A JOURNEY IN THE HAURAN.

By Rev. W. Ewing.

(*Continued from page* 67.)

The Sheikh had prepared a sumptuous repast, according to his lights, and to this we were permitted to add from our own store a little rice, which, carefully cooked, and served up either with boiling *samn* or with milk and sugar, was greatly relished by the swarthy men to whom it was an unusual treat. The sun was gone, and as darkness spread over the uplands the air grew chill. After supper a great circle was formed round the fire. The conversation with the شيوخ turned directly upon the Arabs. Being themselves Turkomâns, not related by blood to either of the great divisions of the *'Anazy*, the *Wuld 'Aly* and the *Ruwally*, their views may be taken as fairly impartial. In matters of politeness they were disposed to give the *Wuld 'Aly* the first place; these also were the wealthier, and more enlightened, making some slight advance towards the beginnings of civilisation. They are strict in the performance of religious duties, but their word is hardly to be relied on, unless they swear *the yemîn*. The *Ruwally*, on the other hand, were declared to be مثل وحوش —"like wild beasts," void of all refinement, for the most part innocent of all religious ideas, only one here and another there knowing how to pray; but in the matter of an oath they may be absolutely trusted; it is not necessary to demand the *yemîn* from them. In the obedience of children to their parents also they are the most exemplary of all. As long as parent and child live, the authority of the former lasts: the honour paid by the son to his mother is one of the brighter features of the shady life of the desert. Of the generosity and hospitality displayed to strangers by both divisions alike, the Turkomâns spoke in terms of highest praise.

Our entertainers shared the ordinary Mohammedan prejudice against pictures of all kinds. A figure drawn on the cover of a box of vestas started the subject. There could be no doubt, so they said, that to make a representation of a man, or any other created being, was eminently flagitious; the prophet—النبى—*en Naby*, by whom the Moslems always mean Mohammed—the prophet had forbidden it, and surely that was enough for all reasonable men. But further, it was clearly an attempt to imitate the work of God; inevitable failure resulted in a caricature, which was an evident mockery of the Most High. If, however, the picture were mutilated—drawing a knife across the part representing the neck—so that it no longer presented a *complete* image, but only parts, then it was permitted to "the faithful" to enjoy whatever beauties it might be found to illustrate!

I sounded them as to their opinion of the *Wahaby*, the gloomy Protestant of Islâm in distant Yemen. They spoke of his splendid zeal on behalf of the pure religion; but even while they sipped the bitter liquid so grateful to the Arab palate, and whiffed their cigarettes, that on which they bestowed the most genuine admiration was his rule absolutely prohibiting the use of coffee and tobacco! How powerfully asceticism makes appeal to such men: a serious exhibition of self-mortification for sake of the religion, how profoundly it moves these sternly nurtured sons of the great wilderness.

The proposed railway from the coast to Damascus has caused a flutter of anxiety in many of the tents of Ishmael. The coming of the Circassians was a small affair compared with what is threatened by the advent of the iron horse, which is to fill with sounds of life and industry the vast fertile solitudes, whose shrill scream is to waken the echoes in many a valley where silence has reigned for centuries. Just what the railway is only a few of them have some dim apprehension; but all have a hazy notion that it means the final expulsion of the *'Arab* from their ancestral wilds; either this or they will have to break with the long tradition of their people, and in simple self-preservation turn to more settled ways. Against either alternative the Arab soul rises in revolt, and no one need wonder if in their deliberate judgment the introduction of the railway spells "ruin to the country."

The feeling of insecurity on account of the Circassian and Arab feud was very strong. No one would on any errand go abroad after nightfall, and just as little during the day as possible. Sheikh Mustapha enjoyed the coveted honour of being a member of the مجلس—*mejlis*, or district council at *Kuneiterah*. But for months he had not ventured to attend a meeting, as that meant riding through the unquiet parts, and, like a wise man, he set a higher value on his life than on the honour of voting for measures which would be carried out whether he supported them or not.

Our hosts assured us that recently some very fine sculptures had been unearthed at *El Yehudiyeh*, by men hunting for treasure, a particularly beautiful one they took to be a representation of an angel. Their sincerity was so far guaranteed by the willingness of some to conduct us thither; but Arab ideas of what may interest Europeans are usually so wide of the mark that I thought it better to go our own way.

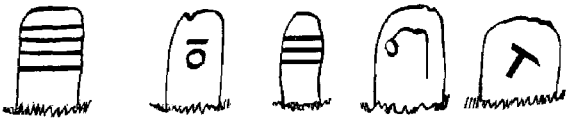
After a light breakfast of coffee and milk, we set out, accompanied by two mukaries who had arrived late the previous day. One of them hailed from Judeideh, the prosperous village overlooking *Merj 'Ayûn*, where the American missionaries in Sidon have their summer quarters. The other was from *Jebel ed Druze*. They had great skins of *kitrân* or "tar," which they hawked among the Beduw for the purpose of doctoring the camels. Their way lay almost due south, so we had soon to part company with them; but long after we had lost sight of them we could hear the song of these happy-hearted fellows, borne by the morning breeze far over wady and rocky hill.

Passing several scattered dolmens, our first halt was made at *El Khushnîyeh*, a series of well-built cattle shelters, on the top of an isolated hill. The summit is almost entirely surrounded by a tolerably good wall. Many evidences of its ancient state lie among the surrounding ruins. It must have been a position of considerable strength in the days of antique war.

What seemed like the top of an old gate pillar lay in an open square. It is 18 inches in diameter at the base, and measures 21 inches from base to apex. A fragment of marble column I found near by, 18 inches in length, 9 inches in diameter. Among the great rush of ruins on the slope to the north-west I found a flat stone, with a deep, narrow, circular groove cut into the face of it, and a straight escape towards one side. The circular groove is 14 inches in diameter. The approach to the ruins is up a steep and winding path on the southern slope of the hill. At the base there were reaches of luxuriant verdure, where sheep and cattle were grazing, even at this late season.

Soon after leaving *El Khushnîyeh*, we met a troop of Beduw riding on camels. They got their eyes on the baggage carried by the *Kedîsh*, and most difficult it was to persuade them that we were not hawking grapes. They looked as if they would have liked to see for themselves, and, until they were finally convinced, 'Abdullah was in a state of considerable agitation. To the dry throats from the desert, the grape presents irresistible attractions, and the rough-and-ready sons of war, accustomed to take what they want, and ask leave, if at all, afterwards, are not too nice about the means used to secure it.

Tell el Talaya, a double-headed hill, with a few spreading trees on the top, lay to our right. Ascending, we found an extensive graveyard on the summit. It is evidently felt that a stone with an inscription on it will serve equally well for any grave. Occasionally we find an ancient stone grimly frowning over a newly-made grave; again, different parts of the same stone, each part preserving a bit of the original inscription, are distributed impartially over several tombs. On many of the stones were the وسوم, *wusûm*; sing. وسم, *wasm*—brandmarks of the Arabs. These five occurred often:—



Under one of the great trees, towards the eastern extremity of the summit, is the *wely*, or saint's tomb. It may once have been covered, but now is simply walled-in. Heaps of bricks are strewn around. A plough lay inside near the tomb, doubtless having been brought for safety.

Continuing south-eastward we passed *A'yûn el Faḥḥâm*, *i.e.*, springs of the charcoal burner—*not* as in the map, *A'yûn el Faḥm*, *i.e.*, springs

of charcoal! Here we met an aged Beduwy, who directed us to *Tell Furj*. *El Furj* is the ruin covering the tell. Many of the houses I examined were of solid masonry, some of them tolerably complete, but desolate now, the abode of owl and bat, and the haunt of night-prowlers of all kinds. I searched long, but not a single inscription, nor even a bit of respectable carving, rewarded my industry.

We came back to the road in time to meet a long caravan of Arabs, who were moving steadily westward with all their belongings. Tents were bestowed on the camels' backs, and on the top of these the women and children, while the men walked alongside or rode on stately in front. Mohammed was a little before me; when I came up I found that he had proposed marriage to one of the women, and had been accepted on the spot! They were now shouting arrangements for the coming عرس, marriage, across the ever-increasing space between them; and amid a burst of hilarious laughter they parted, never, probably, to meet again.

The graceful cone of *Tell el Faras* rose to the left of our way. The ground is covered with scattered fragments of the lava belched forth of old from the fiercely burning, palpitating heart of the hill, now cold and still. Reaching the summit by a series of zigzags and windings, you find the appearance that of an enormous, but beautifully moulded cup, with a slight lean to the north-west, the hollow of the crater going far down into the centre of the mountain. Riding round the ruin, we observed traces of ancient building, and speculate that perhaps in ancient days the deep hollow may have served as a cistern. To the north-west lies a succession of lower eminences, opening savage, black, rocky jaws in an eternal grimace against the sky. How beautiful the tell is by contrast, suggesting the thought: the tell for loveliness, but these grim, cruel mouths for solid business. How the wild men of these regions do love to bury their dear ones on the top of some hill, where the fresh winds of heaven, unfettered, may visit their graves! It may be some reminiscence of the holiness attaching in olden times to these "high places." Even here, at this height and distance, we found a number of tombs, most on the south-eastern rim of the crater. Children, guarding the goats that grazed around, played among the stones, and warned us specially against desecrating the *wely*—a tomb rather larger than the rest, with a low, drystone wall around it.

The summit commands a view of great extent and interest. Unhappily, a light haze eastward obscured great part of the Haurân, but the heights of the Mountain of Bashan rose clearly beyond. To the west the country lay exposed in panoramic completeness and distinctness; the long, jagged edge of the plateau, the deep depression of the *Ghôr*, with the Sea of Galilee in breadths of flashing blue, the uplands and plains of Galilee and Samaria, in full extent, from the slopes that overlook the Jordan eastward, even to the dark bulk of Carmel by the sea. So beautifully distinct was everything that I was tempted to try a sketch.

Winding down the steep descent, we were surprised to see a company of about a dozen half naked, fierce-looking fellows rushing towards us with huge clubs in their hands. We rode steadily forward to meet them, wondering what could have excited them so. As we approached they grew calmer. Inquiring into the matter, they told us, rather breathlessly, that while they were working at their corn they left the goats on the hill in charge of two boys. One had come running to tell them that several horsemen were seen on the heights. What could horsemen want there? Goats, of course. They at once shouldered their clubs and rushed forth to do battle with the supposed robbers. They went away perfectly satisfied as to our honourable intentions as regarded the goats, but why men should toil up the mountain in the heat of the day for the mere fun of the thing, they could by no means understand. "These Franjies, however, are, no doubt, as Ullah made them," and with this pious reflection they wiped the perspiration from their swarthy faces and stalked quietly off across the empty waste.

Tell Jokhadar lay down to our right, with the Khân at its foot. Here passed the ancient road from Gilead and the south towards Damascus. Several Arab encampments dotted the landscape. The village belongs to Mohammed Sa'id Pasha, for many years chief of the Mecca pilgrimage. He owns much land in the district, many fertile acres in the *Ghôr*, immediately north of the Sea of Galilee, yielding him rich returns. We found the brother of the Pasha superintending threshing operations in a comfortable tent pitched on the edge of the threshing floor. Many were the signs of industry here, asses, horses, and oxen in pairs, being driven round and round on the shining gold of the wheat, while clouds of chaff floated in the breeze from the implements of the winnowers. This threshing is a long business, furnishing employment for many weeks to the villagers. So it has been from time immemorial, and they dream not of its ever being otherwise. A missionary once remarked to an elderly Arab that in his country all the grain growing within sight of them could be threshed in a couple of days, and winnowed too. والله العظيم, was the Sheikh's amazed reply, شو بتعملو بقيّة السنة "Whatever do you do the rest of the year!"

The *Aga* came forth, pressed me to turn aside to his tent, and would take no refusal. A youth from *Judeideh*, near Merj A'yûn, we found acting as his secretary. These enterprising youths go far during these months, and are of great service to the illiterates in the east. Such another I remember meeting years before, away to the south of Busrah. He was spending some months with the Beduw, who, professing to despise the art of the "quill driver," are yet glad enough to have business transactions recorded in black and white: so, during the season for numbering and arranging the flocks, the clever youths from Judeideh render valuable assistance. The *Aga* had the inevitable coffee produced, and, while I rested on the floor of the tent, we gave each other as much infor-

mation about our personal antecedents and connections as we deemed expedient. He was specially proud of his brother, the great Haj Pasha. It did not seem as if he would ever tire telling of his prowess, his skill, and his exploits in the desert. His voice and mien were described as those of a lion, and to those the *Aga* naïvely ascribed much of his success in the conduct of the pilgrimage. For 31 years he had held the honourable office, and in that time many and varied had been his experiences: not unfrequently he had proved a knowledge of the desert path superior to that of the Arab guides. The drifting sands obscure the track, and only accurate acquaintance with certain general features could save from utter destruction. It is essential to the preservation of the pilgrimage to reach at intervals the great water tanks constructed along the way. To miss one of these would mean simply the extinction of the Haj. With great animation the *Aga* told of the guides once having been completely baffled; the Pasha, thoroughly roused, ordered them to the rear, and riding in front himself, conducted the great straggling company safely to the tank at nightfall. On another occasion some 200 men, each riding a strong mule, contrary to the Pasha's orders, left the main body of the pilgrimage in search of water, which they believed to be in the neighbourhood. By and bye they were missed; the procession was halted, and, at the head of a company of camel riders, the Pasha went forth to seek them. After a long and weary search, he at last came upon the wreck of the 200. Men and mules had perished together in the burning sand. One man only, who had got his head into the shelter of a little sandbank, was still alive, but unconscious. Such are some of the perils of the pilgrimage; but, of course, many of the pilgrims die by the way from sheer exhaustion. The iron frame of the great Pasha has at last given way, and for some years he has been practically an invalid in the city of Damascus. He is succeeded in command of the Haj by his grandson, 'Abd er Raḥmân Pasha, the youngest man who has ever attained that rank.

The *Aga* learned with great interest what I proposed to do and where I intended going. He declared that the country was unsafe and volunteered to ride with me himself! He ordered his horse to be brought and saddled, and only with difficulty was he restrained from carrying out his purpose. I thought of spending the night with Arabs who were encamped at no great distance, and knew that our reception among them would be all the more hearty if we arrived unattended. Taking a grateful farewell of the kindly *Aga*, we turned a little to northward, and in about half-an-hour reached the Arab tents on a grassy knoll beside a cool and copious spring. Several very beautiful mares were grazing near by. The large encampment was very quiet; the tent of the principal Sheikh, where we dismounted, was deserted but for the presence of a single negro slave, singularly tall and black. We took possession of the tent, and calmly looked on while the slave built a fire in the little hollow by the opening, roasted and pounded the beans, and proceeded to make coffee for his master's guests. Before his task was

finished, the Sheyukh began to gather, and soon we had a goodly crowd lounging around us, all eager for news, but brimming over with hospitable feeling. They were a company of the *Ruwally*. They were men, for the most part, of fine physique, tall and well-knit, with no tendency to obesity. Their features could hardly be described as well favoured, while their complexion was very dark, in some cases almost rivalling that of the slave. The Sheikhs were richly clad in brightly coloured, rustling silk; they wore swords with jewelled hilts and revolvers with highly ornamented handles. We had fallen among the aristocracy of the 'Arab, closely related to the *Sultân el Barr* himself.

Here we were treated to a different view of the great *Haj* Pasha. The Arabs, through whose *dîras* the pilgrimage passes, have an arrangement with the Government, whereby they receive large sums as toll money. The Pasha is paymaster, and he is thus able to visit upon the Arabs any irregularities of which they may be guilty. These men of the desert have also a wholesome respect for the guard which is under the Pasha's command. His influence is therefore felt and acknowledged along the whole line of march. But robbers, Arabs or others, do not love to be restrained; therefore *Sheyukh er Ruwally* love not the Pasha. They have, however, no objection to accept what he may offer, and many of the weapons which it surprised one to find in the desert were gifts from the Pasha's hand.

I was speedily on very good terms with them, and received a pressing invitation to join them when they began their eastward movement a month or two later. They would take me into their own charge, and if I would be content with their homely fare, I should see all their *dîra* from the uplands of the Jaulân even unto Ḥayil, the city of *Ibn Rashîd*. Of this Arabian potentate they spoke with great respect. Ḥayil shelters him and his people only during part of the year. In the season he betakes him to the tents, rides to *Ghuzzu* at the head of his light camel corps, and holds all the 'Arab far and near in awe of his prowess. With no little pride they told me that the principal Sheikh of their tribe, as a special mark of favour, had received 200 horses from this desert ruler.

As the shadows grew longer and darker, and the fire lit up the swarthy faces with a warm glow, the talk, becoming general, soon drifted into the telling of tales; in these the wonderful and the supernatural were liberally mingled, but for the most part the stories were unfit for polite ears. The humour of the 'Arab is very broad, and oft-times very grim. As supper time drew on it was evidently a matter of deep concern to these worthy men how "the Baik" should be entertained. At last they solved the problem to their own entire satisfaction. My two attendants were to go to an adjoining tent, where all the rank and file of the tribe would gather and do justice to one huge dish, while the first born of the Sheikh was told off to minister to my necessities. To have witnessed and shared in the general mess would have pleased me best, but the general opinion was that it would not be showing due respect to "the Baik" to invite him to mingle with the rabble. I was therefore kept in solitary

state in the Sheikhly house, assiduously waited upon by the stalwart youth, who assured me that it was ذبيحة واحدة—all one slaughtering—by which I suppose he meant me to understand that nothing was lost by not going to where the slaughtered sheep lay cooked whole. I heard the sounds of boisterous enjoyment from the "house" of feasting, and directly my courtly ministrant presented himself, bearing a copper dish with my share of the repast. It consisted of a sheet of coarse bread which covered the bottom of the dish, over which lay a solid covering of the choicest portions of the ذبيحة (Dhabîḥah). It was almost swimming in *samn*—clarified butter—but the air of the wilds confers an appetite which makes light of these things. A little water was poured over my hands. The youth planted himself over against me, rolled up his sleeves, and together we proceeded to business. He kneaded the bread into small pieces, selected the tenderest bits of the *dhabîḥah*, laying them carefully to my hand, and certain it is that I made an excellent meal. It shows one how little necessary after all are such things as knives, forks, spoons, plates, &c. A draught of fresh milk hardly yet cooled concluded a repast fit for a prince.

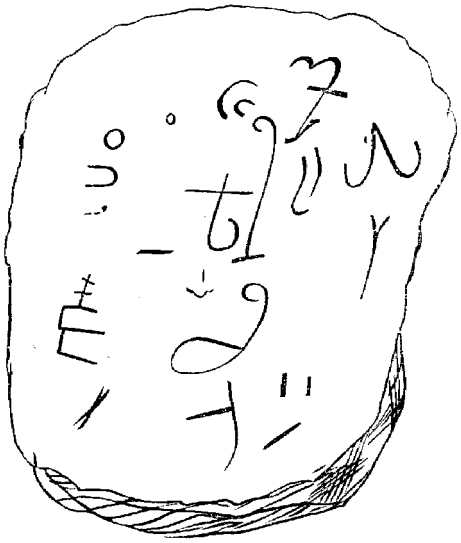
After supper the *meǰlis* again assembled, and well into the night we sat around the fire, both hearing and asking each other questions. Among other things, I learned that the hair of the roof of the tent where we were lodged was made in Judeideh. The women of this tribe spin the goats' hair and weave cloth only for the walls of the tents. The more skilled workers of the Lebanon village are entrusted with the work for the roofs, as these have to stand the worst strain of the storm, and turn the rains which may chance to fall in the circle of their wanderings. One by one the drowsy listeners rose and passed like gliding shadows through the dimness to their separate shelters, and silence stole again over the encampment. At last but one remained, a long-winded youth whose monotonous voice pouring into Mohammed's ears a tale to him of surpassing and wondrous interest, served me as a lullaby, and the next I remember was the light of morning brightening over the earth.

The ride to *Tsîl* was comparatively uneventful. The country is uninteresting. Great breadths covered with the black *débris* of ancient volcanic catastrophes, and wide stretches of dark brown earth, studded here and there with tufts of withered thistles, whose shining surfaces, reflecting the light, seemed to create a white haze in many a hollow. We passed through an extensive field of dolmens. On one of the largest I found some marks (*see* next page) rudely engraved, which doubtless once meant something to somebody.

The Ruḳḳâd we crossed just above the bridge, among oleanders of great height and luxuriance. At either end of the bridge is a bit of solid Roman pavement, apparently little the worse for its centuries of exposure, but it is soon lost amid the surrounding wilderness. Under the ruined arches of the bridge are abundance of beautiful ferns.

Another reach of *wa'r* (rocky ground) passed, the horses' feet plunged

pleasantly into the waters of a little stream. Here we met a genial Beduwy, riding an ass, and punishing a huge bunch of grapes which he carried in a leathern wallet. With generous hand he distributed to the thirsty men whom God had sent across his path, and as we ate our eyes were lightened and we rode forward refreshed. Near by the stream were the bases of ancient walls, with great hewn blocks that might well have supported some mighty structure in the far past. Circular trodden patches, surrounded by low turf walls, with charred stones set for the fires, marked the site of the military training camp, which a few months earlier had been the scene of bustling activity, now the abode of the lizard and the snake.



MARKS ON A DOLMEN.

Tsîl, or as some of the villagers called it, with a distinct aspirate after the Ts—Tshîl—is very slightly above the level of the surrounding country. There is a gentle decline southward towards *Sahem el Jaulân*, and a corresponding depression, speedily rising again to the hills northward. South-west of the village is the threshing floor, and beyond this extensive and very prolific vineyards. Following the example of the Circassians, the vineyards have been carefully surrounded by strong and high drystone dykes. The black towers rise higher still, where the owners lodge to guard their fruit against midnight marauder and prowling jackal. A few fig trees, with their cover of broad green leaves, here break the monotony of the landscape.

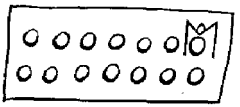
Tsîl is not a clean village; the مزبلة—*mizbalah* ("dunghill")—is the most flourishing of its institutions. Many of the houses are more than

half buried beneath accumulated rubbish. In two or three generations, at the present rate of progress, there ought to be a fine assortment of underground dwellings in Tsîl. But in these respects it is quite a typical Haurân village. The inhabitants are all Moslems, but الجهلية—the time of ignorance—is in no real sense passed for them. It is simple nonsense, however, to speak of them (*see* Murray's guide) as having "a bad name for thieving propensities." They are just like their neighbours; it would be extremely difficult to distinguish degrees of better and worse among them. They are certainly very hospitable, and kindly according to their abilities.

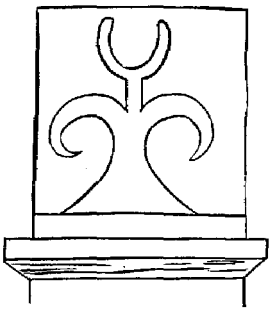
Dâr esh Sheikh lies close to the threshing floor. The courtyard is wide and the dwelling narrow, but the old man's heart was more in proportion with the yard than with the house. As the sun was very hot, I was glad to get inside, to accomplish some necessary reading and writing. The *Meḍâfeh*—guest chamber—had a floor of mud with a hollow in the centre for winter fires, walls plastered with mud, and roof of branches laid on strong cross beams, and covered with mud. We found a disagreeable looking Beduwy stretched at full length along one side, while his mare champed and neighed in the scanty shadow of the courtyard wall. He did not even rise to salute us on our entry, which proved him a churl. It transpired that he had lent the Sheikh a small sum of money at a ruinous rate of interest. This had tided our host over a time of distress, and now it was all repaid save a balance of a few piastres, which he calculated would be cleared shortly by the grain on the threshing floor. But it did not suit the Bedawy to accept assurances. His plan was to descend upon the good Sheikh periodically to demand payment. On these occasions he quartered himself and his mare upon his debtor, secured for himself the best that was going in the way of food, and generally assumed the airs of lord of the place. Sheikh 'Abdullah did not relish his creditor's company, but with no open quarrel he did not feel that he could order him forth; his time, however, was coming.

'Abdullah was despatched to the vineyard for grapes and shortly returned with great tempting bunches of beautiful fruit, for which he had paid at the rate of something less than a halfpenny per pound. This was reckoned *a good price*, and from the buyer's point of view there was little reason to grumble. After dinner there were numerous and obliging guides ready to show me everything of interest about the place. The antiquities have been pretty fully described by Mr. Schumacher, but the inscriptions had escaped him. Here I found Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the list. One or two others I heard of but cannot be certain that they were inscriptions. Often when the natives take you to what they call a "written stone," you find only a new illustration of their ignorance. It requires time, tact, and patience properly to examine these places. On a stone in one of the arches of the mosque I noticed two rows of seven little cup-like hollows, with the letter M over that at the top corner to the right. This suggested thoughts of the ancient "cresset stones,"

examples of which are preserved in the museum at York. But the probabilities are that in former times this and similar stones found in



other ruins were used for the game called by the Arabs منقلة—Manḳalah —an account of which will be found in Lane's "Modern Egyptians." I found it played in Damet el 'Alyah by the Druzes, with the holes made in a piece of thick plank. The following figure, roughly drawn, I also found on the lower part of another arch :—



Towards evening the news spread that Sheikh 'Abdullah had guests, and the neighbours came in to help him entertain them. Several Arabs, with scant clothing and scantier manners, formed part of the company, and the conversation soon became general. The following snatches may be found interesting to different readers. Speaking with one about *el Lejâ*, he said ما وطيتها ; he explained يعني ما داستها—that is, "I never set foot upon it." Another, in the course of an argument, appealed to me to support his statement. I asked first for witnesses. اني مشلّل —Anî mashallil, *i.e.*, I am without witnesses—ما لي شهود. The first sing. of the personal pronoun *ana*—انا—is here pronounced distinctly *anî*, corresponding exactly to the Hebrew אנכי. Beduw and Fellaḥîn alike in these districts pronounce both ج and ق like our hard g. The effect to the stranger is at first extremely confusing. ك, again, is invariably pronounced ch, as in *ch*ange, at the beginning of words; but in the middle, and especially at the end, it often receives its proper k sound. These are phrases in common use, with the explanations which they gave me :—

1 برخة = على مهلك "Take your time," or "at your leisure."

2 ارّع = طلع علَيّ "Look to me," or "give me your attention."

3 سِج = صدق "Truth."

4 انشُر = امشى or استعجل "Hurry!" or "haste you."

5 وشعلومك
6 وشتغى
= علّمنى شو بتريد "Tell me what you want," or "your desire."

7 اقهرك بالله =

1. Burkhah = 'Ala mahalak.
2. Irr' = Ṭala' 'Aleiya.
3. Sij = Sidḳ, properly صدق—Ṣidḳ.
4. Inshur! = Imshi or Ista'jil.
5. Wash'alûmak } 'Allamnî shû betrîd.
6. Washtaghy }
7. Aḳhark billah or bullah. This is shouted after one who refuses to hear or to obey instructions. I asked the meaning of the phrase when I heard one crying it out at the pitch of his voice to another some distance away and received for answer, هو بحط الله على ظهره. Huwa bihuṭ Ullah 'ala zaharo—"He sets Ullah upon his back!"

The oaths that interlarded the conversation were both frequent and forcible. I asked if they considered themselves bound by the oaths they used thus lightly and got heartily laughed at, as I anticipated. "But," I said, "you do swear an oath by which you hold yourselves bound, called حلف اليمين—Ḥalf el Yemîn, 'the faithful oath'—do you not?" They showed a strange unwillingness to discuss the point; but at last one stepped forward to give me the formula for *Yemîn el 'Arab*—"the faithful oath of the 'Arab." Drawing a circle in the court where we were reclining, he took a broken bit of a dry stem of grass between his hands and standing in the middle of the circle, with great solemnity he repeated the following:—

وحيوت هذا العود والرّبّ المعبود وخط سليمان ابن داود والكاذب
ما له مولود

Waḥayât hâdha el'ûd wa er-rubb el ma'bûd, wakhaṭ Suleimân ibn Dâûd, wa el-kâdhib ma lahu maulûd.

"By the life of this stem and the Lord the adored, and the line of Solomon the son of David, and he who lies may none be born to him."

Khaṭ Suleimân is, of course, the circle within which the person stands and possibly as the unbroken line, in some way symbolises truth. No penalty is so grievous to the Arab soul as the absence or loss of posterity. The childless man regards himself as under a mark of divine displeasure. His death means the extinction of his line, and the disappointment of the dearest hopes. Hardly will an 'Arab break this oath, even if his life be in jeopardy. The sin, however, of betraying an infidel, كفر —kefr—is light compared with breaking the *yemîn* to a Moslem; and only with extreme difficulty can they ever be brought to swear the *yemîn* to a foreigner. It was said that the *yemîn* of the Druzes is peculiarly beautiful and awe-inspiring, but I could never persuade a Druze even to repeat it to me. The Druzes told me that they often used *yemîn el 'Arab*, their own *yemîn* being reserved for very special cases; as, for example, when one is accused of murder and wishes to swear to his innocence, then only *yemîn ed Druze* will be accepted.

On a part of the courtyard raised somewhat above the rest we enjoyed supper *à la 'Arab*, a huge trencher of steaming rice, over which rich melted *samn* had been poured, was the chief dish; but there was also freshly-baked bread, *leban*, and honey. The most casual observer could not have failed to observe how liberally the Sheikh's Bedawy creditor assisted himself. Supper over I retired a bit from the company, drew my wraps around me, and lay down under the beautiful canopy of cloudless Syrian sky. But alas, the attentions of certain peculiarly active insects, fostered by the prevailing conditions, were so assiduously unremitting that sleep fled far from weary eyes. I decided that the apparatus I had brought for such emergencies should henceforth be employed. This good resolution seemed to bring some immediate relief and just ere "the star" arose I dropped off into dreamless slumber.

The most delightful hour of all the day in the Orient is that just before the sun, bright and burning, springs like a strong man from his couch rejoicing to run his race; the dewdrops sparkle upon leaf and stone, the brown earth is darkened by its gentle touch, the flocks move softly outwards following their rough but kindly shepherds, and the hot temples are fanned by the fresh cool breezes from the dewy uplands. White mists roll down the valleys, encircling the black heights whose summits rise above like islands in a sea of foam. So comes the day of power, "in holy beauties from the womb of the morning." Over a frugal and wholesome breakfast of coarse freshly-baked bread, *leben*, and grapes, we discussed such weighty matters as work, laziness—the besetting sin of the 'Arab and Fellahy alike—and the tenure of land. On this last subject there was widespread disturbance among the villages of the Haurân, for an order had been issued to register all land in the names of the present possessors that proper titles might be given. In the changing conditions of the country this was likely to prove a real advantage to the people; but their suspicious minds detected in the تطويب—*taṭwîb*, "registration"—only a new instrument for extortion and oppression. Opposition

to the scheme was bitter and determined, especially among the inhabitants of *Jebel ed Druze*. I suppose not fewer than 8,000 or 10,000 soldiers were drafted into the Haurân to overawe the population and secure the carrying out of the order. Discontent manifested itself in peculiar fashion. Bands of Fellahîn and Druzes for once made common cause, and not feeling themselves strong enough to meet the Government troops, and having a vivid recollection of the punishment administered to the daring Druzes two years before, they contented themselves with preying upon the traveller and the itinerant merchant, making the roads unsafe. From this point eastward I heard of some dozen robberies and murders committed during the time of our wanderings. Doubtless there were exaggerations, but most of the accounts I believe to have been authentic.

Southward from Tsîl, about an hour and a quarter's riding, lies *Sahem el Jaulân* (*see* Schumacher, "Across the Jordan"). The village is surrounded by great tracts of very fertile land. This did not escape the eagle eye of Mohammed Sa'id Pasha. He had bought the village and lands for a ridiculously small sum, and forthwith sold them again at a phenomenal profit to the Jewish company which proposed to plant colonies in these regions. Difficulties, however, had arisen, as before the legal formalities for conveying the purchase to the Pasha were completed, the people learned the bargain he had made with the Jews, and repenting their transaction with him, refused to go forward. According to their tale, things were hanging in this unsatisfactory position when I visited them; but the influence of the Pasha would probably be sufficient to bring them to his own mind in the end. It did seem strange to hear the names of the يهود *yehûd*—Jews—and of Rothschild, whom they called رئيس اليهود—*Reis el yehûd*—"Chief of the Jews," on the lips of thes rude men, wandering in the streets of the ruined city which some would identify with Golan, the ancient refuge whither the distant forefathers of the *yehûd* were accustomed to flee for succour, what time their hands were unwittingly stained in brother's blood; the avenger with glittering *sahem*—"arrow"—pressing hard upon their trembling footsteps.

The Sheikh, a friend of Mohammed's, was unfortunately absent; but his son *Funas* hospitably entertained us in his father's stead. As we sat conversing with him in the *diwân*, he turned to a box which stood near by, and, removing the cover, drew out a huge spotted serpent, which he fondled affectionately, and suffered to wriggle about the place in a fashion which did not in the least add to the comfort of his guests! شربت من الشيخ, he explained—*sharibt min esh Sheikh*—"I have drunk from the Sheikh." There are men who prepare certain concoctions and profess that whoever partakes of them is rendered impervious to the poison of snakes. They charge a small sum from those who are privileged to taste the charmed draught, and so eke out a precarious livelihood. I have met a good many lads who had thus "drunk from the Sheikh" and who were very free in their handling of reptiles. Once at

Tell Hûm, a boy who had come with us in the boat suddenly dived into a hole among the ruins, and speedily emerged in triumph with a long serpent writhing in his grasp. He allowed it to bite him, drawing blood freely. I observed immediately afterwards in the boat, that when the other rowers were perfectly cool, he broke out into a profuse perspiration. I asked him if all serpents were alike to him, and he said they were. I reminded him of a short, thick black rascal that infests the vineyards and drystone dykes, and asked if he would grip *him*. With one of his biggest oaths he cursed the father and grandfather of that snake, and declared that he would not approach him. When this fellow bites, you have only about half an hour, and that half an hour of agony, to take farewell of your friends. The truth is that most of the serpents are quite innocuous, and may be handled with impunity. These lads know the really dangerous kinds, and avoid them. But it always makes one creep to see the nasty things wriggling and twisting round human limbs. Yunas finally caught his pet, and thrust him again into his prison box, amused at the relief his disappearance brought to us.

In a wall in front of the public reception room, or *meḍâfeh*, I found inscription No. 5, and in a cellar not easily reached, over against the richly sculptured chamber described by Schumacher, I found No. 6. The mosque, extensive remains of ancient baths which have been uncovered beside the threshing floor, and بيت الباشا—*Beit el Bâsha*—"House of the Pasha," a modern structure of old materials, were all examined in turn, but yielded nothing of special interest. A certain lintel, now deep underground, was said to have an inscription on it, and one who had seen it undertook to dig it up. When at last it appeared in the face of day, it presented only a bit of very common sculpture, and the disgusted workman threw down his pick, despairing of the *backsheesh* he had been promised; but he seemed to think better of the *Franjy*, when his good intentions were rewarded! Yunas, meantime, had prepared for us a frugal and acceptable repast; while we sat enjoying it a poor ragged consumptive, *Shehâdy ez-zânûl* by name, came in trembling eagerness to ask for something that might cure his hacking cough. I could only give him a note introducing him to the good doctor in Safed, whose services would be at his disposal if he were able to reach that upland city. What a magnificent field for philanthropic work these villages and camps present.

Riding westward, we presently came upon the deep *Wady 'Allân*, which here cuts the plain in two. How delightful was the plash and gurgle of the living water rushing over its rocky bed in the fierce heat of that Syrian day! High on the western bank we descried the grey ruins of *Beit Akkâr*, whither we were now bending our steps. We crossed the wady further to the north, and then carefully clambered up the steep and slippery rocks to the ancient city on the heights.

Beit Akkâr occupies a position of great strength, standing on the tongue or triangle between two valleys, just above their confluence

The Wady 'Allân is much the deeper of the two, its sides here descending in sheer precipitous cliffs. On the other side the ascent is also one of extreme difficulty; while to the north the approaches from the plain of old were guarded by enormous fortifications. What a scene of ruin and desolation the place presents to-day! We could trace the line of the streets by the clearly marked depressions, and where a higher tumulus of weather-worn stone met the eye, we might hazard the guess that there had stood some public building. A few underground arches still stand entire, supporting the superincumbent mass of ruins. For the most part the houses must have been erected without mortar. Dressed stones, bits of ancient columns and capitals are strewn here and there; but not a single inscription rewarded a most painstaking search.

Not without feelings of sadness we turned us from the blasted height, and going down with anxious care over the smooth rocks where the iron hoofs of the horses slipped threateningly at every step, we reached again the bottom of the wady, just above a lofty fall. How tempting that clear sparkling water was to thirsty, perspiring travellers! Here part of the stream is led captive into a channel of masonry, and made to turn two mills ere it reaches the basin below; the rest of the waters whirl foaming over the cataract with wide-reaching alarm. Swinging down with the help of oleander bushes, which here abound, and dry roots, I made my way to the edge of the pool below. I stood on a rock, just ready to plunge into the refreshing tide, when lo! a great serpent, speckled back, triangular head, and constricted neck, came twisting down the stream almost to my unprotected feet. It was sickening! Grasping a stone, I hurled it at the reptile, but apprehending danger, he made swiftly for the shore and disappeared under a huge boulder. Such things tend to modify the pleasures of bathing; but it was impossible to resist the attractions of that clear, flashing pool. Happily, the serpent and his friends seemed to take warning from the danger he had escaped, and I saw no more of them. Mohammed and 'Abdullah sat the while in the higher reaches, under the shade of the leafy oleander, in converse deep with certain Beduw, who were most eager to know whence we came, whither we journeyed, and what our business was. If they believed one-half of what these worthies told them they could be in no doubt as to our quality and dignity.

Tsil we could see from the elevation of the ruins, and before coming down had settled the direction we should ride. The ground was for the most part bare and brown, with volcanic stones liberally bestrewn. But the barrenness was pleasantly interrupted here and there by great stretches of waving *Dhurra*, a kind of maize with enormous stem and huge bushy head. Of this grain the villagers in the Haurân make much of their bread; wherein they are greatly commiserated by those who can afford the more aristocratic nutriment of wheat. The horses tore at the green blades and bushy heads with tremendous eagerness. It is the privilege of the traveller, at which the owners of the crops never complain, to allow his horse to snatch mouthfuls as it goes of whatever grows

by the way. As the Arabs do not feed their horses at midday, the refreshment this affords is often considerable.

Preparations for the evening meal were in full swing when we reached the village. This is the great meal of the day. Breakfast is of little or no account to these people. Often they will go long journeys without touching food, in the certain hope of doing well at the journey's end. The sound of threshing in the بيدر—*Beidar*—was hushed, the grain banked up, and watches set. The flocks came slowly homeward through the quiet air; groups gathered in the doorways and courtyards, for no supper would be eaten under the shadow of a roof that warm night. Sunset filled all the west with glorious colour, the paler east reflecting its radiant hues, while the light swiftly faded from out the dome of blue. All seemed to be settling down in peacefulness over the village, when in a moment the scene was changed. We had gathered together on the slightly raised platform in the Sheikh's courtyard, and a huge trencher of rice was brought and set in our midst. This, with bunches of luscious grapes, formed the chief part of our evening fare. Our friend, the Beduwy creditor, who had lounged about in the shade all day, sleeping for hours at once, and waking up occasionally to shout gruff salutations to passers by, came forward, thrust himself into the midst of the circle, and began to do ample justice to the rice. Just then the good Sheikh came in, fire flashing from his dark eyes, his lips set in angry determination. He suffered from a chronic hoarseness that almost deprived him of voice; what was left him was pitched in a very high key. He addressed the Bedawy as *chelb ibn chelb*—"dog, the son of a dog"; directly he ventured the opinion that he was not only *chelb*, but *chefr* and *Khanzir*—"infidel and pig"—as well! Then the music fast and furiously rose and fell on the night air, the shrill treble of the irate Sheikh's accusations and scornful epithets, and the deep bass of the Beduwy's responding blasphemies. As the clangour floated over the city, the usual Oriental crowd soon collected at the gateway, and heard the staccatoed crescendo in which the ill-mannered creditor was ordered forth into the darkness, which now fell thick o'er all the uplands. 'Abdullah's wrath against this rough son of the desert had been rising for some time; but that which led to the final outburst was what no man of spirit could tolerate. Late in the afternoon, down by the dyke that surrounds the *Beidar*, where the village clothes are stretched in the sun to dry, as the Sheikh was proceeding to the great heap of grain to fetch provender for the Beduwy's horse, the latter openly insulted and derided him before the women of the village. Hot words then passed, but the hour of nursing had made 'Abdullah's wrath no cooler, and now he determined to be quit of this everlasting annoyance. The Bedawy, in high dudgeon, threw down the burning twig with which he would have lit his pipe, dashed his saddle upon his surprised mare, making a running commentary of oaths upon 'Abdullah's fiery eloquence. Then came 'Abdullah's wife, the graceful and gentle *sheikhah*, trying to cast oil on the troubled waters.

She could not bear to think even of her husband's traducer going out into the wastes which, moving among the dim shadows, the jackals had already filled with their wild music. But these fierce natures when stirred are very fierce; her mediation was treated with lofty disdain. With a parting curse shot back from the gateway, the Bedawy plunged into the darkness. 'Abdullah's shrill reproaches followed him until the sound of his mare's footsteps died away. With his passion somewhat wrought off, the Sheikh then turned to entertain his remaining guests. He was highly complimented by all upon the courage he had shown. After a few spasmodic bursts at the mean *chelb ibn chelb*, whom he had driven forth, the admiration of his friends seemed greatly to mollify him, and he sat down in peace to eat his frugal supper.

After the usual turn of tale-telling gradually the company of villagers thinned, and one by one those who remained dropped off to sleep just where they lay. Remembering last night's experience, I resolved to run no risks, and so got my "shoe" in order. In anticipation of circumstances such as these I had prepared a strong canvas bag nearly in the shape of a shoe, with muslin sewn round the mouth, which might be drawn in at the top, and fastened up to a nail or other convenient projection overhead. Into the bottom of this I slipped a mattress, and such wraps as were necessary. By keeping the mouth firmly fastened these were preserved from invasion by "the enemy" during the day; and with a little careful management when night fell, I was able to step in without company, and bid defiance to the foe till morning.

A pleasant forenoon gallop brought us to 'Adwân, a Fellahy village resting on a small elevation, which, however, commands a very wide view northward, eastward, and southward. Here we proposed spending the succeeding day, Sunday. I did not quite realise what staying here meant, but in any case it might have been difficult to make a better of it. Sheikh Khalîl gave us a very hearty welcome to his humble dwelling. A somewhat short, thickset man, with ruddy cheeks and sandy whiskers, he came bustling in from the Beidar when he heard of the visitors. Both in appearance and habits he presented a contrast to the usual Fellahy type. As a rule they are swarthy, with a tendency to spareness, and showing no undue appetite for work. Khalîl is an industrious man, making the best of somewhat evil circumstances. 'Adwân cannot boast such prolific vineyards as Tsîl, but the small grapes grown here are very palatable, especially in hot days. While the Sheikh busied himself preparing for our entertainment, I made casual inquiries about the village and villagers. The *mizbalah* is here, as in other villages, the most thriving concern. On one side the houses are entirely hidden behind a huge dunghill. All manner of refuse and rubbish has been thrown there for ages, and now it is hardly an exaggeration to say it is bigger than the village itself! Close by the base of this great heap I found inscription No. 7. In these circumstances I will be easily understood when I say the atmosphere is not pure. A jocular youth in the hotel at Jericho once pronounced the ancient city of palms to be now the *Fabrîk*—manufactory

of flies, mosquitoes, and such-like for the whole of Syria. I have seen Jericho about its worst, and am sure the lad had never visited 'Adwân. The flies seem to be millions of myriads strong. Going over certain parts they rise like a dark cloud around you at every step. They are about the only creatures that have any strength. The villagers are a very sickly lot. They are old, withered men before they are fifty. When a child is born it is not really expected to live. When one reaches the age of eleven or twelve it is regarded as hardly less than a miracle. But the fevered, weakly condition of all is fully explained when the water supply of the place is seen. The fountain rises a little to the north-east of the village. It would be very easy to make a convenient reservoir, protecting from pollution the water to be used for domestic purposes. Abortive attempts to do this have evidently been made from time to time; but anything like thorough work is not to be expected here. The spring is fairly copious, but the water at once collects in a muddy pool. Hither come the cattle to drink, trampling all round and through it; hither come the pious Moslems to wash prior to prayer; and hither come the women with their jars to carry home the needed supplies. Consider these mighty odoriferous mounds, the swarming flies, this pool of filthy water, and one can wonder no more that men are sickly, women feeble, and that they regard it as a special interposition of Providence on their behalf when their children survive the perils of infancy—for these humble peasants have all the passionate longings of the Orient, to see a great posterity.

Not far to the north were several clumps of trees; above the green foliage the red tile roofs of El Merkez rose pleasantly. This is the seat of the governor of the Haurân. The position is both civil and military, but his functions are prevailingly military. A soldier of some distinction is always chosen for the post. The Turks have never felt perfectly sure of their hold upon this district. It is difficult to maintain any satisfactory authority over the nomadic tribes that roam over its length and breadth. The common peasantry might not cause much trouble; but the free-spirited Druzes must also be reckoned with, and in their wild mountains and rocky fastnesses of *El Lejâ*, they are foemen by no means to be despised. The nearest approach to tranquillity was attained under the *régime* of the brave and chivalrous Memdûḥ Pasha. He was a soldier who was respected and admired even by those on whom his hand lay heaviest. *Memdûḥ* by name—"the praised one," he is *Memdûḥ* also in fact, and his fame will linger long in the towns and villages, and among the far-spreading encampments of Haurân.

Of *El Merkez* and the Monastery of Job—now Turkish barracks and Government offices—of *Sheikh Sa'ad* and *Nawa*, Mr. Schumacher has given an excellent account ("Across the Jordan"). Here there is a post and telegraph office; but the officials are so absorbed in Government business that the traveller may consider himself extremely fortunate if his telegram is sent off in anything less than three days after it is given in. As to waiting for a reply, you might almost go and fetch it yourself in the time. El Merkez consists of two straggling streets, running at right

angles to each other. To the south of that running east and west is the so-called "Monastery of Job." Entering by an old gateway, the post office is to the left. Round a large courtyard is a series of rooms ancient and modern, occupied by soldiers. South of this enclosure, reached by a small door in the wall, is the sanctuary, where the patriarch of Uz and his son lie buried. His wife's tomb is shown on the side of the street in a little grass and weed-covered plot. The tombs in the sanctuary are now scrupulously guarded from profanation, fenced off by a railing, and covered with green cloth. The floor in front of them is used largely by the faithful in the garrison for prayer. Just before the door, under the shadow of a great tree, is a fountain for ablutions. The water is brought some distance in pipes, and is the same as that which supplies the village.

The great man himself, who sat under a canopy at the side of the courtyard in company with his officers, cordially returned my salutation. Meantime, Mohammed had been charming himself retailing the story of his master's greatness to a few inquisitive soldiers who had gathered about him. Doctors Post and Porter, of Beyrout, must have been somewhere in the neighbourhood at this time, in quest of botanical specimens. Their scientific interest did not commend itself to the favour of the powers that be, and they were unhappily stopped a little to the south and sent back to Damascus. This we did not learn until our return, and considering the end of their enterprise it is perhaps as well that we did not meet. No objection was made to our progress, nor was I asked any inconvenient questions.

Riding along by the vineyards that stretch between El Merkez and *Sheikh Sa'ad*, we entered the latter village and rode up to the sanctuary, where the great attraction is *Sakhret Ayyûb*. The sanctuary is built of basalt; the roof, which is of solid slabs of the same material, is supported by a double row of square pillars. On one of the arches is carved a cross, telling of Christian possession; but originally no doubt it was a heathen temple. In the floor stands the big rock of which Mr. Schumacher has given such a full description. It is a monument of hoar antiquity; the hieroglyphic inscription on it proves it to date at least from the time of Rameses II. The sanctuary and stone are greatly revered by the villagers.

The place is named after *Sheikh Sa'ad*, the leader who brought hither the company of Soudanese, whose descendants now form almost its sole occupants. Here only in Syria do you find a village community entirely black. The Sheikh, of course, has duly found his position in the Arab Valhalla, and fairly divides the local honours with the ancient patriarch. The village is built on a rocky mound, and on the south-eastern shoulder of the mound stands the sanctuary, visible, with its white dome, for many miles on every side. At the bottom of the hill, towards El Merkez, a beautiful fountain bursts from the rock, and over its waters is built what is now known as *Hammâm Ayyûb*, "the bath of Job." It stands open, and is used indiscriminately by all. As the stream escapes, and

circles away through the gardens and orchards, spreading beauty and fertility along its banks, what a contrast the scene presents to the dreary deserts of the Soudân. Considering this, one can partly understand why these dark-skinned folks should offer hardly less than Divine honours to the man who led their fathers out of the waterless wastes of the far south, to settle in what must have seemed to the eyes of the desert dwellers a very paradise.

Wherever you find anything like a shop, be it hut or tent, among peasantry or Arabs, there you will find either tartaric or citric acid, or both. A ransom is charged for a very small quantity, and it is carried very carefully tied up in a corner of the dress or kufîyeh. A bit is taken by times, and sucked for a moment, then carefully restored to its quarters. They prize it greatly, believing that its astringent properties exercise a wholesome and beneficent influence on the whole system. Here we provided ourselves with a stock, which proved of great service in our wanderings. We returned through El Merkez to 'Adwân, and after refreshment, and such rest as the flies permitted, I rode down in the quiet of evening to *Tell 'Ashterah*. It is only half an hour distant to the south-east. I rode round the base, and then round the top. At intervals along the steep sides there is an outcrop of very ancient ruins, particularly on the northern slope. It is impossible to make anything of these at present, but, doubtless, excavation would bring much of interest to light. The top is shaped almost like a horseshoe, open to the north, with a considerable depression in the midst. A great cluster of sheepfolds, built of the ancient building stones, crowns the north-western ruin. The massive approach and gateway, with watch towers or guard houses, now a huge heap of blackened ruins, lies to west of the hill, not to east, as Dr. Merrill gives it. Everything about the hill betokens that in hoar antiquity it was a place of importance and great strength. The horseshoe shape alone is very suggestive of *Karnaim*, "the two horns"; but it will hardly do to rest identification on such slender evidence. Lying there in the calm evening, the sun low in the west, casting long shadows eastward, it was impossible not to dream of what rich spoils of ancient lore may lie deep hidden in the hill's dark heart, waiting but the spade of the excavator, to enhance beyond all thought the history of the Orient. From fountains rising to the north-east, streams of delightful, cool, clear, sparkling water sweep round the base, through reedy meadows. What a chance for the inhabitants of 'Adwân if they were only awake to their own interests! But, of course, if they came hither, they would bring their dirty indolent habits with them: and these flashing pools would soon emulate the muddy hole whence they now draw their supplies.

The change from the sweet, fresh, free hill top, with far-reaching vision of the ancient land in the midst of which it stands, back to the confined, stuffy, insect-infested Meḍâfeh, was not a very pleasant one. Khalîl's bustling activity was the one refreshing element in the place. There is an unwritten law in these villages which ordains that the expenses of the Meḍâfeh shall fall as equally as possible upon the whole

community. Just how each shall contribute towards the entertainment of strangers is a matter for individual arrangement. The Sheikh represents the community, and in their name proffers welcome and cheer. The entire population of the village, work being over for the day, gathered at sunset round the Sheikh's dwelling. The men occupied the courtyard in front of the Meḍâfeh, the women and children wandering about without the enclosure, craning their necks for a glimpse of the visitors. The house in summer is of use really only as a shelter from the sun. As soon as he has lost his power, and the shadows creep up the valleys and across the plains, all come forth to revel in the cool of evening. Supper was served in the yard. A mighty trencher of *burghal*, prepared wheat, with *samn*, was placed in the midst—the very best the village had to offer. We were told off in relays, strangers first, of course, and squatting around the dish, with bread and fingers attacked the steaming mass. It speedily vanished before this vigorous and repeated onslaught, but not until all had eaten, and had concluded, each touching his brow with shining fingers, with satisfied *el ḥamdu lillahs*. The departure of light was almost coincident with the removal of the utensils. Pipes and cigarettes were produced all round, and as the darkness thickened the smoke mingling therewith increased the obscurity, until a man's position could be determined only by the glowing point of burning tobacco, or the gurgle of his nargîleh. The large company of Fellaḥîn settled down in the most business-like manner to their evening's enjoyment. Their relations with the Government, the Registration question, the cholera, and its probable effect on the sale of their grain, did not detain them long; and, before the first pipe was smoked, their beloved pastime was in full swing, and tales were told fit to make each particular hair wriggle up with nervous excitement. I thought to interest them with descriptions of our western wonders, the telephone, the phonograph, the railway, of which they had the most hazy ideas, ocean steamers, the implements of war, our mighty cities with their rushing industries. They tolerated what must have seemed to them my interminable loquacity, with what grace they could, as courtesy to the stranger required. For what interest did the things whereof I spake possess compared with the supernatural agencies which hemmed in their own lives in these remote solitudes! Did I know anything of enchantments? was their eager question. Certainly they only half believed my denial, and none would have wondered beyond measure if mounds and village had all disappeared before the morning. They told me of a ruin which lay somewhere to the north-west, with huge scattered columns, and dark underground windings where tradition had it that vast treasure lay concealed. There was no doubt about the ruin, for many present had seen it as boys. But there came one over-curious foreigner, who walked over the place and purposed to return and excavate: and from that day to this the ruin hath not been visible to any human eye. Many a weary hour has been spent wandering in the neighbourhood, and every foot of the

soil where once it stood has been carefully explored in vain. Thus do the guardian spirits of the place preserve it from the hand of the spoiler!

Khalîl stirred up the embers of a dying fire, casting a ruddy glow over the swarthy faces in the darkness, and to the merry music of mortar and pestle, water was boiled for coffee. Mohammed produced tea from our stores, and some tasted the beverage of the *Franjies* for the first time. It would not be easy to displace the coffee, but if only price permitted, the "cup that cheers," &c., would soon make a good second among these people. This, however, was only by-play; the serious business of the evening went forward apace. Did I know *Wady en Nâr*—"Valley of Fire"? It was a deep vale not far distant, and a noted resort of the *Jin*—"fairies." The sides, as in most of the Jaulân valleys, are very steep and difficult of ascent. If you stray along the top of the left bank, and look carefully, you will see, about midway up the opposite side, a small doorway, with doorposts and lintel of stone. It stands open; and if the sun is in the right direction, his rays striking within, you may catch, in the cave beyond, the glitter of red gold. No man can guess the wealth there stored; but, alas! for the poverty-stricken Ḥawârny, it is effectually guarded. You go down into the valley, and there the difficulties begin; for while the doorway is easily seen from the opposite bank it is next to impossible to tell here where to climb. Then the dry earth rushes beneath your feet, and it would be almost as easy to climb a soft snow wreath. Finally, if you do discover and reach the door, only at your peril may you approach; for from the atmosphere there is distilled "a ghastly dew," which drip, drip, drips from the lintel on to the earth below, and these strange dew-drops are possessed of marvellous and awful power. If one falls on a piece of wood it is torn into fibres, if on stone or iron it is shivered into fragments, if upon any part of a man the Irishman's "smithereens" are nothing to what he would become! What wonder if the courage of men oozes out of their finger-tips as they confront this mysterious door! So would they have me believe, that from the opposing bank when light favours, these hungry men gloat upon the shine of the precious metal, which they may never handle!

Then came a story which concerned *Umm el Jamâl*, an ancient city whose blackened walls may be seen away on the plain to the south-east, from the minaret of the great Mosque in Bozrah. In a cavern under this city the prophet Mohammed of sacred memory had concealed many things of unspeakable preciousness. Fearing the coming of the infidel, he had placed a guard in the cavern, before which every man who had ever attempted to enter had gone powerless or fallen down in a fit. It consists of 40 giant negroes, an enormous camel, and a snake whose vast sinewy folds remind one most of "that sea-beast, Leviathan, whom God, of all his works, created hugest, that swim the ocean stream." At the sound of an approaching footstep they all spring up from apparent torpor, and with a mighty shout and terrific threatening aspect, raise barriers of dread which the boldest never yet hath passed.

These long centuries of watching in the darksome cave have not wearied them, nor hath the age-long fast in any degree impaired their natural force.

Belief in these stores of hidden treasure is kept alive by occasional discoveries of coin. Only a few months before my visit, a workman, digging for a foundation in Bozrah, came upon a jar full of old silver and golden coins. Several who were working near him heard of his find, and gathering round him, a promise of silence was exacted from each, and the treasure trove was divided among them. But there were too many to keep a secret. By and bye the Government got wind of the affair, and all suspected of connection with it were promptly arrested. The erewhile fortunate men were soon detected, and, as the price of freedom, had to disgorge their share of the treasure. One man, however, stoutly maintained his innocence of the whole concern, and he was still being afforded leisure to revise his declaration in one of his Imperial Majesty's prisons. This was all decidedly discouraging. Yet every man of these folk trusts that one day he will stumble across concealed wealth, which will make him independent of work during the rest of his natural life.

A very long-winded fellow now took up his parable, and retailed to the company, who listened with breathless eagerness, a tale, which was simply an Arabic variant on the old Greek story of the fair but faithless Helen and the beautiful but unworthy Paris. The variations were eminently to the Arabian taste. I gathered myself quietly into my "shoe"; the sound of the tale-teller's voice, in its monotonous half-chant, acted as a lullaby, and soon I was far away in the land of dreams, where the supernatural is ever at home.

(*To be continued.*)

RESULTS OF METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS TAKEN AT JERUSALEM IN THE YEAR 1887.

By James Glaisher, F.R.S.

The numbers in column 1 of this table show the highest reading of the barometer in each month; of these the highest appear in the winter, and the lowest in the summer months. The maximum for the year, 27·709 inches, is in February. In column 2 the lowest reading in each month is shown; the minimum for the year, 26·978 inches, is in January. The range of readings in the year was 0·731 inch. The numbers in the 3rd column show the range of readings in each month, the smallest, 0·129 inch, is in July; and the largest, 0·730 inch, is in January. The numbers in the 4th column show the mean monthly pressure of the atmosphere, the highest, 27·478 inches, is in October; and the lowest, 27·248 inches, in August. The mean pressure for the year was 27·381 inches. At Sarona the mean pressure for the year was 29·822 inches.