A JOURNEY IN THE HAURAN.

By Rev. W. Ewing.

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The advent of the Sunday brought no change in the ordinary routine of village life. The cattle were driven forth; the women came gliding from the pool with the great water jars poised gracefully on their heads; the sounds of threshing came from the Beidar, where the tribulum, the foot of ox and ass, were busy upon the wheat, while from the shovel of the winnower the grain rose to fall in a golden heap at his feet, and the light breeze carried clouds of chaff and yellow dust far over the fields. As the morning advanced a troop of soldiers, heavily booted and spurred, with clanking swords and rattling muskets, came swinging into the court-yard. They formed the escort of a proud overbearing *Shâmy*—a money-lender from Damascus. He carried a light whip in his hand, and stalked about with an air of great self-importance and general proprietorship. He wore a white turban of multitudinous folds; a long great-coat of European cut hung loosely over his striped cotton *ghumbâz*, and the feet of his white baggy pantaloons were gathered into the legs of a huge pair of riding boots. Round the waist, under the great-coat, he wore a belt, from which swung a dangerous-looking revolver in a leather case. The two outstanding features of this man were his religiousness and his profanity. Most punctilious in the performance of his devotions, I saw him once actually stop in the middle of his prayers to curse an offending villager! The variety of his oaths, and the facility with which he brought them to bear on every subject, I have never seen equalled even among the voluble Arabs. His brow was a perpetual threat, and his lips seemed ever set for blasphemy. The officer in command of the troop was a courteous well-favoured young man; one of the number was a *Ḳurdy*—a Kurdish horseman, and the others were of the ordinary ragged loutish type of Turkish soldiers, who look so raw and fight so desperately. The *Ḳurdy* appeared to receive more respect among them than their officer. His people are well known for brave men, but withal have a somewhat evil reputation for cruelty. No one willingly offends a *Ḳurdy*, and no better guard can be taken by travellers wishing to explore the country to the east of the Jordan. This man was full of tales illustrating his own prowess and daring, to which the others listened with a jocular appreciation of his grim humour, which served only to make more obvious the depth of their admiration. As the result of grave misdemeanours which had reached the ears of Government a price had been set on the head of a Beduwy chief in Mount Gilead. The regular soldiery had long struggled in vain to secure him. At last this fellow got together a group of his kinsmen, and started an intrigue with some women of the tribe—itself an excessively dangerous proceeding. Through them the where-

abouts of the Sheikh was discovered. Choosing a cloudy moonless night, the women met them in a quiet wady. There they donned Beduwy garments, hiding their own among the bushes, and, following the directions of the simple *Bedawiyât*, they soon reached the tent where the unsuspecting chief lay sleeping. By the dim light of a smouldering fire they marked out their victim. Suddenly springing into the midst they hewed off his head, and dashed out again before his amazed companions could realise what had happened. Too late the women saw what a dreadful game they had been playing, and filled all the mountain with their cries. Swiftly returning to the valley they threw off their disguise; resuming their own garments they made their way to the Government, triumphantly carrying the grinning horror in their hands. There they claimed and received the price of blood.

This motley company added to our own quite overcrowded the narrow quarters. They ordered about the villagers like a set of slaves, and had whatever they desired brought to them at once. It was a great relief when they went forth to transact the business on which they had come, leaving us once more in quiet possession. My Arabic Testament was brought into requisition, and the Epistle to the Romans perused with more than common interest and profit. Later in the day, Mohammed and I escaped from the place and rode down again to Tell 'Ashterah; in this peaceful place we spent an ideal Sunday afternoon. A plunge in the cool stream was a fit preparation for the night, and helped to brace one for the sufferings that should follow! Of course we were careful to have what water we used carried from these springs. Mohammed's anxious, nervous eagerness to get back to the village as the sun approached the western horizon was a sad commentary upon the conditions prevailing in these regions, where man's chief dread is the approach of his brother man in the darkness. It is a fear shared by the domestic animals: the horse you ride and the beasts of burden all sensibly quicken their pace as it approaches nightfall. As the thick gloom that baffles the keenest eye creeps over the mountains and fills the air, the belated traveller is oppressed with a sense of utter helplessness, and exposure to all manner of evil: while the townsman peers cautiously beyond the circle illumined by his lamp, and thanks heaven that he is not abroad in the darkness. The cooler hour before the sun has set is beloved by all: but you must be an Oriental to realise the full charm lent by that promise to the city of our hopes, "There shall be no night there."

The boisterous conduct of the soldiers, and their rude overbearing treatment of the peasants, made supper a less enjoyable meal than usual. They had come hither to protect and assist the Shâmy in collecting his debts. At no time, but especially then, in the disturbed state of the country, would the money-lender venture forth among his debtors alone. He is not a welcome visitor, and these uncultured folks have an awkward way of relieving themselves of disagreeable company! The escort asked for is always granted by the Government for a consideration. It is quite a good time for the soldiers, who are complete masters of the situation;

their lightest wish is law; and the peasantry know that to resist would only be to bring worse trouble on their heads. One wonders that, aware as they are of the consequences, these men are not afraid to borrow: but the truth is, that every village in the Ḥaurân is overwhelmed with debt. The improvident Fellahy cannot apparently look a single day ahead. A few gold pieces in his hand, their glittering sheen obscures all the future for him. Such inquiries as I was able to make elicited the fact that while much of the debt incurred is for seed in unfavourable years, the most of it is taken on for far different purposes. There is an inborn love of display in the soul of the oriental. One of the most obvious tokens of grandeur is the possession of a fairly numerous *harîm*. But marriage is an expensive business; for, not to speak of the feast that must be provided for the neighbourhood, there are the dresses and the dowry of the bride to be provided: and few men would consider themselves properly married if they did not make an impression of prodigal liberality. This is the opportunity of the wily money-lender; the necessary cash is forthcoming, at a ruinous rate of interest; but who thinks of interest at such a time? When the festivities are over the man may make a heartless ineffectual attempt for a little to meet his obligation: but, by and bye, he settles down to forget it as far as possible, with no hope and less purpose of ever paying it. The interest is collected in kind. Immediately the threshing is in full swing, the creditor swoops down with his minions, and carries off what he is pleased to consider right, the peasant, as a rule, grimly acquiescing, and longing only to see the back of his oppressor. Khalîl, our host, was under a debt of some twenty or thirty piastres—not more, I think, than five shillings—but it did not seem to occur to him to pay it off, while his creditor appropriated at least that value of wheat by way of interest on the loan! Khalîl's brother was in worse case; he is more of a marrying man, has greater expenditure, and therefore is much deeper in debt. He mooned around these days with a very listless air, while his share of the harvest was pretty well disappearing. I asked him concerning his affairs; how many wives had he when he borrowed last? "Only one." And why did he borrow the money? حتى اجوّزني *ḥatta ajawazni*; "That I might marry myself." "Marry?" I asked, "how many more wives did you marry?" ثلاثة, *thalathah*, "Three," he replied, with the greatest composure. Between the addition to his family expenses, and his responsibilities to the *Shâmy*, he had landed himself in perfectly hopeless obligations, and was doomed to spend the rest of his days vainly endeavouring to satisfy the rapacity of his erewhile accommodator.

It must not be supposed that the fabulous sums named as passing from the hands of the bridegroom to those of the bride's parents on occasions of betrothal and marriage, represent anything like real values. Hard cash is not often given; more commonly the gift takes the form of cattle or other goods, dress or jewellery; a perfectly preposterous price

is put upon these things, and the sum swiftly runs up to imposing figures. In Mount Gilead, calculations are made in this connection in "bags." كم كيس حطيت, *kam kîs ḥaṭait*, "How many bags did you pay?" is a common question addressed to a bridegroom. The *kîs* or bag is reckoned to contain so many gold pieces. But payment is not made in gold; generally it is made in cattle. An ox worth about £5 is valued at £40. A few of these, with a camel or two estimated on the same scale, soon represent a very handsome heap of bags!

This same custom prevailing among the Jews in Palestine often leads to awkward results. If the wife divorces her husband, she has no claim upon him under the Jewish law, but if the husband put away his wife, save for obviously sufficient cause, he has to make good to her the whole estimated amount of the dowry. As the estimated amount is usually a long way beyond the sum total of all the man's earthly possessions, some security is thus afforded the woman against frivolous and arbitrary dismissal. As this is often the only security she has, the custom, stupid in its conception and purpose, having regard simply to display, yet comes to serve a valuable end.

The *Shâmy* did us some real service by indicating places worth visiting. In the course of his wanderings he had seen most of the country, and in several ruins had observed inscriptions. In consequence of his report, and with an introduction from him to the Sheikh which we did *not* present, we resolved to journey towards 'Akrabah. Our road lay again through El Merkez, by way of Sheikh Sa'ad and Nawa. Mohammed found a nephew of his own among the soldiers in El Merkez. He had been in the army for about a couple of years, and during all that time nothing had been heard of him. The meeting of nephew and uncle reminded one of the prodigal son and his father. They fell on each other's necks and kissed, with every demonstration of joyful surprise and affection. It has happened more than once to the present writer, to be similarly embraced by stalwart Arab friends, after an absence of a year. If these affectionate moods do pass rather rapidly, there is no reason to suspect their sincerity or intensity while they last.

We did not linger in Nawa: fragments of carved stones we saw here and there, but nothing promising great interest. The dark shaky-looking towers that rise far overtopping all the houses in the village excite hopes, when seen in the distance, which closer acquaintance sadly disappoints. A tale is told in connection with Nawa which possesses more than a passing interest. Not many years ago in Judeideh the missionaries had an application for admission to the full privileges of church membership, from a man who had been nominally Protestant for some time. The man's reputation, however, was not specially good. His ignorance of sacred things, also, might almost be described as colossal; it was equalled only by his self conceit. His wife, a most respectable and trustworthy person, was a church member. When it was intimated to him that at present the way was not clear for his

admission, he vented his displeasure on his wife, and the life she led with him was proof enough that the missionaries had acted wisely. He returned with his demand with great persistency, and at last was told that until there was a decided change, his request for admission could not be entertained. Then, with a considerable flourish, he deserted his wife and children, took his way to the Haurân, and became a Moslem. Finally settling in Nawa, his mountain education gave him an easy lead among the illiterates there. He was appointed *Khaṭîb*, literally "Orator," in the village. It was his duty to act as teacher to the boys, and to take the lead in the public devotions. He attained a position of great influence, and grew accustomed to have his ideas acquiesced in without a murmur. But there is a point beyond which innovations may not safely be carried with a superstitious and lawless people. In the enclosure, beside the wely, or village sanctuary, there grew a thorn tree, which was both an obstruction and an eye-sore. Everything within the enclosure is sacred to the spirit of the saint or prophet whose bones are laid there, and generally may be removed only at peril of death. Being now, as he thought, secure in his authority, he proceeded one night to cut down the tree. Great was the consternation in the village when the dawn revealed the wely's tree laid prostrate, and dread forbodings of evil to follow, oppressed all hearts. It was discovered that the *Khaṭîb* had cut it down: it was whispered that he was only a Christian in disguise! and soon there were hoarse cries for his blood. Only his death might expiate the crime, and deliver the village from impending calamity. The crowd, armed some with whips, others with sticks and clubs, rushed around the now trembling *Khaṭîb*; attacking him furiously on all sides, they literally beat him to death, and so ended his strange career. His widow took service with a medical man in Galilee, and provision was made by the charitable for the education and care of his children.

Jâsem was our first real halting-place. Built entirely of basalt, resting upon a hill of the same material, it looks particularly black as you approach it. A considerable extent of ground is covered, but, for the most part, by ruins. Entering from the south we pursued a tortuous path among the irregular huts that clung to the hill side, until we reached the top, close beside an ancient mosque. Through a gateway in a rough modern wall, we entered a small court, paved with the building stones of a past age. The mosque was in a ruinous condition. Several reed mats covered the centre of the floor, and there one or two pious villagers were engaged in their devotions. My Moslem attendant assured me that we might walk around these mats, without uncovering our feet, so long as we did not tread upon any spot where men were wont to pray. We stepped boldly over the threshold, and proceeded carefully to examine the walls, and the pillars that support the remaining portion of the roof, when suddenly there came from the doorway such a volley of blasphemy as might have overwhelmed a much stronger building. Turning round I beheld the guardian of the mosque, with flashing eyes and uplifted hands, declaring to the crowd the sacrilege

of which we infidels had been guilty, and invoking calamities upon all our relatives, male and female, for many generations. The threatening looks of the populace did not add to our comfort. The guardian was in no mood to accept apologies; but instant compliance with his command to come forth evidently gratified him, as his importance in the eyes of the villagers was doubtless thereby enhanced. I engaged him in conversation, turning his attention away from the burning subject by a few cautious questions about the place, and kindly inquiries as to his own welfare. When, finally, Mohammed stripped off his shoes, and I sprang upon his back, to be carried round the sacred place, his stern features relaxed into a pleased grin, and he at once constituted himself my protector and guide. But for his assistance I should have seen but little in the village. In his company all doors were open to us. In the mosque I found nothing to show that it had ever been used as a church. Bits of rude carving adorned the arches, which, resting on pillars, some with plain capitals, others with ornamentation resembling the palm branch, held up the roof. Over the northern doorway, however, inscription No. 8, with its two crosses, proves Christian occupation. No. 9 stands over a built-up doorway in the south end of جامع العتيق *Jâmi' el 'Atîq*—"the ancient mosque"—so called by the natives to distinguish it from the *modern* (!) structure on the hill. This building stands near the base, close to the house of the Sheikh. No. 10, lying face up in a courtyard, seemed at first almost obliterated; but an obliging young woman brought a jar of water and a brush of hard grass, and, working with a will, speedily revealed the inscription. The stone with No. 11 adorned the entrance to the courtyard of the Sheikh. To prove their goodwill the people brought us delicious draughts of delightfully cool *leban*. Ere we mounted to ride northward, several of the men came forward with looks of some anxiety. They explained to us that according to an old tradition among them, there was at one time a copious spring of clear cold water in the near neighbourhood of the village. For many generations it had been absolutely lost sight of; the most careful search by their fathers and themselves had been perfectly fruitless. They trusted that with my instruments—a pocket compass and aneroid!—I should be able to direct them to the spot where the coveted liquid was to be found. It was a trial to be obliged to disappoint their hopes; and I fear they only half believed me, when I told them that in this I could not help them. Cisterns they have; but they long for "living water."

Leaving Jâsem behind us, our road led at first almost directly towards *El Ḥarrah*, one of the highest and most shapely of all the conical hills in the district. The name of the wely whose sanctuary crowns the summit is *'Omâr Shahîd*. In something less than an hour we passed a large ruin, covering a mound on the east of the road. On the west are extensive and deep quarries, partly filled with water, from which, obviously, the stones must have been taken to build the ancient town. That these ruins

are of hoary antiquity cannot be doubted. Many walls, built of square, well-hewn blocks, without mortar, are still standing; but, while many of the slabs that once formed the roofs may be found among the disordered heaps, I did not see one in position. The earthquakes of ages have shaken these dwellings to pieces, and for centuries the dark lichens have crept silently over all. *Umm Khurj*, "Mother of Saddlebags," was the name a countryman gave to the place. We passed near to El Ḥarrah, the village nestling under the eastern slopes of the hill of that name. The natives of Jâsem assured us that it contained no antiquities, being composed entirely of poor peasants' huts. The night was coming on apace, and we were anxious, if possible, to reach 'Aḳrabah before sunset. A steep, rocky descent here brought us to more level country. These far-stretching uplands, dark, stony, sterile wastes, with the almost unearthly stillness that reigned around, combined to make a rather gloomy impression upon the travellers. As the shadows grew longer we went down towards the bottom of a wide valley, and in the distance, eastward, we could see the white smoke curling above the black tents of the 'Arab, telling of busy preparations for the evening meal. The anxious looks of my companions proclaimed their sense of insecurity in the presence of such neighbours. A troop of camels wandering slowly homeward, cropping the scanty remains of withered herbage in their track, were tended by one who crouched half asleep on the hump of one of the largest in the flock. He proved civil, and communicative. Endeavouring to follow the direction indicated on the map, we were holding too far eastward, and now might not hope to reach 'Aḳrabah before dark. Would we not go with him, and pass the night among his kinsmen? The hospitable offer we declined, desiring to get nearer our goal. The yellow dust, marking a threshing floor on the further hillside, and which we had thought was 'Aḳrabah, he told us, was *Umm el 'Osij*, "Mother of the Box-thorn." Pushing upward we found a very poor-looking village, with few traces of human habitation. Many days had passed since the last tenants went forth from the portals of these dark houses, for many were still standing, built for the most part of older materials, the character and abundance of which proved the importance of the town in past times. We found that a worthy Beduwy, of mature age, had pitched his tent in an open space to the west of the village. Ever preferring the airy tent where it is to be found, before the confined and stifling houses of the peasantry, we turned aside to claim the old man's hospitality. And right hearty was his welcome. His store was neither large nor varied; yet, as he phrased it, had he enough, food for the men and fodder for their cattle. *Sheikh Maḳâwij*, as he called himself, had learned the secret of contentment. He was not at all averse to having his slender supplies reinforced from our stock; and while they prepared for supper, I employed the remaining minutes of light to wander among the ruins, and visit certain stone heaps at some distance from the village. I found a short, stout, ragged, fiery-whiskered, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed man, who told me he came from Sufsaf, near Safed.

We were speedily on the best of terms. He had come hither some two years before, when the place was occupied again after ages of vacancy, to seek his fortune. By all accounts the search was likely to last a good while longer before much came of it. In short, Umm el 'Osij held out no great attractions as a sphere for agricultural skill and industry, so he had pretty well decided to turn his wandering footsteps westward again. He proved a very satisfactory guide, although he could not distinguish between an inscription and a bit of rough carving. No. 12, *e.g.*, he told me was a very fine inscription! He conducted me to the stone heaps east of the village, which must be in the neighbourhood of an ancient burying ground. Here the other inscriptions were found. Broken slabs of stone, with rudely cut crosses, were frequent. Returning to the village, I made a hasty sketch of a curious stone, which had evidently once been a ponderous lintel. While engaged with this, the usual band of wondering spectators came together. One big, dark-looking fellow, with an air of very great importance, elbowed his way through the bystanders to my side, and demanded my business in thus "writing down the country." Had I a Government order? *Amr min el Ḥakômeh.* Armed with this, one may do almost anything. I had nothing more formidable than my British passport, but a look at the man convinced me that it would do as well as anything else for him. I did not immediately answer him, and I observed that the brows of the crowd were darkening. He, however, seemed to waver when I turned sharply and looked him in the face. I asked what right he had to interfere: would he be good enough to show me his authority. He then obviously gave way. I pressed him, and he fell back among the people looking rather sheepish. When I pulled out a book and demanded his name, suggesting the possibility of a visit to the *Mutesarrif* on the morrow, he laughed an uneasy laugh, and said it was only a joke. "Yes, *ya Khawâja*," echoed the crowd, "it was only a joke." The would-be guardian of his country's sanctities now looked rather foolish, and slipped quietly away, while I was left unmolested to finish my explorations.

As night dropped her sable curtains over the uplands we assembled to supper beside the tent fire of Sheikh Muḳâwij. Whatever else is lacking at this season among these hospitable men, the traveller can always depend upon abundance of beautiful fresh milk. As the humble meal proceeded, the villagers gathered quietly, one by one, and sat down on the ground, in a shadowy circle, around us. Most of them had share of what was going, after we had finished, as very liberal provision had been made. These men are usually all *medical practitioners.* They are prepared to prescribe for every ill that flesh is heir to, with perfect confidence; and, as they charge no fees, their practice is often extensive. How little reliance they have on their own specifics is shown by the eagerness with which they gather round a medicine box. I had taken with me a few simple things in case of illness by the way, and in many places found people whom I was really able to help. In the long run I gave the box into Mohammed's care, and he posed as a very great doctor

indeed; some of the cures he effected were held to be wonderful as regarded both rapidity and completeness. As the medicines, for the most part, could do little harm, and he was never disposed to give too much of anything, I could leave him with comfort to dispose of his patients, making sure only that he would not give away all the quinine. Poor old Sheikh Muḳâwij had suffered for years from a persistent and painful internal complaint, and had endured unspeakable things at the hands of the rude surgeons of the desert. One of their chief rules appears to be this: when there is a pain inside, set up a greater pain outside; the greater will absorb the less, and as the greater heals, the less will disappear. The principle of setting up greater pain outside had been faithfully observed with the poor Sheikh, and that night it had taken a peculiarly savage form. Over his stomach a passage had been cut under the skin, and a tuft of coarse wool had been drawn through to keep the wound open. He bore it all without a murmur. His case was rather too serious for us amateurs, so I gave him a note to a friendly doctor, with instructions how to reach him; at first he seemed disposed to go, but I have no doubt, on my departure, the good Sheikh would again resign himself to Ullah, and submit with grand fortitude to the well-meant cruelties of the ignorant Bedawy physician. To journey all the way to Safed or Damascus for medical treatment, would not that be to put a slight upon his friends in the desert? Nay, would it not evidence a lack of confidence in the Most High, to whom his fathers had looked up for help from these solitudes, what time life's troubles fell heavy upon them? Medical discussions were soon followed by entertainment more to the taste of the general audience. It was a strange company that lay thus around the fire, by the solitary tent of Sheikh Muḳâwij, on the lonely uplands of *Jedûr*. With the darkness a chill had crept over the hills, and we were glad to draw to our coverings. Through the still night the stars shone down in wondrous splendour. Looking upward, one could understand in some measure how, in the twilight of the dawning thought of man, the mind should have been almost overwhelmingly impressed with the glory of these shining orbs. Some such feeling must have touched the soul of the old Sheikh. He was full of stories of the far past days, when men bowed down to the stars, and worshipped all the host of heaven. These things all happened in the *jâhiliyeh*, "the time of ignorance," ere yet the morning star had arisen, in whose kindly beams the dwellers amid Arabian sands have ever since rejoiced. For did not "the Prophet" put end to these idolatries, and usher in the true worship of God?

Then we had tales of those distant days in which the majestic figure of the great progenitor of all the Arab tribes, *Khalîl* (Abraham), "the friend of God," with a fine contempt for chronology, was made to walk in familiar converse with Mohammed and saints of later times. Some who in the first fading of the shadows, being only partially enlightened, yet had strength and courage to endure persecution at the hands of hardened idolaters, were kept long time in hard bondage, and finally were guided

by a dog to a mighty cave in the heart of the mountain which looks down upon Damascus from the north. Safe from the hands of their foes in the secret depths of Salihiyeh, they were yet not judged fit for admission to the sweet groves of Paradise. There, through many centuries, they have slumbered serenely, waiting the final summons, when all men shall receive according to their deserts. In their sleep they are still guarded by the faithful dog that guided them hither. He sits beside them all the week; only on Friday nights a feeling of loneliness and impatience comes over him, and if you stray near the mountain at the turn of night you may hear strange noises issuing as it were from the bowels of the earth. The weary canine comes as near as may be to the surface, and indulges a little in vain howlings, then returns to his long watch, and the silence around you is broken only by the sharp yelp of the jackal and the rattle of the loose stones far up the cliffs, which are started by his passing feet.

The snowy mass of Great Hermon shone resplendent in the first beams of the morning. From Umm el 'Osij you obtain a magnificent view of this famous mountain. His white glittering steeps rising grandly from the black stretches below stood out in bold relief against the blue of the sky. I could trace the top line from the summits that look over Banias, almost to where, sinking in the north, they open a passage through rocky jaws for the highway from Damascus to the Syrian coast. Sitting down on an old dyke, to the no little wonder of the old Sheikh, I made a hasty sketch of the snowy outline, which gives a very fair general idea of the appearance. The Arab will never "speed the parting guest"; his farewell is as brief and unsentimental as his welcome is profuse. *Khâṭerak* he will say, which cannot be literally translated; but it is as if he should ask, "may thy thought turn to me betimes"; then he turns his back upon his guest, nor gives one look behind him. I glanced round after a little and saw the Sheikh already sitting calmly by the fire, with his back still towards us, and all about the place had assumed its wonted aspect, as if we had never been there. But the visit of a European will mark an era in the quiet life of the place, and be spoken of long after in many an evening circle, and the mysterious box of medicines will figure in their tales.

It was about an hour's ride to 'Akrabah, over about the wildest and most desolate country I have seen outside the borders of el Lejâ'. We rode almost due westward, and at last, reaching the western extremity of a low eminence, there stretched out before us the ruins of what, beyond all doubt, was once a city of great magnificence, both in extent and character. From the regular lines of stones that ran across the country in the neighbourhood of the city one might infer that in olden times some attempt had been made by the citizens to bring these wilds under cultivation. How far they may have succeeded we cannot tell, for long now it has been left in peace, trodden only by the feet of the flocks by day, and of the night prowlers in hours of darkness.

We passed a level piece of ground, enclosed by crumbling dykes, which may have been the threshing floor in earlier days. The modern *beidar*,

similarly enclosed, lies to the south-west of the village. Beyond this enclosure we entered the burying-ground. On the headstones here we found a few Cufic inscriptions. Most of the stones were broken; the inscriptions were nearly all in Arabic, and it was quite common to find half an inscription on one grave and half on another! Among the graves which were evidently of small account, there were a few larger ones, on which a little more labour had been spent. The most imposing one of all the native boys called *el Mizâr*, but the name of the saint whose slumbers it protects I did not learn. At the head of this grave was a large stone with a Greek inscription, but it had fallen forward on its face, so I proposed to return later in the day with some means of raising it. On the north of the graveyard stands a building known locally as the *kaṣr*, القصر—"the palace." It most resembles the Palmyrene structure which I afterwards saw at Rimet el-Luḥf, only it seems to have been considerably higher. It is built of carefully dressed basalt; it is between 30 and 40 feet square; part of the wall was still about 40 feet in height. The inside, which could be reached by a breach in the wall about 18 inches in diameter, was blocked up with *débris* and large stones which had been shaken down from above. The large stone at the Mizâr, No. 31, had evidently once had a place in this building. We rode forward a little way, and then turned sharply to the right along a broad paved road, apparently of Roman workmanship, leaving a large building with one or two straggling fruit trees—the only trees I saw here—on the right, until we reached the spring, where there was a scene of bustling activity, men and boys raising water, and pouring it into great sarcophagi for the herds to drink. The well is almost on the eastern edge of the ruins. It is about a dozen feet from the brim to the water. It is enclosed in walls of solid masonry which may be coeval with the pavement of the road which leads to it. It is about 20 feet square, and is spanned above by a couple of arches, whence the buckets are let down with ropes to draw the water. There is also a stair descending at the north-eastern corner, where the women fill the jars for domestic purposes. This is now the sole water-supply of the village; but here also there is a tradition that of old there were other fountains, of which for many generations nothing has been seen. Immediately to the east of the fountain rises a huge pile of ruins. Bits of old columns, great stone lintels and door posts, and hewn blocks lie tumbled about in the wildest confusion, all bearing the marks of long exposure to the elements. A space was cleared in the midst, and a way opened by which it might be approached, passing under a large ornamented lintel; and this cleared space they dignified with the title of جامع الكبير—*Jâmi' el kebîr*—"the great mosque." From the top of this pile a capital view of the old city is obtained. The peasants taking advantage of the part which in the passage of centuries had suffered least from the throes of earthquakes, have built their huts chiefly in the south-west quarter of the city, a few straggling eastward towards the fountain;

in these directions there were also, however, many bare walls rising pathetically amid surrounding ruin. To northward the scene was one of wide-spreading desolation. Many acres are covered deep with the dark *débris* of a once mighty city. A more utter wreck it is impossible to imagine. In extent it cannot have been much less than Bozrah, but here the overthrow has been more complete. I wandered long among these gloomy ruins, but found neither inscription nor sculpture. It was interesting to trace the outlines of the houses and the directions of the streets. Many of the buildings had been of ponderous blocks of basalt; large shapely lintels, on which the ancients seem to have expended most of their skill in ornamentation, were not uncommon, but all now involved in equal ruin. I can hardly doubt that there is much of interest hidden here, but all the inscriptions I got were found in the southern half of the city.

We made our way to the Meḍâfeh of Sheikh Sa'id el Ḥajjy. It stood to westward, not far from the threshing floor. It was of spacious dimensions, and clean compared with any place we had yet visited. It was paved throughout with large flat stones; several fragments of Greek inscriptions were found on these. A huge jar of water stood in one corner with a tin jug convenient, and with this the villagers who came to gaze indiscriminately helped themselves. My two companions professed to be sadly wearied now, tempted no doubt by the cool shelter of the Meḍâfeh, and so I left them to sleep. Having seen the horses comfortably fixed, I got an old man to step round with me to several "written stones" with which he was familiar. Happily he was a man of some consequence in the village, and when it was known what we sought, one and another came with information of curious stones they had seen or heard of. While I was copying No. 18 I asked if any *Franjy*, "European," had ever been here before. "Yes," said the old man, "one came about thirty years ago." Thirty years, I may observe, among these people may mean anything from five to forty. That Franjy, who had a *ṭurjmân*, dragoman, or "translator," with him, had copied several of the stones. This particular stone he had read to the people, and his dragoman interpreted. It recorded the fact, he said, that King David, of Israel, had built this house, and that his daughter had built the Ḳaṣr, and lived in it for many years! The dragoman evidently knew what would please these simple folks, and so gave them a thoroughly original version of his own.

It was in 'Aḳrabah that I first heard of an idea—I met with it often afterwards—prevalent over all the East. There is a strong belief that in the far past the country belonged to the ancestors of the white men of the West; and it is regarded as a certainty that our people will one day return to take possession again of the heritage lost for so long. In this connection the opinion got abroad that I was doing for my people a most necessary work. Our fathers, ere they journeyed westward to realms of the setting sun, concealed much treasure in and around the dwellings they left behind them. This treasure is to be found by means of certain mysterious markings on the stones, the key to which they carried with

them, so that their children on returning might be rightly guided. But with the lapse of centuries it began to be feared that ere the day for our return had come, the Moslemîn might have discovered some part of the key, and be thus enabled to appropriate part of the treasure. My business, therefore, was to make certain changes in the markings, which should effectually mislead the followers of Mohammed, preserving at the same time a careful record, so that on the day of our return we might be able to walk straight to our precious hoards and find them intact!

Many of the young men of the village came round me with great eagerness when I was at work in a spot where tradition has localised a fabulous hoard. Their own searching had been all in vain, but they were sure I possessed the secret, particularly as in my anxiety to get the Greek letters on the stone correctly I ran my pencil round them, and felt them with the tips of my fingers. They told me that they quite understood what I was about. I asked if they thought it was treasure. "Of course," *ma'lûm*, they exclaimed. "Ah, well," said I, "if you will supply me with camels to carry off my share, I will distribute the half among you. Gold is heavy, but thirty camels would, perhaps, be sufficient." I suppose a twinkle in the eye of Mohammed, who meantime had joined me, revealed to them what was up, so they left me, deeply disgusted at the levity with which so serious a subject was treated.

After midday meal and brief siesta I went forth among the ruins again. Armed with one large stick and two smaller ones, Mohammed and I made our way by circuitous paths to the burying ground. He did not wish to attract attention lest we should be hindered in our attempt to raise the stone at the head of the Mizâr. Men might think it sacrilege, and the saint might avenge himself upon the village. We reached the spot safely, but had hardly begun operations when two boys appeared on the scene. They stood at some distance in awe-struck silence; when I asked them to come and hold one of the sticks in position, they ventured the opinion that our conduct was *Harâm*, that it was "infamous" work. Mohammed tried to coax them, for he feared they might alarm the village, but they moved further off. He explained to them, and the idea evidently brought great comfort to himself, that we were not doing the Mizâr an injury; on the contrary, out of pure respect, we were building it up, and doing an honour to the saint. He pointed out the disgrace of allowing it to go to ruin, and showed how good must come of our action. But the boys had had enough of it, and disappeared. Then the good Mohammed's anxieties increased. No one need ever wish for a more faithful companion than Mohammed; but the truth was that he himself was labouring under no little dread. It affected him none the less that he was more than half ashamed of it, and tried to conceal it from me with an air of bravado. He burst into a perspiration, and trembled so violently over almost nothing that with difficulty could I repress a laugh. His usual judgment deserted him, and he made absurd suggestions. The Moslemîn, he said, would be very angry. The block rested upon some smaller stones, and while one end was free, the other was embedded in the earth and jammed

with the broken wall, which had rushed when the block fell forward. Clearing the confined end we prized up the other; but as it was obviously beyond our united strength to raise it straight up, I suggested that resting the lever on an adjoining wall he should ease it up while I removed the stones from beneath. "But," said he, "I fear that if we do that it may go down suddenly flat upon its face, and then no power on earth should be able to raise it!" "O," I said, "that were a light thing." "Light!" he exclaimed, with wide open eyes, "don't you know this is a Wely?" It was only a flash revealing the man's soul; but in a moment reason had mastered superstition again, and he wrought with triple vigour. When the stones were removed he steadied the block while I crept under it, and lying on my back succeeded in making a fair copy of the part of the inscription which remained. Unfortunately, a large part of the stone had been broken off with several lines of the inscription, and of this I could find no trace. The break may have occurred when the stone fell from its place in the building. But the peasants are terrible vandals; and knowing nothing of their value, many a precious stone has gone to pieces beneath their clumsy hammers.

(To be continued.)

RESULTS OF METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS TAKEN AT JERUSALEM IN THE YEAR 1888.

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 is 27·734 inches, in December. In column 2 the lowest reading in each month is shown; the minimum for the year is 27·020 inches, in December. The range of barometer readings in the year is 0·714 inch. The numbers in the 3rd column show the range of reading in each month, the smallest, 0·140 inch, is in July; and the largest, 0·714 inch, is in December. The numbers in the 4th column show the mean monthly pressure of the atmosphere, the highest, 27·463 inches, is in December; and the lowest, 27·275 inches, is in July. The mean pressure for the year is 27·375 inches. At Sarona the mean pressure for the year was 29·834 inches.

The highest temperature of the air in each month is shown in column 5. The highest in the year was 106°·0 on both the 12th and 13th of July; the maximum temperature on these days at Sarona was 90° and 93° respectively. The first day in the year that the temperature reached 90° was on March 25th. In May the temperature reached or exceeded 90° on 1 day; in June on 4 days; in July on 18 days; in August on 13 days; in September on 8 days; and in October on 6 days. Therefore