

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

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*Arab Life.*¹

IN dealing with Arab life we have not to take into consideration the third son of Islam, the traditional Abu Osman, the (Turkish) horseman, and father of the Ottoman Turks. The Turks, even when they were masters of the land, were only found as functionaries in towns, or as soldiers in garrisons, with the exception of some camps of Turkomans. They do not enter into any comparative study of the ancient and modern inhabitants of Palestine, by whom they were looked upon as foreigners, owing to their speaking a different language. Turks very seldom learnt the Arabic language, and only those Arabs who in modern days served in Turkish towns picked up a few Turkish sentences; such Arabs were generally in Arab regiments and had only Turkish officers. But the nomads never learnt Turkish, and did not care to come into contact with their nominal lords.

The fourth son of Islam is Abu Suelem (أبو سويلم), who chose a camel from his father's goods and became father of the camel-owning Bedus or Bedawin, as they are generally though wrongly called. The singular Bedawy becomes 'Arab (عرب) or *Badu* (بدو) in the plural; whereas 'Arabi (عربي) in the singular means an Arabic-speaking man, and *el-'Arab* means the nomads and Arabs generally (*awlad 'Arab*, sons of Arabs). The desert is called *el-Bādiy* (البادية), whence the name of the Bedawy who lives there. The distinction between nomads or tent-living

¹ [The reader is reminded that these sketches were written before the Great War.—ED.]

people and Arabs is found in the Bible, for when the Israelites left Egypt "a mixed multitude (*'erebh*) went up also with them and flocks and herds, even very much cattle" (Ex. xii, 38). This mixed multitude was presumably none other than the nomads with their tents and cattle; the nomads near towns always have cattle, even up to our days. The pure desert tribes, such as the 'Anazeh, who possess more camels and horses, cannot in many respects be classed with the agricultural and half-sedentary cattle-rearing nomads roaming about between Gaza and Jaffa.

Solomon had relations with the inhabitants of Arabia; we recall especially the visit of the Arabian queen of Sheba, who came with a very great company and camels that bore spices (1 Kings x, 2). The nomads are being pushed back into their deserts year by year, especially as the railways advance into their regions, and the two lines Cairo—Jerusalem and Constantinople—Bagdad (and the projected railway to Mecca) will in time doubtless drive away those who do not submit to the progressive advance of civilization into their native home, Arabia. Hence the study of the pure nomad tribes will always be of very great interest, inasmuch as we may hope to find among them customs which undoubtedly existed before the Israelites crossed the Jordan or even before the Hebrews came from Mesopotamia.

The nomads, or rather the *Bedu*—for the gipsies are also nomads, but are not called "Arab"—are an essentially military caste, and, as the real heirs of Ishmael, are "wild men whose hand is against every man, and dwell before all their brethren" (Gen. xvi, 12). They lived in this semi-independent state for untold centuries; occasionally they have submitted to treaties in their own interests or to the political and religious changes of Palestine. They have been worshippers of Baal and Ashtoreth with the Canaanites, Jews with the Israelites, and Moslems with the Saracens, the nearest of their kinsmen. They have even been Christians with the Crusaders, but generally only to rob or receive the price of their services from the stronger party. As in feudal Europe the nomads have had, to some extent, their serfs among the fellahin who come to their regions to plough, sow, and harvest, and give the lazy owners one-third of the income. The fellahin, who are respected by them only as long as they are in their villages, and have not yet advanced any money to them, are practically ill-treated when they live in their wild districts. The fellahin women are neither treated with

honour, nor in the *'ard* (عرد), about which Moslems are so proud, strictly followed, when they are away from supervision. For what have they to fear from the fellahin in their homes? And if their impudence becomes intolerable, they simply avoid the hostile villages and go to another region until the wrath of the fellahin abates.

Tribes of less noble blood, who perhaps have always lived in Judaea, have emancipated themselves from other oppressors and become nomads themselves. This has undoubtedly happened recently, if we may judge from the headdress and ordinary clothing which, in the case of the men at least, differs in no respects from that of the fellahin. Among these are the Ta'amry, originally from the now ruined Beth-Ta'mar, near the Furdeis, and the Satrakhry, from the equally ruined Beth-Sakhur, to the right of the Wady er-Rababy below Siloam. These tribes, though they call themselves Arab, are agricultural nomads, and are best known in the markets of Jerusalem and Bethlehem for the early cucumbers (*fukūs*) which they grow in the warm regions in the spring and sell at cheap prices. Though now very harmless, some fifty years ago they were the terror of all villages bordering on the Judæan desert, and they were even known to remain a year away from their homes, inviting themselves to the houses of the fellahin with their club as introduction, and staying a few days at every house and asking for whatever food they required. The men of Urtas were generally called upon to contribute honey which they had from the hives in the old walled camp at Solomon's pools. When my father first tried to settle in Urtas in 1848 the villagers who had deserted the village for fear of the Ta'amry marvelled at his courage in living alone in the dreary valley. There were always feuds with small detachments of troops, and they were so audacious as to kill the officials in the plain of Rephaim, the *baka*, before Jerusalem.

The fatal blow was given them only by the capture of the much-feared Sheikh Safi ej-Jēr in 1865, when the Pasha of Jerusalem at the head of a battalion of soldiers got the better of him in Bethlehem. The unfortunate sheikh rallied the Pasha, saying: "You are not ashamed to come against a single man on foot with 800 men! Had I my mare Khamame, you and all Jerusalem would not have captured me." During the cholera epidemic of 1866 he was imprisoned in Jerusalem, and, as the garrison had left the town for Neby Samuel, he mastered the jailor, and with chains on his hands and feet walked through the streets of Jerusalem, and

succeeded in releasing a dozen sheikhs. He himself was easily captured again and sent to Accho, where he died two years later by a poisoned cup of coffee.

Since then the Ta'amry have been greatly reduced, their only privilege being that they escape conscription, as do all who live in tents. They have to pay the government contributions in the shape of salt from the Dead Sea, which is a monopoly. Nevertheless they are the real providers of salt (smugglers) for all villagers south of Jerusalem. Up to the line immediately south of Bethlehem—Urtas—Wady el-Biar they had nothing to fear from the custom officials, but when they crossed the line they often had fierce contests, for the officials, warned by some enemy of the approach of a caravan or *kaffel* (كافل) of salt, waited for them in a place where they must pass, and where escape was almost impossible. Everyone who has lived on the borders of civilization and the wilderness knows how difficult it often is to keep on good terms with both parties, who are friends or foes as the case may be. In Urtas it was our fate to receive more than once the visits of both parties, and how difficult it was to keep strictly neutral in such cases can hardly be put into words.

The wilder tribes of the Rasheidy, Ra'abny and Jehalin live in the south; the above-named Ta'amry at Sawahry are now very quiet half-Bedu, who bury their dead about Rachel's tomb, perhaps an indication of their direct descent from Judaism. The Philistine tribes bury their dead about the White Mosque in Ramleh. The wild Buffalo tribes, so called from the droves of buffalo which they rear about the Aujeh river, north of Jaffa, are known as *Jamasse(t)* (جماسة). They are almost without religious customs, though they sometimes fast and pray. A Satary (صطري) Bedawy camping about Rubine told me that they were even worse than gipsies, being both thieves and without religion. They wear long hair, especially front locks, and this gives them a buffalo-like appearance. Probably they are from the Euphrates Arabs, and perhaps they even introduced the buffalo from India.

The Arabs formerly had slaves like the Fellahin and Medaniyeh; but since the emancipation, in 1878, the negroes went to join either their compatriots in Jaffa, or the Negro-Bedu, who are found north of Jericho about 'Ain Dük, and who existed long before the last emancipation. These are known as slaves, *'abid*; but the name of

the negroes is really *Sūdān* (سودان), i.e., black (*aswad*). These negroes bring the early vegetables to the Jerusalem market from the warm plain when Jerusalem is still clad in its winter clothing. All the above are agricultural Bedu; they escape conscription.

The *Wehedat* in Philistia, to mention only the chief tribe, together with a number of minor allied tribes, and the *'Adwān* in the Jordan Valley, own the lands where they live and roam. They do not plough or harvest themselves, but they share the grain after the harvest. They furnish the fellahin with land and protection—of a kind; and the fellah, who has to plough and sow, furnishes the seed and receives two-thirds of the harvest for his trouble, the Bedawy lord retaining one-third.

The *'Adwān* live principally between the Dead Sea and Salt, in winter in the plain and in summer in the mountains of Moab, under their Sheikh 'Ali eth-Thiab. They were a very wild tribe. In 1874 'Ali had about 300 mares which he lent to the Arabs, furnishing them at the same time with full equipment, that is, a lance, a sword, and the saddle. In return the Bedawy had to follow him in his expeditions, swearing allegiance and recognizing his supremacy. They would share the spoil after a successful raid. 'Ali himself died somewhere in 1895, and was buried with his fathers.

Continual roaming has made the Bedawy in general very careless about his religious observances, and it is only those who live near towns who come into constant contact with men of more religious scruples which makes them religious too. They naturally prefer independence to all the comforts which a more sedentary life might afford them; but with comfort come obligations and fetters the Bedawy will not bear. If he has a mare and a spear he finds friends everywhere, and turns up impudently and asks for food. Hence the proverb "Never show a Bedawy the door of your house." He is always found in the rear of the armies, helping against the enemy if that army seems about to be victorious, or robbing it if the contrary proves true. They are the mixed multitude who left Egypt in the rear of the Israelites (Ex. xii, 38), and the Midianites followed them later, always ready for either eventuality.

(To be continued.)