considered an honour to be nominated *kafeel*, or surety for a personage of importance. Cases sometimes occur where such a person will reply when the opposite side say, "Who will be thy *kafeel*?"—

"I am my own *kafeel*." The words sound haughty, but a man of position would scorn to break the guaranty thus given, and he would be eternally disgraced if he were to do so.

The suretyship is not always given in writing, though that is the usual form, by writing the name and affixing the seal to the document, whatever it may be. But it is quite enough if a person declare himself before witnesses to be *kafeel*. He is as much bound to fulfil the obligations as if he had set his seal to the contract.

And how if a man breaks a trust? was a question which we asked of our native friends one day. The reply was as follows:—

"In case of a man (among either Bedaween or Fellahheen) breaking trust in regard to a sum of money deposited with him (God forgive us for thinking of such a thing!), he would be brought before a judge, who would ask him the reason.

"Hunger would not be accepted as a sufficient reason, but he might be excused if he would prove that it had been taken from him by violence of enemies, or by Turkish soldiers; but this would have to be fully proved.

"In all other cases he would have to repay fourfold, and he and all his posterity would be stigmatised with the name of 'Khayin amanet-ho' ('He who betrayed his trust'). And no character can be given viler than this to even the meanest of men."

SUEZ AND ITS DESERT.

Notes by Mr. WILLIAM ANDREWS, of the Peninsular and Oriental Company.

THE desert near Suez is extremely arid; the rainfall is very small, and the sky rarely clouded. In summer the air becomes intensely heated, and owing to the great dryness of the climate desiccation is rapid, a dead camel drying up before the vultures can dispose of it.

Before the canal was made, the only drinking water was from brackish wells at distant intervals, and there was no agricultural class amongst the inhabitants, vegetables and fruit being brought from Cairo. After the completion of the sweet-water canal, cultivation commenced, and the gardens now cover 40 or 50 acres of land bordering the canal, sometimes beneath its level and sometimes above. The gardens are let out in