

OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON THE MODERN INHABITANTS  
OF PALESTINE.

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TALES OF WELYS AND DERVISHES.

(Continued from *Q.S.*, 1916, p. 19.)

(d) *Another Story about the Maḳām of the Sultān Badr.*

One day some goats belonging to the descendants of Sultān Badr were stolen, and, after investigation, it was found that the robbers were from the Awlād el-Zaghāreh of the people of Jerash. The owner went there and asked for the return of his goats, but the people denied them, and said they had no goats of his. At last he demanded that they should take an oath upon Sultān Badr, which they agreed to do the next Friday. On that day they assembled at Deir esh-Sheikh. There were present at the same time some people from Deir Eyyūb, who had been compelled to come and swear at the maḳām that they had not taken some cattle, a theft of which they were accused. While there, these people asked the sheikh of the maḳām to persuade their accusers to accept twenty majīdis and to let them off from taking the oath. The sheikh replied: "I do not interfere in these affairs; you had better make terms with those you have robbed and make restitution." Meanwhile the people of Jerash had boldly entered the shrine, taken the oath, and gone away. When the people of Deir Eyyūb saw these people, who they were sure had stolen the goats of Sultān Badr, take the oath with impunity, even adding after the oath, "Let your grandfather (*i.e.*, Sultān Badr), bring back to you the goats which have been stolen," they grew bold. They said to each other, "We have not robbed anything from the wely. Let us enter the maḳām and take the oaths and pay nothing. If the wely had any power it would have been shown against those who have robbed him of his property before they left the maḳām." After that they all came together to the maḳām, and one of the robbers asked the sheikh to open the door. He replied: "I do not open the door; you

open it and enter in and make your oath." The man opened the door and entered, and as he passed the threshold a snake leapt upon him and bit him on the ear. And he at once began to tremble and fell to the ground, and blood poured from his mouth and nose, and blood poured from him, and they carried him out dead from the door of the wely.

But, as the people of Jerash were returning home, one of their number stopped by the road side (لاجل يشرح), and God brought upon him a serpent, which bit him so that he died at once, and his companions buried him there as he lay. And the next year, as his brother was passing the same spot, having turned aside from the road to view his brother's grave, suddenly a serpent went between his legs and bit him in the groin (في محاشمة) so that he died immediately. It was commonly reported that this was the same serpent that had killed the other brother the year before. After he had laid some time by the roadside, some camel-drivers discovered him with the snake still clinging to him. The snake, however, made off on their approach, and the camel-men carried him on a camel to his village, and when they put him down his bowels burst, and they buried him in his uncleanness<sup>1</sup> without being washed.

(e) *Another Story of the Makām of Sullān Bahr.*

One day a man called Maḥmūd, of the village of Zakariyeh, had some property—clothes and ornaments of his wife—stolen from his house. In consequence, there was a quarrel between him and his fellow villagers, as Maḥmūd accused them of the theft. At length when Maḥmūd was about to lay the affair before the government a man came to him and said: "O Maḥmūd! do not bring harm upon these people; the robber of your wife's property is your own father." Maḥmūd was greatly taken aback, and said to himself: "It is incredible that a father should rob his own son's house." The informer repeated again: "Your father is the robber and the stolen goods he has deposited with Muḥammad Mustapha, with whom they now are." Maḥmūd went to his father and said: "Shall I bring the people into danger when you really are the robber." His father began to swear by God that he had stolen nothing, and added that the real thief and mischief maker was the man who had acted as

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, without the ceremonial washing prescribed by the religion.

informer. The son, however, was now convinced that his father was the real culprit, while the people whom he had accused said: "If you want us to take an oath you must make your father take one at the same time." So the son at last took courage to ask his father and Muḥammad Mustapha to take a solemn oath of innocence at the makām of Sultān Badr at Deir esh-Sheikh. They went therefore on Friday to Deir esh-Sheikh. In the makām was a box of candles for the people who made vows of offerings, and when they came to enter the shrine, all these candles were lighted supernaturally. Then the sheikh—the servant of the makām—exclaimed: "Do not swear, because your oath has been proved false already," and they all departed. But the father of Maḥmūd, on reaching Zakariyeh, fell ill with a fever and died; and Muḥammad Mustapha got his hands and feet paralysed; and Muḥammad Mustapha is still living, but he can do nothing with his hands, because the fingers are contracted into the palms; and the toes of his feet are also deformed. This affair is known to everybody.

(f) *Another Story of the Makām of Sultān Badr.*

In the makām of Sultān Badr is a servant called Sheikh Muḥammad—a descendant of Sultān Badr. He is a man of kindly disposition, living in close communion with Allah on account of his good and pure deeds. He is a dervish and has taken powers from the four sects of dervishes, namely:—

- (1) The way of Rafāie'h (الرفاعي).
- (2) The way of Edusūkeh (الدسوقي).
- (3) The way of Aḥmed el-Bedawē (احمد البدوي).
- (4) The way of Sultān abd el-Kādr (السلطان عبد القادر).

Sheikh Muḥammad belongs to all four sects, but does not make open profession of any of them.

One day, some dozen years ago, there were two brothers belonging to the village of Welajeh, working on the railway line near Deir esh-Sheikh. Their father was of great age, and their names were el-Hajj Khalil the elder and 'Ali the younger. One night, the old father when asleep, saw in a dream three men on horseback. One of these, who wore a green turban, said to him: "Peace be to thee," and when he heard these words the old man rose up in great fear, and the wearer of the green turban asked him about 'Ali and

said: "Fear not, because thy road is white (*i.e.*, lucky), and what is on the mind of thy son is guarded." The old man rose up to invite them to be his guests, and to ask them from whence they came; but when he was on his feet, lo, they had disappeared! And he remained sleepless till morning, thinking over the vision. In the morning when his son Khalil came to see him he narrated to him all that had happened. And Khalil said: "It is not desirable that thou speak about the affair. These are holy people and thou wilt not see them again. God preserve us from the vision!" And he left his father and went to work. Soon after this his brother 'Ali was at work with the other workmen when he suddenly put his hands to his head, exclaiming, "Oh my head!" and he leaned against a wall without saying another word. And his brother and the other workmen asked him what the matter was, but 'Ali was unable to speak and made signs to them to carry him home. But as this was far off they laid him in the shadow of a tree to sleep, and put his cloak over him and went on with their work, but Khalil stayed by his brother. And presently 'Ali began exclaiming: "By Allah! O my lord, I never spoke, and never met with anyone, and never told my thoughts to anyone." And after a little, he woke up and began to speak and raised his eyes and saw his brother Khalil, and said: "Alas, carry me to the house, because I am not able to raise my head." And they carried him home and left him there and went away. And in the house he began to speak in an unknown language, and to beckon with his hands, looking about him from side to side. After an hour he slept and remained asleep and alone till his brother returned; and as Khalil stood at his head he heard him saying: "By Allah, O cursed people, lo, he has come now." Then Khalil asked him of whom he was speaking and what had happened to him, to which 'Ali replied: "Wait a little because I cannot speak to thee before this multitude." And Khalil brought water and washed his face and made him coffee to drink. Then 'Ali said: "Tell your father to pay the vow which he made to Sultān Badr. He promised a lamb and thou promised a quarter of a majidi's worth of bakhūr (incense). Why dost thou not pay thy vow?" Khalil said: "It is true I promised the incense, but of the lamb I, by Allah! know nothing. But to-morrow, Friday, we will take the offering to Sultān Badr and pay our vow." Khalil at once went to his father and told him all that had happened to 'Ali and about the vow. On the Friday morning all the family of

'Ali, men and women, went with the lamb and about a rotl of bruised corn (حريشة قمح) to the makām of Sultān Badr. They slew the lamb and cooked it with the bruised corn, and ate and distributed it to the people of the village until all were satisfied. And from the blessing of Sultān Badr some of the food and the broth remained. And as they were preparing to depart they asked each other what should they do with the food that was left over: and they put it in a bāteyeh (wooden dish) and gave it to a woman to carry. And as she went out of the gate of the makām with the bāteyeh on her head the dish broke in two with a noise like thunder and all the food in it was spilled out.

And when they returned they found 'Ali sitting up, and they told him all that had happened. And 'Ali said: "You ought to have given all the food that remained over to Sheikh Muḥammad, for you are not allowed to remove from the makām what has been vowed to the wely."

After a week 'Ali had a dream, and he heard a voice saying to him, "O 'Ali, my desire towards thee is to make thee a sacred dervish for me," and the utterer of the cry blew in his face and told him that the blow he had received upon his head was a test to try him, and to ascertain whether he could keep a secret or not. And 'Ali rose up from sleep trembling, and cried out: "Allah, Allah, Allah, blessed be His name! There is no God but Allah, and Muḥammad is His prophet!" And all the people of the house heard his shout.

From that time he gave up eating, and was constantly weeping, and he began to mutter to himself, and to address someone invisible. Anyone hearing the talking could imagine there were a number of people in conversation. And gradually he grew weaker till he was unable to stand and his fever grew more violent than before. At one time, when he was somewhat recovered, he told Khalil to put all the people out of the house as he needed to be alone for a certain purpose. When the people who were with him had all gone out, weeping, 'Ali told his brother that he wanted a favour from him which no one else could do. He wanted him to go to Sheikh Muḥammad and give him his greetings and tell him how he ('Ali) was. "When he sees you he will know your wishes. Ask him for a *hijab* [amulet] to give me rest and take away the fever, and I beg him for the sake of his lord Sultān Badr to do this thing." Khalil went, as his brother asked, and saw Sheikh Muḥammad at the makām of Sultān Badr. When the sheikh saw him coming he said: "Khalil,

why is your expression changed ? I trust your coming is for good." He replied : " My lord, I beg you ; my brother 'Ali is at the point of death, and sent me to ask you to make him a hijāb."

When the Sheikh Muhammad heard these words he struck his hand to his head exclaiming : " Does it concern 'Ali ? " and he remained quiet for half-an-hour, his hand to his head. Then he said to Khalil " Now stand up and take my salāms (greetings) to your brother and tell him that to-day it is useless to make a hijāb. To-morrow, Friday, come to me after midday prayers, and whatever God arranges will be good." And he returned with this message to 'Ali, whom he found was more ill than before. And the next day Khalil went to the sheikh, and when he arrived the latter told him to go to the house. Now Khalil had not eaten for two days because of anxiety about his brother, and when he arrived at the sheikh's house the sheikh asked him : " How is your brother 'Ali now, and what about this blow which happened to him ? " And Khalil told him how the blow had occurred when they were at work, and how 'Ali used to talk to himself and weep, and sometimes become unconscious, and now he had got a fever, and was out of his mind. The sheikh told him not to be afraid. This, he said, is not fever, it is a blow from holy people, only tell me what he says about me." Khalil replied : " All our desire and hope is that by the will of God and the help of your grandfather he may be cured. Only I beg you to hasten." The sheikh began to make the hijāb, and Khalil, from long sleeplessness and weariness, fell asleep. When he woke up he found the sheikh just finishing the hijāb. He folded it up, and at each folding he blew upon it, and when he had finished, he blew again upon it and licked it all over. Then he said : " By the life of Allah, by the name of the healer, by the honour of my lord Sultān Badr, and by what is in him secretly (*i.e.*, occult powers) by the power of Allah, the sick man should take this in his hands, and the secret of his power will be manifest to him." And he handed Khalil the hijāb saying : " When you arrive at home you will find your brother sleeping, and his ṭarbūsh (*i.e.*, fez) falling sideways on his head. Take his ṭarbūsh and put the hijāb between the labādeh<sup>1</sup> and the ṭarbūsh, and then replace the ṭarbūsh on his head and say : ' For the secret of Sultān Badr.' But now sit down and I will make you food. The food is ready now, as you shall see. I know that

<sup>1</sup> Woollen cap worn as a lining under the ṭarbūsh.

you are very hungry." The sheikh then approached a *bāteyeh* which was covered with a *tabak* (a circular straw mat) and exclaimed, "Stand up, in the name of God, O blessed one," and he took away the cover, and lo, the *bāteyeh* was full of new bread, hot as if straight from the oven. When Khalil saw this he was astounded and exclaimed: "Mashallah *musārak* (how great is your secret), O Sheikh Muhammad." After eating, he paid some money to the sheikh and went away to his brother, whom he found lying as the sheikh had described. He put the *hijāb* under his *ṭarbūsh* as he had been told, and when 'Ali' at length rose from sleep he asked, how Sheikh Muhammad was, and his brother replied: "He sends you his *salāms*." Then Khalil asked his brother: "How are you now?" and he replied: "El-hamdu li-'llah (Praise be to Allah) my burden is loosed and has fallen from me, and now I am at rest. But," he added, "the sheikh told you something, tell it to me." Khalil replied that the sheikh had told him to take him to his village and there, by the permission of Allah, he would be recovered. And so the next morning Khalil took 'Ali to his village, *Welejuh*, and left his mother and sisters to look after him, while he himself returned to his work. One day, a little later, when Khalil came to visit him, he found 'Ali weeping and he asked him what was the matter. 'Ali replied, "I do not want anything, I do not want anyone to approach me, either man or women, especially women." His mother exclaimed, "By Allah, my son, no one has entered here except myself." And when 'Ali heard that he rose up and said, "May Allah kill the woman. By Allah, you are lying, for such and such a woman (giving her name) came to me, and she was in a state of uncleanness." When Khalil and his father heard that they said angrily: "It is not necessary that anyone should visit him, not even his mother or his sister, and whoever wants to visit him must express her wishes from outside the house." And 'Ali said to his father, "And you, O my father, if you love your son do him a service, for sometimes I am occupied with the people of Allah, and it is not allowed that women approach me, because it is impossible to be sure which of them are unclean. This plan brings honour to your son as Sheikh Muhammad informed me."

And after this they stopped all people from paying visits to 'Ali. And very soon 'Ali began to improve in health, but from time to time the fever returned, and one day Khalil saw Sheikh Muhammad and the latter asked about 'Ali. And Khalil told him how the fever

kept returning and asked if 'Ali should not consult a doctor. When Sheikh Muhammad heard this he got very angry and said: "Oh! Khalil, don't spoil your mind, because this illness of your brother's is one about which the doctors know nothing. It is sickness due to the pious people, and although you see your brother at the point of death do not take him to the doctors. If you go against this you will lose your brother, and the sin will be upon you. I tell you 'the sin is on your neck.'"

When Khalil heard this he changed his proposal, and, for a time, 'Ali had recurrent attacks of fever and at last got quite well.<sup>1</sup>

And when he had fully recovered the sheikh came to him and 'Ali kissed his hand and extracted a promise from the sheikh that he should become a dervish. The sheikh promised that this should be done at the beginning of the next month, and he made him promise not to reveal the secret and to hide from all that he was a dervish.

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After the death of Sheikh Muhammad, Khalil and 'Ali came to live at the makām, and there they narrated all the above to our informant, by word of mouth.

*(To be continued.)*

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## THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

By PHILIP J. BALDENSPERGER.

*(Continued from Q.S., 1916, p. 26.)*

### *Toilet.*

THE toilet of the women is performed carefully: special attention is paid to the eyes. The eyebrows are shaved and blackened with *kohl* (antimony), which is kept in a small bottle, the *mukhula*, and put on the eyebrows and eyelashes with a fine pencil called *mikhāl*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The attack of illness appears to have been either malignant malarial fever or sunstroke.

<sup>2</sup> [From the Arabic *kohl*, with the prefixed article, is derived the word alcohol, the present application of which is relatively modern. In earlier times the word was used (*e.g.*, by Paracelsus) to designate any fine powder.—ED.]