

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

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The General Characteristics of the Different Towns.

I.—JERUSALEM.¹

EL KUDS ESH-SHARĪF (القدس الشريف) is the town in which the three great religions of Western Asia, Africa and Europe have an acknowledged sanctuary, in consequence of which it has a unique physiognomy among the towns of the whole world. Christians, Mohammedans and Jews are, more or less, separated in different quarters. The old divisions were, for nearly one-third of the town between the Armenian (Christian) quarter on Zion and the other Christians on Acra, one-sixth for the Jews on Zion, and nearly two-thirds for the Mohammedans on Moriah and Acra. Since the walls of Jerusalem are only marks of the ancient Saracenic town, colonies of inhabitants have sprung up towards the north-west; though the Jews tried to continue separated from them, they have only succeeded in doing so in the ancient Montefiore quarter, or immediately north of the Damascus Gate.

The eastern end of the town is protected, first by the Temple area, and secondly by the steep declivity of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where the Mohammedans have their cemetery. Life and commerce are carried on in the western part, inhabited by the Christians, and now outside the gates along the Jaffa road; whilst the eastern side is quiet and there is even deadly silence along the Temple walls, where towards evening hundreds of ravens alone disturb the stillness by their croaking. Thousands of turtle-doves and wood-pigeons nestle on and around the Mosque of Omar.

¹ [It will of course be borne in mind that these sketches, including this account of Jerusalem, were written by Mr. Baldensperger some years ago.—ED.]

The Jaffa and Hamdiyeh Gates may be called the commercial or Christian gates; the Zion Gate, the Jewish gate; and the Damascus, St. Mary's or St. Stephen's, and the Dung or Maghraby Gates, the Mohammedan.

These groupings of divers religions in different parts of the town are a relic of the past, when it was necessary for those of the same belief to live together and defend themselves against those of other creeds. Besides, they could more easily perform their civil and religious duties and other ceremonies without being disturbed by the others. Processions are ridiculed, though Orientals respect religious ceremonies to a certain degree, and excuse forms of worship other than their own, yet when the fanaticism of the great feasts is aroused, it is not always safe to assist either as indifferent bystander or ironic onlooker. Spring is the most dangerous moment for religious explosions. Easter brings thousands of pilgrims of the Greek church, the aim of their journey being to see the Holy Fire arriving in the Sepulchre on Good Saturday. The wild North Syrians from Aleppo and the whole Waliyeh, mingle with the Greeks and Cyprians and sing in savage enthusiasm—often brandishing their knives—a welcome song to the Holy Fire.

(فأض النور وعيدنا وهذا قبر
سيدنا)

We feast the light that has come
out.

*Fāḍ en-nūr u'eiadnā, u-hatha kabēr
seidna*

This is the Sepulchre of our
Lord.

(سيدنا عيسى المسيح)
Seidna 'Īsa l-Masīḥ

Our Lord is Jesus the Messiah.

(والمسيح فدانا بدمه اشترانا)

The Messiah who redeemed us

*Wa'l Masīḥ fadānā, būdamo
ishtārāna*

And bought us with his blood.

(واحننا اليوم فراحا واليهود
حزاننا)

Whilst we are in joy, the Jews
are sorry.

The only one religion is the
Messiah's.

*Walhnā il-yōm farāḥah, wal-yahūd
ḥazānah.*

(ما دين الا دين المسيح)
Ma dīn illā dīn il-Masīḥ.

To this the Mohammedans answer:

(يا نصارى يا يهود عيدكم عيد
الكرود)

O Nazarenes (Christians), O Jews!
Your feast is the goblins' feast,
Our feast is the prophet's feast.

Yā Nazzārah yā Yehūd,
ʿidkum ʿid il-Kurūd.

(عيدنا عيد النبي)

ʿidnā ʿid in-Naby.

When, unhappily, the Passion-Week of Roman and Greek Christians happens to occur at the same date, then the different feelings are awakened, and the rivals obstinately insist on their rights of passing in processions at fixed hours about the sepulchre, and the meetings are contrary to every charitable feeling; battles, with tragic results, have often been registered. About the same time Mohammedan pilgrims, from fanatical centres north and south, come to Jerusalem for the Moses feasts, *Musum* (موسم). The feasts of Moses begin in Jerusalem. The blessed standard of Moses, *brak en-Naby Musah* (ببرق النبي موسى), deposited in the Haram, is brought forth with great ceremony, accompanied by the garrison of Jerusalem, and saluted by a number of cannon-shots outside the St. Stephen's Gate. The enthusiastic pilgrims, in full dress, with all their processions and flags and instrumentalists, follow or precede the standard. Every village has a wely or saint with a flag or two, and with instruments carried by candidates or the associates of the corporation. The flag of every saint called *rāyet*, (راية), is carried on a long pole in front of the procession, and the different musicians follow. The instruments used are the drum, the cymbals and a small tabret. Behind them follow the dervishes, dancing, whirling, howling, and striking themselves with swords, pins, and so forth. Then follow the non-initiated villagers in threes or fours irregularly, and last come the women and children in gaudy colours.

The departure and first day's journey is very lively and full of vigour. Sacrifices are brought about the tomb of Moses, and, for four or five days, the people are full of joy, playing and singing with all their might, as David and all Israel when, in such processions, they brought the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. xiv, 8). After a few days, when victuals become scarce and water is wanting, the heat becomes insupportable in those dreary regions near the

Dead Sea, and the home journey is undertaken with a good deal less enthusiasm. The sulphurous and other winds blowing from the Dead Sea considerably damp their ardour, and when, after a whole day's journey, the weary pilgrims arrive again near Jerusalem, all warlike ideas have dwindled into one only thought—to get home as soon as possible and let others fight for the faith. There is a hasty visit to the Mosque of Omar, and gradually the crowds disperse again, leaving the eastern quarters of the city as lonely as is possible for a town of so many inhabitants as Jerusalem. By degrees the Christians, who also have visited the different churches and, perhaps, have had a bath or baptism in the Jordan, and have spent most of their money, return to their homes.

The Christian quarter, the most busy part of the town, is crowded almost all the year round with indigenous Christians and European residents, mingled with Mohammedans, Turkish officers and soldiers. But the latter, having their principal barracks in the Mohammedan quarter, are more frequently seen in that direction, and the Damascus Gate, being the official gate for the reception of governors, has had a carriage road built through it, and, with the establishment of the Jewish colonies in its proximity, is now becoming more frequented. The gate, a specimen of Saracenic architecture, and situated in a Moslem neighbourhood, gives us all the appearance of old Mohammedan Jerusalem. The potters, who live between hedges, have their establishment inside the gate—in the space between this gate and St. Stephen's Gate. The Damascus Gate, or Columns' Gate, is the gate where all caravans stop, arriving from the north—Nablus, Nazareth and Damascus; but owing to the trade carried on at the Jaffa Gate, the caravans turn to the right and enter by the new Hamdiyeh Gate or the Jaffa Gate.

The soldiers usually march out by the Damascus Gate. Houses of ill-fame are very rare, if we compare Alexandria and Cairo.

St. Stephen's or St. Mary's Gate is the only eastern gate looking towards the Mount of Olives, and it can be called the "Death or Funeral Gate." The peace of these regions is rarely disturbed but by a funeral procession, with the chanting sheikhs and shrieking women with dishevelled hair as they follow the body of some loved person carried to the resting place. As we step out of St. Stephen's the road is lined with gravestones from corner to corner of the whole eastern wall. Looking down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, we may see the so-called tombs of the Virgin, Absalom, Jehoshaphat,

St. James, and Zechariah, besides thousands of Jewish tombstones strewn all over the slopes of the Mount of Olives, without order and as if haphazard. It is indeed an immense and disorderly necropolis, where paths lead in every direction, and are mostly used by the inhabitants of the villages of Tūr, Bethany, and Abu Dis, east of Jerusalem, who come into the town by St. Stephen's. Bedouin from Jericho, Jordan and Moab also find their way across the necropolis and camp among the graves outside the gate till some spy brings them news that they can safely enter the town without being "pressed" into some service, as soldiers or officers changing garrison and so forth. Being assured that there are removals in view, they push on their tiny donkeys or meagre camels towards the wheat market, where they sell their grain or butter in the greatest hurry, to get out of the gate before sunset, for, as the Rechabites of old, they dread towns and houses built of stone. Except for these occasional disturbances above mentioned, the walk outside the town from the Damascus Gate, by St. Stephen's, and round Moriah by Ophel to the Dung Gate, can be made without meeting anybody, unless perhaps another visitor, who also has come to enjoy the solitude.

The Dung Gate, known also as the Maghraby Gate—from the North-West Africans who live inside—is utilized mostly by the Siloam watermen, who provide the town with the brackish waters of Siloam, which is so much appreciated in times of drought (especially in the summer of 1901). The gate is well named, for the Jews living in the quarter between this and the Zion Gate throw their manure and other refuse in and outside the walls, spreading a horrible smell in the region. The peasants of Siloam have their cauliflower gardens here, and manure the land with the refuse of the Jewish brandy-shops, and other filth.

The Jewish quarter is the filthiest part of the town, and though some order has recently been introduced, it is not rare to stumble over a heap of mud or manure thrown into the middle of the street, if the Siloam peasants happen to be busy elsewhere. The thoroughfare is occupied by Jewish merchants, and the streets are full of Jewish men and women, mostly of the Ashkenazi sect. The Sephardi Jews are, unlike the Polish, exceedingly clean, and their women are kept in the houses and have much more Oriental customs. Owing to the exclusive manner of living of the Jews their *kosher* butchers hardly live up to their name; they have their own herds of

meagre cows, often living within the city walls, and kept in a most pitiful state. The herds pass in and out of the Zion Gate to the poor pasture grounds on Zion and the Valley of Hinnom or the Plain of Rephaim.

Fig brandy is prepared by the Jews almost all the year round, and as the Ashkenazi make it a rule to be as merry as possible during life, brandy is greatly relished. The weekly fair is held on Friday near the Zion Gate, and it largely contributes to the bad odours of the whole quarter. In years gone by the lepers dwelt beside the gate in the square reserved for the fair, but they have now been obliged to remove to the Lepers' home near the Bir Eyub, in the Wady er-Rababé. The Dung Gate and the Zion Gate are the gates used by the Jews for the burial of their dead, as their cemetery is on the Mount of Olives.

The Zion Gate, also called the Prophet David's Gate, leads to the so-called tomb of David, and the cemetery used by Christians of every sect on the top of Mount Zion. Immediately inside the gate is a dreary but very clean street leading all along the Armenian buildings. The fine fir-trees before the Armenian convent add to the good odour and give a good impression to this quarter. The quietness of this quarter is disturbed during the spring when hundreds of Armenian pilgrims flock here to visit the Holy City. Before the convenience of a regular service of coasting vessels from Laodicea and Alexandretta to Jaffa, these pilgrims used to journey by land from Diarbekr to Jerusalem in about twenty days on huge mules with enormous pack-saddles. The muleteers were all Armenians and lodged in the convent with the pilgrims. The animals were tethered in the streets, which are very wide in this place. Now, the pilgrims arrive by rail from Jaffa, and the streets are much less encumbered.

The burial of the Christians is sometimes by way of the Zion Gate, but as they live towards the Jaffa Gate and have to pass into their respective churches, the dead are mostly carried out by the Jaffa Gate, leaving the Zion Gate for the Armenians only, as their church is nearer this gate.

The Moslems have another big cemetery around the upper Pool of Gihon called Mamilla. The inhabitants of Neby Dahud, on Zion, are mostly horse owners, or have been so, and as they had to hire their horses, their way was always outside the walls towards the Jaffa Gate.

The Jaffa Gate, also called the "Friend's Gate," *i.e.*, of Abraham the Friend of God,—the gate leads equally towards Hebron—is the centre of all traffic in and about Jerusalem. All the mountains of Judah, the plains of Philistia and Sharon, and a great part of the northern villages have their natural place of arrival here. On feast-days or holidays everybody comes here and along the Jaffa road or on the Mamilla grounds for a walk. The most elegant shops are here, carriages run up and down along the road for those who do not like to go on foot; soon the tram will also be introduced and wholly transform what is left of Jebus into a modern "comfortable" town.

In the interior, the Christians are also more or less divided into Roman Catholic, Greek (the Armenians we have seen), and the minor churches, as Copts, Abyssinians, etc., etc., who live around their convents. The convents resemble khans in the pilgrim season, when thousands are there lodged gratuitously. The convents, under their respective patriarchs, provide for their poor, either by helping them in paying the house-rent or furnishing their houses, as the convents possess a good deal, or paying contributions and military duties.

Mamilla, which is both a burial-ground and a place for picnics, is also the drilling ground for the garrison when they march out by the Jaffa Gate.

Around the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and at its gates, are sold wax candles and mother-of-pearl rosaries and olive-wood articles; these were formerly made only by Bethlehemites, but now by almost everybody. Jordan sticks, Dead Sea stones, and Jericho roses are also to be had. Jews are never allowed to pass before the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or the Temple area, the Christian or Moslem mob is each one as fanatic as the other to defend the access.

The character of the Jerusalemite, who is a firm believer in whatever church or religion he may belong to, is, as a rule, not very haughty, but rather amiable and polite, and not very quarrelsome. Living mostly by foreigners, he has probably acquired these qualities; as for honesty, diligence, and so forth, the balance may tip in his favour as compared with other towns. Crimes are relatively rare, and if violence is committed it is imported.

Jerusalem Arabic can be called the nearest to literal Arabic, though the pronunciation is what might be called lazy. The *k* (ك), is not pronounced, but sounds as an *alif* (ا); thus *el-Kuds* is

pronounced *el-Uddūs*, with a vowel between the *d* and the *s*—a common practice in monosyllabic words. The *sh* (ش) is pronounced as *s* (س), thus the monosyllable *Shams* (شمس) is pronounced *Sammes* (سمس). The *th* is pronounced *t* in *thāni*, “the second,” pronounced *tāni*.

After the different feasts in spring, which extraordinarily animate Jerusalem, the calmness following is very great. Yet the necessary articles for food, fire, and the progress of the churches, which build in summer, give a certain movement, and as many of the masons and architects are from environing villages, the home-roads are filled with the workmen on Saturday evening, to be crowded again on Monday morning to begin work.

Friday, the day of prayer of the Mohammedans, is not observed in public, as the Moslems go to work before and after the divine service, from 11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. On Saturdays the carriages, which are very much in the hands of the Jews, cease their service.

The money-changers disappear—and many minor workers—as porters, shoeblacks, and the like, are in full dress. A large number of shops are closed, so that the Sabbath affects life almost as much as the Sunday, when all Christians go to their churches, and Sunday afternoons are given over to walks outside the city.

“In Jerusalem is a tumult between Ehman and Messiah.

This one rings the bells, and that one calls on the minaret.”

في القدس قانت ضبيعة ما بين احمد والسيح
هاذا نقوس يدقن وذاك على المدينة يصيح

(To be continued.)