THE BEDAWÎN.

(A Lecture delivered at Jerusalem.)

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THE subject of my lecture this evening concerns a people by whom we are more or less surrounded here in Jerusalem, and whom we have often occasion to meet on our journeys, namely, the Bedawîn.

Bedawîn illustrating the Bible.—They are particularly interesting to us, for Abraham was a nomad like them, and so were the Israelites in the desert and for some time after the conquest of Canaan. Abraham is, moreover, the recognised ancestor of the tribe of Koreish, and of Mohammed, through Ishmael, and of many of the Bedawîn tribes existing to the present day. The life and manners of the Bedawîn are therefore calculated to illustrate the most ancient part of our Bible, which otherwise would be most incomprehensible, for the life of the nomad patriarchs and the wanderings of Israel in the desert present the greatest contrast with our European customs, and we cannot wonder that Colenso found in the book of Genesis so many statements which seemed to him incompatible with his own ideas. Though closely connected and related to the Jews, the Bedawîn still present in many respects the greatest contrasts with them.

Bedawîn are closely connected with the Jews but their destinies are widely different.—Whilst the Jews were dispersed among all nations and countries of the world, and had to adopt all possible languages and to accommodate themselves to the nations among whom they lived, the Bedawîn to the greater part remained in their ancient habitation, the desert, which nobody envies them. The language of the Bedawîn has but little changed since 3,000 years, and their customs have remained much the same. It is a most remarkable circumstance, clearly showing the wonderful providence of God, that these two peoples, Jews and Arabs, under such widely different circumstances have been preserved for thousands of years to be the witnesses to the truth of revelation, whilst other ancient peoples like the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Phœnicians, and even Greeks and Romans have vanished from the face of the earth. And yet in spite of the difference there are peculiar points of similarity between Israelites and Arabs. First of all with regard to *religion*, for both are the representatives of monotheism. Secondly with regard to *language*.

Antiquity of their Language.—A comparison between the different Semitic languages, the Hebrew, the Aramaic, the Syriac, the Assyrian, and the Arabic, has led to the conviction that the Arabs have preserved most of the original type of the Shemites in language and manners. If a Bedawy buried 2,000 years ago, could rise from his tomb and visit the tents of his tribe in the desert at the present day, he would

not find much change in their customs, and might even converse with them in his own tongue.

In the poetry and the life of the Bedawîn in the sixth century after Christ we have still a faithful reflection of Bedawîn life 2,000 years before Christ, and the more we study these old poems, the more we see that these Arabs, more than any other people, reflect the life of the time of the patriarchs, notwithstanding the 2,600 years which lie between them. There can be no doubt that the different Semitic races whose language is reduced to words formed by three radicals are all belonging to the same origin. In all Semitic languages "*assaza*" means to be strong; "*abada*," to apprehend; "*asara*," to bind; "*dammun*," blood; "*mautun*," death; "*jamelun*," camel; "*bassalun*," onion; "*dahabun*," gold.

The conservative element which is expressed in the religion and in the customs of all Shemites naturally exists also in their language and explains why the backbone of the language, the three radicals, have been preserved intact from the oldest time to the present. This strongly conservative element rests on the character of the desert country in which the Bedawîn live, for the peninsula of Arabia has for thousands of years been barred from contact with other nations, on the north by the desert, and on the three other sides by the sea.

They probably came from Mesopotamia to Arabia.—A great Oriental scholar, "Schrader," makes the suggestion that Arabia was the original habitation of all Shemites, but this idea is opposed to the old tradition, according to which the Arabs immigrated from Mesopotamia, and their language shows that Arabia could not have been the cradle of the Shemites. Certain names of animals which are common in Mesopotamia, and in more northern countries (but not in Arabia) have become obsolete or have changed their meaning in Arabic, for instance, the old Semitic word "*Dibbún*," bear; "*rimun*," wild ox; "*nimrun*," panther. Other animals which are *only* to be found in Arabia bear names which are unknown in the other Semitic languages, for instance, "*n'aam*," ostrich; "*jerboa*"; and similar evidence can be adduced from the names of trees, for instance, "*tamrun*" or "*dikla*," date tree. Thus it is clear that animals and plants peculiar to Arabia could not bear the same appellation in all Semitic languages, but generally the Arabs borrowed the name of an animal similar to the same in the north, for instance, the stag they call *Baker el wahshy*.

The conservative character of the Bedawîn is, in the third place, clearly shown by their genealogy. Arab historians (Abd ul Feda and Ebn Chaldun) divide their nation in three classes:—*Arab Badieh*, or extinct Arabs, as the tribes of Aad, Thamûd, Sohar, Tasem, Wabar, Dessem, Jedis. Secondly, the *Arab el Arabah*, or original Arabs, who derive their origin from *Kahtan*, who is the Joktan of our Bible the son of Shem. (Kahtan was the son of Eber, the son of Salah, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah.) Thirdly, *Arab Musta-arabeth*, the descendants of Ishmaïl, who is the ancestor of the tribe of

Koreîsh and Mohammed. Ishmaïl married the daughter of El Modad, a descendant of Kahtan. From Ishmaïl to Ednân the Arabs reckon eight generations, from Ednân to Malek the Koreishy there are also eight generations, and from them to Mohammed we have ten generations. Not less than fifty kings of Yemen are said to be the descendants and successors of Kahtan, and many of the present Bedawîn tribes belong to the Arab el Arabah. Some of the Arab nations mentioned in the Bible[1] may still be recognised in existing tribes; in fact, there is nothing clearer than the purity of their descent from Kahtan and Ishmaïl.

Antiquity of Nomad Life.—No doubt nomad life was a very ancient form of existence; involuntarily we think of Abel, who was a keeper of sheep. As long as this occupation was carried on in fruitful and rich territories, as in Mesopotamia, it may have had great charms and attractions; but now the Bedawîn is the inhabitant of the desert, and we can hardly have an idea of the hardships, the dangers, and the monotony of desert life. Arabia, though four times as large as Germany, does not contain a single river, and could therefore never obtain the cultivation of other countries. But why does the Bedawy reject all temptation to settle or try to obtain a more comfortable existence? Why does he stick to the desert though he is endowed with superior intellectual qualities and is by no means a savage? Have not his ancestors, at the spread of Islam, conquered the richest countries of the world from India to Spain, and obtained riches such as no other conquerors enjoyed? The following story may serve to answer these questions:—

Its Privations.—A traveller once lost his way in the desert and came at last to a Bedawîn tent where he asked for some food from an old woman whom he found there. She immediately went and caught some serpents which she baked and presented to him, and driven by hunger he ate them. Being extremely thirsty he asked for water and she went with him to a ditch the water of which was bitter; yet he could not help drinking of it on account of the violence of his thirst. When he expressed his astonishment that she and her people were living in such extreme circumstances the woman asked him: "Tell me, have you a Sultan who rules over you and oppresses you, and who takes your wealth and destroys the offender; a ruler who, if he desires, turns you out of your house and eradicates you utterly?" When the traveller answered that might sometimes happen the old woman rejoined: "If so, by Allah, your dainty food and elegant life and all your comforts united to oppression and tyranny are a penetrating poison, whilst our poor food with liberty is health and strength. Hast thou not heard that the greatest blessings are liberty and health?" and the Arab poet says: "There is no hand but God's hand is above it, and no oppressor that shall not meet with an oppressor."

[1] Gen. xxv, 12. These are the names of the sons of Ishmael:—Nebajoth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, Kedemah.

The Camel.—Another reason why the Bedawy clings to the desert is the peculiar nature of the animal, which alone makes a life in the desert possible, namely, *the camel*, from which the Bedawy derives his principal, sometimes his whole, subsistence, and which is his constant companion. However necessary other domestic animals may be for *us*, certainly the camel is for the Bedawy everything, and we cannot be astonished that it possesses in his eyes beauties which we cannot discover in it. It is, indeed, wonderful in how short a time immense distances can be traversed by a good camel. But a principal reason for keeping to the desert is contained in the words about Ishmael which fully characterise all Bedawîn: "His hand shall be against everyone and everyone's hand against him," for the ingrained propensity of robbing and vengeance has no doubt ever been the greatest curse of Bedawîn life.

An important question now forces itself upon us, namely this: What has preserved the Bedawîn amidst their incessant strife against misery and want, and amidst their bloodshed and wars from sinking into the state of a savage and utterly barbarous people?

It seems that two important circumstances prevented this. First we find among them up to the present day the patriarchal system of government, and connected with it a great love for their ancestors and an excessive pride about the purity of their race.

Their old fame as Warriors and Poets.—Secondly, and perhaps principally, it is the gift of poetry which elevates their character and preserves their better qualities even under the most adverse circumstances. This gift they brought with them (like the Hebrews) as a flower from Paradise, and such care they took of it that it continued to blossom even in the arid sands of the desert. The retentive memory of the Oriental has served to bring down to our days the ancient poems of the Arabs, though the art of writing them did not originate before the fifth century after Christ. In the oldest collection of poems, called the "Muallakat," we have the poems of Amr el Keis, Tarafa, Zoheir, Lebid, Antar, Shanfary, Amer ebn Koltum, Nabra, and Harith. The grandeur and wildness of the desert have impressed these poems with such a fire of passion and a depth of sentiment that the scholars who are best able to judge (as, for instance, Noeldeke and Rûkert) do not hesitate to class them with the greatest poets, with Homer and Virgil. For as we feel in Homer's songs the fresh air of pristine life of man, as we can penetrate through the song of the Niebelungen into the spirit of old German life, so we realise, through the old Arab poets, Bedawîn life in its close connection with nature, its narrowness and grandeur, its stern manliness, and its romance. These poems show us warriors of iron character, men of undaunted courage, whose only law is their own will and their honour, stern wild men, who endure the greatest privations and know how to meet death bravely; and yet they love justice and truth, they are ever ready to assist the weak and needy, they are hospitable and liberal to a fault. The Arab poet says: "I will wipe off with the sword the insult, and may the decree of God bring upon me whatever it will." Another

poet says: "He is no man who sheds no light around and leaves no trace on earth behind him." Another collection is that of Urwa b. Alward and the Dîwân of Abu Talib and the Dîwân of Abu l'Aswad Abd Allah.

The Hamasa of Abu Tammâm is another collection of more than a thousand poems from many hundred poets, and about 45 female poets. A somewhat later collection is the Kitab el Aghani and other poetical works. These Bedawîn were commonly unable to read or write, but the purity of their language is such that they easily make poems, which if written down by others are found to be grammatically correct; and so powerful was the memory of these Bedawîn that one of them could bet with his guests that he would recite to them Kasidas from 100 different poets, all of them bearing the name of Amru, which was a common name then.

As the ancient Hellenes had their yearly poetical and gymnastic contests at Olympia, so the Arabs gathered together at the yearly fair of Ukaz (a town south of Mecca) from all parts of Arabia to hear the recitations of their poets, and the Arab warrior knew of no greater honour than to have his valour and liberality extolled in verses which were known and repeated all over the desert.

It is related that when Kaab ebn Zoheir recited one of his poems in the presence of the prophet Mohammed the latter was so pleased that he took off his mantle and put it on Kaab's shoulder. Moawyia, the Calif, afterwards offered Kaab 10,000 dirhems of silver for it, but he would not part with it, and he got it at last after Kaab's death for 20,000 dirhems. This is the green mantle which at first the califs of the Omayiads, and then the Abassides, inherited as their greatest treasure, and which was burned at the capture of Bagdad by the Tartars in the year 653 of the Hedjira.

The stern character of the Arab warrior, whereby he bears privation and misfortune with stoic resignation if he can only revenge himself or his friends, has its opposite pole in tender and passionate feelings for his relatives and companions. Judging from Arab poems, tears seem to flow in Arabia in greater abundance than elsewhere in the world. It is related of the celebrated poet Mutammim, when reciting a poem on the death of his noble brother Malik, that he could not speak from weeping, and afterwards got blind in consequence of his grief. Who should think that constant warfare and shedding of blood could leave room for softer feelings! And yet it is a fact that most of the poems in honour of the dead begin with expressing a most touching regret at seeing the old, well-known site of the Arab encampment forsaken. We should not expect this from a nomad with whom the constant change of locality has become as it were a second nature.

I cannot omit to mention here that at the time of Mohammed many tribes of Jewish origin lived in Arabia who had adopted the Arabic language and Arabic customs (as far as they did not interfere with their religion). One of the most respected warriors and poets at that time was the Jew, Samuel Ebn Adyia, who lived in the strong castle El Ablag,

near Teima. This fortress was the refuge of the persecuted and needy, and his name was a proverb among the Arabs for faithfulness and truth. They used to say : I swear you fidelity and love as that of *Samuel*, وفاءً كوفاء السموءل. Amra el Kais, the poet, had deposited with him his treasures (namely, five celebrated suits of armour inherited from the Kings of Hymîar), and Samuel sacrified the life of his son (who fell into the enemy's hands) rather than betray his trust.

We cannot fail to acknowledge that the heroism of the old Arab is the heroism of a noble race, not content with sordid motives or vulgar impulse. Whatever glory may be attached to the blow struck by a vigorous arm, this material superiority is far from suppressing or destroying the superiority derived from intelligence. The accomplished Arab warrior combines *both in his person*, and is almost always a poet (as, for instance, Antar). The Arab chieftain is not only the leader in battle, but also the ruler and judge of his tribe, and will never be able to obtain much influence if he is not wise in council and clever in speech. To speak well is an essential part of the chivalrous and ideal perfection of an Arab chief, because the best means of leading the stubborn and proud Bedawîn is by persuasion.

It is striking what close similarity exists between the state of Arab life 1,000 years ago and the feudal system and the life of English and Continental barons and knights during the same period. We must acknowledge that these Arabs were at that time by no means inferior to Germans or English, or it would have been impossible for them to conquer half the Christian world or to overcome the innumerable hosts of the Crusaders. But the immense difference between European society as it is now and the wretched, degraded condition to which the Bedawîn have sunk, shows with undeniable evidence what we owe to Christianity, and that Christ alone is able to elevate, to change, and to regenerate the natural man. But it is time for us to leave the condition of Bedawîn life as it appears from old poems and traditions, and describe the modern Bedawîn.

The Desert.—We, living in Palestine, are on the south and the east surrounded by deserts nearly as vast in extent as the Mediterranean, but few of us have seen these countries. Let me, therefore, give you an idea of what the desert is.

Its Character and Influence.—We will accompany Mr. Palgrave on his journey from Maan, south of Kerak, to the Jowf, which is a five days' journey to the east, in which not a drop of water is to be found. He says :—

"On either side extended one weary plain in a black monotony of hopelessness. Only on all sides lakes of mirage lay, mocking the eye with their clear, deceptive outline, whilst here and there some basaltic rocks, cropping up at random through the level, were magnified by the refraction of the heated atmosphere into the semblance of a fantastic crag or overhanging mountain. Dreary land of death, in which even

the face of an enemy was almost a relief amid such utter solitude. But for five whole days the little, dried-up lizard of the plain, that looks as if he never had a drop of moisture in his ugly body, and the jerboaá, or field rat of Arabia, were the only living creatures to console our view.

"And now began a march, during which we might almost have repented of our enterprise, had such a sentiment been any longer possible or availing. Day after day found us urging our camels to their utmost pace, for 15 or 16 hours together out of the 24, under a well-nigh vertical sun, with nothing either in the landscape around or in the companions of our way, to relieve for a moment the eye or the mind. Then an insufficient halt for rest or sleep, at most of two or three hours, soon interrupted by the oft-repeated admonition, 'If we linger here we all die of thirst,' sounding in our ears, and then to remount our jaded beasts and push them on through the dark night, with the constant probability of attack or plunder from roving marauders.

"Our order of march was thus:—Long before dawn we were on our way, and paced on till the sun, having attained about half-way between the horizon and the zenith, assigned the moment of alighting for our morning's meal. This being ended, we had again, without loss of time, to resume our way from mirage to mirage, till, flaming over all, from heat to heat, the day decreased, and about an hour before sunset we would stagger off our camels as best we might, to prepare an evening feast of precisely the same description as that of the forenoon, or more often, lest the smoke of our fire should give notice to some distant rover, to content ourselves with dry dates and half an hour's rest on the sand."

Samoom.—Then comes the shelook, or sirocco, of the Syrian waste:—

"It was about noon, and such a noon as a summer solstice can offer in the unclouded Arabian sky, over a scorched desert, when abrupt and burning gusts of wind began to blow by fits from the south, while the oppressiveness of the air increased every moment, till my companion and myself mutually asked each other what this could mean and what was to be the result. We turned to enquire of Salem (the Bedawîn chief), but he had already wrapped up his face in his mantle, and, bowed and crouching on the neck of his camel, replied not a word. His comrades, the two Sherarat Bedawîn, had adopted a similar position and were equally silent. At last, after repeated interrogations, Salem, instead of replying directly to our questioning, pointed to a small black tent, providentially at no great distance in front, and said, 'Try to reach that; if you can get there we are saved.' He added, 'Take care that your camels do not stop and lie down'; and then, giving his own several vigorous blows, relapsed into muffled silence.

"We looked anxiously towards the tent; it was yet 100 yards off or more. Meanwhile, the gusts blew hotter and more violent, and it was only by repeated efforts that we could urge our beasts forward. The horizon rapidly darkened to a deep violet hue, and seemed to draw in

like a curtain on every side, while at the same time a stifling blast, as though from some enormous oven opening right on our path, blew steadily under the gloom: our camels, too, began, in spite of all we could do, to turn round and round, and bend their knees, preparing to lie down. The samoom was fairly upon us. Of course we had followed our Arabs' example by muffling our faces, and now with blows and kicks we forced the staggering animals forward to the only asylum within reach. So dark was the atmosphere and so burning the heat that it seemed that hell had risen from the earth or descended from above. But we were yet in time, and at the moment when the worst of the concentrated poison blast was coming round, we were already prostrated one and all within the tent, with our heads well wrapped up—almost suffocated, indeed—but safe, while our camels lay without like dead, their long necks stretched out in the sand, awaiting the passing of the gale."

Were it not for the *oases* which are found in the midst of the most extensive deserts, it would be impossible even for the boldest Bedawîn to traverse these regions. During the winter many parts of the desert are covered with some vegetation, and the rain-water gathers in certain hollow localities, so that not only the herds of camels find pasturage and water, but also the Bedawîn can obtain some subsistence beside their camels' milk.

Principal Plants of the Desert.—There are several plants growing in the Wady Sirrhân, north of the Jowf, which yield food to the Bedawîn. There is the *samah*, a small tufted plant with juicy stalks, and a little oval yellow-tinted leaf. The flowers are of a brighter yellow, with many stamens and pistils. When the blossoms fall off there remains in the place of each a four-leaved capsule, about the size of an ordinary pea, and this when ripe opens, to show a mass of minute reddish seed of the size of poppy seeds, resembling reddish sand in feel and appearance, but farinaceous in substance. These seeds are collected and used instead of rice or flour. Another plant is the *misaâ* bush, which attains 2 or 3 feet in height, is woody, with small and pointed leaves of a lively green, and a little red, star-like flower. This in June gives place to a berry, resembling in size, colour, and taste our own red currant, though inferior to it in flavour, while its sweetness predominates too much over its acidity. With the poorer Bedawîn *samah* and *misaâ*, and a mushroom, called *kemma* or *kemmage*, are considered luxuries, but the richer tribes always have a supply of wheat and dates. The camels' favourite food is a shrub called *ghada*, which covers some parts of the desert.

No domesticated animals, beside the camel, find their sustenance in the desert, and most Bedawîn tribes keep their flocks of goats and sheep in the neighbourhood of cultivated ground where they can find pasture. Only their horses accompany them, and are fed with camels' milk. Naturally the barrenness of the territory stands in perfect analogy with the more or less degraded condition of the Bedawîn inhabiting it; and the same is the case with regard to the variety of domesticated animals

possessed by the Bedawîn. For the tribes who have the best and the greatest number of horses are far superior to those having only camels.[1]

Principal Tribes in Syria.—Let me now give you, in a condensed form, an idea of the principal Bedawîn tribes.

We can divide the dwellers in tents into two classes, namely, such as are settled within a certain closely circumscribed territory, and the large wandering tribes. I must confine myself to the countries in our neighbourhood, and shall, therefore, *not* mention the Bedawîn south of Jebel Shomar, or north of the Euphrates.

Let us begin with the country north-east of Palestine. The large Syrian desert between the Jordan and the Euphrates is the home of the great wandering tribes of the Anêse. In winter they live in the desert, and come in the summer to Palmyra and Damascus. They are the descendants of Wayl, and according to their tradition they have wonderfully multiplied in consequence of a peculiar blessing given to their ancestor. They comprise the Wald Ali, the Hessenne, the Beshr, and the Rualla and Shalân, who, however, live south of the Haurân. These rich tribes comprise about 10,000 horsemen and about 100,000 camels.

Another powerful tribe, at present the principal lords of the Belka, which is considered the paradise of the Bedawîn, on account of its beautiful pastures, are the Beni Sahher, said to descend from the Beni Abs. They are the enemies of the Anêse, and wander between the Belka and the Jowf. They muster about 700 horsemen and 20,000 camels. These large wandering tribes, also called Ahl el Shemal, which spend the winter in the desert, look down with contempt on the smaller tribes which live within a certain circumscribed territory near cultivated land, and under the control of the Turkish Government. They even refuse them the name of Arab or Bedawîn.

This second class contains a great many tribes. The Syrian Bedawîn are :—El Mawaly, el Hadadeyne, el Turkomân, Arab Baalbek, Arab el Bekaa Esaleib, Abl el Jebeil. In the Haurân there are the Fuheily, the Arab el Ledja, Arab Jolan, el Adwan in Moab, and el Sirhân to the south of Haurân. South of the Belka are the Ahl el Kebly, to whom belong the Sherrarat, the Hawayetat, and the Beni Atyieh ; these live between Wadi Sirhân on the east, and Wadi Moosa on the west. Farther south in the Peninsula of Sinai, or Jebel Tor, are the Towâra Arabs, and in our own neighbourhood, between Hebron and Gaza, the Tayaha, the Azazme, the Reteymah. The Taâmera are, as we all know, the principal tribe south of Jerusalem, already showing a transition state between Bedawîn and Fellahîn.

Manner of Travelling and Encamping.—Let me now describe to you the manner in which the wandering Bedawîn travel and encamp.

[1] We find among some of the Bedawîn tribes opulence, and among others the greatest possible poverty. The Arabs of Wady Moosa are so poor that they, from utter want of clothing, are obliged to cover themselves at night with sand, while many a sheikh from the Anêse possesses 200 to 500 camels.

It was in the year 1863 that I met a large detachment of the Anêse, the Sbâ, in the desert east of the Ledja. Their order of march was this: A party of five or six well-mounted horsemen, armed with lances adorned with tufts of black ostrich feathers, preceded the tribe about four miles as a reconnoitring party; the main body occupied a line of at least three miles in front; first came some armed horsemen and camel-riders with long muskets, spears, and swords, at 100 or 150 paces from each other, extending along the whole front; then followed the she-camels with their young ones, grazing in wide ranks during their march upon the wild herbage. Behind them walked the camels loaded with the tents and provisions, and last came the women and children mounted on camels, having saddles made in form of a cradle, or nest, with curtains to screen them from the sun. The men indiscriminately rode alongside and amidst the whole body, but most of them in front of the line, and some, riding on camels, led horses by the halters. Occasionally we met an Arab with a falcon on his hand covered with its leather cap.

The Tent.—The tent is called "beit," it is made of black goats' hair; the pieces, each not quite a yard in breadth, are joined together to make a sufficient breadth for the tent. The length varies from 20 to 80 feet. Each single tent has nine poles, called "'amood," the highest of which scarcely ever exceeds 10 feet. At the middle pole is the partition for the women, the men's apartment being on the left side on entering the tent, and the women's on the right. In the men's apartment the ground is generally covered with a Persian or Bagdad carpet, and the wheat sacks and camel bags are piled up round the middle pole. The waterskin and the wooden coffee mortar are never wanting in this part. The women's apartment is the receptacle for all the rubbish of the tent, the cooking utensils, butter, and waterskins, &c. All these things are laid down near the pole, called "hadera," where the slave sits and the dog sleeps during the day. No man of good reputation would sit there. On the forepost of the men's apartment hangs a corner of the tent covering, called "roffe," which serves for wiping hands before or after dinner. The furniture of the tent consists, first of all, of the women's saddle in the form of two immense wings attached to the middle part, having the form of a nest. Each of these two wings is formed of two poles covered with red tanned camel skins, and adorned with tassels, and large enough to afford space for a person sleeping in it at full length, whilst the middle part serves as a receptacle for the little children. When riding, the sheikh's ladies hang strings of various colours and cloth cuttings round the saddle from one wing to the other, which gives to the marching camel a most wonderful appearance. The whole looks like a canoe put across the camel's back, or like an immense bird with outstretched wings. It is clear that such extensive saddles can only be used in the desert; it would be impossible to travel with them in narrow, mountainous, and rocky countries, or to pass with them through a forest. The pack-saddle is called "hôdaju," the men's saddle "shadad."

When the place of encampment is reached the sheikh puts his spear in

the ground, and at once the tents are pitched according to old-established rules, without disorder or dispute.

In the year 1870 the Rualla Arabs, a tribe of the Anêse, were forced to come to the plain of Esdraelon on account of the drought in the Haurân. It was most magnificent to see, from the top of Mount Kafsy, this rich plain literally covered with thousands of camels and with the black tents of these wild people, and to hear the peculiar shouts of the shepherds whereby they directed the march of the camels, and the songs or zagharit of the women. But after they had left, not a blade of grass or a bit of straw was left in the whole plain.

Tent Life.—Let us examine the *inmates of the tent, their occupation and character.* The salutation of the Bedawîn is simply *salâm 'aleik* or *marhaba*, and then follow the usual questions: *keif el hal.* The clothing of the poor is simply a long shirt with long sleeves; the same is white with the men, and of green or bluish colour with the women, who wear it so long that it trails on the ground, and the sleeves also reach down to their ankles. Over the shirt the men wear the brown and white striped *'abai*, or in winter a sheepskin jacket. On the head they wear the *keffyieh* and a cord of camel's hair called the *akâl.* Often in travelling they cover their faces with the *keffyieh* so that only the eyes are visible. Men and women, when coming to towns, wear big boots of red leather.

The Anêse are distinguished by their long tresses of hair, which they rarely cut; they call them *kervan.* All the women tattoo their lips, chin, arms, hands, and feet with blue dye, and generally wear glass bracelets of various colours. The ladies of some Anêse tribes wear silver rings in their ears and noses, and carry silver bracelets and silver chains round the neck. Bedawîn are rarely over 5 feet 2 or 3 inches in height, their features are good, their noses often aquiline, and finely chiselled, their deep-set and dark eyes sparkle from under their bushy black eyebrows with a fire unknown in northern climes, their beard is short and thin, but the black hair of the head is abundantly thick, and their teeth are always white as pearls. The women of the northern Bedawîn, especially the Anêse, are handsome and graceful, but those of the south are very ugly. Their complexion varies from yellow to nearly black. Cleanliness is, of course, not to be expected in the Arabs, with whom water is too expensive an article to be wasted for the unnecessary purpose of washing; if need be, they use sand, or rub themselves all over with butter, and the women use even a stranger kind of pomade, which I certainly would not recommend.

Diet.—Their diet consists of milk and *leben* of camels or goats, and unleavened bread, either baked very thin on a round sheet of iron, called *sâj*, or in cakes baked on stones. Only when guests appear a goat or a young camel is killed and served with rice or *burghul.* A luxury with them are dates with butter, or a heap of thin cakes of bread piled upon one another like pancakes and swimming in melted butter. This dish is called *fateeta.* Coffee is, of course, the favourite beverage, and is most

carefully roasted and prepared in the manner well known to you. They serve their dishes always so very hot that it requires much practice to avoid burning one's fingers, for even spoons are quite unknown.

The only art known among Bedawîn is spinning and weaving of camel and goat's hair for preparing tents, bags, and halters, and the tanning and dying of camel skins, either with pomegranate peels or with the roots of a desert herb called *verk*. These skins are used for girdles and to cover the saddles. In the Belka the Bedawîn gather the soap (kali) plant, and prepare from it, by burning, the potash, or kali, which they sell to the soap manufacturers at Damascus, Nâblus, and Jerusalem.

Beside some copper pans and trays they only have wooden bowls and wooden trays or *batiés*. The rest of their furniture consists of their tent-pegs and a large wooden hammer, called *matraka*, all of which are easily carried in a bag.

In his tent the Bedawy is a most indolent and lazy creature. His only occupation is feeding the horses or milking the camels in the evening, and now and then he goes out with his hawk. A man, hired for the purpose, takes care of the herds and flocks, while wife and daughters perform all domestic business. The women grind the corn in a handmill, or pound it in a mortar, and prepare butter from the milk by shaking it in a skin. Occasionally they work at the loom, but their principal business is to fetch water, which they sometimes have to carry long distances on their back. On them also falls all the work connected with the pitching and striking of the tents.

You may easily imagine that scientific pursuits are incompatible with Bedawîn life. Books are unknown with them. Among 1,000 Arabs only one can read, and still fewer know how to write. These accomplishments are considered unworthy of a good warrior. When I spoke to a Rualla chief about the great advantage of relieving the monotony of desert life by reading, he said he would be glad to receive a schoolmaster for his boys if I would guarantee that they would be able to read the Korán within the space of *one* month; and when I thought this impossible he would not hear any more of my suggestion. Yet they are as enthusiastic admirers of poetry as their ancestors were, and there is scarcely an Arab sheikh who does not know some poems by heart. When Saleh el Jerwan, from the Beni Sahher, was mortally wounded in the Valley of the Jordan he made, just before expiring, a poem expressing exactly the same sentiments of submission to the divine decree, of love to his family, and of eternal hatred against his enemies, as one finds expressed in the old poems. After his funeral the food for the guests was cooked over a fire kindled upon 16 skulls of his enemies. Fendi el Fais, the sheikh of the Beni Sahher, who died in 1879, was buried in Saleh's grave at Rama, in the Ghor opposite to Jericho.

Religion.—In *matters of religion* Bedawîn are very indifferent Mohammedans. During the course of 12 centuries Mohammedanism seems to have made little or no impression on them, either for good or evil. That

it was equally ineffectual in this regard at the period of its very first establishment we learn from the Korán itself, and from early tradition of an authentic character.

We read :—"Amîr Ebn Tufeil, sheikh of the mighty tribe of the Beni Amîr, resolved with two of his friends to travel to Medina in order to make the acquaintance of the prophet Mohammed. After having saluted him Amîr asked the prophet : 'Will you be my friend?' 'No,' answered Mohammed, 'unless you believe in the unity of God, who has no companion.' Then Amîr asked : 'But will you make me your successor if I become a Moslem?' Mohammed answered : 'The world is the Lord's, and He gives power to rule to whom *He* pleases.' 'Then,' rejoined Amîr, 'I receive the Islam if *you* take the government over the inhabitants of towns and leave me to be ruler over all Bedawîn.' The prophet refused this also, and Amîr said : 'What benefit shall I then derive from becoming a Moslem?' Mohammed said : 'It gives you the community of all true believers.' But Amîr answered : 'I stand not in need of this,' and left him, threatening him with war."

The Bedawîn of the present day do not show any aversion against the doctrine of the unity of God or to the prophet Mohammed, but they seem incapable of receiving or retaining any serious religious influences or definite forms of thought and practice. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," seems to be the character of most of the Bedawîn. They know little of Mohammedan worship with its prostrations and rehearsals, its ablutions and rites; usually they say : "Our sheikh prays for us all." They care nothing for the pilgrimage to Mecca, except in the way of demanding their share of the *zurra* paid by Government, or in the way of plundering the pilgrims; they are indifferent to the fast of Ramadan, but they devoutly slaughter a lamb or a camel on the tomb of their kinsmen. The desert, like the vast expanse of the sea, is calculated to impress on the mind the unity and power of God, and therefore we find with the Arabs the stereotype exclamation, "Allah Akbar:" God is great. Involuntarily one feels in the desert the presence of God, for it teaches more than anything else what it is to be alone—alone with God. Therefore in the first centuries of our era many thousands of Christians became Eremites in the deserts of Egypt and Syria. Such asceticism is based on the great and undeniable truth, that we are only able to realise the invisible and eternal things of God in proportion as we are weaned from the material things and cares of this visible world.

Fatalism.—But ONE doctrine of Islam exercises a great and constant influence on a Bedawy's life, and this is the doctrine of *fatalism*. This doctrine stands in singular affinity with the dangers encountered in the desert and with the uncertainty of an Arab's life. Necessarily it must produce great recklessness and indifference regarding the changes of fortune and precautions against death.

Morals.—Bedawîn *morals* are equally lax. "Dogs are better than we are," is a common expression of theirs; and Palgrave gives them

credit for having in this regard spoken the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But I believe that with regard to morals there is among the different Bedawîn tribes as wide a difference as there is among other classes of Oriental society, and any infringement on the sanctity of the harem would at once be revenged by them.

Warfare. — The general character of Bedawîn cannot be better described than in the words of the angel to Ishmael's mother: "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every one, and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." It is remarkable how, even to this day, every Bedawy sustains these characteristics of his ancestor Ishmael. They are at war with all agriculturists within their reach, and they are constantly at war among themselves. The Arabs say:—"Our father Adam had three sons—one was a hunter, the other a farmer, and the third a Bedawy, who received from Adam the camel to live by. However, the camel died, and the Bedawy came to father Adam and said: 'My camel died, what shall I do now, on what shall I live?' 'Go, answered father Adam, and live by what you can get from your brethren.'" Another Bedawy said to me when I explained to him the great advantages of a peaceful life, "How shall a Bedawy get his livelihood without his spear and sword? We have old enemies among other tribes; if they have taken away our camels, we must somehow or other regain them or die from hunger."

Disputes among different Bedawîn tribes generally arise about the water and pasture. They begin with the shepherds and end with the death of some sheikh, which must of course be revenged. But even in a fight among the larger tribes, in which thousands on each side are engaged, the loss of life is insignificant. In October, 1878, the Beni Sahher had a battle with the Rualla in the Haurân, in which a large number of horsemen and camel-riders was engaged. As usual, one of the best mounted chiefs in full armour gallops into the empty space between the two parties and challenges the sheikhs of the enemies till one of them accepts the duel and is thrown from his horse. Then some of his friends come to his assistance and an irregular combat begins, which, however, is generally restricted to the horsemen. In this battle the Beni Sahher were victorious, killed 70 of the opposite party and gained 18 mares, but they were not able to take any camels or tents. It is affirmed that the old law of blood-revenge (*thâr*) gives to these battles a much milder character, as the Bedawîn do not like to bring upon themselves personally the avengers, even in the case of victory.

Stealing Expeditions.—The most frequent form of warfare is the *ghazu*, with the object of surprising the enemy and taking their tents and camels. But if such an expedition on a larger scale is not practicable there is always a number of poorer Bedawîn thirsting after renown and gain of plunder. Then the expedition proceeds in the following systematic manner. The *harâmy*, or robber, who is never on horseback, selects two trustworthy companions; besides their weapons, in which the club plays

the principal part, they take some provisions, consisting of salt and flour in a bag. Towards midnight they reach the tent which they intend to attack. One of them goes first behind the tent, and when attacked by the dogs, he flees in order to remove them from the scene of action. At the same time the second cuts the ropes from the camels' knees, and drives them away, whilst the third, standing at the opening of the tent, is prepared to strike anyone on the head who should venture out. If the attack is discovered and one of the robbers made a prisoner, he is asked what he came for; and after having confessed, he is obliged formally to renounce the right of the *dakheel* (suppliant). Then he is fettered with a horse-chain and put at full length in a hole dug in the middle of the tent with tied up arms and his locks pinned to the ground. In this position, as one buried alive, he remains till he is able to pay the ransom for his life, which generally costs him all his property. Often a friend guarantees for him, and it is considered an unpardonable disgrace if the robber cheats this friend who became his surety. From ancient times it has been considered the greatest honour and distinction among all Bedawîn to obtain the name of being a daring and successful robber.

Not many Bedawîn sheikhs die a natural death; at least, most of those I knew personally were killed—for instance, Mohammed el Duhy, Sheikh of the Wald Ali; Gendsh, Sheikh of the Mowally; Feisal, Sheikh of the Shalân; Rubbah, Sheikh of the Sakker, killed in 1858 by the Adwân; and Moutlak, his brother, killed by the same in 1870; Mohammed el Moosa, Sheikh of the Sbeh, killed by the Koords in 1868—and if one of them dies a natural death from lingering illness [or suddenly] they ascribe it to poison given by the Turks [or some other enemies], as in the case of Akyle Agah, and of Fendi el Fais, Sheikh of the Beni Sahher.

How the Bedawîn Cheat their Creditors.—Dulaüm ben Murra Aljuhani:—"God permitted me to succeed in a good purchase at a time when money was most scarce. He (the merchant) bent the fingers of his hand to reckon (on his fingers, of course) his amount of profit, without, however, reckoning how long I should make him wait for the payment. He may be glad if instead of the gain he expects, he receives a small part."

Suhaib ben Nibras:—"Often have I for days and days put off a creditor whose eyes grew yellow from vexation, whose face was in constant sweat from desire after payment. For it is the lot of every creditor who is stingy or too hard in his demands, to have everything denied by the debtor.'

Hanif ben Qu'air Alabsi:—"My enemies rejoice at my debts, as if none of them had ever got into debt before me. But by making more debts I will continue to enrage them so that they almost perish."

Atirga ben Mihrag Alhilâh:—"I brought the stuff away with me, so nice, black and white, whilst the coins which I ought to have paid for it remained hid in my sleeve. And he took up a piece of paper, looked

at the witnesses, and counted with both hands how much money I shoul have to pay him after the lapse of a certain time. But I believe that we shall never see each other again! And Abaid put a seal and names of witnesses and wrote a title deed about it, which will cause him much lamentation. This is how I treat those wretches, for I see in them nothing but a help for the time of need."

Tarîf ben Manzur Alasadî :—"After we had the money from Yahya ben Yabîr in our hands, I said one morning to my friend Hisu—for he told me all his secrets, as I told him mine—'Does Yahya demand that we keep our conditions, though he raged like a madman against our money when we bargained?' This merchant of Alkufa must not suppose that we are not clever enough to understand the reckoning he made on his slate. But I promised enormous profit, and then he turned away not suspecting that he would lose *all*. Let Yahya, therefore, not hope that anything will be restored, for the madman has thrown his things into the depth of a raging sea."

Awaif Alquwafi Alfazâri :—"I told you to guess, O sons of Lahta, where I should be in the turmoil of trouble. Now seek me if you can! Fie upon you and upon the understanding between your ribs (according to Bedawîn ideas the understanding has its seat in the heart), how could you depend upon me and my religion? For with regard to religion and good reputation I am the poorest of men."

Abdallah ben Alabras Alasadî :—"I am gentle as long as my creditor is gentle, but I keep my debts so long that my murderer will still find them. Day and night I put the creditor off till he at last gets tired of me and is glad if he gets back any part of the debt without profit."

Wâbr ben Mu'awiya Alasadî :—"I have always in readiness for my creditors a sharp sword and a splendid club of Arsan wood; a thick club with a great knob prepared for the merchants of Almadîn. Yes, by thy grandfather, when the time for payment comes, and my liver feels not inclined to pay, I will repay him with a stick of Arsan wood, so heavy that it hurts the arm to lift it."

Abu 'muabbês Aluquaili :—"Little I cared for Saiyar and his shouting, when on my flight I had the well Sirâr between him and me. He had followed me with great diligence, and spread his paper in the market place before a number of old men who had left their business to investigate my affair, as if I had done them injury. They swore by God that I should not get away as long as I owed him one piece of gold. In their foolishness they wanted to hold me, but I invented a trick and said :—'To-morrow I expect some goods, and I therefore invite you to meet me at the house of Ibn Habbâr.' But I only fixed this meeting to cheat them, so that my promise and the *not* keeping of the same might save me. When my feet at length found opportunity for flight I did not stop running and galloping. When they saw that I was escaping at the utmost speed, so that not even a bird could have caught me, they said to their comrade :—'Leave him alone, thou canst not overtake him; come back with us and may all Bedawîn go to hell!' Yes, Saiyar, truly

some time will elapse before I pay you, and so you had better fold your paper and keep it well from the mice!"

Swearing.—"For some time I refused when they asked me to swear an oath, so that the fools might suppose I was to be trusted. When they heard my refusal they imagined that the idea of swearing was cutting my very heart, and they did not know that my oath was prepared long ago to free my neck from the burden of debts."

Musannin ben Uwaimir Alasadî:—"They asked me: 'Will you swear?' and I said in haste: 'God preserve me from swearing an oath.' When I saw that the people believed that I would not swear out of deep conviction and fear of God, and realised that if I swore, witnesses, paper, and seals would all be vain, I swore an oath that the mountains burst as stones which warriors throw from their slings."

"God saved my young camel from the hand of the Emîr by a false oath which thou happily foundest out, without its bringing thee to hell fire."

"Swear a false oath, and if thou afterwards fearest misfortune, repent and turn again to the merciful Forgiver of sins."

However, we must leave this, the darkest part of Arab life, and turn to *the brighter side of the picture.*

If you meet a true son of the desert in the streets of Jerusalem, you will at once recognise him, not only by his dark features, his piercing eyes, and his plaited locks of hair, but also by his long strides and dignified motions. You see, however, that he feels ill at ease within a walled city, and you would not like to fall into his hands in the open country when he is mounted on his mare and carries his spear in his hand. But at the sight of his black tent you may be sure of perfect safety, whoever you are. There he is the best and most generous of hosts, and will spare no pains or expenses to make you as comfortable as possible.

It is related of Amîr Ebn Tufeil, of the Beni Amîr, that his herald used to call out at the great fair of Ukat: "Anyone needing a beast of burden may find it with Amîr. Anyone hungry may come to him. Anyone needing protection will find safety with him." I do not think that the mightiest in Europe would dare to make in real earnest such invitations and promises. It is told that a king once sent his vizier to a Bedawy, who possessed the fleetest mare of the desert, in order to ask him for it. But when the vizier arrived at the Arab's tent, he found him in most reduced circumstances. As he had no food to give, and as no animal remained with which he could treat his guests, the Bedawy killed his mare for them. After dinner the vizier spoke to him of the request of the king, upon which the Bedawy told him that he and his retinue had just eaten the mare, and in proof of it he produced its fresh skin.

From the oldest times to the present all Arab poets extol the virtue of hospitality and liberality, and even the dimensions of the *mansaf*, or tray on which the meat is served, is not forgotten in their songs. The prophet Mohammed, returning from the Battle of Bedr, is said to have rested in the shade of the *mansaf* of an Arab, and at present the *mansaf*

of Mohammed Ebn Esmeir, Sheikh of the Wald Ali, is considered the biggest, and its owner the most liberal and honoured of men. In the year 1863 I travelled with some friends to the Haurân, and met the Beni Sahher east of Um Keis, encamped in a beautiful oak forest. Our caravan contained 40 mules and horses and 20 men, but the Arabs nevertheless declared that we were their guests; no provisions were to be unpacked and no fire to be lighted by us. We were at once invited to Abdullah Ahmed's tent, and, after having partaken of his hospitality, we wished to retire. But he declared that we had only got our breakfast, and we had to remain till we had had luncheon and dinner, and thus we were obliged in the course of two hours to go through three meals.

Samples of Honesty.—Let me now give you some instances of *honesty*, which is not unfrequently found among the Arabs.

A merchant from Nazareth, who had bought sheep from the Sherrarât, paid by mistake four piastres too much; but after he had gone a distance of 10 miles he observed a Bedawy following and calling him. When he asked his desire, the Bedawy said: "You have paid me four piastres too much, and I only came to return what is yours."

Another instance:—Two merchants went to the Sherrarât to buy goats. After they had bought a number from this tribe, one of the merchants went to another party of Bedawîn to buy more. The Sherrarât meanwhile struck their tents and travelled towards the south, but the host of the merchants remained with his guest on the spot waiting for the return of the other man, and when the same at last arrived he showed no signs of vexation, but treated him with the greatest attention. Meanwhile the Sherrarât had gone so far south that the Bedawy could no more overtake them, and had to remain for a whole year in that country waiting for the return of his tribe.

Again:—A man lost a lamb, which a Bedawy found and exchanged for an ewe, which in the course of a few years had several young ones. When he at last met with the owner of the lamb, he returned to him the sheep he had gained, and excused himself that he had occasionally drunk of their milk.

Palgrave, who does not flatter the Bedawîn, says that he did not lose two pounds' worth during his whole journey through Arabia.

But though there is no doubt a good deal of honesty in the desert, yet it is certain that the Bedawîn who come in contact with townspeople often use all their cunning in order to cheat them. We have quite a number of old poems written by Arabs, who with delight describe the manner in which they cheated their creditors.

I am afraid my time is already too far spent to describe more of the peculiarities and strange customs of the Bedawîn, of their stern demeanour, and reluctance to smile or laugh, or to speak of their quaint and original way of speech.

In reviewing what has been said about the character of the Bedawîn, we are obliged to acknowledge that it contains great contrasts. As we find in the middle of the desolate desert the *oasis*, with all the riches

of a luxuriant vegetation, so we find with the Arab unbounded liberty and cruel despotism; great instability and inconsistency and great tenacity in preserving their old ways and customs; a clear intellect and reasoning power, with wild fancies and deep sentiment; lasting love and lasting hatred; egotism of the worst kind and true devotion; robbery and liberality; honesty and treachery; childlike simplicity and deep cunning.

But one thing is certain: if the Bedawy remains what he now is, he will be a great hindrance to cultivation and to progress in the East; for where the Bedawîn wander no tree grows and no corn can be raised, and their ravages are as fatal to agriculture as those of the locusts. But should it not be possible to reclaim these restless wanderers, drifting to and fro in the desert without higher object, without home, and without the hope of a better life after death? Are not the sons of Ishmael also the sons of Abraham? Do not their traditions constantly remind them of the holy example of Him who by faith obtained the promise? Did not the Apostle Paul first preach the Gospel in Arabia, and were not the Arab tribes of Lai, Taghleb, Tennooh, and Bedr once Christians? It is the Apostle Paul who also, with regard to the Arabs, pronounced the memorable words: "God has concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all." And we have the sure promises of God that the Arabs also will come to the light which arose on Mount Zion: for "the dromedaries of Midian and all the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered unto the Lord; and even the desert shall be changed, and shall blossom like the rose."

THE MEASUREMENT OF EGGS.

By Colonel C. M. Watson, C.M.G., R.E.

It is stated in the Talmud that a log contained six eggs (*see* Zuckermann's "Jüdische Maass-System," who quotes Peah 1, 6, Terumot 43, 3, Erubin 83, A). Colonel Conder, in "The Handbook to the Bible," p. 61, states that the mean capacity of an egg is 4 cubic inches, and hence makes the log 24 cubic inches, but he does not say how he measured the eggs, or whether they were English or Syrian eggs.

In order to check Colonel Conder's measurement I have measured a considerable number of English eggs, and the result is not in accord with his statement. I found that the most accurate way was to measure carefully the volume of the amount of water displaced by an egg. This is more convenient than measuring the volume of the content of the egg, and gives almost exactly the same result. Here, for example, is one experi-