

PALESTINIAN ANIMAL FOLK-LORE.

(Concluded from "Quarterly Statement," 1904, p. 274.)

By the Rev. J. E. HANAUER.

7. To what I have said about the hyæna,¹ I would add that besides and in spite of the evil qualities popularly ascribed to it, the beast is said to have one good trait, namely, that of gratitude to those who treat it well. In proof of this the following interesting story is told:—

"A Bedouin having been found murdered, suspicion pointed to a young man in a certain village as the criminal, and although innocent, he had to flee from his home in order to escape from the vengeance of the murdered man's relatives. On his flight northwards he was met by an old man of his acquaintance who asked him where he was going, and who, when told why he had left his village, warned him from going further in the said direction, because the avengers of blood were ahead of and awaiting him. He, therefore, turned eastwards, but had not gone far before he met with another acquaintance who told him not to proceed any further that way, because a little further on there were other relatives of the murdered Bedouin lying in wait for him. On hearing this he turned westward, only to meet a third friend, who warned him that in that direction also a party of his enemies were on the look-out for him. In this dilemma he cried out 'O Allah, thou knowest that I am innocent, and yet, whichever way I turn, I shall meet with those who seek my life.' He then left the beaten track and went down a hillside which was *wa'ar*, i.e., covered with thicket and brushwood, towards a valley where he knew of some caves, in one of which he hid. As soon, however, as he got used to the gloom he perceived to his horror that he was in the den of a female hyæna that, leaving a litter of cubs asleep, had gone abroad in search of prey. The unfortunate youth was just about to quit the fearful place in order to seek shelter elsewhere when he heard human footsteps approaching. Fearing that his foes had tracked him to his place of concealment he drew back into the darkest recess of the cave. A couple of minutes later he saw a man crawl in, take up

¹ See *Quarterly Statement*, 1904, p. 271 sq.

one hyæna's cub after the other and put it into his 'abba in order to carry them off for sale. By this time the fugitive had recognised the new-comer as an old friend of his, and, coming forward, he made himself known to him and begged him to spare the young creatures, stating that he was now tasting the bitterness of being hunted, and entreating his friend not to hurt the young hyænas, and then perhaps Allah would one day save both of them from evil. The man consented, and, having put down the cubs, left the cave, after having promised the fugitive not to betray his hiding place, but to come and tell him as soon as it would be safe for him to return to his friends. He had scarcely left the cavern when the female hyæna returned, and, perceiving a human being in the cave, was going to attack him, when the cubs rushed up, and by their yelping attracted her attention. After a good deal of hyæna-talk between her and her children, she seemed to understand that the man had been a protector to her little ones, and, like Androcles' lion, she showed her gratitude by bringing him food, not portions of dead carcasses such as hyænas live upon, but hares, partridges, young kids, &c., which she had caught alive. In this way the young man lived as the hyæna's guest for some time, till at last his friend came and told him that, the real murderer having been found and punished, he could safely return home."

I relate the story as it was told me by a lady who had heard it from a fellahah. It seems to me to be Seneca's well-known tale of the runaway slave and his grateful king of beasts,¹ but in a South Palestinian modern fellah dress. The lion has been extinct in Palestine for centuries, the leopard is rare, though occasionally met with, and so the hyæna, at present the largest of the South Judean carnivora (the bear being found only in the Lebanon and Anti-Libanus), and whose name, **التببع**, Ed-Daba', is somewhat like the name, **السبع**, Es-Saba', by which the lion is most frequently known, has taken his place in the legend.

8. As might have been expected, the serpent figures largely in the animal folk-lore of Palestine. The following may serve in illustration :—

"The serpent is the most accursed of all created things, and very treacherous. It is at the root of all the evil in the world.

¹ Mentioned first, so it is said, in his *De Beneficiis*.

Who does not know that when Iblis was refused admission into Paradise he went sneaking round the hedges and trying in turn to persuade and bribe the different animals to let him in. It was in vain, till the serpent bribed by the promise that, as a recompense, the sweetest food should be his, and on the suggestion of the Evil One that he would find that human flesh was the most delicious of all the eatables; introduced the Devil into the Garden, concealed in the hollow of his fangs. From this hiding place he spoke to Eve, who imagined that it was the serpent that was addressing her. What mischief resulted is well known. The serpent was, however, as he well deserved, cheated of his reward. It happened in the following manner:—When, after the Fall, an angel was appointed to assign to every creature its special food and country, the serpent shamelessly demanded that he should have human flesh for his sustenance, in accordance with the promise given him. Our father Adam, however, very naturally protested, and wisely pointed out that, as nobody had ever tasted human flesh or blood, it was impossible to maintain that men's flesh was the most luscious of food-stuffs. Thus he gained a year's respite for himself and his race, and, in the interval, the mosquito was deported to go round the world and taste the blood of every creature." (This it could, of course, do without injury to any animal, for the Anopheles' theory had not yet been invented.) "At the end of twelve months the mosquito was to report in open court on the result of its researches. Adam, however, had a faithful friend in the swallow. This bird, unseen by the mosquito, 'shadowed' it all the twelve months till the great day of decision came, when, as the mosquito was on his way to report on its investigations, the swallow met him openly and asked him what flesh and blood he had found to taste the best. 'Man's,' answered the mosquito. 'What?' said the swallow, 'please say it again, and loudly, for I hear badly.' On this the mosquito opened its mouth wide in order to shout the answer, when the swallow, with incredible swiftness, darted in his bill and plucked out the dangerous insect's tongue. They then proceeded on their way to the place where, by appointment, all living creatures were assembled to hear the final decision. On being asked the result of his investigations, the mosquito, who could now only buzz, was unable to make himself understood, and the swallow, pretending to be his spokesman, declared that the insect had told him that he had found that the blood of the frog

was the sweetest. In corroboration of his statement, he said that he had accompanied the mosquito on his travels, and many of the animals present, who had come from different remote regions, respectively testified that they had seen the mosquito and swallow at the same time in their special country of residence—one animal in such and such a month, and another at a different time of year. Sentence was therefore given that frogs, and not men, should constitute the serpent's nourishment. In its rage and disappointment, the deadly creature darted forward in order to seize and destroy the swallow. The latter, however, was on the alert, and so the serpent only succeeded in biting a bit out of its tail feathers, and ever since that time the philanthropic bird has had its tail forked. Baffled in this manner, the serpent, which was at that time a four-legged creature, and could in one hour travel as far as a man could walk in seven days, though it might neither devour men nor suck their blood, yet sought every opportunity for stinging and slaying men, and did no end of harm till the time of Suleiman (Solomon), the king and sage, who cursed the reptile so effectually that its legs fell off and it has had to crawl on its belly ever since."

NOTES ON BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES.

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1. *Naaman and Elisha* (2 Kings v).—The narrative suggests that there was no great distance between the city where the King of Israel was living, the place where Elisha lived, and the Jordan; but no names of places occur, though the house of Elisha was on an *Ophel* or "knoll" (verse 24). Coming from Damascus, Naaman would cross the upper part of the Jordan Valley, probably by the Bethabara (*Abarah*) ford, and the king may have been at Jezreel. North of Jezreel are the two villages *Fâleh* and *Afâleh*, which appear to be the two Ophels, mentioned in the list of conquests by Thothmes III, in this part of Lower Galilee. These places are all so near comparatively to the Jordan, that Naaman's journey, to and fro, in this narrative, and the communication between Elisha and the king, are easily explained, if the prophet was living at *Afâleh*—a place close to Shunem—which latter he was in the habit of visiting. (See 2 Kings iv).