

OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON THE MODERN INHABITANTS
OF PALESTINE.

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TALES OF WELYS AND DERVISHES.

(Continued from Q.S., 1916, p. 137.)

The story of the Discovery of the Pious People (الطاهرين) and their Wives.

A CERTAIN black man went from Beit Nattif to Egypt to find employment. On reaching Egypt he was directed to Zagazig where he found a job as a digger for some Europeans who were making excavations. During the work they continually found human bones, which they threw away with the earth.

One night the black man had a dream, in which he heard someone say: "To-morrow, you will find a cave in which are buried the wives of certain pious folk. Do not enter the cave."

In the morning work was resumed as usual, and presently a door was found. On looking into the opening the diggers saw chairs of gold and skeletons sitting on them, as if alive. The waḳil ordered the workers to enlarge the opening so that he could enter. When this was done, he ordered the workmen to enter the cave and to remove its contents, but they refused, because they saw that the bodies still had flesh clinging to the bones, and the shrouds were decayed and their private parts were uncovered. The waḳil drew near to uncover the bodies completely, and lo, the figures began to draw their shrouds over their faces and their private parts. And the waḳil wished to make further investigation, but he heard a voice which said: "Do not uncover the people of God." Undeterred, however, by this, he advanced and touched one of the female figures. Immediately, he exclaimed: "My eyes, my eyes!" and on being led out he was found to be blind. When they returned to the place after taking him home, they found it was all covered in again and they could not re-discover it.

*Story about the Sheikh Abū Midiān.*¹

There is a wely in Jerusalem called Zāweyāt Abū Midiān which belongs to the Mughrabis. This Sheikh Abu Midiān was a Mughrabi from the city of Telman, who left his country and wandered away in the love of God and of His Apostle. First, he went to the Hijaz accompanied by forty warriors, who were under his command. And when the Apostle of God appeared to him, he left the Hijaz and came to Jerusalem. There he found the city being besieged by King Dhaḥer and the Sultān Badr; and the inhabitants of the city were infidels, living in caves and tunnels. King Dhaḥer had already spent forty days in the siege without success, for the city was surrounded by a wall with iron gates. And Sultān Badr and his people were accustomed to spend the nights at Sharafāt, where is now the maḳām of his daughter Sittna Badriyeh. When Abū Midiān knew that, he came to the gates of the city but found them closed; the soldiers of the king asked Abū Midiān: "Whence are you, and why do you come here?" And the followers of Abū Midiān answered: "We are pilgrims." At length, one day Abū Midiān stood at the gate now known as Bab el-Mugharbi (Dung Gate) holding in his hand a stick, while the men with him had sticks and small knives (شباری). Abū Midiān, exclaiming: "Oh, power of God and the Prophet," knocked at the gate with his stick, and the gate fell out and he threw it into the valley. Then he cried out to his people: "Behold, my people, ye men!" and he marched before them exclaiming: "*La illahu il 'Allah Muhammad rasul Allah,*" the people chanting after him. He entered the city and began to slay the infidels. King Dhaḥer heard the chanting, and, coming with his soldiers, saw that Abū Midiān had broken into the city. Heavy fighting took place against the people of the city, and no less than thirty-three were killed of the followers of Abū Midiān, leaving only seven surviving. At length the city surrendered, and Abū Midiān asked about his followers; they told him that only seven survived. He searched for the dead and found them in a cave, which is now the Zāweh, and he buried them there. He also buried there his hand which had been cut off in the fighting; and they likewise placed there the stick with which he had beaten the gate. This is still to be seen in the Zāweh Abū Midiān. After this, Abū Midiān

¹ A maḳām opposite the Ecce Homo Arch, Jerusalem.

met King Dhaher, who asked him what reward he wanted for all he had done. He said: "I want as much land as I can cover with the hide of a bull." The king granted him this, and he brought the hide of a bull and with it made a rope, and he measured with it and when he had turned his hand to the four quarters [*i.e.*, when he had completed the enclosure all round] the space enclosed comprised half Jerusalem. The king exclaimed: "Why so much? Do you want to be king over the whole place?" But he said: "No, I only want it to be wakf to me and to my descendants." The king granted him what he asked. After that Abū Midiān took a journey and before he left he put one of his men in this place, and the place continues to be called Zāwet Abū Midiān to the present day.

The story of Sheikh Burhān ed-Dīn el-Ma'abedy in Hebron.

Sheikh Burhān ed-Dīn is one of the "noble people" of Hebron, and is one of the "people of a way" (طريق). The following story is told of him: When he was living he obtained a zāweyeh; and he was able to make himself invisible at times. Now he had a female servant called Luleh, an attractive woman who "took power" from him and became a derwisheh and who continually lived in his house. The people began to gossip about her and to spread rumours disgraceful to the sheikh: and one day the sheikh fell ill and he sent to his people that they should come to him, but none came. And so the sheikh sent Luleh saying: "Go to my relations and tell them that Sheikh Burhān is at the point of death and has some information to give them before he dies. If they will not come, the sin be on their necks." Luleh went and told them what the sheikh had said, and they at once came to him. And the sheikh said to them: "I am at the point of death, and I desire that the produce of a vineyard which I have in such and such a place shall go to my servant Luleh, because of all the faithful service she has rendered me, but after her death you will inherit it. But beware of opposing this, and I warn you to take every possible care of her."

When the relations heard these words they were very bitter about it, because they did not like to hear even her name mentioned, and they replied: "Take her with you to your grave to bear you company there, and then you can settle your account with your God about her." And they arose and departed.

A few days later the sheikh died, and his relations and some of the people of his village assembled at the zāweyeh and began to speak against him, especially with regard to the derwisheh Luleh and to the vineyard which he wished to take from his relations for her benefit. And they began to cast discredit on his claims as a true derwish. And Luleh heard all this talk. They washed the body and took it to the burial-ground of the *Ma'abedeh* family. And after the prayers were finished and they were about to lay the body in the grave, Luleh drew near and said to those around: "I beg you to let me speak with him a few words and to say farewell." They made way for her and she drew near to the bier and raised the lid and said: "Oh, Sheikh Burhān ed-Dīn, you are now altogether dead and have departed away to the *Dar el-hakk* (house of truth), and have left me in this world after ye have brought shame upon me before all the people, and even at this time people are talking against me. And you have not made any manifestation of your piety up to this moment. If now you do not justify my purity before men, I will make your mākam as a dung-heap all my life." Upon these words everybody saw that Sheikh Burhān was trembling inside the coffin, and then he flew up from the cemetery to the vineyard above the city and he descended into another burial-ground west of the city. When the relations and friends saw that, they were filled with astonishment, and began greatly to blame themselves for what they had said against Luleh. And they saw that the words they had said against him had made him angry, so that he refused to be buried with his relations in their cemetery. So they buried him at the spot where the body had rested, and they all began to ask pardon of Luleh, to kiss her hand and ask her for her blessing.

The story of Sheikh 'Ali Bukā of Hebron.

This is one of the famous local sheikhs noted for their pious deeds. He was servant of one of the Shurēfa el-Khalil (nobles of Hebron). One day when Sheikh 'Ali was with his lord, he told him: "Before very long you will die, but not in the Faith nor in the straight way." His lord exclaimed: "What words are these? Are you a prophet?" He replied: "I am no prophet, but nevertheless I speak the truth."

After a time this great man died, and being honoured by the people they came from the whole district round to attend his funeral. After the body was washed, it was taken in procession to the cemetery and after the prayers the leader of the ceremonies said: "The shurēf has been removed by God's mercy. What witness do you bear to him?" And all the people exclaimed: "He is one of the good (خير)." But the derwish shouted: "He died an unbeliever, without trust in God." At this everyone was astonished, because all who knew him, the whole city indeed, bore witness that he was a good man. So they said: "Sheikh 'Ali, bears false witness against his master because he has a quarrel with him." And they hustled him out of the cemetery, saying to him: "How can you bear false witness against your lord? We think it is because you are jealous." But he replied: "I bear witness only to the truth. God has caused him to die and he is buried, and this too in the burial-ground of the Moḥammedans. Let us see in the morning. We will come here and uncover the grave and, if we find him, then my words are false."

To this they all agreed. After speculating in their minds about this affair all night, they assembled in the morning and the grave was opened, and in it was found not the shurēf but another man with a hat upon his head: so they knew that he had died in a wrong state of faith.

From that time Sheikh 'Ali began to weep when anyone spoke to him, and also when anyone brought him food or drink. And he would not associate with anyone else or speak to them. This continued till his death, and so he was called Sheikh 'Ali el-Bukā (بكى), "the Weeper." His maḳam is still in Hebron and he has descendants there and also at Lydda and Ramleh.

The following is told of one of Sheikh 'Ali's descendants from Lydda, who was a judge in Gaza and, like his ancestor, was called 'Ali. He came to Hebron on some business for the government. When the business was finished his friends who had come with him, including among them a zābit (officer), wanted to hasten their return to Gaza. But 'Ali said to them: "I must remain here this night that I may pay a visit to my grandfather's grave." The others said: "You are from Lydda, what grandfather have you in

this city?" And the judge said: "My grandfather is Sheikh 'Ali el-Bakā." And they were all astonished and laughed at him, saying:

"You are from Lydd
And you have here a jidd (grandfather)
And relate yourself to Sheikh 'Ali."

The judge replied: "Let us now go to the maḳām and you will find it shut. If I am one of his descendants I shall be able to open the gate and enter, and if I am not I shall not be able. Here is a test if you wish it." They all adjourned to the maḳām and when they arrived there he said: "Now you shall see the proof. Look if the door is shut or not." And they saw that the door was shut and locked. And the judge drew near, saying: "In the name of the most merciful God," and he took hold of the gate and it opened at once. And the judge turned to the people and said: "Will you be pleased to enter?" And when they saw these things they asked his forgiveness for what they had spoken against him.

(To be continued.)

LORD KITCHENER'S WORK IN PALESTINE.

By ESTELLE BLYTH.

THE month of November is one of the pleasantest of the year in Palestine. The dry heat of the long summer, culminating in the fierce October siroccos, has been broken by the first rains; everywhere the parched, cracked soil softens and expands, the thick white dust is laid, the olive trees are washed clean so that the full beauty of their silver-green leaves appears, and the air becomes fresh and clear and fragrant. During the great heat all colour is burnt out of the sky, but now we see it brilliantly blue, flecked over with white clouds; and we have also wonderful sunrises and sunsets, whose swiftly-changing beauty evades description but is never lost to memory. A few little green blades show here and there on the bare hills, and small pale pink crocuses, heralds of cooler weather.

It was on November 19th, 1874, that Lieut. H. H. Kitchener, R.E., joined the camp of the Western Survey party at edh-Dharfyeh