

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

(Continued from p. 137.)

By PHILIP G. BALDENSPERGER, Esq.

THE FELLAḤĪN.

As a rule the house of the Fellaḥ is composed of a single room which is divided into different portions; in addition to this there is a court in front of the house, which is the real dwelling-place in summer. Larger animals, such as camels, cows, and donkeys, find a place in the front part of the room, which, being a step lower than the other parts, is called "the bottom of the house" (*ka' ed-dār*). The camels kneel next the wall with the head towards the family, then in succession come the cows and donkeys, sometimes tethered, with a manger before them, called *methaved* (مذود). The last-mentioned is not above the level of the ground, and is merely shut round about by a small bank of mortar. In the second part of this room is the *mestabet* (مصتبة), the sitting-room and bedroom of the family. It contains the best furniture of the house, and is about half a yard higher than the other part already referred to. On this floor is a hearth in one corner where the housewife sits and prepares the food. There is no chimney, and the smoke after filling the room escapes by the door or by a small hole above the windows—if there are any. In winter, and this is the only time when they really have a fire inside, the smoke is certainly a nuisance, until the fire has burned up and kept a temperate heat, and is then very agreeable to those almost clothesless people. The bedding is put away in the daytime in a niche formed in the back wall. This room is divided off from the store-room, called *kate'* (قتع), for straw, wood, &c. Sometimes there is another upper floor, called *raviet* (راوية) or *siddet* (سدة), sometimes used by the older people, when two married families occupy the same dwelling-place. Below the *raviet* is a dark recess known as the "Secret place" (*sirr*). A small poultry-shed (*khum*) is built in some corner of the lower room. The hens are sometimes shut up here at night, though they usually prefer to perch on the *khabiet* in the store-room. All these divisions

are under the same roof. When there are herds these are in a stable, either a big cave with a large court in front or a chamber built on the same principles as the house.

The houses of the Jerusalem district are well built, durable erections of stone with vaulted arches, built by masons from Bethlehem. Those in the mountain country of Ephraim and Hebron have but two stone arches, equi-distant from the outside walls, and the intervening space is covered with trunks of trees cut from the forests. These rude beams are called *jizr*, and require to be renewed from time to time. They are referred to in Eccles. x, 18: "By slothfulness, the beams decay, and through idleness of the hands the house leaketh." These are filled in with small brushwood, upon which is placed a layer of earth and stones, and finally a thick layer of clay and straw well kneaded together and spread over with the hands. When freshly laid the grains which have been in the straw spring up, and the roof looks like a field where the crops begin to sprout, but on account of the thinness of the soil it soon withers again. It is this grass on the house-top which is referred to by the prophet Isaiah (2 Kings xix, 26, Isaiah xxxvii, 27) in his description of the passing away of the Assyrian might under Sennacherib. When winter approaches the roofs are plastered over again and levelled and pressed as much as possible with a stone roller to avoid the disagreeable dripping of the water (alluded to in Proverbs xix, 13, and xxvii, 15), which sooner or later invariably sets in after heavy rains. A hole leading to the back part of the house is called *rôzanet* (רֹזָנֶת); through this the *tibn* (short-cut straw) is taken into the house, since the bundles would be too large to pass through the doors. The houses in the maritime plains are still more miserable, and cannot stand any lengthy rain. They are built of unhewn stones and mortar, with as little lime as possible. The roofs are all of wood, without arches to support them, and as they stretch across from one wall to the other they are necessarily smaller. A good deal of brushwood and thorn is used to fill up the crevices of the roof before setting the final layer of sand above, and consequently they easily catch fire. I have never heard of houses in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, where the houses are all stone, catching fire, but in the plains (especially since petroleum has been introduced) incendiarism is by no means rare. As regards the latter point we read of the relatives of Samson's bride threatening to

burn her and her father's house with fire (Judges xiv, 15), which was only possible in a region where the roofs were built of wood. The houses of the plains often fall in after rains, and there alone could Samson, who well knew how badly they were built, ask to be placed between the two wooden pillars which supported the house (Judges xviii, 29-30).

In the mountains, in the case of those who have houses of stone with vaulted roofs, an upper storey is sometimes built. This is called *'oliet* (علية),¹ from its being high, and is lit by a couple of windows called *mejwez* (مَجْوِز), i.e., the pair. Little or no lime is used for the walls, and the roof is made by laying branches across. The smaller houses (*sekifet*) never have windows. In the plains they are a little wider, and are called *bá'iket*, and as the material with which they are built is much softer, thieves can easily break through without noise.²

Many fellahín who live in caves build a wall in front of the mouth; this dwelling is called *shékif*, or cleft. The inhabitants of Siloam have many such buildings built into the rock, both in the village itself and in the environs, and many such rock-dwellings in the Valley of Hinnom are now only inhabited by goats. In the Valley of Khareitún, below the Frank Mountains, the Ta'amry have many rock-houses, now principally used as sheep-cotes and barns. When the people of Urtás are in danger of being seized by the Government they retire to these rock-houses, which are inaccessible to cavalry. The prophet Jeremiah, a native of Anathoth, probably knew not only the rock inhabitants of Siloam, but also those of the inaccessible Valley of Adullam (Jer. xxi, 13). Obadiah, too, pronouncing the judgment of Edom, refers to the almost impregnable rock-castle of Kerak (Obad., v. 3). "Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high."

The floors of most of the houses are not of flagstones, as in the towns, but are plastered with the simplest and most accessible material they can find. In the mountains small stones, earth, and lime, or bits of potsherds, are mixed together, whilst in the plains earth alone is used, and nearer the sea gravel and sand is employed. The walls of the houses are sometimes plastered and white-washed inside in the better class villages as Bethlehem, Beth Jâla, and

¹ This corresponds to the *'aliyyah* אֲלִיָּהּ of the Old Testament.

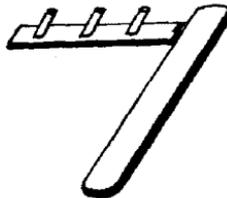
² Cp. Job xxiv, 16.

Rāmallah, or they are plastered with clay, a work which is done by the women. These walls are sometimes covered with rough designs, and, although some are supposed to represent animals, yet the lines are almost always at right angles, so that even a moon is represented quite square and a horse is drawn by means of a number of triangles.¹

In the vaulted houses the ceiling is called *'akēd*, in the others *sateh*, and the roof is designated *hait*, which means "protected," although, as a matter of fact, it is not protected at all on the most dangerous side.

In the mountainous regions the houses usually are built against the steep sides of the mountain, and the roofs are therefore easily climbed without a staircase. A wall is often built against the side towards the street, to prevent animals or children getting up and walking on the fruit, which is spread there (as being the best protected place) to dry.

The houses have seldom more than one door, and at the most only one window, for windows are the privilege of the stone houses, and therefore only found in the mountains. Sometimes there are two windows, divided only by a narrow lintel before which is a moulding, on which the head of the family sits to look out when he has nothing to do or takes his meals when inclined to be alone. There is no lattice, so common in towns, and the windows are closed at night-time by solid shutters bolted with wooden bolts. The shutters are called *bāb et-Tākat*, that is, door of the window. When the door is shut from the inside big wooden bolts are used. The key (*mefūth*) is of wood, and has three wooden teeth to fit into



three holes which push up the bolt and thus allow one to open or shut the door. A small hole is left in the bottom of the door, to allow the hens to go in and out when the door is shut.

¹ See *Quarterly Statement*, 1893, p. 216.

The furniture of the house has next to be considered. First there is a mat (when the houses are near to the villages that make them). It takes the place of the carpet, which is rolled up and put in the niche with the bedding. The fellahîn call the carpet *hujra(t)*, it is made by the women from the hair of the goats and the wool of the sheep. As cushions they have the *waşade(t)*, the pillow-case of which is of thick woven wool and hair like the *hujra(t)*. The carpet is spread out for guests and is used as a mattress at night time by the whole family. A large coverlet called *lihâf* completes the bedding. The bedding, as a whole, is called *farâsh* ("spreading"), and when the man orders his wife to prepare the sleeping apartment he says simply *uffurshi* ("spread"). The *hujra(t)* is such an essential part of the household belongings that a family without one is considered really poor. The Hebrews, no doubt, had their carpets, and it is possible that the word *yêrî'ôth* (יריעות) usually rendered curtains (Exodus xxvi, 1, &c.) should sometimes be thus translated. So when the Psalmist says "Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain" (Psalms civ, 2, R.V.), we should remember that a curtain must be vertical, whilst the heavens are spread more after the manner of a carpet. When the Hebrews left tents to dwell in houses of stone, the tent-curtains were no doubt used as carpets. Curtains are called *mâsâk* (Exodus xxvi, 36) for the doors, and *kêlâ'im* (Exodus xxvii, 9) for the hangings of the tabernacle. At the present day the carpets of the fellahîn are generally grey (from the undyed mixture of hair and wool), with lines of red or blue from the dyed wool woven into it.

The most necessary implements are those used for culinary purposes, though they have no kitchen, but simply a hearth set upon the floor in the best part of the room. Two large stones or two small parallel walls constitute the hearth, where in winter time the fire is also kept to warm the room.

The fellahîn have fewer copper implements than the madaniyeh.¹ They comprise (a) the big caldron (*dist*), which, though used for washing, is mostly intended for the cooking of whole sheep or goats at feasts; (b) the *tanjara(t)*, perhaps the Biblical *kiyyôr*; (c) the frying pan (*meklâyet*) made of iron; (d) the *kidre(t)*, the earthenware kettle used in every household; it is almost round with an opening smaller than the body of the kettle and two enormous handles by which to

¹ See *Quarterly Statement*, 1903, p. 166 sq.

lift it. This may be the *fârâr* used by the Israelites to prepare the manna (Numbers xi, 8). A long wooden ladle is always used to stir the food or to take it out into the dishes.

The food is set before the family in wooden plates, which are of various sizes and have three different names. The largest is called *bâ,ie(t)*, it is also used to wash the clothes in. The second is the *kadah*, which may also be used to soak the food for the camel,¹ and the smallest one, often not larger than an ordinary soup plate, is the *handâbe(t)*, which is used for honey or oil, or for any liquid food into which the bread is dipped. The food in this case is presented on the straw tray (*tabak*). The rolling pin, *merak*, is called *shubak* in the towns. Water is stored in a big jar (the *zîr*), which is always kept in the corner before the entrance, with a small cup of tin or pottery to drink from. Other similar utensils are the *jara(t)*, which is carried on the head by the women from the fountain to the house; the *'aslie(t)*; the *mehlabé(t)*; the *brâk* (ابريق), and the *sahn* (صحن), a deep bowl.² The various water skins are called *zarf*, *kirby* (قربة), *si'in*, and *'ekke(t)*. The *jrâb* (جراب) is a leather bag with leather straps, generally home-made and very carefully tanned from kids' skins, in which are carried provisions when on a journey or for a day's work away from home. It is also used for the flour, and is hung against the wall on a nail or peg (*watad*) to keep it from damp or from the depredations of animals. Isaiah xxii, 23, shows us that the (Hebrew) *yâthêd* was already in use in his days, and similarly Ezra (ix, 8) appreciates the "nail in the sure place." The men have a small *jrâb* better tanned than the above, and sometimes painted red on the outside; it also is home-made and is used for tobacco, and is called *kîstutun*.

The hand-mill is found in every house, and fixed into a kind of clay tray so that the flour falls into this and is gathered and put into the *jrâb*. The mill is called *tahûne(t)*, but in some districts, towards Egypt, has the name *rahâ*, with which we may compare the Hebrew (dual) *rêhayim*. Another kind of hand-mill is called *mejrashe(t)* it only breaks the corn, or else is used to prepare the vetches for the camel's food. Before the wheat is put into the mill it is sifted through the sieve (*ghurbâl*), which is made of the sinews of the sheep. The women sift with great dexterity, rubbing the

¹ The dough is also kneaded in it.

² See *Quarterly Statement*, 1904, p. 51 sqq.

tiny stones (*šarâr*) about the wheat and, cleverly shaking the sieve, catch the stones in her lap, thus illustrating the sifting of the House of Israel referred to in Am. ix, 9. The flour sieve (*munkhul*) is of horse-hair, and the straw sieve (*kurbâl*) is only used on the threshing floor to sift the straw out of the wheat after the wind has done most of the work.

The cradles are made of wood, and have two semi-circular legs to rock them. There is nothing particular to note about the *šrîr*, as it is called; it is to be found in every house where there are young children.

Households which can afford the luxury have the special coffee implements, consisting of the coffee-pan with iron ladle chained to it (the *melmasse(t)* is simply a broad iron ladle with a long handle, and is used solely for the roasting of coffee); the *bukruj* or coffee-pot of brass, in which the coffee is boiled; the *jurn* or *hâwen*, the wooden mortar for pounding the beans; the *medak*, a stone or wooden pestle; and, finally, the small lamp (*šrâj*) for which is provided a small niche in the wall, or it stands upon a wooden pedestal called *mesraje(t)*; this, however, I have only seen in the plains of Sharon.

The lamp is, or rather used to be, the well-known oval earthen oil lamp, but it is fast disappearing, and tin lamps for petroleum are now found even in the remotest villages. The lamp is tended by the women, who buy the oil out of their own savings and keep the lamp burning all night. A man who found his house without a light would curse the darkness and the woman who had not kept the light burning. The *nêr* or lamp of the Hebrews was regarded in much the same manner as the *šrâj* of the fellaḥîn. Darkness then as now was a calamity, and the lamps were kept burning all night (Prov. xiii, 9; xx, 20; Job xviii, 6). Then also the woman tended the light, and it is said of the model woman in the last chapter of Proverbs, "Her *nêr* goeth not out by night" (xxxii, 18). A lamp-stand was among the objects which the rich woman in Shunem put into the upper chamber for the prophet Elisha (2 Kings, iv, 10). It is called *mēnôrâh*, and was, no doubt, a wooden stand like the modern *mesraje(t)*.

Every saint's tomb has a light or lamps to light it, and the tradition is that when the lamp is not lit the saint lights it himself.

(To be continued.)