

## MORALS OF THE FELLAHÎN.

*(Answers to Questions.)*

By P. J. BALDENSPERGER, Esq.

THE following answers must be taken as a general description of the fellahin, of whom it cannot be affirmed that any are either "good" or "bad," but the character of the greater number is indicated.

1. *What sort of reputation have the people which you are describing?*

Answer. It is very different; thus, the Bethlehemites may be divided into three classes: the Moslem Fawaghré, فواغره, the Greek Christians, and the Latin Christians. As the name of the Moslems indicates, they came from Beit-fâghûr, a village above the Wady el Biâr, now in ruins, فاعور. Towards the end of the last century they took possession of a part of Bethlehem. They are darker than the Latin Christians, who themselves are descended from European Christians who came here as pilgrims and merchants, many probably being of Venetian origin, as their Italian-sounding names still denote. Most of the Christians of the Greek Church closely resemble the Moslems. They are the original Christians of Bethlehem, or have flocked to this centre in the course of centuries.

It is asked: *Are they brave, generous, truthful, and honest, or are they the reverse—thieves, liars, cowards—or are some good, some bad?* The Fawaghré may be called brave and even generous to some extent, whilst the Christians are cowards, and, being of a mercenary turn of mind, rather stingy, as compared with others around them; for whilst the fellahin in general treat guests with much honour and hospitality, this custom is rapidly dying away among the aristocratic Christians.

Truthfulness, honesty, or the contrary, are very relative qualities. These people would not call themselves liars for putting facts in a way to serve their own ends, nor do they consider a man dishonest who does not steal anything of considerable value. The word thief

حرامى, *harami*, or خاين, *khain*, is only used for burglars or robbers. Also there are different ways of viewing some things which are allowed. Thus, a man may take grapes from a vineyard in the daytime, but if he take them by night he is called a thief and punished as such. Of course there is a good deal of common sense in this, for the first man only means to eat grapes, whilst the nocturnal visitor steals. The Fawaghré were formerly burglars, but have of late years taken to work, generally carrying loads between Jerusalem and Jaffa, or from the stone quarries to Jerusalem. The Beit Jala Christians, who were almost all originally of the Greek Church, are generally considered braver and

more generous than Bethlehem Christians, and they are also less given to mercantile pursuits. Bethlehem Christians have been travelling the world over for the last 25 years, whilst Beit Jala Christians are stone-carriers or lime-burners, and the habit of being out day and night influences the character to a great extent. The less the fellahin frequent the towns the braver they may be considered, but honesty is not one of the virtues they can boast of. Highway robbery is less practised now than it used to be, but some villages seem to have a predilection for burglary—those situated near towns being often tempted to this—whilst those near the great roads leading from one town to another incline to highway robbery. Kūryet el 'Enab, commonly known as Abu Ghōsh, has had its notoriety as a robber village, and the inhabitants still retain some of the impudence of their immediate ancestors. Lifta as well as Mālhab were of the burgling order. Urtās and el Khūdr, small and out of the way, may be classed as peaceful and, to a great extent, honest. Deir Eyūb, دیر ایوب, not far from Bab el Wad, are notorious robbers and thieves to this day. Perhaps this has been brought about by their situation, which enables them to survey the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem without themselves being seen, whilst the inhabitants of Beit Mahsir, بیت محسیر, also not very far from the road, but without the same facility for surveillance, are more retired, brave, peaceful, and industrious. In years gone by when their powerful neighbours of Kūryet Abu Ghōsh used to make raids upon them, they would submit without murmuring. Very much depends on the origin of the different villagers, religion always having had some part in it. Abu Ghōsh and Emmaus, near Latrōn, are of the same origin, most likely of Circassian descent, whence their arrogance. Surafend el Kharāb, سرفند الخراب, 4 kilometres west of Ramleh, has a very wicked population taken all in all, differing greatly from their next neighbours of Kubeibeh, كبيبة, of Egyptian origin, who, although of no very good reputation, still are more peaceable than the Sarafaud people. Then again, almost all villagers along the Jerusalem road are petty thieves, and have more immoral vices than those living further away, also they are less generous in consequence of their continual contact with strangers of all classes and nations. The word *brave*, translated by the fellahin into *man*, رجال, is developed into several meanings; thus, a *man* gives to eat to any stranger passing by, as well as being brave in fighting. Again, manliness, عراقيل, may be shown by taking away property forcibly from other villagers, or from those living in the same village, usually as a punishment; this is called robbing, نهب, in their legal way, and is restricted to some villages. The further off from the seat of Government the hardier and bolder they are to execute their own laws. Going to accuse in towns shows decadence of their independence.

Again, goat-stealing is counted as manliness. This is practised in the mountains, and very often done as vengeance—the stealing party either hides in advance between the rocks where the flock is expected to pass, or takes the goats out of the folds. This prey is mostly killed at once and roasted and eaten, either by the thieves only or by the whole families. Generally they prepare an oven, *زرب*, made for the purpose, by loose stones piled on each other, leaving a hollow large enough to introduce the goat or lamb; when the stones are sufficiently heated, the meat is put in whole and covered with the heated stones for an hour or so. Afterwards the meat is quite tender, and is eaten with the more appetite if the enemy is greater.

In fighting against each other, either with stones or arms, they may be called bold; they seldom hide behind rocks or walls, although they are cowards.

They have vices, though different from those of the townspeople, inherited from time immemorial—as Moses told the Children of Israel in Leviticus xviii, 23–27, to keep themselves from such abominations.

2. *How are women punished when they are unchaste, either before or after marriage?*

Answer. Women are punished by death when the consequence of their unchastity can really be proved, be it before or after marriage. The way the punishment is fulfilled is generally brought about by the coaxing of the nearest-of-kin; the father, or brother, or cousin entices the accused to go to some out-of-the-way place, where they pretend business, or in harvest time an excuse can readily be found; the victim also very often is aware of what is going to happen. Any mode of killing is adopted. I have known cases of being cut to pieces, others strangled, others shot, or simply cutting the head off. It is considered a great dishonour for the family to leave the adulteress unpunished. Honour is saved when the deed is done, and as a sign that vengeance has been taken, some blood ought to be smeared on the turban of the executioner when entering the village; the neighbours then cease their blame.

Near large towns they are less strict, partly from personal degradation and liberal views, and partly from the impossibility of escaping the Turkish law.

Several cases in Urtâs were punished, one by strangulation in a cave several miles away, another was shot by her brother-in-law. Her husband was in the army, and, as he never came back, the case was never reported. In the first case, a girl was killed by her brother and cousin; here, too, nobody had anything to say, and the case was covered. A woman of Surafend left her village and dishonoured herself and family by giving herself away in the streets of Jerusalem. Her brother went there, treated her very kindly, and succeeded in making her go home on a visit, where she was treated with much love during a month. One day when he was out ploughing, he asked her to bring him his dinner, which she

unhesitatingly did. They sat down to eat, and having done so, he asked her to go to the sand-hills of Rûbîn in search of wood. He followed her there, and when he approached her with his axe, she fell on her knees begging for life, but he said: "Thou whore, thou hast stained our honour, we can only wash it clean with thy blood." He hacked one arm away, and then the other, she all the time begging him to spare her life. Then he unrolled her hair, and dragging her with fury, cut off her head, smeared some of her blood on his turban, and buried the mutilated corpse. When he came home, rumour of his behaviour was soon spread, and his enemies tried to let the Government officials know, but he left the village, and is said to have been seen in the Hauran. But the family stain was removed.

Formerly, when the Government power did not extend very far beyond the walls of Jerusalem, they killed them openly. In Beit Sâhûr many years ago a woman was discovered having been on forbidden ground; the elders of the village and the family council took the woman down to Bab-el-Masié, باب الماسة, and sat down in a large circle, the woman in the middle: they now voted as to what should be her punishment, and all except one man said death. She was then and there cut to pieces by the whole assembly, the one man having narrowly escaped to share her lot, though he was innocent, and only from compassion wanted to save her. Thus, examples may be found here and there, but certainly they become more rare as we near the towns.

### 3. Are men punished for adultery as well as women?

Answer. Yes, if there are sufficient proofs, but this being very difficult, they mostly escape the punishment. Where the relatives of the abused woman think they have ample proof of the adulterer, they will kill him clandestinely, in fact a good many murders originate thus: but a man has always to be avenged, there is no end to the vengeance. The following is an example: A Faghuri went north stealing. In the Nâblus district it is customary for strangers to beg their bread at the ovens. The burglar sat down in the street to await some occasion. Presently a well-dressed woman came out with a wooden dish, باطيه, *batié*, containing dough and pigeons, which she was taking to the oven, طبرون, *tabaney*. He now slipped into the house and hid in the wheat-storer (خابية), with the intention of stealing what he could when the inmates were asleep. After a while the woman came back with the roasted pigeons and fresh bread, put them on a tray of straw, طبق, and covered them. She then put on her wedding clothes, perfumed herself, painted her eyes, and let in a male friend. They had their supper, when suddenly a knock at the door announced her husband, who had been away to buy corn, and had returned unexpectedly, with two loads of wheat. In haste, the woman put her lover into the wheat-storer, and opened with *ahlan wa sahan*,

أهلن وسهين Welcome to my husband. Of course, the wheat had now to be stored away--the thief and the lover sitting side by side as quiet as possible. When the wheat came pouring in, the thief jumped up, and called the attention of the house-owner to the different events of the evening. They now brought both lovers and laid them face to face on each other, and in this position cut both heads off with one stroke of a sword. Both corpses were thrown into the well in the courtyard, and the thief in the self-same hour left the house and village, and was never again seen in that neighbourhood. A Dervish, an unmarried man, under pretence of frantic fits of holiness, had, in his nightly runs over the mountains of Urtas, a secret *rencontre* with a maiden. When the secret was divulged, the Dervish secretly left Urtas (see *Quarterly Statement*, January, 1894, pp. 34-35), for the next-of-kin would have killed him, in spite of his holiness. The woman was strangled. It is only the apparent consequence of adultery which is thus punished; for it would be next to impossible to punish—at least fellahin—legally, a man or a married woman, as the consequences can always be shifted; the law for denouncing being so minute. Thus, a man found shut up in one room with a woman, or even in her bed, cannot be judged as guilty, as long as the act itself has not been seen. There may be very strong suspicion, but the husband dare not act lightly. A man of Beit Dejan was telling me one day, in the presence of two fellahin from Emmaus and Beit Mahsir, how he had watched his wife, whom he suspected of having a lover. One day he feigned leaving the village, but by a round-about way came back and hid in the vicinity, when his doubts were soon confirmed by the entrance into the house of his wife's lover. He called immediately several men of the village, and they surrounded the house, and called to the woman to open the door, which, after some hesitation, she did. She had hidden the lover, but a close inspection of the premises soon brought him to light, when the husband only sent both away, immediately announcing to his wife her divorce. At this, my two mountain fellah friends had their swords half drawn, as if to assist at such a capital moment, and could hardly await the announcement of the execution of the sinners in some brutal way. The blood of the two mountaineers had risen whilst the Dejanite coolly explained to them how he did not even beat either his wife or her lover; for, said he, they would have accused him in Jaffa, and he might have been punished; but thus he was divorced legally before the judge in Jaffa, having sufficient proofs. My mountaineers spat in the Dejanite's face—for such degradation of fellahin they would, under the same circumstances, have cut both to pieces. (Burning, as proposed by Judah, Genesis xxxviii, 24, is unknown.)

4. *Are thieves punished by having their hands cut off?*

Not now; but in times past this must have been customary, and up to a very recent date. The Crimean War may be regarded as bringing

in a general change in the relations between fellahin and Government laws, of course, always in a progressive way, beginning with Jerusalem and its environs and Jaffa and its environs. All other towns and villages long retained a semi-independent life.

In the story of the Zir (about the year 600 A.D.), cutting off hands is mentioned. The Haj Mustapha Abu Ghôsh, who held the mountains of Judah under his supreme authority up to 1863, punished thieves for a first offence by cutting off a hand and a foot; old offenders were usually killed at once. At a later period they used only to beat them, but in such an unmerciful way that death would often be the consequence. In the plains, where waterwheels are used, a thief was sometimes bound to the chain, and carried round under the water several times. Many years ago, when having a talk with some fellah Sheikhs, I asked them whether they would object to French rule? Well, they said, it was all right, but they were afraid of the punishments being those of having hands cut off for thieves, and tongues cut out for liars. This is perhaps a tradition kept up from St. Louis, who used to do this out of his extreme piety.

5. *Explain how murder is punished, and what money is needed to condone it. Explain all you know about blood feuds.*

Answer. When murder has been committed, the malefactor and the kindred *حامولك* of the murderer leave the place, if it is a known fact, and cannot be denied. They generally go to some powerful neighbour or ally, and beg his assistance or protection *دخاله dakhalet*. They usually experience a friendly reception. An armistice *عظوة* of a certain number of days is called for, and the family of the person murdered try to arrange matters through the mediation of their protectors. If an agreement is come to, their law is *Piast. 33,333, para. 33*. But, as a rule, a girl is given in marriage to the deceased's family, or even 2 or 3, also several yoke of oxen, or a piece of land. A day for meeting is appointed, and they generally meet well armed, for, in case of an emergency, they may settle the dispute by a fight. They have a dinner together, differing in nothing from all other dinners—rice, and meat, or bread, in broth—they kiss each others' heads, and promise to live henceforth in peace. Though time may help them somewhat, the desire for vengeance is so strong amongst them, that it takes a good many years to really arrange matters. If they cannot agree, time is no question. They say a Bedawy had waited to take his revenge 40 years, when he met a relation of the murderer of his relative and killed him; but a quarter of an hour later he met the murderer himself and repented for having been too quick. Therefore they wait as long as possible, and try all they can to kill the murderer himself; unless the murderer is not worth killing, then a better man is chosen. In fact they always claim four men at least. In cases where money is not accepted, or the

conditions are too hard to fulfil, the vengeance, *الثأر el thar*, continues through generations. Government interference of late years has hardly been able to put a stop to the feuds, though it has somewhat checked them, and interfering as far as the money-question goes has considerably weakened the opponents, who are frightened by the terrible expenses. In a case of murder, already alluded to on page 132, *Quarterly Statement*, April, 1894, where the whole village of Urtas agreed to kill Salem, the tyrant of the place—who together with a captain of Gendarmes in Jerusalem oppressed the people—they had agreed to lay in wait for him on different roads, and to bear the consequences together. Accordingly on the 17th November, 1875, he was killed on the way to Bethlehem; the murderer was known, but the family of the murdered man was too weak to do anything beyond denouncing the whole set of conspirators, who were imprisoned at Jerusalem for many years, but by means of money they got out again, and the man is still unavenged. The man left three boys, between one and five, who at the age of ten already began talking of the vengeance they had to take. On several occasions in my presence they, together with their nephew (at the time of the murder a man of 20), tried in the heat of dispute to take their vengeance, *أستد ثأرهم istad tharkum*, but the bystanders were very careful to stop them. Amongst themselves, or in our presence, no secret was made about the hopes of taking their revenge. The offender would even come to me and tell me, if he had tried and not succeeded, either because his gun would not go off, or the victim had escaped narrowly by galloping as fast as possible. Two men especially expected to be murdered, and never went out of doors after dark, hardly through the village itself, for fear of meeting the ever-ready avenger.

In Beit Mahsir a man killed his brother many years ago. Here the case was different; neither Government officials meddled, nor did any of the family stir, as they were all the next-of-kin. But the murderer left a wife and a son, who went to her home at Lubban, in the Nâblus district. When the boy was grown up his uncle, the murderer of his father, went to claim him, pretending a desire to have his nephew with him to bring him up and marry him. The fact was he was afraid the nephew might easier find occasion of taking his vengeance if absent from the village, but if he married his daughter to his nephew they would be brought into closer contact and there would be less danger. The boy, who is now grown up, promises still to kill his uncle some day. He is a very good-natured lad, but the *thâr* cannot be omitted.

If a man is killed undesignedly, the murderer is plundered of everything he possesses by the relations of the person killed, and is obliged to flee from the village to some powerful friend or neighbour, who thus replaces the City of Refuge of the Israelites. Negotiations may begin at once, but three men may be killed in his stead without the guilty party having any claim whatever. If a woman is killed the Mohammedan blood-money, *deyê Muhamadie*, *دي محمدية* is taken, but in rare

instances blood is taken instead. It is very rare for a woman to be killed, at least willingly.

If a woman be the murderer she is not punished; the murder, if possible, is put to the account of a man. It may happen that in a riot women help the men by throwing stones, and may kill a man. Several years ago, in Kūryet el 'Enab, a man was killed by a woman who threw stones from the house-top. He begged, like Abimelech of old (Judges ix, 53) to die by the hand of a man, but, contrary to Israelite manners, this was not granted, and to this day if his enemies talk about him, it is said with contempt: "Cursed be his father, who was killed by a woman,"  
 ينعى أبو قتله مرآ (see also Judges ix, 54) *Yen'al Abu-katlatho mara.*

6. *Do you know cases in which men have been made to drink boiling water or oil to show their innocence after swearing it by Allah?*

Answer. No, but very often in Urtās they used to threaten and even appoint days on which to go to the Bal'a, بلعة south of Gaza, where a Sheikh makes the swearers lick a red-hot iron, and the guilty alone has his tongue burnt. But as such proceedings are very disastrous for both parties, they always arranged matters at the last moment before starting.

7. *How do they swear? Do they place the hand on any stone or other object in swearing?*

Answer. The real efficacious form for swearing is somewhat as follows:—

والله العظيم بالله الكريم ان يا ابن داود (وهلم جرا)

*Wallahi il 'Azeem, billahi-il-Kareem, im ya ibn Daoud (&c., &c.).*

*By God the mighty, by God the bountiful, oh son of David.*

They now say what the case may be. Instead of "son of David" they may say the prophet David himself, or the Saint before whose tomb they swear. This is generally done with great solemnity and danger, as the parties meet on an appointed day, at the Saint's tomb, mutually agreed upon, all well armed, to swear their innocence either of a theft or adultery; for murder they do not swear.

On one occasion a man had taken a mare from another one for a ride. In consequence of the ride the mare died: the owner claimed the price of the mare, and the borrower denied his liability. Consequently a day was appointed for the parties to meet in St. George's Church, which, though a Christian (Greek) Church, is still acknowledged by the Mohammedans as El-Khūdr, الخدر. The borrower of the mare approached, and put his hand to the chain in the lunatic asylum and swore, as above, and by El-Khūdr, that the mare never died in consequence of his ride. Both parties were so well armed that they only



walked home proudly without daring any attack on each other. Another man was accused of "attempt of adultery." The case had to be settled, after swearing innocence in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

المهد *el mahd* (Christians swear by the son of Mary, Jesus, the son of God; whilst Mohammedans swear by 'Esa, the son of Miriam). The accused, although guilty, swore to the husband, and after having done so, struck his adversary, غريم *Ghareem*, with a naboot on the head, saying, "Are you now content; you have had my oath?"

Another form. If a man has been wounded by a firearm the person supposed to be guilty swears:

والله العظيم بالله الكريم انى هل بروده ما همزت ولا شمزت ولا  
انى من قومها ولا حخرة يومها ولو انها الي ما اعلم وبين ادورها

*By the great God, by the generous God (here touching the gun) that this gun did neither impel (me) nor wink (to me), neither am I from its tribe, nor was I present in its day (i.e., the day of its crime), and even though it be mine, I know not where to look for it (i.e., I am ignorant of its doings).*

On some occasions they use stratagems: A man had to swear for a misdeed of which he was guilty, and, being of an honest turn of mind, he went into the house, lay on the cradle and was rocked by his mother, then with a light heart he went to swear, as above, and saying, "Since I was rocked in the cradle I never committed such a crime, nor have seen, nor beheld such."

There is another more powerful form, of which we ourselves were once the victim. . . . A "best man" from the village was brought to swear at the window of the Prophet David at Neby Da'ud, Jerusalem, that we were in the wrong, whilst three other men behind him held each other by the girdle, the first swearer holding the iron bar of the window, the others forming a chain behind him and only swearing that what the first one said was absolutely true.

On another occasion two parties had to settle the limits of their lands. They were not sure about them, so they sat down and agreed to swear by St. George, but to spare them all the trouble of going there and putting on feast clothes, they made a square with their fingers on the ground, the swearer saying, "Oh men! this square represents St. George's abode, he is over against us, but can be present just as well, so I'll swear here"; and, putting his hand on the square, swore, and it was accepted by both parties, namely, that the boundary of his lands passed in such and such a place.

8. *Can the Sheikh order a man to be put to death, or can the Elders of the tribe do so? If so, how is he killed?*

Answer. Not now. In days gone by when the Sheikhs of KÛryet el Enab, of the Abu Ghôsh family, or of Beit-'Atâb of the Sahamy family,

or of Beit Jibrín of the 'Azizy family, were all powerful ; these chieftains would simply order a man to be killed, and their orders were immediately executed. But, as already stated, the Crimean war is to be considered the end of the fellahín power in Palestine, though some far off villages south of Hebron still retain partial independence. About the year 1858, when the present inhabitants of Enmaus, east of Latrón, still lived in Kúryet (for they are relatives, and are distinguished as fellahín and 'hadar, or townspeople, حدر), a man named Shahwán, شهبوان, fell in love with a married woman and did all in his power to marry her by inducing her husband to divorce her. When entreaties and threatenings were without effect he tried to kill the man. One night when the husband was asleep at Dilb, the fountain below Kúryet el 'Enáb, Shahwán shot him with a pistol right in the breast ; the man, mortally wounded, still had strength enough to call out "Shahwán shot me !" this being heard by some neighbours. Shahwán ran home and hid the pistol, but it was generally known that he was the murderer, and without any trial the Haj Mustapha ordered him to be brought and slaughtered immediately, the relatives of the murderer having to fulfil the order. When the uncle of the murderer put the sword to his neck he fainted, but three other men standing by took the sword, and with one blow cut off his head on the manure hill. The Haj Mustapha gave orders to have him buried without ablution, with his blood and bloody garments, and had him carried away outside of the village, that his carcass should not "defile the

village," لا ينجس البَلَدَ so without prayer they buried him in a corner of the cemetery. But secretly by night his relatives poured several jars of water over his grave, to have him cleansed, and thus enable him when his time comes to enter into Paradise.

9. *Are they strict about their women? Are there many illegitimate children?*

Answer. Yes, on account of their jealousy, and very often not without cause. They all try to keep them as strict as possible : they have no confidence in their women, not in the most virtuous. Some villages are more openly given to debauchery. The less they communicate with strangers, as, for instance, outlying villages of the Hebron district, the less the scandal. However chaste a fellah wants to have the reputation of his own village, this being also a guarantee for himself, he is careless and even impudent about the reputation of another. Some villagers still consider themselves as 'hadar ; townspeople, as Bir M'afn of Emeer descent, or Kúryet el 'Enab of Abu Ghôsh memory. Their women at least half veil their faces on the approach of strangers, which fellah women do not. I know of no illegitimate children at all, at least none living in the villages, in consequence of the strictness about unchastity. On some rare occasions married women have had children,

whom the father or husband would not acknowledge, but for want of sufficient proof simply rejected the child. I knew a blind man in Jaffa who had been sent away by his father, of Beit Mahstr, when he was already grown up. The father, on careful calculations many years afterwards, had come to the conclusion that this could not be his son, and so rejected him. Again, another curious case, a married woman had a boy by another man, but the husband acknowledged the boy; not so the natural father, who, however, after the death of the wife, claimed "his son," as the woman could no more be punished. The fellahin want as many sons as they can have—for every son is capable of praising God—and the more **حمد الله** (hamd-lillabs) the better for the father's well-being in Paradise. The above case is the only one I heard of. I do not know of any unmarried woman's child living in a village.

A girl belonging to a village in the plain was with child, which would be punished by death in any other villages. Her father inquired about the father, and tried to have him marry his daughter, but he would not acknowledge the child before its birth. The girl then came to Jaffa, and put the case before the Kadi, who took her into his house, and she was confined of a boy there, who is called **ابن الدولة**, *Ibn el doleh*, Son of the Government, and the girl was paid 3 Majeedis a month to bring it up. A new order of Roman Catholic sisters came to Jerusalem several years ago, going round the villages to gather maiden-mothers expecting their children; they act as midwives, and bring the children up in the orphanage at Jerusalem in the Roman Catholic faith. Their field of labour is mostly among the Christian fellahin. The women of villages which lie near to towns, employ means for procuring abortion.

Another way of escaping punishment is also common. If the man who misled a girl consents, which is often the case, the pair go to another part of the country, beyond Jordan, amongst the Bedawin, or to the Hauran, where they act as though they were always married, and generally find employment as farmers or servants. This going away is called "a snatching away," **خطيفة**. They never come back, though for decency's sake, the family feign to minutely search for the fugitives. Years may go by before anything is known, and the girl's relatives are the more easily consoled, as a bloody act is spared to them.

In two villages in this district public houses are even found. An old woman receives into her house runaway girls from other places, and secretly lets the young men know. Though the people of these villages call this a new custom, and impute it to Government protection of women, I am inclined to find in it a very old institution. These villages may be classed with Sodom and Gomorrah: and also in Genesis xxxviii, we find Judah going to a harlot, who in those days was veiled as a particular sign, and afterwards sending her a kid as pay, openly. Thus it is very likely that the villages in the neighbourhood always had such institutions. The villages of the plain all along the way to Gaza have no

very good reputation. A great deal may be owing to an admixture of more or less Egyptian blood. Mountaineers have in all countries a better reputation than the inhabitants of the plain.

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## A JOURNEY TO PETRA—1896.

By GRAY HILL, Esq.

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DISMOUNTING we passed into the narrow gorge on foot, gazing with delighted wonder at the purple red cliffs, which rose sheer up on each side, and often overhung our heads, and failed but a little of meeting 200 or 300 feet above us. But the brilliant blue sky and glorious sunlight peeped in here and there and lit up the dark chasm. Oleanders grew along the stream bed, although many, we were told, had been cut down to make a passage in the summer of 1895, and fig and other trees flourished in clefts. In this winding cavern-passage every footfall reverberates. There was but little water at this time in the bed of the stream, it having been diverted above to irrigate the corn lands of Eljy. We missed the arch across the passage so often mentioned by previous travellers, and were told that last summer it fell down. A sudden turn brought us in sight of the celebrated Kusneh, rose-coloured in the splendid sunshine, which, owing to the abrupt turn to the right of the gorge, fell full upon it and made of it the most perfectly beautiful thing we think we ever saw. Having looked long upon this we again plunged into the chasm, and after a little while wondrous Petra opened to our view. We pitched our camp in the centre of the main valley, under the rock-cut theatre. "Murray's Guide Book" of 1868 recommends placing tents above the theatre, and no doubt a finer view could be had from there, but I could not see any place where it would be practicable to put up tents, or any way by which the baggage mules would get up to that position. We established our kitchen in a cave near at hand. The next day, however, we changed the place of the camp to just under the large rock-cut tomb or temple known as the Corinthian Tomb, a spot which we found more convenient for visiting those parts of Petra which are at a distance from the Sik.

The chief monuments of Petra have been so fully described that I will say nothing about them here. We were much struck with the great extent of the place, the number of side valleys, the upper stories of excavations tier above tier in the cliff sides, the rock-cut stairs and paths leading to places not visible from the valley, and the very great number of caves cut out of the soft sandstone which had, no doubt, formerly been used as dwelling places. We had Wády Músa to ourselves. The presence of the soldiers seemed to keep the Bedawín and the fellahín of Eljy at a distance. Sometimes we noticed dark figures watching us from the hills, but no one