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THE BEY OF TUNIS.

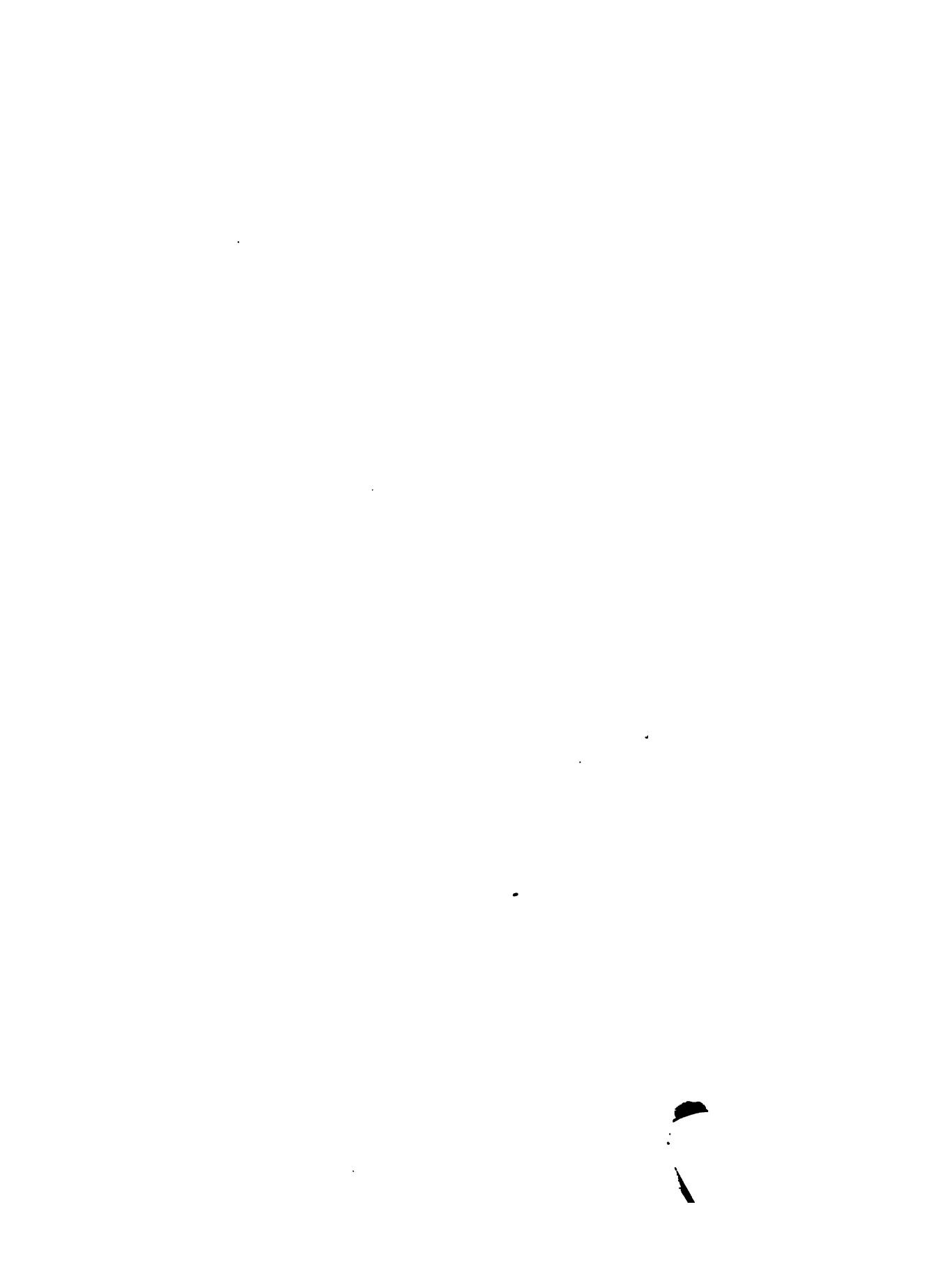


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THE BEY OF TUNIS.







GENERAL [Name]

THE
CAVE DWELLERS
OF
SOUTHERN TUNISIA

RECOLLECTIONS OF A SOJOURN WITH THE
KHALIFA OF MATMATA

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH OF

DANIEL BRUUN

BY

L. A. E. B.

LONDON: W. THACKER & CO., 2 CREED LANE, E.C.

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1898.

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PREFACE



My journey among the cave dwellers of Southern Tunisia was essentially one of research, since I was entrusted by Doctor Sophius Müller, Director of the Second Department of the National Museum, with the honourable task of purchasing ethnographical objects for the said museum.

On submitting this work to the public, it is incumbent upon me to offer my sincere thanks to all those who afforded me support and help in my travels: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, at whose recommendation Cubisol, the Danish Consul in Tunis, addressed himself to the French Regency, and obtained permission for me to travel through the country, and also an escort, guides, etc. Doctor Müller and Chamberlain Vedel, whose respective introductions, given from the National Museum and the Society concerned with ancient manuscripts, and addressed to other similar institutions, introduced me not only to these, but also to those remarkably scientific men, Gauckler and

Doctor Bertholon, whose friendship I have to thank for much information and assistance.

England's Representative in Tunis, Drummond Hay, may be said to have traced my path through Tunisia, as, on the basis of his remarkable knowledge of both individuals and of relative circumstances, he sketched a plan of my journey, from which I required to make little or no deviation. The Government and officers in El Arad, the officials, both military and civilian, showed me the greatest hospitality, and assisted me in the highest degree; Colonels Billet and Gousset especially claim my warmest gratitude.

Much of what I have recorded has been left in its original form, namely, as letters written home, some to my wife, some to other persons, as, for instance, to the publisher, Herr Hegel. I have not altered these lest they might lose the fresh impression under which they were written. Several portions were composed with a view to publication in the French journal the *Revue Tunisienne*, and in the Parisian magazine *Le Tour du Monde*.

The illustrations were obtained from various sources. Albert, the photographer in Tunis, obligingly allowed me to make use of a number of photographs, from which were chiefly drawn the views of the town and of the sea-coast. With a detective camera I myself took some

instantaneous photographs on the journey from Gabés to the mountains, of which a number are introduced. Besides these, Mr. Knud Gamborg has engraved some drawings of my own. Mr. Gauckler also gave me the free use of the sketches already published in his *Collection Beylicale*, from which were selected the pictures of the villages in the Matmata mountains. Lastly, from the wife of Consul Henriksen at Sfax I received two paintings, which are reproduced.

When, in the spring, I made an expedition to Greenland, I left my manuscript with my friend Doctor Kragelund, of Hobro, who had already afforded me his assistance, and gave him full powers to arrange the somewhat heterogeneous materials. In my absence he corrected the proofs as they came from the press, and has therefore taken a very important part in my work, and enabled it to be published in its present form. For this act of friendship I tender him my warmest thanks.

DANIEL BRUUN.

November 1894.

NOTE.—The fact of three years having elapsed since the Danish original of the *Cave Dwellers* was published, renders the letter form of which the

author speaks somewhat unsuitable for translation. It has been necessary, therefore, in many cases to modify that form, and also to omit certain passages in the work as being of little or no interest to English readers.

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THE CAVE DWELLERS OF SOUTHERN TUNISIA

1



CHAPTER I

WITH DRUMMOND HAY IN TUNIS

THOUGH the midday sun still shone bright and hot, I sat at my ease and breathed again in the pleasant atmosphere of a cool drawing-room, from which the stifling air and the flies were excluded by closely drawn blinds.

I had just arrived from Tunis by rail, over the scorching hot plain, and past the milky-white shallow lagoon known as the Lake of Tunis. Beyond Goletta the blue hills seemed to quiver beneath the rays of the sun, and my eyes were blinded by the dazzling white walls of the cathedral standing on the heights, where, in olden days, Byrsa, the fortress of Carthage, stood, defying the invader and the storm.

As we sped over the traces of the mighty circular wall, which formerly enclosed the town, I

caught a glimpse of a white roof amongst the green trees of a wood, and requested the conductor to stop the train at the English Consul's summer abode.

Down a pretty shady avenue I walked to the white summer palace, with its beautiful columned portico, the finest in all Tunisia.

It is a proud name that my host bears,—a name associated with unfailing honour in the history of Morocco. His late father, Sir J. H. Drummond Hay, as England's Representative, practically led Morocco's policy during the past forty years. He represented Denmark also, and under him his son won his diplomatic spurs.

My host had invited me that we might quietly arrange a plan for my intended expedition to visit the Berber tribes of Tunisia.

I was aware that in the south-west mountains of the Sahara I should meet with Berbers of a pure race such as are scarcely to be found elsewhere. Our country's excellent Representative, Consul Cubisol, had procured me a French permit for the journey, without which it would be difficult for a lonely traveller to visit regions unfrequented by Europeans.

In the spring, Drummond Hay had made a tour on horseback over the greater part of Southern Tunisia; he was therefore acquainted, not only with

the localities, but also with several of the native chiefs who would be able to assist me. He understands the people and their country thoroughly, for he speaks Arabic like a native, and is quite conversant with the life, opinions, manners, and customs of the inhabitants. His wife had travelled far and wide with him in Morocco when he was serving under his father, and accompanied him to the capital of Morocco; so she also is well versed in Oriental life.

Together we traced the plan of my journey, which, in the main, I afterwards followed. Here I will not anticipate

what I shall relate later; only promising this—that I owe first and foremost to Drummond Hay the fact of having comprised in my journey those regions which no traveller has as yet described. To him I was also afterwards indebted for the elucidation and explanation of what I had seen and heard.



DRUMMOND HAY,
BRITISH CONSUL-GENERAL AT TUNIS.

Both my host and hostess had resided for many years in Stockholm, when Drummond Hay was Consul there. The north has great attractions for them, as Drummond Hay's mother was a Dane, a Carstensen, being daughter of the last Danish Consul-General at Tangier.

England has great interests in Tunis, not only directly on account of the many Maltese living there under British protection, but also indirectly, more especially since the French settled in the country; it will therefore be understood that the post of British Representative is one of confidence.



CHAPTER II

SUSA

“A HAPPY journey until our next meeting, and may Allah preserve you from cholera!”

These were the parting words of my friend Gauckler, Inspector of Antiquities and Arts, who bade me a last farewell at the Italian railway station of Tunis.

Numbers of flamingoes stalked along the shores of the lagoon, showing like white patches on the blue-grey expanse of water. Out on the horizon, where the lake ended, I could see Goletta's white houses, and beyond them a deep, dark blue line—the Mediterranean.

At midday the heat was stifling, but after we reached Goletta Bay the sun sank rapidly, and the air grew cooler as a little steamer took us through the entrance to the harbour, past the homeward-bound fishing-boats. Just at sunset we reached our large steamer. To the north, Carthage's white church on the heights near Marsa appeared on the horizon, and, in the south, the blue mountains of Hammamlif.

Amid the noisy whistling of the steamer, mingled with screams and shouts, I tumbled on board with my numerous bundles and packages; finding my way at last to the saloon, where a frugal dinner awaited us.

Next morning, when I went on deck, the coast lay like a flat, grey stripe ahead of us. I went forward and enjoyed the fresh sea breeze for which I had so longed in Tunis. Near the bows of the ship were two dolphins. One of them rose to the surface of the water and spouted a stream of spray through the little orifice in its head, then sank again. The other then rose in its turn.

The white bundles on the fore part of the deck now began to stir into life, and each as it rose threw back its burnous, and showed a dark face. One Arab had with him his whole family. He had spread a rush mat on which, amongst their numerous belongings, lay, closely packed, husband, wife (perhaps wives), several children and a large poodle. A roguish little girl came to discover what I was contemplating. She was sweet, brown, and clean, and peeped up at me, hiding her face the while with one hand, evidently conscious of wrong-doing. The tips of her fingers and toes were stained red with henna, which was not displeasing. Soon after, a closely veiled figure, apparently the mother, came to fetch the little one. I had just time to perceive

that she was pretty, as she threw back a fold of her haik to wrap round her child and herself. What a charming picture they made as they leant against the bulwarks and gazed towards the land !

Upon a slope, quite near, lay Susa — white, white, everything was white.

On the summit of the slope were some towers and a crenelated wall, and on the seashore beneath, yet another wall. Below lay the harbour, too shallow, however, for our ship to enter ; we had therefore to lie out in the open.

A boat took me to the quay, where some twenty black-eyed boys of all ages, with gleaming teeth and red caps, lay watching for their prey. As the boat drew alongside, they rushed down to seize my luggage. The boatmen attempted to push them aside, but, nevertheless, one caught up my little handbag, another my umbrella, and a third my photographic apparatus. There was nothing for me to do but to jump ashore and chase the thieves. It was long before I could collect everything under the charge of one lad. Then, with a couple of smart taps right and left, my little guide and I marched up to the Kasba, where the Commandant lives. Here are the magazines and barracks, and here, too, I knew that I should find a collection of antiquities.

Susa was originally a Phœnician colony, and

played no small part in the Punic Wars. Trajan called it "Hadrumetum," and made it the capital of the province. It was laid waste by the Vandals, rebuilt by Justinian, and destroyed by Sid Obka, who utilised the greater portion of its ancient materials to build the holy city of Kairwan. Later



SUSA.

the town was rebuilt by the Turks, who had here for a long time one of their hiding-places for their piratical fleets. The town was therefore assaulted by Charles v. in 1537, and again by Andreas Doria in 1539, and, lastly, was occupied without a struggle on the 10th of September 1881, by a force under General Etienne. It is, after Tunis, the most

important town in the Regency, and is governed by a Khalifa in the name of the Bey.

Numerous remains of all these periods are to be found in Susa. In the houses, mosques, and in the surrounding country, antiquities and ancient ruins abound. From the Commandant I learnt that the foundations of the Kasba date from the time of the Phœnicians. Later, the Romans, as also those conquerors who followed them, built over these.

In the *salle d'honneur* are arranged many earthen vessels of Phœnician origin found in tombs, together with other objects of the same period.

From Roman times remain magnificent mosaics, partly buried in the walls; vessels, vases, and broken fragments of marble figures. The Kasba itself, with its many arches, gateways, turrets, and walls inlaid with tiles, dates from the days of the Arabs or Turks.

In nearly every instance the mosaics depict horses, their names being introduced beside them. Evidently, in those days, this was already deemed an important mart for horses bred in the country. The breeding of Barbs appears to date further back than is generally believed, and, in fact, to be older than the Arabian conquest of this land. One sees horses depicted with red head-stalls, decorated on the top with tufts of feathers, and with their near

quarters branded, exactly as seen on the troop horses of to-day.

The outlines of the horses on the mosaics prove that the Barbs of that period were the same in type as those of the present age; also that their careful treatment is not of recent date. Even the same class of flat iron shoes is used now, as then, on the horses' forefeet.

I inquired of the Commandant whether particularly fine horses were reared in this region. He replied in the affirmative, and that in the direction of Kairwan there are nomad tribes whose horses are of noble race.

I climbed the high tower of the Kasba,—now used as a lighthouse,—whence I overlooked the town which lay below me encircled by its protecting wall. Over the country, on all sides, olive woods met my view, and far away on the horizon I could catch a glimpse of villages, looking like white specks. There dwell the ill-disposed tribes who, in 1881, held out against the French. They never ventured on an open engagement, but at night assembled in their hundreds and kept up an incessant fire on the French lines; killing a number of both officers and men. These were avenged by heavy levies and fines on the inhabitants. Poor people, they had only defended their hearths and homes.

My boy guide followed me through the streets,

where drowsy lazy Moors crouched, half asleep in their shops, waiting for purchasers. The loveliest small boys and girls were lying about in the streets, much to the obstruction of traffic, here conducted by means of small donkeys and large mules.

Stepping into a little Moorish coffee-house, I found, to my astonishment, that the interior resembled in construction an old Byzantine basilica, its dome being supported on arches and pillars. The whole was white-washed, but well preserved. The coffee-house was named "el Kaunat el Kubba," which may be translated Church Café.¹ Nothing could be more artistic than the cooking utensils, mats, and pottery scattered here and there about this very old building.

At five o'clock it was dark. The stream of wayfarers diminished, and the streets were deserted and empty. I dined at the Hotel de France on the seashore, not far from the esplanade, and sat after dinner reading my papers, till I heard a frightful noise outside, and, peering out, saw a crowd of Arabs gathered behind an unfurled banner. They shouted and yelled in measured time. One of them said a few words which all the others repeated. I was told that they were praying to Allah for rain. They halted a few paces from a kubba, called Bab el Bahr,

¹ More accurately the coffee-house of the dome.—Translator's Note.

and the procession dispersed, the banner being taken into the kubba.

I went for a turn on the seashore by the road which leads along the walls to Bab el Jedir. The sun was melting hot. Against the walls were built a number of mud huts and sheds, in which, amongst carriages and carts, horses and donkeys were stabled.

Outside were piles of pottery, vessels of all shapes and sizes, from the largest receptacles for wine or water—reminding one of those found belonging to the Roman age—to cups and jars of spiral or other strange forms, such as I have seen in the museum at Carthage.

This clay ware is brought from Nebel, where, since very ancient times, there has been a manufactory that produces pottery the same to-day as it was a thousand years ago.

The gateway is deep, and has, as have most gates in this country, recesses with seats on both sides, always filled by idlers and beggars. Indeed, it is quite an Eldorado for the blind, halt, and maimed, as well as for many who have nothing the matter with them. The whole day they sit there and stretch out their hands for alms.

I placed myself near the corner stone of the gate, where the shade was cool and pleasant; through the dark archway I could see the sun blazing on the shore, and the road looking like a bright streak of



TWO KHRUMI WOMEN.


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light, and, beyond it, the harbour and the beautiful blue sea.

In the space of half an hour, at least a hundred little donkeys passed me, laden with vessels of water or bundles of straw, with often a man or boy perched behind the load. A solitary rider also passed, his small but wiry horse going at an amble. Along the seashore came, picking their way, a herd of goats, most of them wearing small bells that rang incessantly. The herd settled in the corner outside the gates between the towers and the town wall. Then came unveiled Bedouin women, dark-skinned almost as negresses, but with very fine features. Then other veiled Arab women with black masks that covered their faces. A number of boys followed these, all good-looking and black-eyed. One held out his hand ; they are accustomed to European good-nature, and a copper is a foretaste of Paradise to an Arab boy.

Lastly passed a strange couple. On an ordinary Arab saddle a veiled woman rode astride, and behind her, on her horse, a little boy ; he held the reins in one hand, and a parasol in the other.

Towards evening it grew cooler. Amongst the shipping lay the *Ville d'Oran*, which next morning was to take me south. It was lit up with numbers of lanterns, and the town was illuminated and hung everywhere with flags, in honour of the Russian



fleet, which that day was to enter Toulon. Festival was kept, not only all over France, but also in her colonies. Illustrated editions of French newspapers, with coloured pictures of Russian and French admirals and of the ships of both countries, were displayed on the walls of all cafés, tobacco shops, taverns and drinking booths in Susa.

The light on the Kasba had been lit. The moon rose over the town, and lanterns gleamed along the seashore and the promenade. The irregular line of the wall and the Kasba tower showed dark against the heavens. Mingling with the ripple of the water against the quay, I heard the Marseillaise played, followed by cheers, and on the terraces and balconies appeared dark figures, enjoying the cool air and the music.

CHAPTER III

FROM SFAX TO GABÉS

AT 9 a.m. on the morning of the 14th October, the *Ville d'Oran* weighed anchor and left the roadstead of Susa in brilliant weather for Monastir.

Monastir, or Mistir, has a population of nine thousand inhabitants, of whom one thousand are Europeans. It was originally a Carthaginian town; later, the "Ruspina" of the Romans. It is now surrounded by battlemented walls interspersed with towers and pierced by five gates. Ornamented with coloured tiles, the minarets of several mosques rise here and there above the houses.

I crossed the town from the south to the opposite side. Here I found an immense cemetery; grave upon grave grouped about kubbas. In the very midst of the cemetery is a cistern, which must supply remarkably good water!

Following along the walls of the town I soon reached the beach, where before me lay three small islands—Jezirel el Hammam (Pigeon Island), Jezirel Sid Abd el Fairt el R'dani (so called after a Mara-

bout whose kubba crowns its summit), and the third island named Jezirel el Austan (Central Island).

Still following the walls, I passed Moorish women and children washing clothes on the shore. A number of boats were lying in the shallow water under the lea of the islands.

At ten o'clock I was again on board, and at eleven we started, steering for Mehdia, some thirty-six miles farther south.

On the way we passed Cape Diauros, the site of ancient Thapsus. It was a Carthaginian colony where fought Cæsar Scipio and Cato. Numerous ruins recall the old times.

In Mehdia harbour we anchored about three o'clock. Mehdia was once a very important town; now it has only some ten thousand inhabitants. The Sicilians besieged it in 1147; the Arabs in 1160; the Duke of Bourbon in 1390; and Charles V. in 1557. The knights of Malta took part in this last assault, and the grave of one of these knights is still shown.

Some Europeans carry on a trade here in oil, dried fruits, sponges, coral, and sardines. In the months of May and June there are often a couple of hundred boats lying off the shore fishing for sardines, and generally making good hauls. In one night a single boat may take even as much as from four to six hundredweight of fish.

Large vessels do not follow the coast from

Mehdia to Sfax, but make a long circuit round the island of Kirkennah, the water along the coast being shallow. Along this stretch of sea have been placed light-buoys to mark the course. These buoys are filled with compressed oil, and burn incessantly day and night. They are constructed to burn three months, but are inspected monthly.


Early in the morning of the 15th October we cast anchor about two miles outside Sfax, of which the white walls glistened in the morning sun. A steam tug took us ashore. The ebb and flow of the tide here is very strong, with a possible rise and fall of as much as eight feet, which accounts for the flatness of the beach.

The only ship in the roadstead was the *Fæderlandet* from Bergen, lying - to and discharging timber.

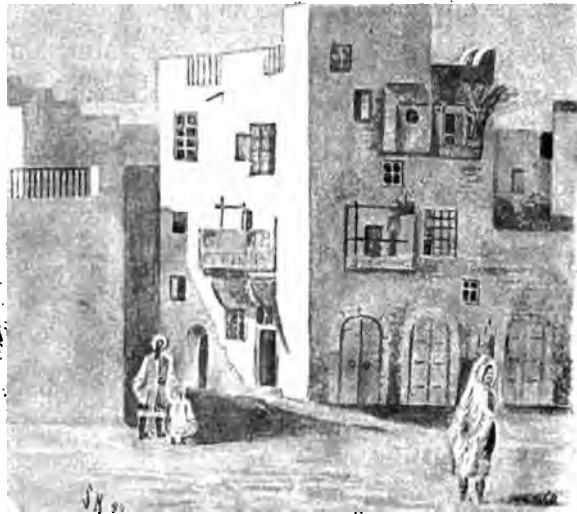
Sfax was taken on the 16th July 1881 by a force under Admiral Garnault, after a serious bombardment which laid waste a great part of the ramparts and the town.

The walls enclosing the European quarter, which faces the sea, have been pulled down lately, and here the French have established themselves. To the rear lies the Arab town, still surrounded by its walls and towers.

On landing I met the Vice-Consul for Sweden and Norway, Olaf Henriksen, a young man who in



the course of a few years has made for himself a good position as partner in the large, and perhaps sole, firm of timber traders in the place. His



AT SFAX.

(From a painting by Mrs. Henriksen.)

office and warehouses are on the quay. Olsen, his co-partner, is likewise a Northerner. Henriksen is agent for the United Shipping Co., but it is seldom that Danish vessels touch here.

After a stroll through the town, Mr. Henriksen


led me to his home and introduced me to his wife, a Norwegian lady from Christiania. I spent a comfortable and most enjoyable day in their house, which is outside the town and commands a view of the harbour.

Mrs. Henriksen is a very fair artist. On the walls hung sketches of her northern home and of Sfax, painted by herself and showing considerable talent. The tombs of Marabouts, the cemeteries outside the walls, and the Arab tents in the vicinity were the subjects that pleased me most. She most amiably promised to be my collaborator, by allowing me to make use of a couple of her sketches for my book.

Sfax is a large town, with about fifty thousand inhabitants, of whom the eighth part are Europeans. A considerable trade is carried on in sponges, oil, and esparto grass, this last being worked by a Franco-Anglo-Tunisian Company; in addition to these, there is a trade in fruit and vegetables, more especially cucumbers, called in Arabic "Sfakus," from which, no doubt, arises the name of the town.

In the neighbourhood are many villas and gardens, where the townsfolk take refuge in the hot season, but beyond these is the sandy desert.

In ancient days the Romans had here a large city, of which many traces are found. In the



covered streets I saw arches, which by their capitals and columns were of Roman origin, and heard of old Roman graves and foundations being frequently discovered.

Sfax is a garrison, and amongst the soldiers is a fine body of Spahis, but at the time of my visit many were absent at the manœuvres.

During the night we steamed in four hours from the roadstead of Sfax to Gabés.

A golden strand : in the background some white houses, and to the right a palm grove. Such is the view of Gabés from the sea.

The landing-place was only a short distance from the European quarter. I called on the commanding officer, Colonel Gousset of the Spahis, to whom the Regency at Tunis had recommended me, directing that he should assist me by word and deed in my journey to the cave dwellers (troglydites) of the southern mountains.

It was the hour of muster, and the Colonel introduced me to many of the officers, one of whom, Captain Montague of the General's staff, lent me his horse, and a Spahi was told off as my guide.

“When one wanders towards the Syrtes and ‘Leptis Magna,’ one finds in the midst of Afric’s sands a town called Tacape ; the soil there is much cultivated and marvellously fruitful. The town extends in all directions to about three thousand


paces. Here is found a fountain with an abundant supply of water, which is only used at stated times; and here grows a high palm, and beneath that palm an olive, and under that a fig tree. Under the fig tree grows a pomegranate, and beneath that again a vine. Moreover, beneath these last are sown, first oats, then vegetables or grass, all in the same year. Yes, thus they grow them, each sheltered by the other."

Thus wrote Pliny of the oasis near Gabés over eighteen hundred years ago, and this description can be applied in the main at the present day.

Of this town, created by the Carthaginians, colonised by the Romans, and later the seat of an archbishopric, and which stood nearer the ocean than the existing villages, there remain now only some crumbled ruins on the hills near Sid Bu'l Baba's Zauia, now difficult even to trace.

Remains of cisterns can be seen, built with the imperishable cement of which the Romans alone understood the preparation. But the stones have long since been removed to Jara, Menzel, and Shenini, villages of the oasis, where are still to be found, in the wretched native buildings, carved capitals and bas-reliefs, side by side with sun-dried bricks and uncut stones.

But it is long since this old town vanished. The Arab geographers in the eleventh and twelfth



centuries, as also Leo Africanus in the sixteenth century, mention Gabés as a large town surrounded by walls and deep trenches, which latter could be flooded with water. They tell us of a great fortress there, and that the town had a large population and



TOWER IN THE VILLAGE OF MENZEL.

extensive suburbs. Then the Mohammedan conquerors laid their iron hand over the country, and the inhabitants were dispersed and gathered in the villages Jara and Menzel, each now containing some four thousand inhabitants. Both villages were situated near the river and close to the market-place, and were continually fighting amongst themselves for

the possession of these ; whilst other villages, of which Shenini is the largest, concealed themselves amidst their palm groves.



JEWESSES AT MENZEL.

To keep these rival villages in subjection, the Turks erected, just between them, a fort --Borj Jedia (the new fort). It was blown up by French marines on the 21st July 1881,

when they assaulted, stormed, and seized the villages.

Later there arose by the seashore, huts, taverns, and eating-houses, and, after the first occupation, these formed a place of resort for all sorts of adventurers, and was therefore wittily named "Coquinville" by the soldiers. Out of this has grown quite a little town, known as the Port of Gabés. This is occupied by the European colony, consisting of from one to two thousand persons of various Mediterranean origins. The residence of General Allegro, the Bey's governor of El Arad, the most southern district of Tunisia, was originally the only building on the spot, and here he still resides; but now in the long streets there are commandants' houses, officers' quarters, the Hotel de l'Oasis, and a large number of offices of all descriptions. Behind the town to the south, lie the barracks for the garrison of Spahis and infantry. In former days the troops were quartered farther inland, on a height near the Gabés River, as the water was better; but now drinking-water has been brought to the town from a near-lying oasis.

Wad Gabés, or the Gabés River, has its source about a score of miles inland, and flows over its broad bed, through saline and lime-charged soil, down to the oasis, wherefore the water contains much magnesia, and is in consequence most unwhole-

some, and has caused the death of many a young colonist and soldier. It is said that the age of the eldest soldier buried in the churchyard was but five-and-twenty.

In old times the water must naturally have been as unhealthy as now, but the Romans, those masters of colonisation, used, on that account, rain water collected in cisterns. Remains of such tanks are found everywhere in the south.

The Arab rider, given me as guide, and I rode along the northern bank of the river so as to cross the Gabés oasis from the sea towards the interior.

It was the most enjoyable excursion I can remember ever having made.

The sea roared behind the sand cliffs, while the horses panted through the deep sand. From behind the cliffs appeared the tops of palm trees, and presently we were in the shade.

The light gleamed through the palm leaves on lemon, orange, and pomegranate trees, and on the trailing vines, trained up to the beloved sun, and stretched from tree to tree in graceful festoons.

In the open spaces between the palms lay the orchards, where grew all kinds of fruit trees—peaches, apples, pears, plums, apricots, figs, olives, and many others.

The air was pregnant with the scent from the

trees and plants. Beneath the shade of the thick foliage overhead spread the most beautiful green sward, intersected by flowing rivulets of water and small canals, dammed by means of dykes and low banks, as in our own land irrigation.



ON THE OASIS OF GABÈS.

By small paths and roads we wandered on, following the turns of the canals, riding sometimes on a narrow track between two banks, and if we then met Arabs on their little overladen mules it was a squeeze to pass by them.

There was silence amongst the trees. Only now and then, when we drew near to tents, or some straw



hut concealed amidst the foliage, could we hear voices and the barking of dogs. Women and children peeped at us through the branches, and we saw men in scanty clothing working with hoes in their gardens, or women weeding the beds and gathering henna in baskets.

Birds flew from branch to branch, or across the open spaces. Wood pigeons called, and turtle-doves cooed, whilst the chaffinch fluttered about on the tops of the almond trees, and in the distance the sound of a shot proclaimed that a sportsman in a clearing on the borders of the oasis had fired at hare, quail, or partridge. On the extreme border, by the sea, was the tomb of a Marabout, built from the ancient remains of the town of olden days, blended with new materials. The columns supporting the entrance were of new rough stone, with handsome carved capitals.

We emerged on the barren plain, and saw in the far distance, on rising ground, other palm groves, but hurried back again into the fascinating wood, till, by paths and over small stone bridges, beneath which streams rippled sheltered by the arching palms, we came to a broader road between high dykes. There it was difficult to advance, as some artillerymen with baggage carts drawn by mules had stuck fast in the mud, the waggons being overladen with stone.

The way now turned towards the river. As we left the palm grove by the miry road to cross the bridge, the grey walls of a village lay before us on the opposite side. The river bank was crowded with women and children washing; clothes were hanging to dry on the bushes, whilst shortly-kilted



WASHERWOMEN AT THE JARA BRIDGE.

figures waded into the water, or sat on the stones by the river side beating clothes with flat boards. Most of them pretended not to see us, some turned their backs, and a very few stole roguish glances at us.

The whole scene was worthy of the brush of a good artist. The grey-yellow water, the yellow shore and green wood under the deep blue sky, and

against this background the many-coloured figures of women and children. All were in constant movement and chattering loudly.

We rode through the gate. The village consists of narrow streets and lanes of wretched low houses. The air was oppressively hot, and dirt was everywhere. My guide rode in front, pushing people aside with loud exclamations. They submitted quietly to being hustled; "Kith to kin is least kind." Then, again crossing the river, we rode through the oasis to other villages and as far as the poor huts of Shenini, then turned again down to the stream, which here ran between high banks, and after visiting, just at nightfall, some encampments close by, we hastened on our way back to Gabés.

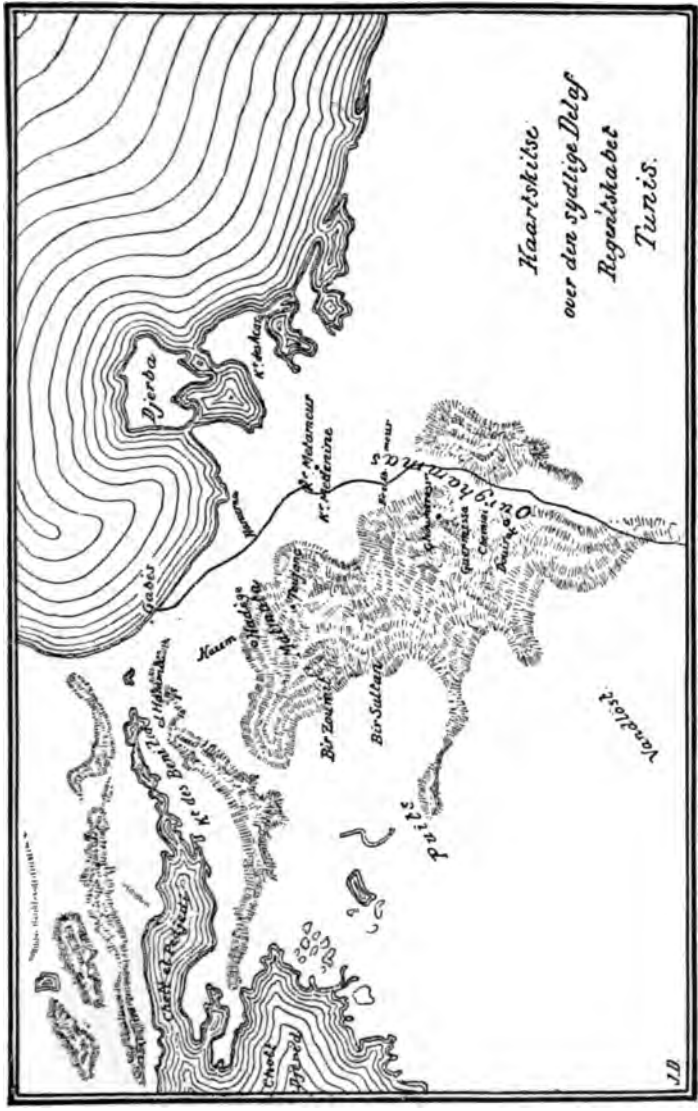
CHAPTER IV

FROM GABÉS TO THE MATMATA MOUNTAINS

CROUCHED in a wretched hut, which seemed to me then the perfection of comfort, I sat writing by the light of a flickering candle at the village of Zaraua, on the top of a mountain of the Matmata range, south of Gabés.

Outside I could hear my horse munching, as he stood, his well-earned barley; farther away dogs were barking. The moon sent her rays through my doorway; and now and then came to my ear the sound of human voices, but this soon ceased as the sun had long since set; for in these regions all retire to rest early so as to rise at daybreak.

The two previous days had sped as in a fairy tale. As I opened my window at the Hotel de l'Oasis at 4.30 a.m. on the 17th October, it was still half-dark, but I could distinguish a little way down the street an Arab horse, saddled, and by its side a white bundle lying on the footway. It was Hamed, the Arab horseman, whom the *bureau de renseignement* had placed at my disposal, and who was now waiting for five o'clock, the hour fixed for



MAP OF SOUTHERN TUNISIA.

our start. A little later arrived my brown steed, supplied by the Spahi regiment.

My small travelling kit, photographic apparatus, and breakfast were packed on Hamed's horse. The revolver I slung on my own saddle, little realising that the same afternoon I should fire it on a festive occasion ; and we started, wending our way amongst the showy, newly-built European houses.

Outside the town, the country is somewhat flat ; we followed the road. To our right, towards the north, was Gabés' winding river, but invisible to us, as it lies low. On the other side, the palm groves showed us a dark forest. The villages by the river stood out clearly against this dark background, and the rising sun shone on the white kubba to our left of Sid Bu'l Baba.

On the road we met little groups of natives driving camels and tiny donkeys, all laden with esparto straw. Their houses were many a mile away over the blue mountains, which were dimly distinguishable on the horizon, for they came from Hadeij, our destination, to sell this, about the only product in which they can deal during the hot summer season.

Now and again we also met small caravans of donkeys carrying light loads of dry wood.

After a quick trot, that warmed us at this early chilly hour, we turned to the left in a southerly

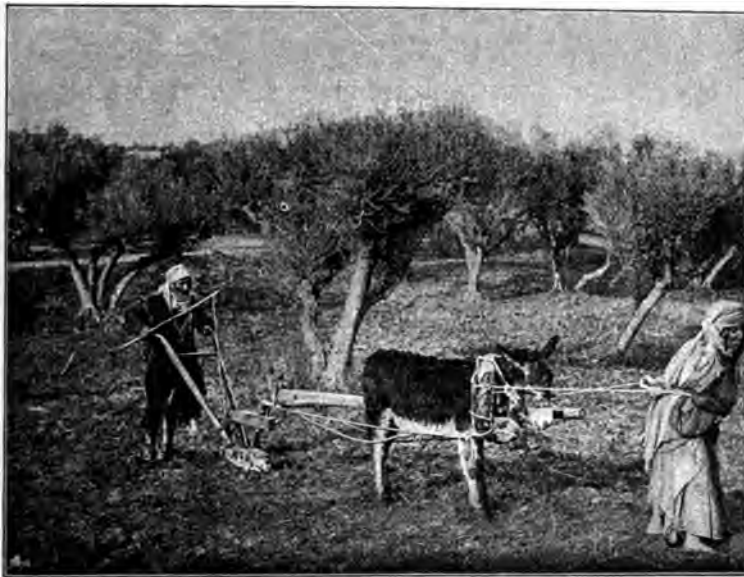
direction, taking a path that wound along slightly undulating ground. A brace of partridges rose, and we heard the quail calling, and saw young larks running on the barren ground. On a hill to the north-west we spied the camp of Ras el Wad, erected by General Boulanger in his day. Once and again we indulged in a quick gallop, but only in short stretches, when the paths were not muddy or too winding.

Here and there stood a parched olive tree or date palm, on spots where, in the wet season—if it ever come—a little water would reach them. We were overtaken by a horseman closely enveloped in a white burnous, the hood drawn over his head and sticking up in the air in a peak. It was "Amar" from Hadeij on his slight but wiry pony. He was acquainted with Hamed, so wished to join us. His hair, beard and eyes were black, his expression good-natured, with an open brow, and his teeth milk white.

After two hours' ride, during which we only once met any people, we reached the oasis of El Hamdu; near by roamed some miserable cattle, grazing under the care of an old man; with these were also a couple of goats.

On the border of the oasis we watered our horses at a fountain surrounded by palms. Women peeped shyly at us over the walls of the only stone building of the village that we could make out.

Riding on, we passed several tombs of Marabouts. On our left, the palms of the oasis seemed drawn up in a long line, and smoke could be perceived rising heavenwards from huts and tents beneath the trees. From an encampment on the edge of the oasis the dogs rushed out barking,



PLOUGHING - GABÉS.

the inhabitants standing stiffly, like statues, and staring at us.

Along a shallow, stony, river bed—rough ground for the horses—we pursued our way towards our destination in the hills, whilst the sun burnt so fiercely that our senses were dulled.

After a couple more hours, we again met laden

camels, and with them some travellers on foot, one without a burnous or head-covering, and clothed only in a shirt confined at the waist by a strap. He wore his hair in a tuft on the nape of his neck, and carried in his hand a banner on a pole. Amar told me he was a Marabout from one of the villages near Gabés.

Of Marabouts there is no lack. This one was very poor, and was returning from the mountains, where he had been begging for money which he imagined was due to him. The banner he carried that everyone might see that a holy man was coming.

I gave him a few coppers, and the young fellow kissed my hand, and wished me good luck on my journey. It is not everyone who is wished good luck on their travels by a Marabout. I bought my blessing cheap.

We now rode some distance amongst small hills, which are scattered in the foreground of the mountains like islands on a coast-line. On some eminences were heaps of stones.

“Those were there before our time,” said Amar.

In places where the ground was more or less level it was slightly scratched round about the dry bushes. This is the arable land, that is to say, it would be cultivated if rain fell.


We halted beneath some bushes to eat our break-

fast. The bread, butter, and cheese we could all enjoy, but I alone the wine and meat. A pomegranate supplied our dessert.

Whilst we sat there, five women in blue dresses came by, preceded by an old man driving half a score of camels. The women wore bracelets and anklets. They glanced furtively at us and trudged past. A negress only, who lagged behind, tried to attract our attention. She was evidently not accustomed to be taken notice of.

Travelling was now easy, the track leading upwards over smooth calcareous ground. In little watercourses, now dry, were planted clumps of palm and olive trees, the soil being banked about them to form dams. On an adjoining slope were numbers of small caves, inhabited only in harvest time, when watch is kept over the crops.

We ascended higher and higher amongst the mountains, until suddenly, as I turned in my saddle, I saw the Mediterranean like a blue streak in the distance. We were at that moment at the highest point we were to reach that day. At a distance here and there dogs appeared, barking at us, and occasionally in their vicinity white figures and rising smoke. Hamed said that these people were cave dwellers, but were only a small tribe. A little later we were to arrive at quite a subterranean town.




I halted abruptly on seeing below me a valley with, comparatively speaking, many trees. On the farther side rose a long range of high mountains. The valley itself was exactly like a large, old sand or clay ditch, with sloping sides, pierced by a great number of neglected and long-disused shafts, but planted with trees—palms, olives, and figs.

“Is that Hadeij?” I asked. Hamed nodded, and I pulled up to take a photograph.

It was then exactly two o'clock, and we continued on our way, walking for a time beside our horses. Just as we were about to remount, a white sheep-dog bounded out of a hole we had not noticed; it bayed at us in a most dismal fashion, and from the nearest points of vantage its companions joined in chorus.

I rode up to look at the dogs, and caught sight of a deep pit with perpendicular sides that had been dug in the ground from the top of the ascent. Down at the bottom a camel stood resting. Round a hearth were household chattels and large bins made of rushes, containing barley, and amongst these a few fowls. Some women and children looked up on hearing the tramp of my horse, stared at me for a moment, and then fled into recesses in the walls.

Hamed now suggested that I should not remain standing there, and I followed his good advice.



A path had been dug into the hillside, and terminated in a large door or gate. This evidently led to a long underground passage, and ended in the square yard, open to the air, which I had just seen, and whence are entered the excavated rooms or caves, used as dwelling-places, stores, and stables.

On the horizon the straight stems of palms stood out sharply against the mountains. In the foreground were olive trees, and, mingled with them, a few palms; beneath one of these was gathered a group of men, amongst whom, Hamed said, was the great Khalifa. I therefore drew rein. An old greybeard rose and strode forward, offering his hand and bidding me welcome, the other men following his example. They were fine specimens of humanity, with regular features, black eyes, and straight noses—one saw at once that they were not of the ordinary Arab type.

From an open space, or square, several passages led into the hills, affording admission to the cave dwellers' abodes, which are all of similar construction to that already mentioned. I was allotted quarters in one of the caves, and stepped from the outer air into the hill through a wooden gate on heavy hinges, and proceeded through a long passage, cut in the rocks, a little over a man's height. On either side were excavated large stalls for horses, the covered way ending in an open

square court with perpendicular walls some thirty feet high and about the same in width. From this court one steps into symmetrical caves with vaulted roofs.

In the underground guest-chamber I stretched myself comfortably on a couch covered with handsome carpets from Kairwan. A table and some chairs completed the furniture of this room, specially set apart for European guests. The Khalifa is rich, very rich, so that he can permit himself this luxury, though it is but seldom that he has a European visitor. He told me with pride that General Boulanger had in his time been his guest.

After my long ride I required rest; the doors in the yard were therefore closed, so that it was quite dark in my room. The flies did not worry me, and I had quite a refreshing sleep until I was awakened by the neighing of the horses in the passages. A little later the light streamed in through my door; a figure stepped in, and for a moment it was again dark whilst the newcomer passed through the doorway.

It was the Khalifa; behind him came Hamed and several other persons, sons or people of the house.

I expressed my pleasure at being the guest of so hospitable a man, and the Khalifa responded with compliments. Coffee was served, and the party



grouped themselves about me on the floor, with the exception of the Khalifa who seated himself by me on the divan, and conversation flowed easily with the help of Hamed.

The contents of my saddle-bags, the photographic apparatus, and especially an entomological syringe, underwent careful investigation.

But I could not afford to sit and idle the time away, so went out to look about me. Through Hamed I expressed my desire to examine the interior of a dwelling, and was promised that I should see everything; but several times we passed the square openings on the tops of the hills, as also the entrances to houses, without anyone making a sign to us to enter.

At last we arrived at a house into which I was invited. On the whole it much resembled that from which we came, and was inhabited by a Jew and a poor Berber family.

The yard was dirty; cooking utensils lay



JEWISH FAMILY IN A CAVE DWELLING
IN HADEIJ.

scattered about, intermingled with a few rush corn-bins and some goats and poultry.

A woman, old, wrinkled, and tattooed, and both hideous and dirty, was brought forward for me to see. It was, of course, the Jew's wife. His fellow-lodgers, the Berbers, I did not see; but as I stepped into the dwelling, a vision of blue skirts and bare legs vanished into the side caves.

Already I began to feel impatient and to fear that I was being made a fool of and should never see, as I longed to do, where and how the Berbers lived. Fortunately I had later a splendid opportunity of studying the whole subject.

Accompanied by two sons of the Khalifa and some other persons I walked round the valley and up the slopes, whence I could peer down into the caves at the bottom of the valley, and could see women going through the entrances to their dwellings, to the palm and olive trees, followed by dogs and inquisitive children.

My camera I had with me, and used it frequently.

As the sunset hour approached, the heat relaxed, and one breathed with ease.

In a great open square, beautified with palms, at least fifty young men and boys were running from side to side. They had cast aside the burnous, and wore only red caps and shirts, which fluttered as



they ran. With long sticks, bent at one end, they struck at a soft ball which flew to and fro, sometimes in the air, sometimes on the ground.

It was beautiful to watch these bold muscular figures, so straight and supple, with their light brown skins, regular features and bright eyes,



CAVES IN MATMATA.

reminding me that thus must the Greek and Roman boys have played on the plains beneath their blue mountains.

The game was kept up without a pause, until the sun sank suddenly behind the mountains, and it was no longer possible to see, for twilight is unknown in these regions.

I returned to my cave, lit my candle, smoked cigarettes and waited until my dinner should be served.

Five figures appeared, each carrying a dish which was placed on a table before me, and a pitcher of water was deposited beside me. The



A CAVE DWELLING, MATMATA.

meal consisted of soup with lumps of meat highly peppered, a stew of chicken, and an enormous dish of kus-kus, made of barley meal with goat's flesh, and, finally, honey and bread; this last was of barley meal, dry but well flavoured.

A knife I had with me; but a spoon, that treasure to a European in these regions, was pro-

vided. Hamed stood by my side, filled my glass whenever it was empty, and served the dinner. On one side sat Mansur, the Khalifa's third son, as ordained by their customs and usages. I requested him to join me at dinner. With a graceful motion of his hand to his breast, he bowed his head and begged me to excuse him.

Hamed informed me that honoured guests always dine alone.

On the floor, somewhat aside, sat a row of white figures all staring at me whilst I ate.

A great silence reigned.

This procedure rather disturbed me at first, but one soon gets accustomed to this sort of thing.

Hamed constantly pressed me to eat. I thought it could be of no consequence to him; but discovered later that he was prompted by delicacy of feeling. For when I had concluded my meal, it was his turn, with Mansur and others, to eat the remains. All the scraps of meat, bones, etc. left were then put back into the dishes, and these were carried into the adjoining room where the rest of the men gathered round them; but before doing so, they poured water in a basin and moistened their lips and fingers.

I peeped in on them, and was greeted by the sound of noisy mastication.

Their shoes had been left beyond the edge of

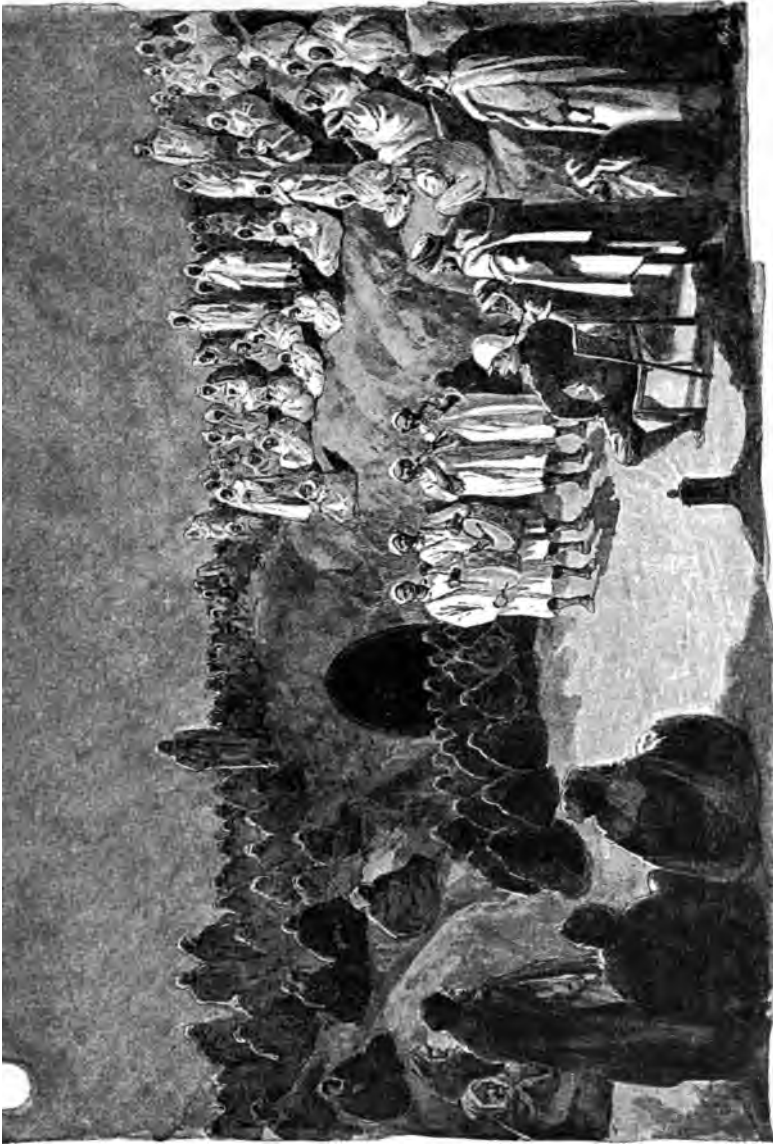
the rush mat on which they were seated. Fingers were used in place of spoons or forks.

At last they were satisfied. The remnants were again collected in a dish, and it was then probably the turn of the boys and negroes, and, after them, of the dogs; but the end I did not see.

After enjoying coffee I went out into the court where the stars twinkled overhead. In the distance I heard a strange humming noise, and the sound as of far-off explosions. After a little while the Khalifa arrived to invite me to be present at the first day's fête held to celebrate his son Mohammed's wedding to a second wife, and I then understood that the sounds I had heard had been the hum of many voices and of gunshots.

The moon rose in the vault of heaven, and disclosed in front of me, and on either side of the slopes, forms wrapped each in his burnous, squatting side by side. From above, the moonlight shone on the white crowd, giving them the appearance of spectres. The group opposite looked as though moulded half in black, and half in dazzling white.

Up above and to the left were depicted against the light a crowd of black, pointed figures. These were men of the Matmata mountains; they sat silent, watching apparently the dark corner in front of me, where no light penetrated, as the moon rose high on her course.



THE BRIDAL FESTIVITIES.
(From a sketch by Knud Gamborg.)

100

The Khalifa ordered chairs to be brought. On these we seated ourselves, Hamed standing behind us, and bending forward to each of us in turn, like a mechanical contrivance through which we carried on our conversation.

Groups of men sat behind and beside us; they continued arriving until the square was full to where the Matmata men sat on the banks.

Right in front, on the level ground, I distinguished a dark compact mass. These were the women, closely enveloped in their sombre garments; they were seated by the entrance to the caves.

A lantern was now lit and placed on the ground near my feet. At first its light confused me, but without it I could not have seen what took place.

One of the Khalifa's horsemen named Belkassim, a relative and an elderly man, was deputed to maintain order, and at once cleared a little space between us and the women. He then led forward two negroes, who performed a dance to the sound of a drum and a clarionet. They marched towards us side by side, then retired backwards, then again forward and back. This was repeated some half-dozen times, with a swinging movement from the hips. Every time they approached us, they waved the drum and the clarionet over our heads, then turned towards the women before stepping backwards

FROM GASES TO THE ALPINE MOUNTAINS 3


The Khalifa's horsemen came to the front of us, these we sawed through. *Emir* stood and looked at us, and being covered to the neck in his turban, a mechanical movement of the eye was confined on our conversation.

Groups of men set out on horseback, they continued arriving until the square was full of where the *Mahat* had set up the benches.

Right in front of the outer ground I distinguished a dark compact mass. These were the women, closely enveloped in their semi-transparent garments; they were seated by the entrance to the caves.

A lantern was now lit and placed on the ground near my feet. At first its light confused me, but without it I could not have seen what took place.

One of the Khalifa's horsemen named Belkassim, a relative and an elderly man, was deputed to maintain order, and at once cleared a little space between us and the women. He then led forward two negroes, who performed a dance to the sound of a drum and a clarinet. They marched towards us side by side, then retired backwards, then again forward and back. This was repeated some half dozen times, with a swinging movement from the hips. Every time they approached us, they waved the drum and the clarinet over our heads, then turned towards the women before stepping backwards



again. The Khalifa raised his hand. The negroes bent their heads backwards that he might place a coin on the forehead of each. I followed his example; with the result that they continued their parade and deafening noise of slow, harsh, wheezy, jerky music.

Suddenly it increased in pace, and both negroes whirled violently round. The time then became slower, the parade recommenced, and my sense of hearing was again endangered each time the loud drum was swung over my head.

The din ceased abruptly, and from the rows of women came a strange clucking sound as of the hurried calling of fowls, "Lu, lu, lu, lu, lu, lu." This was a sign of approval. At the same moment a gun was fired. The flash lit up the rows of women. The shots were repeated again and again. It was the bridegroom's nearest friends firing a salute in his honour. The women responded with the "Yu, yu" cry, the negro musicians joined, and more shots followed.

Then it struck me that I also would join in the festive demonstration, so I told Hamed to bring me my revolver, and I fired the six chambers into the air, one after the other.

The women at once broke into the cry of joy. Drums and clarionets joined in.

"I am much gratified," I said to the Khalifa,

“that you have introduced me to the circle of your people. Here is my hand in token of my gratitude. May Allah protect you and yours.”

“Thanks for your good wishes,” he replied. “You come from a strange and distant land. You are my friend and my brother, one for whom I am responsible so long as you remain in the Matmata mountains. You are free to travel anywhere you please; no one will injure you.”

I said, “When I came I knew you would treat me as you would a brother; I was told so by the Khalifa of Gabés; but I was not aware that you had authority over all the tribes of the Matmata. But now I know it. I arrived with this weapon by my side, as you may have seen it hung by my saddle when you received me. Now I realise that it is superfluous, and that I shall have no need of it so long as I am amongst your people. As a sign, therefore, of my sincerity, and as a token of my respect for and gratitude to yourself, my brother, I present you with my weapon. But before I place it in your hands, permit me to salute with it, after the manner of your countrymen, as an expression of the pleasure I derive at being in your company during the celebration of these festivities.”

Retiring outside the circle of spectators, I again fired the six chambers of my revolver.

Then arose from the women a high-pitched and long-drawn "Yu, yu, yu," followed by some musket shots.

Bowing to the Khalifa I presented him with the revolver. He gave me his hand, bringing it afterwards to his lips. This was the seal of our friendship.

"Would you like the women to sing for you, or would you prefer men-singers?" asked the Khalifa.

"As you will, brother; I do not wish to interrupt your fête; let it go on as arranged before my arrival."

However, the old man insisted on my deciding which I preferred, so I could not deny that I was inclined to hear the women sing.

They sat before me; I could not distinguish their features. Amongst them, I was told, sat the first wife of the bridegroom Mohammed—sharing in the universal rejoicings.

According to report, she is comparatively young and still pretty, and who knows but that her heart aches at the thought that soon she must share her husband with a younger rival—or perhaps it may seem to her quite natural, and she congratulates herself on the prospect of having someone to help in her work, which is not of the lightest.

The Khalifa laid his hand on my shoulder to

warn me that the performance was about to begin.

In somewhat drawing measure, a sweet female voice improvised a solo, the chorus being taken up by the surrounding women, interrupted now and again by the shrill "Yu, yu."

Hamed told me it was of myself they sang.

"This morning he came with weapons and followers—perhaps straight from Paris. The pistol hung on his saddle; his horse was red. The proudest charger you could see. He sat straight as a palm on his horse, right over the steep hillside. Yu, yu, yu.

"Now he sits with us as a brother. Yes, like the Bey himself, by the side of Sid Fatushe, our old Khalifa. He has given him his pistol, a costly gift, of greater value than even the best camel. Yu, yu, yu.

"If he will be our friend and remain with us, we will find him a wife. Fatima awaits him—of the beautiful eyes, her nails stained with henna; on her hands are golden bracelets, and anklets on her feet.

"Yu, yu, yu."

There was a great deal more sung about me which I am too modest to repeat.

The women sang for about an hour, improvising my praises, giving honour to the Khalifa in flatter-

ing phrases, and not omitting my friend and guide, Hamed and his horse.

At last the song ceased, and I thanked the Khalifa and begged him to believe in my sincere appreciation.

Next stepped forward a mulatto. Amongst the Arabs these play the part of the jesters of the Middle Ages. Accompanied by the drum and the shrill notes of the clarionet, he delivered a lampoon in verse, directed against the women, since they had not sung in praise of him whom they knew, but, forsooth, had extolled the stranger whom they saw for the first time.

He abused them in language far from decorous, and reaped applause in half-stifled laughter from the men, who spent the whole evening on the self-same spot where they had originally settled; only now and then did one of them rise to wrap his burnous better about him; his figure standing out sharply against the vault of heaven above the edge of the bank.

There were many children and half-grown lads present. At the commencement they were rather noisy, but were scolded by Belkassim, or the Khalifa, and were kicked aside. Later, several fell asleep enveloped in their burnouses and leaning against the elder men.

When the negro singer had finished his song

it was again the women's turn, and they paid him off for having ventured to imagine that they might have sung in praise of him, a wretched creature, who did not even possess a decent burnous.

The drum and clarionet again did their duty ; after which the negro took up his defence. They were not to suppose that he was poverty-stricken ; and he was the boldest rider amongst the Matmata (the Khalifa told me the man had never mounted a horse). When he appeared in flowing burnous, the hood thrown back as he sang the war song, he rivalled the Khalifa himself when marching to battle.

He and the women continued squabbling in this fashion for some time. No doubt the women carried the day, for the negro was finally shoved back upon the spectators, and hustled by them from one group to another, until at last he vanished in the darkness.

Two men then performed a stick dance to the tripping time of drum and clarionet, and towards the end the women joined in a song with a chorus. They prayed Allah for rain and a good harvest. Then sang of Mena, the married woman who took to herself a lover and paid for her indiscretion with her life ; of the hunter who bewitched a lion with his flute, thus saving the life of a little girl ; of love ; of charming cavaliers ; of the Khalifa ; and, finally, of myself ; but, strangely enough, not of the

bridegroom, so far as I could gather, and very slightly of the bride.

The wedding feast was to last eight days. On the last the bride would be brought home. During these eight days Mohammed, the bridegroom, was not to show himself in either his own or his father's house. He must remain concealed amongst his friends, and not attend openly at the rejoicings, though he was probably present incognito.

At last the Khalifa rose and bade me good-night. The men dispersed and went their ways homewards, the women following.

I expressed a wish to leave next morning, and, in accordance with my plans, to take a two days' journey into the mountains to visit a number of Berber villages, returning afterwards to be again the Khalifa's guest before finding my way back to Gabés.

The same evening the Khalifa sent an express courier to the sheikhs of the villages with instructions that I should be well received.

This arranged, I retired to rest. As I passed up the dark underground passage, I patted my horse and wished my friends good-night.

The door closed behind me, and soon I was sleeping as quietly and peacefully in the caves of the Matmata mountains as I should in my own bed at home.

CHAPTER V

RETURN TO GABÉS

HAMED woke me at sunrise. I was soon dressed, my saddle-bags packed and coffee heated.

The horses had been led out from their underground stable. Outside the dwelling I met the Khalifa, coming evidently fresh from his devotions as he still grasped his rosary. Smiling, he held out his hand to take leave bidding me "Farewell till to-morrow evening."



HOLD UP!

As we rode over the hill, a rider galloped up and took the lead; it was Belkassim, the Khalifa's relative, who was to show me the way. I followed him, and Hamed became the *arrière garde*.

There are no springs or wells in these regions ; water, therefore, is collected in deep tanks. By one of these was a woman filling her pitcher.

The rays of the rising sun gleamed on Belkassim's white burnous and the silver-inlaid gun which lay across his saddle-bow, on the tips of the palm trees, on the mountain peaks, and on the woman at the cistern. Snatching a rapid glance I saw she was pretty, but she at once turned her back ; so I could only admire her slender feet and silver anklets as she placed the pitcher on the side of the tank and drew her blue-striped kerchief over her head.

"That is Mansur's wife ; his only wife," said Belkassim.

Happy son of the Khalifa of Matmata !

When we had crossed to the other side of the vale I turned in my saddle ; she still stood there, and in the distance below I saw her face indistinctly, like a pale spot amidst its dark blue wrappings. She remained long standing thus and looking after us ; then disappeared, carrying the dull grey pitcher on her back, and up the slope other blue figures came tripping along to the same spot.

The valley is very uneven, rising and falling, as it is furrowed and cut up by watercourses. The palm and olive trees scattered along these crevasses are protected by stone enclosures and ditches.

Just as we passed the last dip in the valley

before climbing the hill, there rushed out three dogs which had evidently been watching us.

I looked about me, for it dawned on my mind that there must be a habitation in the vicinity. I was right; for, by standing in my stirrups and stretching my neck, I got a glimpse of the square upper rim of a cave yard.

The dogs rushed on Hamed's horse which was last, and had possibly approached too close to the entrance of the dwelling. The attack was so violent that we were obliged to turn and assist him. The furious brutes held fast on to the tail of his horse, fearing to come within reach of Hamed's whip; but one of them succeeded in biting the horse's near hind-leg, drawing blood and laming it—a pleasant beginning to our mountain trip!

We dismounted and threw stones at these furious white sheep-dogs, and at last they retired, showing their teeth and ready to resume the attack the moment we remounted. Fortunately a man and a boy appeared and called the dogs off. Believing the man to be their owner, I ordered Hamed to rate him soundly and threaten that I would report what had occurred to the Khalifa. The man took the rebuke quietly, but told us humbly that he was a poor devil who possessed nothing—not even a dog. The proprietor of the dwelling was absent.

“Then greet him from us and say that he

should have his dogs under better control, or he will have the Khalifa after him."

The wrongly accused man kissed a fold of my burnous, and we again mounted our horses and climbed the mountain in a zigzag course, by difficult paths over loose stones.

Belkassim rode only a few paces in front of me, yet I saw his horse above the level of my head,



EXCAVATED STABLE.

whilst Hamed, who was a couple of paces behind dragging along his lame horse, appeared to be far beneath me.

From the summit I looked back along the valley and to a high undulating stretch, where the trees showed like spots on a panther's skin.

Over the valley to the north rose the mountains, and beyond them stretched an indistinct light blue plain, melting far away into a darker blue—this was the sea.

Step by step, slowly but surely, our horses paced

down the long valley into which we descended. Now and again we put up a covey of partridges that flew up the mountain, and the larks started in couples from amongst the palms and stones. We presently hurried on at the quick pace to which the Berber horses are accustomed; Hamed singing, as we went along, a song that echoed above us and on every side.

Perched on some stones at the bottom of the dry bed of a torrent were three pretty little girls, who leaned against the bank and peeped shyly at us over it. Their goats jumped from stone to stone seeking food amongst the scanty forage afforded by the dry burnt pasture.

The tallest of the little girls ran suddenly away from the others when I rode towards them. She scrambled up the rocky bank like a squirrel, and paused on the top of a large boulder; the flock of black goats following her. She was evidently old enough to know that speech with a strange man is forbidden.

Belkassim tried to coax her down again; he assured her that the kind stranger would give her money if she would come to him. But no, she would not respond, remaining where she was and calling to the two other little ones. These pressed nervously against each other, in their thin blue garments, and, when I offered them some coppers,

shut their eyes as they extended their hands to me to receive the money, and then took flight.

We were near some native dwellings. Dogs barked, under an olive tree stood a donkey munching straw, and we perceived some of the familiar blue figures, which looked nearly black against their light brown surroundings. In the distance their ornaments glittered in the light of the setting sun. Belkassim shouted to them to come forward as it was a friend and brother of the Khalifa who wished to see them. Most of them remained standing where they were and stared at us. The men were apparently all away, either amongst the mountains, busy with the date harvest, or building tanks in the valleys, so from them there was naught to fear.

We dismounted and had a chat with the women. I unpacked my camera and tried to take their portraits, but these girls and women are so restless that it is difficult to make them keep still. There was one exception, however, a pretty fresh young girl who came out of one of the dwellings—a cave like those near Hadeij—and stared and stared at the camera.

An old woman next came tripping up to offer herself, evidently of a mind that coppers are worth having. I should have preferred her good-looking daughters, who were engaged in driving a restive camel into the cave passage. But this I saw plainly

was not to be, for she ordered the girls in and placed herself before me, and I had to be satisfied.

This was the village of Judlig. The population cannot be large, but by me it will always be remembered as the village of many women.

Continuing along the base of the valley for about an hour, we then entered another valley through the great deep bed of a broad river now dry; the banks were quite perpendicular. This river is the Sid Barak. The horses had difficulty in keeping their footing on the stony bottom.



BERBER WOMAN OF THE VILLAGE OF
JUDLIG.

On a slight rise our guide bade us halt, so we drew rein while he pointed out Sid ben Aissa, but I could see nothing.

When we had ridden some way down the valley, we saw some half-score white burnouses coming towards us. These proved to be the Sheikh and his people, who came to bid me welcome; his brown-clad followers walked beside their horses. In time, the old greybeards and dark-eyed merry lads joined our party.

Dogs barked, sombre clad females with peaked white headgear peered over the crest of the mound, and terrified little children fled to their mothers and hid themselves in the folds of their garments.

Palm trunks raised their lofty crowns towards



A CAVE INTERIOR.

(From a sketch by Knud Gavnørg).

the blue heavens, where, on the mountains and in the valley, they grew mingled with olive and fig trees, and the hot air of midday quivered about us as we made our entry.

The village contains some fifty underground dwellings like those of Hadeij, and about five

hundred inhabitants. The approach to the Sheikh's dwelling was not covered in. From the highest point of the hill a slope led through a gate to the great square court. In addition to this entrance from the slope, one could enter from the hillside through a deep excavated passage that ran parallel with the slope, but naturally at a lower level.

Close to the point where the descent began was erected a thatched roof of dry twigs and palm branches, supported on four palm tree trunks. On this roof lay red and yellow bunches of freshly gathered dates, and beneath its shade sat a few men. My horse was tied up close by.

Hamed had told the Sheikh that I wished to see the interior of a dwelling, so they at once led me into the courtyard and thence into the long underground chamber.

In the courtyard a camel stood chewing the cud. It was pushed aside, fowls fluttered out of our way, and a kid and several sheep sprang on to some heaps of garnered dates, or hid behind the great egg-shaped reservoirs, woven of rushes, used for storing corn.

In the caves I found it dark, chiefly because my eyes had been dazzled by the daylight outside. Within were women, some grinding corn, others weaving. None were very young, but all were overladen with ornaments. They were quite friendly; one offered me dates, another water, only one of

them, probably a young wife or daughter, hid in a corner and turned her back on me. The children flocked about me without fear, one of the boys even pulling roguishly at my burnous.

During my visit, Hamed and the other men had remained outside. Hamed was very proud of having obtained permission for me to see the cave. Usually, he said, no strangers are admitted into a house where there are women. But I fancy my good reception was due as much to the Khalifa's influence as to Hamed's.

On our way to the cave we had passed the vaulted guest-room, tastefully excavated out of the soft calcareous soil. Here I stretched myself on costly carpets whilst I ate my meal; my escort afterwards consuming the remainder.

As I wished to learn all particulars concerning the costume of both men and women, they brought me clothes and ornaments in quantities. To the great amusement of those present, Belkassim was dressed up in woman's attire, the property of the Sheikh's first wife. Afterwards, I photographed him in the same dress, together with the Sheikh and his boys in a group outside the caves.

After a stay of a couple of hours we rode on, being set on our way by the Sheikh and his people.

We now followed the bed of the river Barrak, amongst rocks and ridges and over rolling stones

and rough pebbles. We saw a party of women leave the valley for a deserted village, of which the ruins showed waste and grim on the mountain-top. They were taking food up to the shepherds in charge of the sheep and goats there, and would take advantage of the cooler air of the heights to have a midday nap in the shade of the ruins. In olden days the Beni Aissa dwelt on these heights, but it was very trying, especially for the women who had every day to descend to the plain to fetch water; so, when more peaceful times came, they moved down to the caves at the base of the valley.

This valley wound round the foot of the mountain, so for a couple of hours we had the picturesque ruins to our right. At last we lost sight of them, and then began a stiff ascent through wild and desolate gorges, and, finally, we clambered up a very steep mountain side where the stones rolled from under our horses' feet. Hamed thought it too bad, so dismounted, letting his horse follow him; while we, by endless zig-zags, wound our way to the summit. Here we waited a few moments to recover breath and give time to the loiterer, whilst enjoying the lovely view over the Matmata mountain peaks and vales.

Once more we descended into a valley, then

toiled up another mountain side, afterwards riding along the ridge at the summit to reach "Tujud," one of the eyries on the top of the Matmata heights.

On the horizon we could distinguish the low land to the south of Gabés, and, beyond it, the sea. Farther east lay the mountain chain of Jebel Teboga, a long blue line, and between it and us stretched a level plain, partly concealed by the adjacent hilly ground, of which the ridges surmounted each other in undulating lines. Below us, to the north, was a deep valley.

Scanning the stony surface of the bridle-path, I discovered accidentally some outlines scratched on the stones. They were mostly of footprints, and later I was informed that these are said to be carved by pious friends, in memory of the dead, on the spot where they had last met the deceased.

Tujud lay before us. In the distance it resembles somewhat an old German castle of the Middle Ages, with the usual mass of houses attached thereto. The summit of the pile of dwellings was crowned by a couple of camels, showing like black silhouettes against the sky. On the flat grey plain, dark specks were moving: these were women.

The Sheikh came to meet and conduct me

into the town, through steep narrow alleys. The houses were all built of uncut stone, and not whitewashed. The style of building was most irregular. As the rock was very precipitous, the little dwellings were extraordinarily varied in height and appearance. Their courtyards were crowded with bleating sheep and goats, a few camels, various household chattels, braziers, and all manner of dirt. In the doorways, and on the flat roofs, women and children stood watching us.

Of men there were not many at home; at this season they are probably mostly guarding their flocks on the far plains to the south-west.

On a height close by, were a couple of Marabout tombs with whitewashed walls; and in the distance to the north we could see, over the mountain ridge, a village on a height. This was Zaraua; and towards the west we sighted another, Tamezred. They both looked like fortified castles.

After a short halt we continued our way towards Zaraua, the Sheikh giving us a guide, quite a young fellow. He tried to slip off when we had ridden about half-way; as it was near sunset he most likely wished to return to his home before dark. Belkassim gave him a sound thrashing and forced him to go on, as we could not distinguish the bridle-road from the footpath. When we reached the foot of the hill and could see the village at

the summit, I dismissed the lad, who quickly vanished behind us.

No one came to meet us until, when quite near the town, a young man at last appeared, who welcomed me, announcing that he was a near relative of the Sheikh who, he said, was absent.

Both Hamed and Belkassim told me they detected an intention to slight me, therefore they abused the unlucky fellow because I had not been received at the proper distance from the town, and with the honours due to me.

Twelve years ago these natives tried to assert their independence of French rule, and many of the brave fellows fell fighting here among the mountains. From that time, therefore, they do not entertain a friendly recollection of the French; and they supposed me to be a Frenchman. However, they did not openly venture to run counter to the safe conduct the Khalifa had given me, so they went through the forms of hospitality; but my guides were in the right—my hosts were, to say the least, unwilling.

I walked up a path which led towards the cemetery. On the precipitous slope lay mound on mound, composed of small stones. Here rested, perhaps, the defenders of their fatherland, laid low by the bullets of the French.

From the tanks beneath the slopes the women



drew water. They carried the huge pitchers on their backs, bound to their foreheads by a towel. Each turned away her face, or concealed it in her towel, as they approached us. The men stood, like rigid statues, without looking at us ; not one extended the hand of welcome.

We dismounted on the outskirts of the village, and the young man led me into a stinking court and opened the door of a room that was snug enough, but where dirt, dust, and spiders reigned. The atmosphere was extremely musty and disgusting. I at once decided that I would not inhabit it, and proclaimed my amazement at their daring to offer me such a room.

The reply was that it was impossible to procure other quarters, and that there were none better to be found. Knowing this to be false, I said plainly that I would not submit to such treatment, and, in accordance with Belkassim's advice, ordered that a tent should be pitched outside the house on a small terrace near the slope. The young man bent his head in consent, and soon several men were busy sweeping the terrace and driving tent pegs into the hard ground.

Our horses still stood saddled, without anyone offering to look after them, and again I had to do battle for my rights, with the result that they were stabled and supplied with provender.

In the meantime I walked down the mountain side, partly to look about me, partly to allow my followers time to fight out matters with the natives.

The sun had just set as I seated myself on a stone and looked up to the village above me; in the gathering darkness it showed as a massive black pile. On the terraces outside I could distinguish dark figures engaged in their evening orisons. They bowed frequently and kissed the ground, and then lay prostrate for some moments, deep in prayer.

The dogs around me barked, and I could hear the hammering in of the tent pegs, as also voices in discussion above me. Near me was a new grave—perhaps of that very day; it was covered with stones, and in the middle was stuck a bit of stick with a green rag attached to it, to scare jackals and deter them from digging up the body.

Presently our horses were led down the hill by Hamed, and watered at one of the tanks. As he passed he confided to me that Belkassim had managed his business so well that all was now in order. The latter had declared that I was not a Frenchman, but a stranger from another land, a friend of the Khalifa and of the tribe.

This, it appeared, had changed the attitude of the Zarauar, for, when I soon after returned to the town, several men came forward and offered me another dwelling which, after inspection, I accepted. I also

granted the permission they asked to strike the tent.

The dwelling in question evidently belonged to someone practised in carpentry, for in the corners lay bits of wood, knives, axes, etc.

The ceiling was of palm stems, and on the stone walls hung a quantity of platters, bowls, trays, and cooking-pots. Lighting a candle I stood it on a plank, and threw myself on my rugs with my saddle under my head, and fancied myself the owner.

It was long before any food arrived, but when it did it was excellent. Whilst I ate, a knot of people stood at the open door and watched me. I chatted with them, and in the end we became ostensibly good friends, especially after I had distributed some cigarettes.

The public retired when the bowls and trays were carried out, and I applied myself to writing. That being done I rolled myself in my burnous and went to sleep. When I had slept but a short time I was awakened by the sound of the yard gate rattling. Our horses, which stood in the gateway, were evidently disturbed. Then I heard a light footfall on the pavement outside, and a sound as of someone breathing near my door, and a few minutes after a fumbling at the door handle. This I could not stand. Springing up I quickly struck a match and opened the door. There, with its head to my nose and

breathing in my face, stood a camel; and behind it another.

Thank goodness, it was nothing worse.

Before sunrise we started, riding in the cool morning over mountain and vale to Tamezred. By a deep stony gorge we arrived at the foot of the mountain, where the road was so impracticable that we all three had to dismount and drag our horses along; it took us half an hour to cover a quarter of a mile.

This was certainly the most unapproachable cyrie I have seen in the south. From the mountain top the view extended for miles over hill and dale down to the plains to the south-west in the country of Bir Sultan, at least forty miles distant. There the herds were grazing, for no rain had fallen on the mountains.

Sheikh El-Hadj Abdallah received us amicably, and invited me to the guest-chamber—a stuffy room—where food was brought me. From thence I over-looked a wonderfully beautiful landscape.

The inhabitants spoke the Berber tongue, but also understood Arabic. I tried in vain to get some Berber manuscripts to examine, but none were to be had, the language being nowadays written in Arabic characters.

The Sheikh's property—a square court with a low range of buildings outside it—I examined from end to end. Within were women spinning and cooking.



FALCONERS.

11

12

In one enclosure stood a fine bull, in another I discovered a number of old flint-lock muskets hanging amongst keys, yarn, powder-horns, and pomegranates, all being spun over with spider webs. The guns had probably not been used since the French invasion.

This was the only occasion on which I saw fire-arms in any numbers, the Arabs generally concealing them—often under their beds so as to have them handy.

In the guest-room a camel's-hair tent hung, rolled up under the roof. When the men wander forth after the rainfall to hunt or to sow, the tent is packed on a camel and taken with them.

The Sheikh informed me that the inhabitants of Tamezred number some five hundred souls. Of these about a hundred men can be armed; they mostly fight on foot, as horses are rare in these mountains; in Tamezred there are only seven, but there are many hundreds of camels, about a hundred cows, as many small donkeys, and large herds of sheep and goats. These graze on the plains, far away towards Bir Sultan and Bir Zuamitz, watched by the men of the village.

When the rain falls, all the men and some of the women go off to the plains to plough and sow; they live in tents, and their sheikhs accompany them and hunt gazelle and other game. Only a few old men

remain in the villages to guard the women and children.

It is not the people of Tamezred alone who thus migrate, but also those from other mountain villages, as Zaraua and Tujud. Hadeij, in the Matmata mountains, feeds its herds in the plain south-west of the range beside the course of the river Wad Halluf.

The village of Tamezred is crowned at the top by a minaret, and lower down, amongst the houses, are several Marabout tombs with vaulted cupolas. Only one of these, the grave of Sid Hadj Yussuf, is limewashed and gleams white in the sunshine; the most part are grey, and at a distance it is scarcely possible to distinguish the buildings from the rocks.

On a height outside the village is raised a great surveyor's landmark, visible for miles, and corresponding to others on the peaks of the Matmata mountains. These points of observation were raised by a French officer for the purpose of making a survey, which will surely be carried out ere long.

Having now attained the most westerly inhabited point of the Matmata mountains, we took an easterly direction, again following steep paths and deep gorges to reach the real Matmata villages, of which Lasheish is the largest.

In a deep valley on the way we found some half-score men occupied in clearing an old circular

well built of unhewn stone. They told me that this supposed well was discovered quite recently. It dates from the time of the Romans, at least so report says, but it may be even more ancient, for no one remembers either having seen or heard of it.

The sand, which they drew up in rough baskets, was only slightly moist, but the fact of its being so gave them good hope, though they had already reached a depth of over one hundred and fifty feet.

Later in the day we passed a kubba, said to be the burial-place of a female Marabout. This lay, completely ruined, on a ridge between two crests of the mountain. I wanted to peep in, but my guides requested me not to do so.

From this point is a view of a wide valley, to the north of which are the mountains, and behind them lies Hadeij. Beyond the range we had a glimpse, through a haze, of the plains of Gabés and, far out, of the Mediterranean Sea.

In the valley below stood a whitewashed, square, cupola-topped Marabout tomb, that of "Sid Barrak." I let my attendants go on a little in advance and sneaked in, first tying up my horse outside. The room was square, with a vaulted roof. In the centre of the floor stood a high square frame of carved wood, beneath which the saint was evidently buried. In each corner of the frame was stuck a flag. On the ground, along the whitewashed walls, were

earthen pots, such as are used by the negroes; they were apparently sooty from use. Above were sketched, in black, lines, circles, and figures that reminded me of the Berber alphabet.

Just as I was copying these ornaments in my sketch-book, Hamed and Belkassim stepped in.

Hamed desired me to put on my burnous and draw the hood over my head before I left, so that no one should discover that I had entered; and Belkassim suggested that I should put some coins into a bag that hung on the wooden frame, and which was provided for the offerings of pilgrims, given to defray the expenses of illuminating the Marabout's tomb at the festivals; often celebrated, he said, by the women in or near the tomb. I did as he desired.

Outside, in the vicinity of the tomb, were dug low underground chambers, into which I crept. Scattered within was pottery, some broken, a few pieces entire. They had been used, and there were also traces of a fireplace and smoke stains on the roof, all suggestive of the above-mentioned festivals. Both Belkassim and Hamed murmured a few prayers at the grave, and when they had finished their devotions we remounted. Belkassim looked carefully round as we emerged. There was not a single soul in sight, so he winked mischievously at me, and we went our way.

We were now again on undulating ground of hard chalk and clay, cultivated in very good ridge and furrow, and planted with palms and olives. In the distance we perceived several white spots in the valley. These were the Marabouts of Lasheish, the large troglodyte village. Meanwhile we were compelled to make a long *détour*, as we were in most impassable country, cut up as it was by the numberless large brooks, always found on either side of great rivers.

On a slope was a little white limekiln, whence smoke was rising. By it were piled large faggots of wood, seeing which I began to realise how much brushwood must, in course of time, have been consumed in these limekilns, and then understood why the natives of the Matmata do not, as a rule, white-wash their houses.

Lasheish is not under the authority of the Khalifa of Hadeij, but under that of his colleague of Gabés. In other respects it is exactly similar to Hadeij.

Knowing that the women here weave materials for burnouses, clothing, towels, and, in fact, all that appertains to the garb of the country, I decided on making some purchases. The cave to which I was conducted became, therefore, during the period of my stay, a regular shop, people coming in from all parts with goods for sale.

Fortunately, Mansur arrived on a visit, partly for the purpose of inviting guests to the wedding feast; partly, so as to accompany me on my way back to Hadeij. He materially assisted me in making my many purchases, and in securing them at fairly reasonable prices. But the bargaining was neither an easy nor a pleasant task for him, as our host always sided with the vendors. They quarrelled violently the whole time, and frequently, before completing a reasonable bargain, I had to throw the article repeatedly back on the seller's hands. A gala burnous, I remember, was walked in and out of the door seven times; on each occasion with a decided command that it should not reappear before my eyes unless the price were reduced to about an eighth of what was first asked. Each time the owner returned, he abated a little and the haggling was renewed. With the air of a connoisseur I would re-examine the burnous, only to arrive at the same conclusion—it was far too dear. So again it was returned to the owner, who was at once pushed aside by other vendors.

Belkassim and Hamed vied with each other in shouts of abuse. There was a regular storm, and what a blessed calm when the bargaining was ended.

The simplest sale cannot take place without these folk abusing one another as if their lives depended on it.

Not having allowed myself to be cheated, I had rather risen than fallen in the natives' estimation. The men, who a moment before had seemed to feel bitter enmity towards me and my guides, and who had often been harshly turned out of the room, now sat comfortably in peace and quiet beside me, watching me eat.

After dinner I took a turn through the village, but soon perceived that I was being led about much as foreign officers are at great military manœuvres in Europe, when they are shown everything except what they are most desirous of seeing. I was, therefore, soon ready to depart; all the more so, as I observed that the caves were all on the same lines of construction as those I had already examined at Hadeij.

Just as we were about to mount our horses, a man approached us. Cringing humbly and miserably, he dragged himself to my horse and kissed my hand. I was told he was the owner of the dog which had bitten Hamed's horse yesterday. He came to entreat me not to inform the Khalifa of the occurrence, as he feared he might be cast into prison. Having told him that I was sure the Khalifa would be lenient, I spurred my horse and rode off; but my reply did not at all satisfy the penitent, who rushed to my side and clung to my clothing. I was near being angry, when my host came forward

and explained that should the Khalifa hear that I had been molested on the way, the man would not escape punishment. Therefore he and the people of Lasheish implored that I would entirely refrain from reporting to the Khalifa the mishap that had befallen us.

I glanced down at the culprit, and nearly burst out laughing; he looked so ridiculous. Never do I remember having seen a more hypocritical and debased countenance.

I preserved my gravity, however, promised to keep silence, and put out my hand to take leave. The culprit literally snatched it to his mouth, and I heard him calling down the blessings of Allah upon me.

In an open square, planted with palms, the date harvest was in progress. The golden bunches which hung on the green crowns fell to the blows of a curved knife. Lightly clad men, boys, and even a young girl, worked in the tree-tops; climbing quickly and adroitly up and down the rough surface of the straight stems. Below, men and women collected the bunches in great clusters, which they placed in rush panniers, and removed on the backs of small donkeys.

It was difficult to tear myself away from this idyll, but we had to press forward, so I hurried up my little escort, and we marched on over the mountains.

Mansur had much difficulty in keeping up with me, being very heavy, and accustomed to ride a mule rather than a horse. There was always something wrong with his saddle, and he was perpetually dismounting to alter first one thing, then another, thus being left farther and farther behind. We were obliged at last to halt, to allow him to rejoin us, though time was passing, and sunset was near.

A little distance from Hadeij we found, at the bottom of the valley, a little donkey standing quite alone, feeding on some straw. Belkassim said that if left there at night the jackals would soon make away with it.

It was almost dark when we crossed the river and rode up to the village.

Again I saw the boys romping in the square amongst the palms. Their glad voices reached my ear, and when they caught sight of me they ran up to us followed by their barking dogs.

The men, grouped beneath the trees, rose and came forward to press my hand. The Khalifa also rose to receive me. I thanked him for the delightful trip he had arranged for me.

“I am glad that you are satisfied; glad to see you here again; and that you will stay with me, your brother, even for forty years.”

Of course these speeches must not be taken

literally, they only express the kindly feeling of the speaker towards oneself.

After I had dined in my cave I sallied out to the Khalifa's dwelling to be present, in accordance with his invitation, at the festivities held in honour of the third day.

As I did not like the old man to be inconvenienced by having to sit on a chair because I did so, I suggested that we should sit together amongst the other men. To this he agreed.

Gradually there arrived numbers of men from all the surrounding country; these sat tightly packed on the banks, as on the previous occasion.

Again the negroes danced, the drums boomed, and the clarionets screamed; whilst the Khalifa, his sons, and myself sat together in a friendly group looking on.

Now and then the women sang, but, as far as I could understand, neither bride nor bridegroom were mentioned in their songs, certainly not the latter.

It was hard to keep awake. Belkassim's little son nestled up to me, and, as it grew chilly, I wrapped my burnous about him, and he was soon asleep. The monotonous music induced drowsiness; I fought valiantly against it, which was more than Hamed did, for I suddenly found him snoring beside me, wrapped in his burnous. I let him

repose, but from that moment conversation betwixt myself and my foreign surroundings was limited to the simplest compliments.

In the course of the afternoon the Khalifa invited me to come back again and be present at the special bridal festival to be held five days later. I promised to return.

Next morning—the 20th October—I left Hadeij to ride back to Gabés. I took leave of the Khalifa, with many expressions of goodwill, adding, “May you soon have rain, that your olive trees may neither wither nor die.”

Just as we reached the first height, Mansur, who had volunteered to follow me to Gabés, pointed out how coal-black the heavens were in the direction of the sea, and how the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled, saying, “Allah has heard your good wish. It will rain in the Matmata mountains.”

When we descended into the plain, the rain pelted in our faces. We put on our burnouses, pulled the hoods over our heads, and hurried on. A moment after, we were wet through.

Mansur continually lagged behind; it was difficult for him to keep up, and he begged us to ride on without waiting for him.

Once we passed a shepherd with his flock; the sheep were all huddled together, the goats apart, whilst he had taken shelter under a bush.

We crossed a couple of river beds which, when I passed a few days ago, had been dry and parched ; now the water rushed over them in a rapid stream. However our horses crossed easily, and I started at a gallop, pushing quickly through rain and slough, with the mud flying up to my ears, till, the ground presently growing too slippery, I was again reduced to going at foot's pace.

The palm grove of El Hamdu gleamed through the rain, but before we could reach the oasis the river had to be crossed. The ford amongst the tamarisk and oleander bushes we found easily, but the torrent ran high. I urged my horse forward, and he went slowly through the water till he suddenly slipped and fell, wetting me to the middle. I tried to turn him back, but the current swept us to the side, and at last I gave up the struggle, being afraid that my books and sketches might get wet. Then I caught sight of Hamed, and saw his horse, which was laden both before and behind the saddle with my purchases, plunging about in the swirling stream, and splashing the water in every direction. I shouted to him to turn back.

We then followed the course of the river a long way up, and tried to cross several times, but without success.

A herd of little, thin, brown cattle walked along

the banks ; they had got separated, and some were on either side of the river. They had apparently no guardian, and were evidently endeavouring to rejoin each other. Occasionally one of them would plunge into the water, only to be driven back to the bank by the current, and we heard the distressed bellowing of the divided herd.

At last, at a spot where the river was very broad, we succeeded in crossing without mishap, but the water reached above the horses' girths.

We then returned along the banks to the ford, where we waited for half an hour before Mansur's white horse appeared on the opposite shore. The rain poured down incessantly, and our horses pawed the ground impatiently, eager to get on, but we were compelled to wait to direct Mansur where to cross.

"To the left! to the left!" we shouted; but Mansur had drawn his burnous so closely over his head that he could neither see nor hear, and not till he was close to the river were we able to attract his attention; then he also crossed safely, and we continued our way.

In the neighbourhood of the oasis we could hear the El Hamdu folk crying and lamenting the rainfall. The date harvest of the oasis was not ended, and, until it was over, water was injurious to the dates. What is good for the olives and the barley

fields is injurious to the palms, the chief source of subsistence of the people of the oases. All over the world the agriculturist is the same.

Involuntarily I recollected a certain old fellow, a countryman of mine, in a town in Jutland, who, sitting at his dinner-table one day, complained loudly that the Almighty had not taken pity on the poor country folk and sent them a little rain for their rye-fields; when, at the very same instant, there was a loud clap of thunder, and rain suddenly pelted down without any warning. He at once jumped up, rushed to the window and exclaimed, "Oh, the devil! now all my peat is gone to —!"

Step by step our horses splashed on through the puddles; it was almost impossible to quicken our pace; so it was late in the day when we reached Gabés, to find everything standing in pools.

The river had not been so swollen for many years, and had done much damage.

Luckily, neither my sketches nor my purchases had suffered.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE MATMATA MOUNTAINS AND THEIR INHABITANTS

THE Matmata mountains form the northern spur of the comparatively small range which, in a curved line, follows more or less the bend of the coast. Leaving a low stretch of land between itself and the sea, this range runs first along the coast-line to the south of Jurat (of which more hereafter), then continues right into Tripoli, being broken only at intervals.

Here and there it is inhabited by Berber tribes, who are indeed Mohammedans, but have in great measure retained unchanged their primitive habits and customs.

In the mountains Ghurian and Jefren, to the south of Tripoli, are found the brave independent kinsmen of the Berbers of Tunisia. They recall with pride the exploits of their ancestors, and rear their sons to be a free people and to labour. Therefore they have maintained their intelligence and intellectual superiority, and have been able to defy foreign rule, though not always with equal

success. For example, in the Jebel Jefren originated all the disturbances which have occurred during the Turkish occupation of Tripoli.

North of Jebel Jefren is Jebel Nefusa, also inhabited by Berbers, some of whom speak a dialect resembling the language of the Tuareg. The greater proportion of these are supposed to be descendants of the Libyans, who conquered the country before the Arabs, and who, like these last, came also from the East.

It is the custom among some of the Nefus tribes, in common with that of the Uled Nail of Algeria, that their young women, for a time before marriage, abandon themselves to prostitution. This practice naturally reminds one of the ancient cult of Astarte.

Tarik, conqueror of the Spaniards, was a Berber, a native of Jebel Nefusa. Perchance he was one of the race who had owned allegiance to Jewish sway. At any rate, after he conquered Spain, the Jews there were treated by him with marked consideration. In his case, as in that of so many Berbers who were drawn into the mighty current of Mohammedanism, they never became fanatical Moslems, and the same may be said at the present day.

Though indeed, like their kindred race the Tuareg, they became Mohammedans (perhaps many of them had been under Christian influence—at

least there are signs of it), they are not fanatics. They have no special religious order, and they belong to the so-called fifth sect, and are unacquainted with any ritual.


Not a few of these Berbers reside in caves, "Jebel Ghurian" meaning literally "the Mountain of Caves." Before these cave dwellers became Mohammedans, they raised altars to God; and, according to travellers, very ancient stone monuments, dating from a period previous to that of the Arabs, are to be found everywhere in these regions. They resemble those found in Algeria, in Andalusia, and even in Brittany.

The language of the country on the borders of Tripoli and Tunisia is partly Arabic, partly Berber. It is probable that in earlier times the Berber tongue was spoken from Jebel Jefren over Duirat to Matmata.

Books written in the Berber language are not to be found here; so far as we know (manuscripts have been discovered on the island of Jerba), the Berber dialect being written in Arabic characters.

I ascertained that the language of Southern Tunisia is still spoken in the villages of Zaraua, Tamezred, Tujud, Shenini, Ghermasi, and Duirat (as also on the island of Jerba), and in part of Urghamma.

From Jebel Jefren to the Matmata mountains,



the lively natives closely resemble each other in their expressive eyes, happy dispositions, and ready smile. Contrasted with the Arab, their countenances are shorter and broader, and their hair less black.

They are essentially a free race. An assembly of the people in the villages of Southern Tunisia, known as the "Miad," settles tribal questions, according to a local code (kanun) which is based on ancient rules and customs, and is even more highly revered than the Koran.

As arable land is extremely valuable, and the inhabitants of the barren mountains are comparatively numerous, it has been the custom from time immemorial, in Southern Tunisia at least, that the young men should go to the coast towns in order to earn money, wherewith, on their return, to buy a house, palms, cattle, and a wife; alike in this respect to the Savoyards and Auvergnats who quit their hearths and homes for a time.

In the towns these mountaineers live with the utmost frugality, sleeping generally by the roadside, and earning their bread by all sorts of work, such as water-carrying, domestic service, etc.

When in 1881-1882 the French army invaded the mountains of Southern Tunisia, they were astonished to find that many of the natives spoke French.

The "Ksar" dwellers are brave and hardy, and accustomed to "hear the powder speak." Their

delight used to be to sally out on a raid, when they made matters hot for all concerned. They were not ordinary thieves—no, weapon in hand they fell on their adversaries, who could never feel secure from a *coup de main*.

On the other hand, they, in their inaccessible and fortified eyries, were prepared to defend themselves.

Their plundering raids extended over the Tripolitan frontier, even as far as Rhadamés. They always plundered thoroughly. Dr. Bertholon states that when he, as military surgeon, served in the campaign against them, they not only seized all the herds, but even the clothes of their victims. So completely did they strip prisoners, that these would be left with only a scrap of shirt which barely covered them.

The people of the adjacent oases on the plain and towards the "Shotts," who are more peaceful and phlegmatic, the circumstances of their lives being better, have often suffered from the attacks and depredations of the mountaineers, when they have not chosen to purchase immunity by paying blackmail to the latter.

Dr. Bertholon maintains that monogamy is usual amongst them, but my experience leads me to a different conclusion, since the men of rank with whom I came in contact had generally several wives.

The abduction of women was not uncommon in earlier times, when the armed inhabitants of the Ksar used to carry off their wives by force.

That they had to guard their women carefully is not strange, since these have the reputation of being light of morals.

One custom is universal amongst these people ; it is that at the wedding the bridegroom shows his bride a heavy stick, of which one end that he holds to her nose is thoroughly and sweetly scented. The interpretation of this custom being that so long as she conducts herself properly, her life will be mild and pleasant like the scent ; but, on the other hand, should she misbehave she may be sure of being well punished. I saw one of these sticks at Tatuin.

As I wished to form some idea of the manner in which a family lived and worked together in the small troglodyte communities, I took advantage of my stay with the Khalifa of Hadeij to procure information regarding his family and the life they led in common.

These inquiries I had to make with the greatest discretion, for I would not for the world have given them a chance of misjudging me, or of supposing that I had come amongst them to spy. By degrees I put together what I saw and heard till the whole picture is, I may venture to say, correct in the main, though some of the minor details may have

been misunderstood by me, or have escaped my observation.

Sadi-ben Mansur-Fatush, as Khalifa of the mountains, exercises authority over the villages of the Matmata range. He is born of the tribe of Uled Sliman, of which his son is a tribal sheikh.

The Khalifa is between sixty and seventy years of age, and has three wives, Mena, Fatima, and Sasia. By the first he has two sons, Amar and Mansur. By the second, one son, Mohammed. He has probably daughters also; if so, they are married and live at a distance, and no longer interest either their family or tribe. I could not gain any information as to whether any had married within the tribe itself.

Sheikh Amar has two wives; the first is named Aisha, the second Meriam. He has two sons, Abderahman (by Aisha) and Mahmud (by Meriam).

Mansur, who bears the title of "Adel" (notary) of the Uled Sliman, has only one wife, named Uda, and no child.

Mohammed, "Kateb" (scribe) to the Uled Sliman, is his father's secretary. His first wife is called Meriam, and by her he has a son—Hamed. His second wife, to whom he was married during my stay in Hadeij, is called Mena; she is of the Uled Sliman, and a native of the village that bears the name of that tribe.

The age of the Khalifa's sons may be on an average about twenty-two, none of their wives being probably over twenty. Of the children of these marriages the eldest of the boys is about five years old.

The Khalifa's family, therefore, consists of about a score of souls, who, as will be seen further on, live



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together; but to these must be added other members of the household, negroes and servants with their children, and a number of near relatives, and of men who attach themselves to the Khalifa's service. Many of the latter have homes of their own, and possess palms, olive trees and cattle, which they farm on their own account, but being dependants of the Khalifa must help him to sow and reap his corn,

prune his palms, gather the dates and olives, press the oil, and, in short, do any work of which they are capable.

The Khalifa is very rich. He owns many underground dwellings, barns, stables and oil mills, but a large proportion of the profits of all these must be expended in providing food and shelter for the infinity of people whom he protects. His large landed property and all his possessions will be divided, when he dies, amongst his sons, who at present own only what the old patriarch chooses to give them, but after his death each will have his own palm and olive trees, his own house and cattle; unless they prefer to continue living in fellowship.

The Khalifa's property is valued at some two hundred thousand francs—a pretty penny for a mountaineer living amongst barren hills devoid of either springs or wells, but where the cliffs and valleys are furrowed with channels to conduct the rain-water to cisterns, and where every tree must have the earth banked about it that the water may lie at its foot.

We will now examine the dwelling used by the Khalifa and his family, and endeavour to form an idea of how the various married couples are accommodated; thus ascertaining that, notwithstanding patriarchal house-government and community of life, each little group has its own portion, however

small, of the dwelling set aside for its own exclusive use.

The soil in the valley of Hadeij is composed of strong clay and marl, which lend themselves admirably to the excavation of regular well-shaped chambers. These have an advantage over dwellings built above ground, in that they are cooler in summer and warmer in winter, besides being easier to defend; they are not open to discovery by strange, unaccustomed eyes, and afford good protection against thieves and robbers, for cattle can also find shelter within them.

The formation of the valley is undulating, and extends over low hills divided by smooth level ground or by narrow gorges, where streams flow in the rainy season. Seen from the mountain, the whole looks like a great sand-pit scored with faint paths, and with depressions where the olive and palm trees grow amongst the mounds.

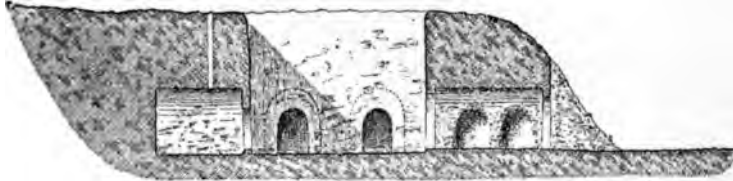
The plan of a dwelling is as follows :—

From the side of a hill, and through the solid earth, leads an underground path—long or short, as the case may be—and quite the height of a man. This takes one to the ground-level of a large square excavation, open overhead, which is generally dug in the highest part of the hill, and forms the courtyard. The walls of this court are perpendicular and smooth. From the ground-level of this cave one enters



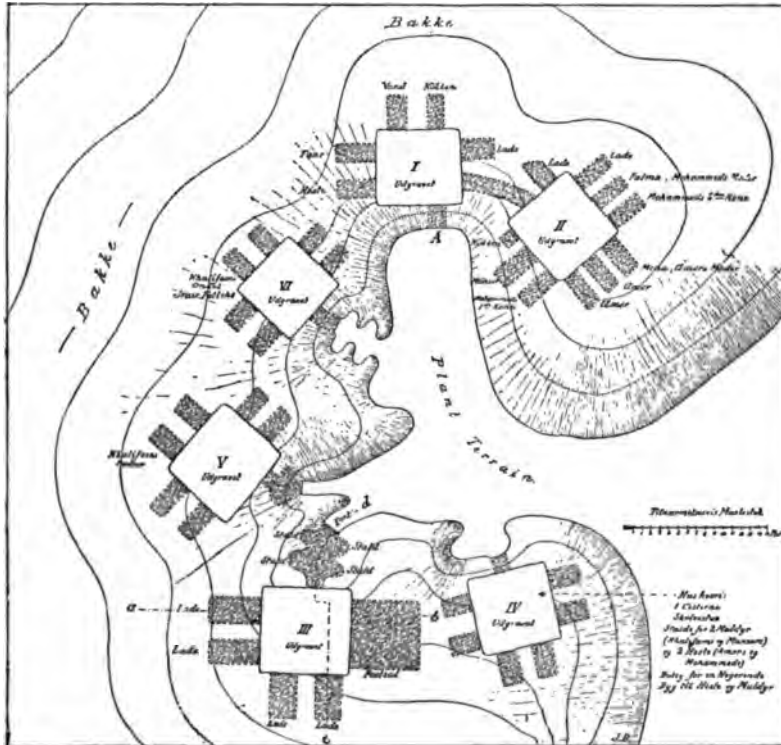
Corn.
Shaft.

Section a-b.



Section c-d.

SECTIONS OF DWELLING IN MATMATA WHERE I LIVED.



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through an opening, a somewhat long underground chamber with a vaulted roof, like that of a wine vault. These chambers are used either as stores, stables, or dwelling-places.

The courtyards measure, as a rule, between eleven and twelve feet in depth and breadth.

The side caves are usually about twenty-seven feet long, but not even half that in breadth; though I have seen them both larger and smaller. These rooms are generally furnished with doors. The passage also is, as a rule, closed at both the outer and the inner end by means of a strong door or gate.

In the court is a fireplace intended for common use; in wet weather the cooking is done in one of the underground rooms. Further, there is often a tank into which water is conducted by pipes from the earth's surface. At the sides of the court stand large rush baskets filled with corn, and sufficient space remains for fowls and domestic animals, when, under special circumstances, such as threatened danger, these are driven within.

Here and there in the passages are recesses for stabling horses and donkeys, which stand therefore in utter darkness.

In a cave chamber it is dark when the door is closed, otherwise there is sufficient light.

The accompanying sketch shows some of the

dwelling inhabited by the Khalifa and his nearest relatives.

From the flat, smooth, open space grown with olive and palm trees, leads the passage to the courtyard.

Dwellings I. and II. are united, and have but one entrance. Through the gate (A) is the entrance to a cave passage, and thereby to the first courtyard. Here are to be found the following chambers : One for the horses, one for the sheep, one containing a tank, another is a kitchen, and, lastly, a store.

From the first courtyard one passes through another cave passage into courtyard No. II. This provides dwellings for all the Khalifa's sons with their wives and children, and for the mothers of these sons.

The Khalifa himself resides at night in an adjacent cave in company with his third wife, but both spend the day with the rest of the family in courtyard No. II., where they cook and eat in common. As far as I could ascertain, no domestics live here.

This courtyard is furnished with rush baskets for corn, and with a fireplace.

Amar has two chambers, one for each of his wives ; and his mother has another close by, so they occupy a whole side of the court.

Two chambers are used as barley stores.

Fatima, Mohammed's mother, has a room, and beside it is another to which Mohammed's second wife was brought. Exactly opposite lives Mohammed's first wife, and, on the same side, Mansur and his only wife.

Last of all comes the kitchen.

I visited all these caves; each woman had her household pots and pans prettily arranged on the inner wall of the chamber, as our cooks do their brass utensils on their kitchen walls. Ranged on the sides were various articles, while in the centre of the clay floor, adorned, as a rule, with rush matting or with carpets, stood what appeared to be a low table. This is the sleeping couch, on which carpets are generally spread; on this the inmates sleep without undressing.

The whitewashed walls are bare but for the guns which are sometimes hung there, as also keys, yarn, etc.

In Mohammed's and Mansur's rooms I saw some frightful framed pictures, apparently supposed to represent the Prophet, and evidently cheap rubbish bought at Gabés, corresponding in all respects to the coloured prints of the Christ which we find in every cottage in our country.

The comfortable cave rooms, and even the courtyard, were clean and well kept. The fowls, indeed, had the run of yard No. II., but it was evidently

forbidden to cattle, which were restricted to the first yard.

By a long underground passage, provided with side recesses for horses and donkeys, one entered yard No. III.; its chambers included a large banqueting hall, the roof of which was composed of two parallel vaults, supported where they met by a central row of pillars. This hall occupied one entire side of the court, and opposite to it were two rooms, used when I was there as guest-chambers; one of these I occupied. They could also be utilised as corn stores; to this end a shaft is dug from the surface, through the solid earth to the dome, so that the corn may be poured down; and when the camels bring the grain, it is unloaded near the mouth of the shaft.

Near the entrance to the passage are two rooms, also available as stores for grain, but during my visit they were used as dwellings for several male servants.

In yard No. IV. lived a negro family, who were entrusted with the care of Mohammed's and Amar's two horses, and the two mules belonging to the Khalifa and Mansur which were stabled there. There was also a corn store, where the barley for the horses and mules was kept, a writing-room, and a tank.

These four yards were used indiscriminately by the Khalifa and his household.

Now we come to the two other dwellings—V. and VI. In one lived a cousin of the Khalifa; the other was occupied by an old fellow called Uncle Srair Feteish, under the same conditions as the courts already mentioned.

A little farther off was the dwelling occupied by the Khalifa and his third wife; this was also composed of subterranean rooms, two on either side. One of these chambers was occupied by the Khalifa and his third wife, one by an Arab servant, another was used to keep clothing in, a fourth as a kitchen, two others as stores for dates, and the last as a writing-room.

Owing to his official position, the Khalifa has a certain amount of correspondence, and therefore requires a proper place in which to preserve documents. These are all written in Arabic characters; the Berber alphabet being unknown in Hadeij, and but little, I believe, in the whole of Southern Tunisia. Though in many villages the Berber language is spoken, it is not in Hadeij, where it appears to be forgotten in spite of the natives being Berbers.

The above-mentioned dwellings are far from being the only ones possessed by the Khalifa, for both in Hadeij proper and in the environs he owns several houses occupied by his retainers. He also owns caves, reserved for his occasional use, in the

vicinity of his distant groves of palms and olives, when, as in harvest time, the trees have to be watched.

The caves that I saw in the Matmata mountains were, with few exceptions, of the same description. Of these exceptions may be mentioned the caves I found in Sid ben Aissa. To these led uncovered ways, so that one had a direct view into the courtyards from the outside. Also at Beni Sultan I observed steps that sloped from the upper surface to the courtyard. The rooms in this instance were not so symmetrical; many of them were not excavated on the same level as the court, but were raised a few steps above it. This very irregularity rendered these caves more picturesque and interesting than those of Hadeij.

In the enclosures were several tanks, and in the rooms I saw women spinning with wheels.

The approach to these houses was by means of steps cut in the calcareous soil; where the steps terminated was a gate by which one passed into a fine vaulted underground chamber, and thence into the courtyard.

The Sheikh of Beni Sultan owned also an oil mill, erected in an underground cave, that, with its vaults and colonnades, closely resembled the crypt of a church. In one of these vaults I saw the mill, which is worked by a donkey or a camel, and is

composed of a large round stone turning on a broad low stone cylinder. In a neighbouring vault close by was erected a primitive oil press.

In Duirat, the most southern village of Tunisia, I found caves of a rather different description. These were of the same dimensions as the chambers already described, and were cut in the sides of cliffs. Before the door of the caves an enclosure was frequently made, and within this stood a house, through the centre of which was a passage leading into the cave.

This style of building has the advantage that in summer the natives can seek the shelter of the cave, where it is cooler than in the house; and, again, should the house be attacked, they could retire into the cave, the entrance being easy to defend.

That the dwellings are not all caves probably arises from the fact that there is not always sufficient space in the mountains for the many large chambers required to accommodate a number of people. The cave is the original dwelling; the house followed as an appendage. The hedged-in enclosure mentioned can be utilised as a shelter for cattle.

Near Tatuin I noticed, in passing, a rock cave that was merely an irregularly dug hole. It was inhabited.

In the mountains I discovered several of the same description, but uninhabited; being occupied in harvest time, when the dates and olives need guarding.

At Tujan I saw, excavated in the cliffs, several ancient caves with small terraces in front



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of them; they had long been abandoned as dwellings.

Lastly, I must touch briefly on a mode of building found on the plains, in the villages of Metamer and Medinin, and evidently deriving its origin from the cave.

Small, oblong, domed houses are built side by



BEDOUIN WOMEN GROUPED BEFORE THEIR HUT.

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side in a square, thus forming a complete citadel of exactly the same form as a cave dwelling; the plan of cave construction having been copied above-ground.

In Southern Tunisia there are numerous large villages, such as Hadeij, Lasheish, Ben Aissa, besides some smaller, as, for instance, Judlig, which are composed exclusively of cave dwellings.

Moreover, caves are found mingled with other dwellings in Beni Sultan, Smerten, and Sguimi.

Cave dwellings therefore prevail in the valleys, and real houses on the mountains.

Finally, the more primitive caves are found on mountain slopes, as, for instance, at Duirat.

The villages that consist of houses are of stone or sun-dried blocks of clay. They stand, as a rule, high on the mountains, and much resemble those of the Kabail in Algeria, or the ancient French villages on the mountains of Auvergne.

CHAPTER VII

FROM GABÉS TO THE OASIS OF EL HAMMA— THE SHOTTS

JUST after I had changed my clothes, the hotel waiter announced that a sheikh wished to see me, who, when ushered in, proved to be Mansur; following him came Hamed. They both looked so very serious that I feared something had gone wrong; but Hamed, observing my puzzled expression, whispered to me that Mansur had come to invite me to the wedding feast.

After I had returned Mansur's greeting, we both sat down, he on the bed cross-legged, I on a chair, while Hamed showed some tact by placing himself behind me to serve as interpreter, for Mansur understood little French.

After an interchange of compliments, which were indubitably sincere on either side, Mansur came to the point. His father, the Khalifa, had desired him to say, that if I would go to Hadeij and be present at the last great feast on the fifth day, he would regard it as a proof of my friendship for him and for the Matmata; that I should be treated

as a brother, and if I would remain there many, many years I should be welcome.

Mansur came again the following day to see me ; with him and Hamed I visited the villages of Jara and Menzel, where I intended making purchases for



AT GABÉS.

our National Museum, and therefore required their help.

In the great Sok (market-place) I bought agricultural implements, hoes and spades,—which were made under my eye,—one of the primitive ploughs and its harness of plaited esparto grass ; and, lastly, a collection of garments. Consequently there was

much noise and lively quarrelling, though it did not reach quite the same pitch as recently in Lasheish.

In the afternoon I took a carriage with the British Vice-Consul Galleja and his brother, Cesare Galleja, two exceedingly obliging men, and drove to the village of Menzel, as I wished to obtain some reliable information from an Arab there, about the marriage customs of the country.

On our return we met the Khalifa of Gabés, who told us he was also invited to the wedding at Hadeij, but had been obliged to refuse as he could not leave Gabés, General Allegro being absent; therefore in the interim, the government of the whole district fell entirely on himself. He advised me to take with me a small bridal gift, so the same evening I bought a fine haik.

The military officers at Gabés are nearly all unmarried. Those of the same grade mess together—that is to say, they engage a cook who provides for them.

The lieutenants of the 4th African Light Battalion and some other officers invited me to dine at their mess. We were altogether a score of men, and I spent a bright and pleasant evening amongst my new African friends; and made acquaintances which were to be renewed some days later in the south, whither several of them were immediately proceeding.

This was the first, but not the last, time that I while in these regions had the pleasure of replying to the toast of "To the Danish soldier," with "I drink long life to the French army," with whom I served eleven years ago when they were fighting in the south.

On the 22nd October, Hamed and I again left Gabés, starting with the dawn at 5.30 a.m., and proceeding this time in a westerly direction.

The Spahis had supplied me with a small but powerfully-built brown horse, capable of pacing between five and six miles an hour when so inclined. At first it wanted to hurry on, but I restrained it, and we walked past the village of Menzel, and traversed the palm groves, where the birds twittered, and the smoke from huts and tents rose to the tree-tops. It was bitterly cold, and we wrapped our burnouses closely about us. When we rode out of the oasis the sun had risen, and cast our shadows in long lines on the undulating golden-grey plain.

Far away to our right the rays of the sun were reflected from the whitewashed walls of a Marabout's tomb, built on a hillside. There also stood the *poste optique*, which is in communication with another on a mountain near Medinin, the southern military station.

We allowed our horses to break into a hand gallop that refreshed us in the beautiful morning,

as, with a keen sense of enjoyment, we followed the tracks that, with countless windings, led towards the west.

There was little vegetation ; the land lay before us barren and desolate.



IN THE MOUNTAINS—ON THE ROAD TO AIN HAMMAM.

Before reaching the summit of a slight rise we pulled up our horses to a walk, and presently looked back from the top of the eminence.

A haze hung directly over Gabés ; the palms of the oasis extended as far as the sea, and behind them glittered the bright waves. Away towards the south we could distinguish the blue peaks of

the Matmata mountains. Here and there on the plain blue-grey smoke rose into the air.

The heat of the sun became scorching, so we allowed our horses to go at foot's pace during the remainder of the way. In Africa one finds but two paces—a walk, or rather an amble, and a gallop; but on a long summer journey the gallop or canter is rarely used; Berber horses, therefore, are trained to walk fast. It is expected of a *cheval de la plaine* that he should be *un bon marcheur*, that is to say, that he can be depended on to cover his five or six miles an hour, and to keep up this pace the whole day long.

When we had ridden about a third of the way, we crossed the river; near it is an ancient well that has been used since the time of the Romans.

From the level of the ground was constructed a walled, paved, and inclined passage; this was covered in, and terminated at the spring, from which were built upright walls to the surface of the earth, forming the well. Thus the water can either be drawn from the top or carried up the steps.

During the next couple of hours we met only a few riders and pedestrians.

A mountain plateau of no great height now showed before us, but a little to our left. Towards the north it lost itself in the plain in a level slope, over which wound the track.

On the hill the soil was washed or blown away, leaving the barren flat rocks naked, and the horses had difficulty in keeping their footing amongst the large rough stones. In one place the path wound on either side of a small pile of stones. This heap was the length of a man, and lay east and west. Hamed informed me that it covered the remains of one who had been murdered on this spot many years ago.

After a time we reached the highest point of our day's journey, and came upon a magnificent view.

The foreground was composed of a level, stony slope of dull-yellow soil. Where it ended we saw a long, narrow, grey strip with a tufted border; this is part of the palm grove of El Hamma oasis. Beyond it, to the left—therefore to the south-west—ran a mountain ridge, and farther on the right was a shining level plain, somewhat white in appearance. This is the "shott" of El Fejej. It resembled the sea when dead calm, and seemed as though it had flowed thence to lose itself far away in the western horizon.

North of the "shott" the mountains tower up in successive tiers, the foremost, of a deep blue tint, contrasting sharply with the white flat surface of the "shott."

Beyond are paler blue peaks, and beyond

them again the vague outlines of far - distant mountains.

Shott Fejej is the most easterly of the "shots" that extend in a long line from the Sahara south of Biskra to the Mediterranean, thus covering a track of between two and three hundred miles.

It is only separated from the Mediterranean by Le Seuil de Gabés, a small strip of land about eleven miles wide.

A "shott" is low-lying land of which the soil is clay saturated with salt; this in the rainy season is flooded by the overflow of the rivers, and dries by evaporation. Seen from a distance, a shott has the appearance of a lake, but on approaching it one is disappointed to find that this glittering flat surface is only a crust of saltpetre.

Not only is travelling extremely dangerous on this sodden ground, but the shott is stifling hot in summer, and in winter bitterly cold.

Drummond Hay told me that at the beginning of the year, he, with only one servant and a guide, had ridden over Shott Jerid on his way from Kebelli to Tozer. Though warmly clad, he was nearly frozen, and his fingers could scarcely grasp the reins from the cold. The way lay along a narrow path, and on either side was bog; a single false step means death.

It is asserted that it is only in the centre of

Shott el Jerid that there is always water ; but this is not apparent, as it is entirely covered by a crust of salt, on which footsteps resound as they do when passing over a vault. The water naturally flows to the lowest level ; but when the wind blows, it sweeps the water in various directions over the salt crust ; this breaks under the weight, and the level is thus altered. At times there may be as much water in the shott as would reach to a horse's girths.

The crust is also occasionally forced up from below by water and certain gases, and, rising, forms small conical mounds, giving the impression of an impending volcanic eruption. These little mounds lie like islands on the sea ; but, in consequence of the reflection from the surface, appear to be hills of some height, and are visible for many miles around.

One of these, the largest, is called "Jebel el Malah" (the salt mountain). It is only some twenty paces in diameter, and scarcely a yard in height above the level of the shott, but looks from the distance like a fair-sized hill. In the centre of this hill of salt was formerly an old well, now filled up. It contained water of the same quality as that still found in several other wells in the shott, which is not more brackish than that found in the oases of the vicinity and considered drinkable.

The caravan roads traverse the shotts, leading from verge to verge amongst the oases. Some of these roads are very unsafe. The traveller has to be most careful to avoid being bogged, or plunged suddenly into a hole; as told of a whole Egyptian army, which, according to tradition, found here its grave. Step by step must the traveller work his way forward, perhaps through clouds of dust; whilst a mirage may rise to tempt and deceive him. Should his guide make the least mistake, or the camel or horse he rides step aside, all is over.

According to custom, usage, and agreement betwixt the tribes, the roads over the shotts are supposed to be defined by stones, or felled palm trunks, placed at distances of about a hundred yards apart; but in places these, which are called "Gmair," are missing; in others they are replaced by camel bones.

The Arabs relate frightful misfortunes that have befallen on these tracks. Whole caravans have been known to have been swallowed up by this treacherous earth crust, which at once closes over its prey.

The land amidst the shotts is *par excellence* the home of the date-palm. In the oases of Tozer and Nafta are found the best quality of dates known. This clear transparent fruit is sold at £6 the hundredweight. In El Hamma, on the other hand, the dates are not of the best quality, the oasis being too

near the sea, and the air, therefore, too damp. This explains what one hears of the dates of Gabés being sold at only twelve shillings the hundredweight, or one tenth of the price of those from Nafta.

Many authors and explorers, both ancient and modern, have imagined that in the basin of the shotts they had discovered the Triton sea of Herodotus, believing the river bed of Wad Malah to be the lower course of the Triton river, which connected that mysterious lagoon with the sea.

Though this hypothesis has never been proved, Raudaire, captain of the general staff, conceived in 1878 the bold project of reconstructing the old Triton sea, by leading water into the immense basin of the shotts. He thought it would be only necessary to dig through the eleven miles of the wide chalky tract near Gabés to form a large inland sea. From this scheme great advantages were to be gained. The southern French frontier would be protected by a natural barrier. The re-created Triton sea would soon be traversed by shipping, thereby leading to mercantile relations being established with regions and people hitherto unknown.

And what a change might result in the climate! The moisture would create fruitful stretches of land, where colonists would flock in numbers.

Alas! the project, vigorously supported at the outset by the Government, proved untenable after

further investigation in 1876. Raudaire's survey had not been accurate. The western shott did indeed lie twenty metres below the sea-level, but the immense shotts of "Jerid" and "Fejej" proved, on the other hand, to be as much above it; so that the canal would have had to be prolonged nearly one hundred and fifty miles, and even then only the first named of these shotts would be submerged.

This unfortunate revelation did not dishearten either Raudaire or his celebrated supporter, Lesseps; and, until the death of the former, in 1885, he—Raudaire—defended his project with an energy and determination worthy of a better cause, and in spite of the State having wisely withdrawn its support. Lesseps still visited the ground on several occasions, and positively asserted that at the cost of a hundred and fifty millions of francs the scheme was feasible.

From past events it is sad to note that great minds like Lesseps's often have recourse to dubious expedients when they desire to *lancer une affaire*.

All other learned authorities—geologists and scientific men, such as Parnel, Letourneux, Doûmet-Adamson, and others—had, long before, sharply criticised Raudaire's fantastic project, and declared that the sea had never in ancient times occupied the flats now filled by the shotts. Indeed, Cosson further maintained that had this proposed inland sea been successfully dammed, it would soon have

been imperatively necessary to fill it up again, so much opposed would it have been to the general interest.

All were, moreover, agreed that it was highly improbable that the climate would be influenced to any extraordinary degree; that, by admitting the water, millions of date-palms would be destroyed, and most of the springs which now fertilise the oases of the Jerid would be tainted and spoiled by the salt water, thus causing the ruin of the country; finally, the project would cost a thousand (in place of a hundred and fifty) millions of francs.

Lesseps's repeated assurances of the accuracy of his researches were received very coldly, though this was before the occurrence of the Panama affair.

Now the question is closed, and one hears nothing more of the company formed in 1882 by the great Frenchman, *pour la création de la mer intérieure*. The old man's prestige had been on the wane for some years already. Yet the day will come when the memory of his important works will obliterate the recollection of the errors of the evening of his life, and history will again grant him the title which is his due—that of “the great Frenchman.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE OASIS OF EL HAMMA

ON the southernmost border of this oasis lies a village built of sunburnt stones, and of which the narrow lanes were almost deserted when we passed through it.

The Khalifa lived on the outskirts towards the south, and when we arrived he was squatting on a stone bench that ran the whole length of the outer wall of his house. The shade was delicious beneath the eaves of the broad roof supported by two rows of felled palm-tree stems. I cannot help thinking that these were the origin of the pillars of the ancients, and suggested to the Egyptians the design for the columns of their temples, and, through them, those of the Greeks and Romans in their magnificent temple halls.

Around the Khalifa were sitting, standing, or lying, groups of loud-voiced men, all talking. He was holding a court of justice, which was attended with the wrangling, jostling and thrusting, usual on such occasions.

Crouched in front of him was a man, near whom

were a woman and child, and around them was gathered an interested, excited crowd.

The woman, with outstretched hands, addressed the Khalifa, speaking in a subdued voice and with the striking gestures peculiar to Orientals. She was immediately interrupted by the man, who shouted and gesticulated. Other men joined in. I saw arms and clenched fists in constant motion, and was deafened by the noise rising from every side.

The Khalifa, a man of about fifty, sat, mild and amiable, gazing at the crowd with his deep black eyes. His fine figure was slight and noble, and his features refined, with a slightly hooked nose and a full beard, through which his fingers were occasionally passed. Now and then a hidden fire flashed from his expressive eyes as he made a remark. Then the shouts of the crowd would moderate, but only for a moment, and again the storm broke loose.

At last it really grew too bad, and what I had expected for some time came to pass—one of the Khalifa's men punished the crowd with a stick. Some retreated a little, others remained calmly seated, and the inquisition recommenced, until again the demonstrations became too violent.

Our arrival interrupted this scene for a time. I was kindly received and shown to a dwelling on the first floor of a side wing.


When my baggage had been brought in, at his invitation I seated myself beside the Khalifa on his carpeted bench, where we partook of the "welcome" of coffee in tiny cups, whilst we discussed my journey and my motives in undertaking it.

The man, woman, and child remained unmoved all the time, and stared at us from the same spot where, probably, they had been for hours. She was old, ugly, and wrinkled, and gazed vacantly before her. The child, a pretty ten-year-old boy, looked inquisitively at me with his fine black eyes, whilst the man drew his hood over his head and hid his hands under his burnous, so that he appeared to be a mere white bundle.

Thus they sat, resigned to their fate, the men around keeping moderately quiet. If one or another became noisy, he was silenced by one of the Khalifa's attendants.

I begged the Khalifa to continue his judicial proceedings, and, after some hesitation, he did so, leaving me seated on his carpet, and going aside a little took his place beneath one of the pillars.

Whilst the flies swarmed in myriads about me, and the hubbub of men's voices buzzed in my ears, I leant against the wall and gazed before me. From the subdued light beneath the shade of the eaves my eyes scanned the sunlit plain which extended to the mountains. To the right the palm tops on the



southern edge of the great groves of the oasis quivered in the glittering light. Below them I perceived the brown tops of tents. Before me, close to a stone dyke which crossed the foreground, the plain was covered with long low mounds. On each of these stood, facing the east, a small flat stone, or a little dazzling white cupola. This is the cemetery, suggestive of a stone-strewn strand.

Among the graves sat in clusters some white peaked bundles. I imagined them to be people performing their devotions, but soon they moved, and I caught sight of an implement shining in the air above the white points, and was told they were men digging a grave.

Only a few hours earlier, in the tents below the palms, a man, still in the prime of life, died of the insidious fever of these regions, and was shortly to be buried.

When the brawling of the crowd around me was hushed, I heard a wailing sound as of hounds baying in the distance. No doubt the lamentations of the women.

The grave was soon ready, and some of the white figures strolled off to the village, the rest returning to the camp.

For about half an hour I sat gasping with the heat and endeavouring to keep off the flies with a palm-leaf fan.

The man, woman, and child were still before the Khalifa, but I hardly noticed any longer the loud tones of the bystanders. Not that they had ceased wrangling, but that my ears had grown accustomed to the sound. Now and again one of the sons came and conversed with me, but I begged to be left in peace.

At last came the funeral. Four men bore on their shoulders a bier, over which was thrown a burnous. The bearers hurried along, followed by some fifty men clad in white burnouses, and behind them as many women in dark dresses. From these arose sobbing cries in measured time.

The noise near me subsided a little ; some of the crowd wandered down to the plain to join the funeral, and gradually dispersed altogether.

The wailing of the women came distinctly to my ears, and in the centre of their group I saw a pair of white arms stretched to heaven.

Now the lamentations were stilled, and a death-like silence reigned during the midday hour ; only the buzzing of the flies was to be heard.

Taken aback by the sudden hush, I looked about me ; there still sat the man, woman, and child gazing over the plain.

The bier was now deposited on the ground. Around it crouched the glaring white figures, their hoods drawn forward and their hands covering their

faces, while the prayer for the dead was recited. The men appeared grief-stricken. Who could tell when Allah might call away another, or knew but what it might be his own turn to be summoned next morning ! For the fever raged distressingly in the oasis. So sounds of lamentation rose from the dark group which showed so sadly and so strikingly against the pale golden-brown of the plain and beside the gleaming white crowd of men.

“ He was so good, so proud, so strong, but yesterday.
Now he is dead, his wife is all alone,
Oh woe, oh woe, oh woe.
Now she grieves, his children and his friends weep.
Oh woe, oh woe,” etc.

While this wail rose from the sombre crowd, I saw white arms flung repeatedly heavenward.

The plaintive song increased in strength, till it sounded like a fearful howl, and I saw the women tearing their hair and scratching their faces. This lasted some little time.

Meanwhile the body was laid in the ground ; the men sitting around in silence and weeping, whereas the wail of the women resounded louder and yet louder.

When the prayers were ended, the men rose and returned home, each going to his work ; only a few remaining to fill up the grave.

A little later the women alone were left, but they had parted into two groups. In the one they

stood erect, and from these came wailings; in the other group the figures squatted on the ground, resting while their companions mourned.

The Khalifa returned, and again the original noisy mob gathered around him.

The women out there had meanwhile exchanged places several times to take their turn of wailing. At last, after a lapse of half an hour, they started homewards, going to the encampment where the dead man's tent was then being struck. Like a rag it lay on the earth, in token of the home being broken up, and not till later, when the first great grief had subsided, would it be raised again.

During this interval a meal had been prepared for me, so I retired to my room where it was delightfully cool.

Up a steep external stair I climbed from the yard to a room, and through that to another adjoining it, this last being very spacious. The roof was built of palm beams, laid one against the other, and supported in the centre by a pillar. The walls were whitewashed and lined below with rush matting, and the whole floor was covered with beautiful thick, soft carpets of great value. In one corner were cushions and pillows for a couch; in another our saddles, bags, and rugs were neatly arranged. A little window with an artistic iron grating overlooked the roof of the pillared verandah; this window was

fitted with a shutter which could be closed at will to keep out the light and the flies.

One of the Khalifa's sons kept me company whilst I ate.

After Hamed and the other attendants had consumed the remainder of the meal in the next room, I had the door and the shutter closed, and lay down in the half darkness for a mid-day nap. It was almost impossible to sleep on account of the noise in the verandah, but at last I dozed off.

Hamed woke me presently to tell me that there was a wedding in the oasis, and that if I wished to see the bride brought home I must hasten. So I started, together with some of the sons and dependants of the house. As we passed the cemetery I saw that the women had again gathered there, and could hear their lamentations, so I hurried on into the street, trying to shake off the mournful impression, before joining in rejoicings.

On the way I met an Arab who, with a good French accent, said, "Bon jour, Monsieur." It was one of the Khalifa's retainers, who now owned a little palm grove and home in the oasis, but who, some years ago, had served in the Algerian *tirailleurs*, and therefore spoke good French.

I was delighted with this new acquaintance, as through him I should be better able to make myself

understood than through my good Hamed, so I asked him to accompany me.

On the way he told me that he had served in Mexico and, later, in the war with Germany. He had been wounded on three occasions, and showed me his scars with pride. The last time he was wounded was in the battle of Gravelotte. He was afterwards kept a prisoner in a little town in Germany, and since had completed his long term of service in Algiers.

From the street we espied a man on the top of a palm tree behind a high wall ; he was busy gathering the date crop. I lingered to watch him, and when he discovered my presence he smiled amicably, and said something to my attendants about wishing to offer me some of the fruit. He really did climb down, and came to me with a bunch of remarkably good dates, which I accepted and sent to my quarters.

When we had passed the village we entered the palm grove. From every side people were streaming in ; men, veiled women, young girls, and children, all to see the bride taken to the bridegroom's dwelling.

The whole scene closely resembled what I witnessed a couple of days later, under better circumstances, in Hadeij. I will therefore restrict myself to mentioning that we saw her arrive in a closely

shut litter, borne on a camel, accompanied by some female relatives and a man who led the camel. Negro musicians headed the procession, which halted in an open space.

Then began a "fantasia" of horsemen, who galloped past us firing their muskets. They were richly dressed, and the horses' quarters were decked with brilliant silken coverings. But there were not many riders, neither did the "fantasia" last long. This, I was told, was because there was mourning in the oasis on account of the many deaths.

After the "fantasia" the bride was conducted into the town, through narrow lanes where the palanquin scraped between the walls of the houses, and down into a yard. Here the camel was made to kneel, and the girl, still closely veiled, was led into the dwelling of the man, who perhaps saw her that evening for the first time in his life.

Passing by the entrance of a small mosque I peeped in. It was cool and shady in the little room, the roof of which was supported on pillared arches. On the floor were rush mats, and in a corner were raised a few steps, whence the "Imam" speaks to the faithful. This stair was simply made of unpainted wood, not even ornamented with carving, as is generally the case.

Towards evening we visited another village,

rather more to the north. It was surrounded by palms, amidst which stood a little minaret attached to a mosque close to the market-place.

Between this and the village first mentioned there is an open piece of land, formerly occupied by a town, but now only encumbered with building materials.

In the vicinity, near some hot springs, are also the ruins of an old Turkish fort, now so insecure that no one ventures to live beneath its crumbling walls. It is said that the inhabitants had, as a matter of course, plundered the building of all its timbers and woodwork, and that consequently the walls hardly held together. Rusting amongst the fallen masonry lay a couple of cannon of antediluvian construction. The fort was evidently built to protect the springs, the water of which is warm, the highest temperature being about 113° Fahrenheit. The natives fetch the warm water in pitchers from the basin of the springs, and set it to cool for drinking purposes.

From the days of the Romans these springs have been known and esteemed as having great healing powers, and as such have been resorted to from most ancient times.

When we arrived in the neighbourhood of the village, we were greeted by the same cries of lamentation that we had heard the previous day

in the cemetery, and were told that the women were mourning over a bride, married only four weeks ago, who had just died of the fever. It seemed as though sorrow had overwhelmed the oasis, for wails rose on every side amidst the palm groves.

It was evening, and nearly dark, as we strolled back to the Khalifa's abode, where we found the meal ready. When I began to eat I could not find my knife, which I remembered having used at breakfast. I searched everywhere, but in vain; Hamed examined the saddle-bags, and then discovered that some pomegranates he had gathered in his garden and given to me were missing, and besides these, from a parcel of cigarettes two packets were gone. Thieves had evidently been at work.

We held a consultation as to what was to be done, and I decided to mention the theft to Ali, one of the sons. At the same time I wished to avoid telling the Khalifa of it, as I thought it might distress him to learn that his guest had been robbed. But I could not be entirely silent on the subject; amongst the Arabs a man must uphold his rights if he wishes to be respected.

As soon as Ali heard of the theft, he went straight to the guard at the gate, and asked him who had been up to the guest-room.

One person, it appeared, had carried a bunch of dates there at my request. This had been one of the Khalifa's own men, so the guard had not thought it necessary to prevent his going up.

Ali had, however, caught this same fellow some time ago stealing gunpowder, so he readily suspected him and hurried off to the man's dwelling, which was near at hand. Here he advised him to confess and at once restore the stolen property, and thus escape punishment.

This the fellow would not do, so Ali, assisted by others, searched the house, finding the knife and a packet of cigarettes. In the few hours that had elapsed since his theft, the ruffian had treated himself to five-and-twenty first-rate cigarettes and the pomegranates. The culprit was very soon thrown into prison, and there he remained when I left El Hamma on the following day. Whether or not he was set free after my departure, and whether the Khalifa ever learnt the story of the theft, I am ignorant.


It was late in the evening, near ten o'clock, and I was about to retire to rest, when Ali noticed that I had caught a slight cold. He insisted that I should at once go down to the wonderful healing waters of the warm spring, declaring that in a quarter of an hour I should be perfectly well.

It was pitch dark when Hamed, Ali, and I, carry-

ing lanterns, strolled through the village to the spring near the ruined old "Borj." We descended a stone stair which ended in a dark, paved lower room, from the opening into which steam issued into the cold outer air. By the light of the lantern I saw that the water rose within the room, through which it flowed, and was discharged through a small opening into a basin outside.

In the centre of the room stood a clumsy pillar supporting the roof, and surrounding the fountains were tanks built of stone. Within one of these lay the black figure of a negro. We requested him to move. This he was quite willing to do, but it took him a long time ; and we had to assist him, for he could scarcely walk, his legs being crippled with rheumatism. When we had taken him up to a chamber near the stone steps, and after letting the water run out for a little while, we undressed.

The room was full of choking hot steam, as in a Roman or Moorish bath ; I began to perspire before I got into the water. Counting one, two, three, I scrambled in. Over my whole body I felt an icy sensation, just as though I had plunged into cold water, but immediately after followed a feeling as of being scalded, and I sprang back on to the stone verge. Twice I repeated my endeavours to bear the burning heat of the water, but each time



had to jump out quickly; so I remained seated on the stones, throwing the water over my body, and even that I could hardly bear. The whole time I felt as though everything inside me were being boiled, and I perspired frightfully.

With Hamed it was the same, but he was able to remain longer in the water. But Ali astonished us by quietly enjoying himself sitting in the water, the temperature of which was at least 113° Fahrenheit.

After half an hour of this we dressed hastily, and went to the upper room that was thick with rising steam, but not nearly so hot as the lower one. Here, on the stone flooring, we sat closely wrapped in our burnouses, the hoods well drawn over our faces, to refresh ourselves by perspiration. Twice when I drew my hood aside, a clammy, cold, raw air seemed to strike my face. The lantern had been placed on the stone floor, and by its light, before I hurriedly covered my face again, I caught sight of four other figures lying huddled in their white burnouses.

Thus we sat for another half-hour chatting amongst ourselves, and to the negro. The other three men appeared to be sleeping. The negro told us that on a little donkey, his sole possession, he had ridden a great distance from beyond the island of Jerba, to be cured by this far-famed

spring. When he arrived about a fortnight ago he could not stand at all, but Allah had already assisted him, and now he was so much better that he could hobble about a little. Every day was wholly spent by him in the bath, or in this upper room. His food was dates and bread given him by charitable folk, as he, poor fellow, possessed nothing.

I gave him a couple of francs, with the wish that Allah would continue to help him so that he might entirely recover. Throwing himself on his side he sought my hand, and, not finding it, kissed my burnous, murmuring his thanks and praying that Allah would protect me on my journey; and, as long as I was within hearing, continued to repeat his good wishes.

We stepped out into the dark, and returned home nearly at a run, so as to avoid catching cold. Through the lanes we sped rapidly, the light dancing in Hamed's hand, and beside and after us the deep black shadows of our ghostly figures leapt along the walls, startling a little boy who met us, and who darted like a flash of lightning into a narrow side alley.

When I reached my room and stretched myself on my couch, I was conscious of an indescribable feeling of well-being. I felt quite refreshed, and all symptoms of indisposition had completely passed

away ; so I fell asleep, having had ample proof of the healing properties of the holy underground spring.

My friend, the old soldier, had said during the day that in the neighbouring mountain wild boar were always to be found in numbers, and that at the moment they were also lying near the river of El Hamma, about a mile away and close to the shott, for it had been a very dry season, and the boar had moved to the oasis in search of water, and taken shelter in the thickets and brushwood.

I had therefore agreed with the Khalifa's sons that the next morning at sunrise we would ride out and try for a shot at the boar, which at that hour came down to drink at the water pools.

I was pleased at the prospect of this hunt, and intended to try on the occasion an old flint lock given me by one of the Khalifa's sons.

Early next morning, before it was light, Hamed woke me, saying, "There will not be many men to hunt with you to-day. All the people have to go to the distant plains, some have already started, and others are preparing to depart ; for in the night an express courier arrived to report that rain had fallen in the west."

I at once told Hamed to say to the Khalifa that I gave up all intention of hunting, as I would not hinder his men from going to their work.

I said this knowing that it was a year and a day since rain had fallen, and that the prospects of the barley crop began to look serious; for it is only when the soil is wet that the corn will sprout; and Allah having had compassion on the people and sent rain, the men should start at once to plough the bare earth and sow the grain.

The rule is that the first arrivals at their destination have the choice of the best land, for, although each tribe possesses large tracts of the plains which, according to ancient custom, belong to them, the ground is common property, and the first-comer can take what he will and as much as he can manage to cultivate.

There was joy that morning in the oasis. Over two thousand men and women departed hastily in small caravans—some going far away to the country south of the western shott, others to the nearer lying plains. Only those who possessed neither camels nor horses remained, with the old men and some women and children.

Whilst dressing I heard the Arabs quarrelling below my window, just as they had done the previous day, and as, probably, they do every day since the Khalifa first held his court of justice in this place.

From the doorway at the top of the stone steps I inhaled the fresh morning air in full



draughts. Across the yard, where the horses were eating their fodder, I looked over the flat grey roofs to the palm groves. From some of the dwellings smoke was rising, and the murmur of many voices reached me.

The sun had just risen, and shone on the distant mountain tops, as I passed through the yard and the long dark gateway into the verandah. There, on his stone bench, was seated the Khalifa, calm, mild, and amiable. My eyes wandered amongst the rows of pillars and over the mob that surrounded him in the courtyard; a quarrelling, gesticulating, noisy crowd. He rose and, laying his hand on his breast, saluted me by bending his head. I did the same, and then we passed on together through the square between his house and the cemetery. His sons, assisted by the farm men and women, were there directing the departure of the last caravan.

From an open doorway in the long white wall came old women dragging heavy corn sacks, and men with wooden ploughs and rope harness. Other women brought water in great bullock skins, and all was bound securely on grumbling camels, amidst much loud shouting and talking; while, leaning against the wall and holding each other's hands, stood a row of half-naked children.

The Berber women are of fair complexion,

and wear the usual blue garb wrapped round the body, and fastened on the shoulders with silver pins, leaving their sides and throat visible. On their bare arms and legs they wear rings of silver, lead, or bone, and their nails are stained with henna. Many of them have good features and black eyes, and their movements are pretty and graceful.

There are other women, however, as smartly dressed, but whose dark colouring, coarse features, and ugly mouths bear witness to their foreign extraction. In these there is negro blood.

Later I expressed my astonishment at finding so many of the latter here. "They are more prolific than the other women," said Hamed, "therefore many men take them as handmaidens to have the more children, for children signify riches."

They are descendants of slaves brought by caravan from the Sahara *vid* Rhadamés. Officially there are now no more slaves; but, in fact, over the whole of Southern Tunisia, one finds numbers of negroes who are more or less closely bound to the households of the great proprietors. They are well treated, and therefore remain in their masters' houses, even though the French have declared that slavery has ceased to exist.

The costume worn by the negresses is the same as that of the Berber women, but their black wool is plaited in thick locks, that fall

over their foreheads, whereas the Berber women's hair is either hidden by a handkerchief or hangs loose like the front hair of our own women.

Gradually, as the camels were laden, they formed into groups, and then began the exodus. The men and most of the women were on foot, the former with muskets on their shoulders or knotted sticks in their hands. A few riders led the way on horseback.

Their path wound across the cemetery, amongst the graves, and out into the grey or ochre-yellow plains, where group after group disappeared.

Other caravans, small and large, came from the town or the palm groves, some of them traversing the road and travelling in another direction. We saw the crowd gradually fall into lines, and, winding over the plain towards various points, vanish out of sight.

The Khalifa returned to his seat in the shade, with the shouting mob about him, whilst the flies buzzed in the hot air.

On the plain the sand seemed to burn; the mountains quivered on the horizon, and the shott lay like a heated furnace far away to the north.

With my guide I went for a stroll through the oasis: first to the Jewish quarter, where I bought an article of dress, and then to the goldsmiths, who, in my presence, made anklets, ear-

rings, and bracelets of silver. Then we visited the blacks, who fashion large and small cooking utensils of clay without the aid of a potter's wheel. Next, a Jewish shop, where we secretly purchased a couple of bottles of palm wine. A visit to the coffee-house—the only one I saw—followed, where, amongst myriads of flies, we drank scalding hot coffee. On, again, to a man in the market - place, who made the loveliest fans of plaited palm leaves; and lastly to the basket-maker's shop, and to a weaver in his room.

Everywhere we were followed by an inquisitive crowd, who watched the interesting bargains.

When we returned we found the lieutenant and interpreter from the "Bureau de Renseignements" in Gabés had arrived, riding with their Spahis, to hold a court of inquiry. They had taken up their quarters in the guest-room, where they sat awaiting my return, and invited me to join them at their meal.

This Bureau corresponds to the "Bureau Arabe" of Algeria; but whereas the latter has the right of judging the natives, the former has no such right. They have but one means of control, but through this they, in point of fact, distribute justice almost equally well.

The officers, at the conclusion of the midday meal, would have to hold a court during all the

rest of the day, as they were obliged to return home the following morning. After a cheerful repast, I started on horseback at about two o'clock, intending to spend the night on the plain, near a well. The Khalifa, who naturally had few people at home, excused himself from sending a guide with me, but the officers declared that alone we should be unable to find our way to Hadeij on the following day. They represented this to the Khalifa, saying he must find a guide, and I heard a loud discussion on the subject, and caught an expression in the usually mild eyes of the Khalifa, which I had never seen before.

In Gabés I learnt later that the Khalifa had in his youth been the finest horseman, the boldest soldier, but also the most notorious horse-stealer imaginable. With his weapons in his hand he went off, far away to strange and unfriendly tribes, to rob and plunder. In fact, his forays sometimes extended as far as the regions about Tunis. That these encounters did not always take place without a fight, may be realised when one learns that the Khalifa boasts of having had sixteen horses shot under him.

The officers having promised to send a guide after us to the well, we said adieu and rode off. The mild Khalifa's sly glance rested on me as I shook him by the hand on taking leave.

CHAPTER IX

OVER AGLAT MERTEBA TO THE MATMATA MOUNTAINS

OVER a slightly undulating plain with mountains on either side, we rode for some distance in the intense heat. On the way we met a Spahi from the Bureau at Gabés, followed by a boy. Hamed was pleased to see a comrade, and lingered to talk to him. It appeared that the Spahi should by rights have been at his post near Aglat Merteba, where we were to stay the night, but our friend the Khalifa of El Hamma had sent him no provisions for three days, and, driven by hunger, he had been compelled at last to desert his post to seek food. He was then on his way to El Hamma to meet his officers, who, he knew, were to be there.

On account of the cholera, which, though then decreasing, had recently raged in the south, especially in the oasis near the shott, in Nafta, and in the yet more northerly Gofsa, a cordon of Spahis had been established to prevent communication between not only the infected and the healthy regions of Tunisia itself, but also with the frontier of Tripoli. Meanwhile cholera broke out amongst the Spahis, who were then mostly


recalled; but on the particularly menacing roads to the oases on the coast, some posts had been left, especially near the wells, to prevent wayfarers from the stricken districts from penetrating farther.

The plain extended on every side. The mountain to our left rose higher, that to the right retreated in a westerly direction. But far away to the south we could perceive the blue outlines of the Matmata mountains. We passed a dead camel, picked clean by the jackals, and paced quickly along the track, over stony ground, or on the dry golden-brown plain, where there was no vegetation worthy the name.

It was just sunset when we saw before us, in a hollow by a river bed, two small dark peaks. These were empty tents belonging to the Khalifa, and under which the Spahis and herdsmen had lately been encamped.

Now there was not a living soul to be seen. The tattered canvas of the empty tents was supported by weak poles and pegs. Broken pottery, esparto straw, and refuse were scattered untidily about. We drew water out of the paved well in the only water-skin we had. From this both ourselves and our horses drank, for there was no water-trough, and we had brought neither bottles nor pitchers, expecting to find the camp occupied.

A small caravan of some half-score camels came



by, travelling northwards. The drivers fetched a little water, whilst their beasts continued on their way.

We secured our horses to pegs, each by the off foreleg, and gave them a little alfa straw, as there was no barley, and it would be late ere the guide, who was to bring some, could arrive. Then we spread our rugs in the open air between the tents, and prepared to enjoy our evening meal of dried meat and bread. After it was over I lit a cigarette, and lay down, whilst Hamed slumbered. The moon was rising, and I listened to the horses grazing and a cricket chirping. Thus a long time passed. Once a bird flew over the hollow, otherwise no sound broke the stillness of the night. It turned very cold, so I put on, besides my burnous, the haik I brought as a gift to the bridegroom, and, wrapping myself up, lay down in one of the tents, which, though open at the side, protected me from the rays of the moon, for, in the south, sleeping in the moonlight causes illness—so say the Arabs at least.

I had dozed an hour, when I was roused by the neighing of our horses. I looked out, but there was nothing to be seen. Hamed also rose, but could not discover anything. So we lay down again, using our saddles as pillows, but soon heard footsteps, and a voice speaking. It was the guide, who had trudged all the way, carrying a little

barley for our horses. When we had fed them we gave the guide some bread, as he had only dates with him, and then tried to sleep again. We were disturbed once more by the Spahi returning from El Hamma. From him I learnt that he had complained to the officers, who had reprimanded the Khalifa—the mild, amiable Khalifa.

Before daybreak Hamed and I were in our saddles, and pacing along in the wake of our guide, who, closely wrapped in his burnous, led the way with long strides.

At dawn we passed a mound that was completely covered with stones, and somewhat later we came upon other knolls, shaped like tumuli, and also covered with stones.

“Those,” said Hamed, “are ruins from the time of the Romans.”

On the plains we saw herdsmen driving their cattle. In one spot, lines in the form of a large square had been scratched with a stick on the hard surface of the earth. These are drawn by the herdsmen about their cattle, when they collect them for the night, that jackals or other wild animals may not venture to attack them—at least, this was Hamed’s explanation.

As the distance from the mountains to the south and south-east decreased, we passed various tracks leading to several dry torrent beds; these were the

paths from Gabés to the mountains. Far away to the south appeared a faint blue line at the base of



REARING.

which I knew were the villages of Tujud, Zaraua, and Tamezred.

At seven o'clock it began to grow hot. Our guide threw his burnous over his shoulder, and,



placing his staff at the back of his neck, grasped the two ends with outstretched arms. Thus he stepped briskly forward over the uneven stony ground, or on the flat hard clay surface, that was riddled with holes by the jerboas.

In the quivering sunshine we saw herds of sheep and goats grazing in charge of a guardian.

After again crossing a couple of dry water-courses we reached once more the vicinity of the mountains. Before us lay a valley, in the distance were palms and olives, and far away at the highest part of the valley a single upright palm. This the guide indicated, saying it was our destination; as Hadeij, the end of our journey, and where we were expected for the wedding feast, was not far thence.

I now dismissed the guide, who said he would return in a direct line across country to El Hamma. His white figure was soon left far behind us, as we rode down the valley with the mountains on either side. To our right I was told there was a little cave village. I did not distinguish it, but we passed the palm and olive trees belonging to the inhabitants.

On the slope of the hill farther on, still to our right, lay the village of Judlig—that of many women.

At last we came to a torrent racing into a broad valley, and knew that we were nearing Hadeij. The bottom of the valley was uneven and furrowed, and scattered with palms with fan-shaped crowns.

CHAPTER X

BRIDAL FESTIVITIES IN HADELJ

Down the mountains and over the hills and valleys flocked the people in numbers. Amongst them were a few riders carrying guns and making their horses curvet along the path, marked by a dust cloud. Burnous-clad men straggled along in small or large parties, which showed at first as mere white patches on the mountain side, but grew larger and more distinct as they drew near. Women in bright clothing and mounted on donkeys came from their villages, accompanied by their husbands and children; other women were afoot, wrapped in red, yellow, or blue draperies; the midday sun lighting up the trinkets on their arms and ankles.

All these groups made for the cave in the valley—the Khalifa's village. A couple of his men came riding to receive me; they closed up the troop with Hamed, and other guests overtaking us swelled our train, so that almost unconsciously I found myself at the head of quite a little cavalcade; the horses snorted as their hoofs beat the ground and raised

the whirling dust, and the clink of spurs and the sound of voices reached my ear.

There was an air of festivity about the riders behind me, as, with the hoods of their fluttering burnouses flung back, they hurried along to the feast, passing the parties on foot, who drew aside as the horsemen trotted merrily past, their restive steeds curveting and snorting as they emerged from the shade of the palms into the sunshine.

When the dust-clouds had subsided, we halted under some olive trees, where the Khalifa sat surrounded by male friends and neighbours. Here I dismounted, and saluting first amiable old Sid Fatush, who received me most cordially, I then shook other outstretched hands and received their welcome.

On the open square which I knew so well, were raised camel's-hair tents for the reception of the numerous guests. Outside these the horses and mules were tethered. No women were visible; they remained in the caves, but hundreds of men moved about, or sat in groups with upraised guns, whilst a swarm of romping boys clustered around them.

Guests were continually arriving; they kissed the Khalifa's hand, and greeted one another. Many of these dark-eyed, fine-featured men were known to me, and I heard incessantly the salutation of "Salam," to which the reply is "Salam alikum."

I felt secure and proud of my position as a friend of these mountaineers, and of knowing that, though the only Christian here amongst the "faithful," I was safe, thanks to the Khalifa's influence and protection.

Most of the men were clothed in the ordinary white burnous, or the brown toga-like haik, draped about them in picturesque folds; but others, especially the riders and those who intended performing the "powder-play" on foot, had discarded these garments and assumed silken costumes of golden, green, or blue embroidered gala burnouses with wide sleeves. A very few wore the ordinary burnous or the haik over their silk attire.

My good friend Belkassim was the only person present, as far as I could see, in old, worn, or ragged clothes; his upper garment resembled a frock coat. But he had to supervise the horses and mules of the guests, and I saw him hard at work, dragging them about, scolding and dealing blows right and left in his efforts to make room for the numerous animals.

His duties were evidently those of a marshal, and he did not spare the stick with which he made play at times amongst the idle lads who were heedless of his directions. Though very busy, he found time to give me a look and a warm greeting.

The bridegroom, Mohammed, was not visible, neither was he mentioned. According to custom, he kept himself concealed with his closest friends.

Mansur was not at home, having gone to fetch the bride; so Amor was the only one of the Khalifa's sons who bade me welcome.

I was shown to my quarters in the guest-cave, and our horses were stabled in the cave passage, as on my first visit. A first-rate gala dinner refreshed me; the table being laden with dishes and bowls of well-cooked food, which I relished with the good appetite of a hungry man. The Khalifa himself came to look after me during my meal, followed by an inquisitive mob who crouched round the cave, darkening the entrance.

The onlookers remained silent while the meal lasted, and when it was over were hustled out, and I ordered Hamed to post himself at the door and forbid ingress to each and all, as I desired to change my dress and attire myself in my festal costume—a white linen suit.

When this was done, Hamed entered, leading by the hand a sprightly eleven-year-old lad, who addressed me in pure French, and was introduced by Hamed as his little brother Ali, who was invited to the festival, and had arrived with his mother and sister from Gabés, having ridden thence on a donkey.


Ali attended a French school at Gabés, and, being a bright intelligent lad, had soon learnt to talk fluent French. He told me that the Khalifa had

said he might come and ask if I would employ him as interpreter.

I was much pleased with this acquisition, and during the hour which remained before the bride's arrival, and the consequent commencement of festivities, occupied myself, with little Ali's help, in gathering information on the subject of the wedding customs in the Matmata mountains, which enabled me to more fully understand what I witnessed later in the day, and thus add to the knowledge I had already acquired from both Mansur and Amor, and from several others of the better class of mountaineers.

And here I will diverge a little to describe the ceremonies that had preceded this last great function ; and, in the meantime, my readers may picture to themselves the crowd eagerly scanning the mountains to espy the expected little caravan led by Mansur, who was to bring home the bride ; the guests steadily increasing in numbers, and the bridegroom in his hiding-place, listening to the sounds of rejoicing, and perhaps dreaming of his bride-elect ; whilst muskets were being loaded, locks examined, horses saddled, women adorned, and the bridal chamber made ready.

On his son Mohammed's behalf, the old Khalifa discussed the necessary arrangements with the bride's father, who is one of the tribe of Uled Sliman. The



marriage is then concluded, but by merely a civil contract. Before the bridegroom can be left in peace with his second wife, there must be much *feu de joie*, many songs sung, quantities of kus-kus eaten, and many preparations made in both the bride's and the bridegroom's homes. In the latter especially, where festivities must be kept up for eight days, men and women vie with each other in making ready for great rejoicings.

It was, as my readers may remember, eight days earlier, on the 17th October, that I had witnessed the festival of the opening day. At first the women had been mainly occupied in collecting wheat and barley to be ground in their small stone hand-mills, many people being expected; so there was much work that had to be done, but joy and festivity would reign in Hadeij, so the village women met in the evenings and tried to surpass each other in improvising songs.

Whilst the chorus and joyful "Yu, yu" re-echoed in the still evenings, the men, as we have seen, sat in groups listening to the songs of the women, the negro comic singers, and the noisy drums and clarionets. Now and again there would be the flash of powder and report following report, all tokens of universal rejoicing.

The two first fête days are called "Faraja." The third, "El Henna," is so named after the plant, the

leaves of which stain red the nails on the hands and feet of the women. A young bride must never be without this beautifying preparation in her new home, and every day she must adorn herself to please and attract her husband.

On the fourth day, "Nugera," the women again assemble and work and sing, busying themselves with preparations for the festival.

At last on the fifth day, "Mahal," the rejoicings begin. The tribesmen and women arrive to devour enormous quantities of various kinds of food, in addition to their well-loved "kus-kus." The negroes dance, sing, and earn much money, as they are never overlooked by either host or guests.

The next morning, that is, of the sixth day, called "Follag," the men begin by again revelling in "kus-kus" and meat dishes; they require to be well fed and strengthened, for in the evening after sunset they must sally out to collect wood for fuel. They return in the early morning, and then the women's turn comes, when they will make their last and greatest effort to render the bridal banquet worthy of the occasion, and to do credit to themselves and to the Khalifa. Many oxen and some score of sheep are slaughtered, for no festive occasion passes without every man gorging until he is almost unfit to move.

The seventh day, "El Kesuar," is appointed for

the presentation to the bride of her dresses and ornaments. In this case this honourable commission was entrusted to Amor, the Khalifa's second son.

Soon after midday he swung himself into his saddle and led the way, followed by some ten horsemen and a number of men on foot. The latter led mules laden with the bridal gifts. On the way the riders galloped in wildest "fantasia," riding gallantly as they proceeded towards the bride's home on the other side of the mountains, whilst muskets were discharged, and the smoke of the gunpowder rose amongst the hills. The negro musicians, who accompanied them, played on their flutes and beat their drums to warn the Uled Sliman of the approach of the people from Hadeij.

These are expected, and a festal welcome prepared in the village; for there also, during many days, great preparations have been made, the tribe being proud that little Mena should go to Hadeij as bride to the Khalifa's son.

What a crowd there was the other evening, when, after sunset, she stepped from the cave into the open court, shy and timid, to allow herself to be seen by the men of her homestead, who had gathered on the top of the bank, whence they could see down into the deep courtyard to where the light flickered from the candle she carried, and where her shadow wavered on the perpendicular walls. For the last

time they looked on her maiden form and beautiful features, and could not but acknowledge that little Mena was a fitting bride for Mohammed, son of the Khalifa of Hadeij.


The previous day the village women of the Uled Sliman sang the live-long day—morning, noon, and night their joyful songs arose from the caves.

There was no more work to be done. Enough food was provided for their own tribesmen, and for the strangers who were to come and fetch the bride.

After Amor and his men have done honour to the Uled Sliman by the “fantasia” on horseback, they are led into a cave, the residence of the bride’s father. Here they hand over the lovely clothes, and are regaled with roast and stewed meats.

Before leaving, they pass into another room, where the women have ranged themselves along the walls, each seated on her own “senduk” (chest). On the head of every woman they place pieces of money, intended for the negress who will adorn the bride, for she must have encouragement and be paid in ringing coin to embellish the bride, that she may prove attractive in the eyes of her future husband.


Not until after sunset does Amor return to Hadeij, where again the musket shots re-echo and the negroes dance and play, richly rewarded by the spectators.



In the village of Uled Sliman there is also feasting: the last great festival before the little girl leaves her home for ever, for next day she must bid farewell to all those who have been so good to her, to become the wife of a stranger, a man with whom she may be scarcely acquainted, except by name. But she probably dreams of her coming prosperity, and of him who will shortly be her husband and master. Lucky for her if she does not dwell on the thought that perhaps in seven, eight, or even fewer, years,—when she is faded, old, and ugly,—she may become a beast of burden, and make way for another and more youthful woman, whom she may gratefully welcome as a help in her work.

But we will not overshadow a happy hour with such forebodings. Sorrow may come early, but, possibly, never!

At dawn of the final day, called "Sjiffa" (a canopy), all were early afoot in Hadeij. During the previous evening, and late into the night, guests kept arriving from distant regions, and more would arrive that day. People had been invited from all the villages in the Matmata mountains—first and foremost, those of Uled Sliman, but also from Ras-el Ned, Beni Sultan, Tujan, Smerten, Beni Aissa. Many hundreds would assemble, and, with the men, women, and children of Hadeij, between one and two thousand would be present.



In the Khalifa's house, in all the caves, and in the tents, the guests were fed in the early morning. Belkassim had his hands full, taking care that everyone had his appointed place.

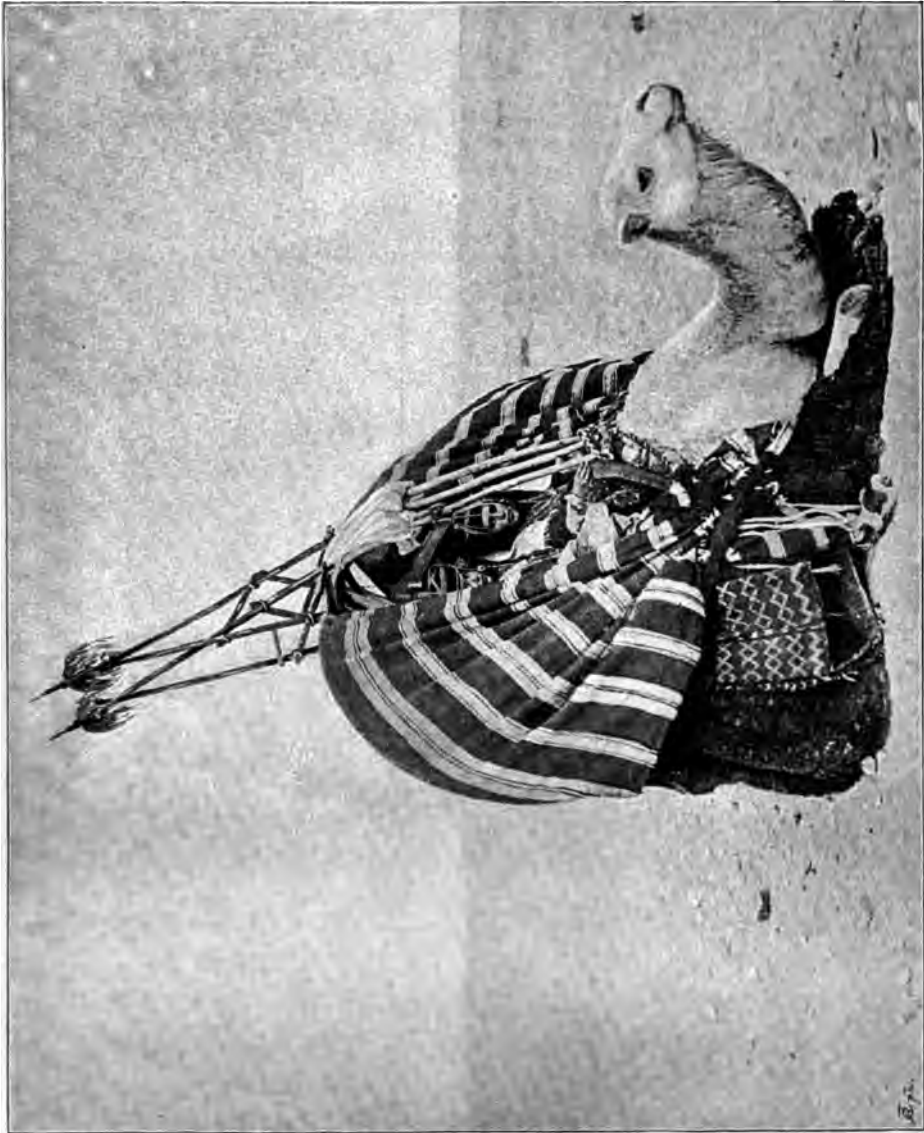
The meal soon being finished, the people flocked to watch Mansur start with the canopy (Sjiffa) perched on the bridal camel. He rode a donkey, and was accompanied by both horsemen and men on foot, the latter firing off muskets and performing the most graceful and joyous "fantasia," whilst the negroes played gaily on flutes and tambourines as they disappeared amongst the mountain paths.

But we must glance at the home of the bride, where Mansur is expected to arrive some hours later.

The father of the bride had given a banquet to the men, women, and children, and even to the negroes, followed by much *feu de joie*.

Towards midday, when the bride has been adorned, and only waits to be fetched, the men of her tribe enter, and each lays his mite on her head. All is for the negress who has dressed her and striven faithfully that the result may be superlatively impressive.

But hark! The report of guns is heard in the distance, the men from Hadeij are coming. Haste, oh, Uled Sliman, to receive them, for the powder speaks, the clarionets shrill, and the tom-toms boom incessantly.



10



CAMEL WITH CANOPY.

Behind me rose a rampart of earth, banked up about the palm trees ; it was tightly packed with rows of men ; and above this white crowd the palms towered into the air. Farther off the crowns of other palms and olives were visible, scattered here and there over the valley of which the horizon is bounded by blue mountains. Clinging to the tops of the neighbouring palm trees I saw boys, who had climbed there for a better view.

Behind the men stood groups of women ; amongst the former were the negro musicians, and beside these were men in silken apparel and carrying muskets, in readiness to perform the gun dance (or powder-play).

Far to the left, on an open space between two roads, were gathered a number of horsemen, clothed in flowing garments and with their silver-inlaid guns held pointing upwards, prepared to spring forward at a given moment and pass us at flying speed.

To the right, the ground rose in a gentle incline to the caves in the bank.

It was hot at the midday hour, and the sun burnt scorchingly in the valley, but the attention of all was strained watching for the long-expected procession, so no one noticed the heat.

The flutes, clarionets, and drums began to play. The boys started running across the open space, followed and driven back by Belkassim and his

assistants, and roundly abused even by the Khalifa himself; for the space had to be kept clear for the horses to gallop over.

Suddenly the sound of gun-shots was heard coming from the opposite groups. The smoke rose amongst the palm leaves, and then I saw men beautifully dressed and wearing red caps and full white trousers, performing the gun dance, either two or four at a time.

Two men sprang forward from the group. The first rested his cheek on his gun, aimed at his companion, and danced round in a circle with little tripping steps, still steadily sighting the other, who, opposite to him, danced in the same circle, the butt end of his gun held in a similar position. Thus they tripped from side to side, keeping with their guns a steady aim at each other. Then, suddenly, a report sounded from the two guns simultaneously. The dancers then sprang round to the staccato and nasal notes of the clarionets, now playing in quicker time. One of the men threw his musket up in the air to catch it again as it fell, the other whirled his whizzing round in his hand. So they danced for a while, and then dropped into slower measure, aiming at each other as at first, and ending by abruptly vanishing amongst the crowd to reload their guns, whilst others danced forward and the firing was repeated.

Two and two, aiming at each other, four men danced in a circle; as they tripped from one side to the other, reports re-echoed and guns whirled in the air. The sun gleamed on silver-inlaid weapons, on the dust, the dazzling white burnouses of the men, on the women, the palms and the olive trees, whilst the music's monotonous nasal clamour resounded hideously.

Then the riders to the left stirred into activity. Two men started their horses at a gallop, forcing them along at furious speed. Like lightning they approached, the riders leaning towards each other so that their heads pressed cheek to cheek. Their caps seemed one red spot, their two faces were not distinguishable the one from the other. The rider on the right held his gun in his right hand, the other in his left, and as they galloped they swung them to and fro and up and down in the air. When they were quite in front of us, just outside the group of dancers, one of them fired his gun into the ground and the other into the air, then they parted, galloping quickly back to join their ranks.

Other horsemen followed in the same fashion.

In El Hamma I had noticed some riders whose horses had silken coverings flowing over their quarters, but here I saw none.

Some thirty horsemen came forward in turn to take part in the powder-play. The dancing group

did not cease firing when the riders passed; the flutes and clarionets wildly intermingled their din—it was deafening. But the riders' prowess was a beautiful sight. Some of them had no guns and only galloped past; one carried, hanging by his saddle, a splendid long silver-mounted sword, resembling our own old Viking swords. This I was to see used later, during the bridal ceremony.

After some time passed in this way, I heard the sound of other flutes and drums. The dancers and riders redoubled their exertions, for at last the bridal procession was on the point of arriving.

Mansur on his mule came riding into the square, and was nearly trampled on by the "fantasia" riders.

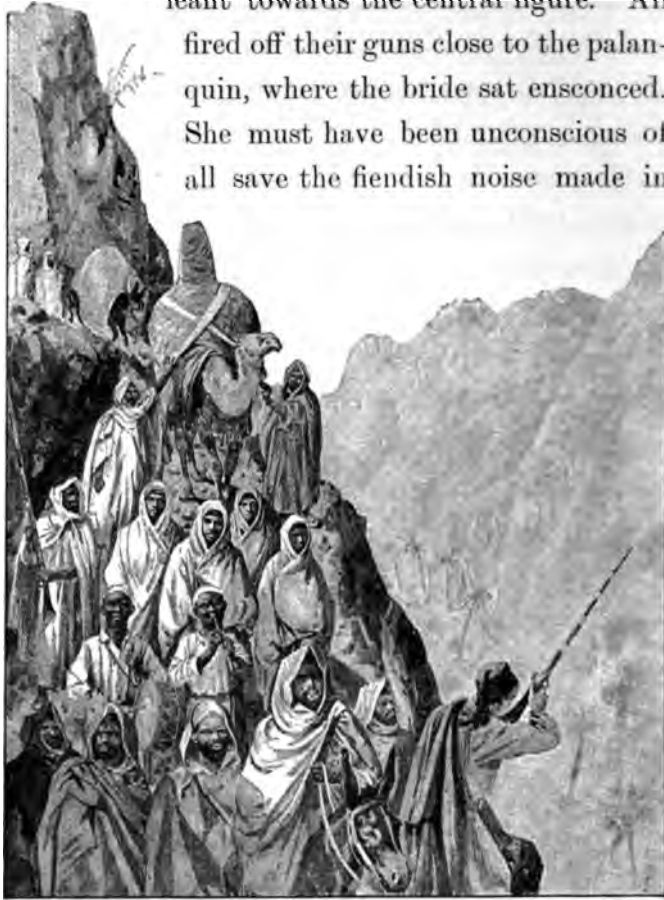
After him followed the camel with the canopy. It was led forward by men on foot, others supporting the palanquin on either side as it swayed backwards and forwards.

Behind the camel came some women, and the procession was closed by a mule laden with dresses and gifts.

Just as the camel was about to halt beneath the shade of the palm trees in front of me, two horsemen came tearing up. They fired their guns quite close to the canopy. Their horses reared, and I saw their forelegs right up in the air as the guns whirled over the men's heads.

At short intervals other riders followed, some

singly, others in couples, or even three riding side by side. In the last case, the two outside riders leant towards the central figure. All fired off their guns close to the palanquin, where the bride sat ensconced. She must have been unconscious of all save the fiendish noise made in



THE BRIDE ESCORTED OVER THE MOUNTAINS.
(From a sketch by Knud Gamble.)

her honour, and the unpleasant rocking motion produced by a camel's action.

The horsemen returned to their starting-point

after each gallop. The red and gold canopied palanquin with its pointed top was now just in front of me. The music continued, and the clatter of the horses' hoofs, and of shots fired into the ground; whilst the spectators in their white burnouses stood almost motionless, enjoying the beautiful sight. The sun shone brightly, and many drew their hoods over their heads to protect themselves from its rays, and the horses were white with foam from excitement and heat.

Behind a couple of the horsemen, a stark-naked negro lad, bestriding a little jennet, came galloping up. He waved his arms and gesticulated wildly with a stick, using it as a gun. Alas! the mule stopped suddenly, sticking his forefeet into the ground. The negro lad, with an indescribable grimace, threw his arms about its neck. The mule reared with a bound; the lad clung fast and anxiously to its neck as he still hung on, but was fated to fall, for the mule finally plunged to one side, pitching the naked boy on to the sand. For the first time I saw the spectators smile, some even laughed aloud. The mule trotted off towards the hills, followed by the shouting lad, whose unclothed form was covered with dust.

Such clowns often appear on the scene during a festival; the part always being played by a negro.

The black boy must soon have caught his mule,

for a few minutes after his first performance he again rushed by to repeat his uncouth "fantasia."

After the palanquin had been present at the "powder-play" for about half an hour, it was conducted towards the caves. The "fantasia" being at an end, all the people followed the bride; some going before, some behind the camel, and others alongside of it. The whole ground seemed sown with a crop of burnouses.

The Khalifa rode up and gave directions to Hamed and Ali as to where I was to be placed during the remainder of the function.

We took a short cut back to the Khalifa's house, where I was stationed on a chair, over the entrance gate through which the bride would pass.

From my commanding position I looked down on the spot where the women sat and sang to me on my first evening.

Gradually more and more men and boys arrived, till the slopes were crowded. In front of the gate was Belkassim, the ubiquitous Belkassim, keeping back the boys with his marshal's stick. Amor was there also, and a little later the Khalifa arrived on his mule. These kept a small space clear near the gate. Pressed together close beside it was a group of girls, mostly half-grown; in their light-coloured clothes they were very effective. They chaffed one another as they watched for the advent of the bride. By



FANTASIA.
(From a sketch by Knud Gamborg.)



chance one of them looked up and caught sight of me ; in an instant she had imparted her interesting discovery to the others, and many a pretty, roguish, or inquisitive glance was cast on me. When I nodded to them, they tittered, and the biggest girl withdrew the kerchief from before her face.

The Khalifa on his mule had enough to do keeping order. His angry voice thundered not only at the boys, but also at the men who pushed forward to have a look.

At length the musicians and the red-topped palanquin came in sight. Gun-shots exploded all around. Four negroes appeared, tripping along with a swaying motion from their hips, and playing, two on drums, and two on clarionets ; the music shrieking hideously over the hill. Behind them came the palanquin, followed by the mule with the gifts.

A short distance from the gateway they halted, and the camel was ordered to kneel. The obstinate beast refused ; supported by the men, the palanquin swayed from left to right. Poor little Mena : you were to be worried yet a little longer before you were to be allowed to leave your cage.

At last the men succeeded in making the camel kneel and in binding its foreleg, its complaining roar mingling with the rest of the infernal din.

The negress stood beside the palanquin, and I saw that she conversed with the captive—perhaps

seeking to reassure her. She stretched her black arm beneath the canopy to pass in a finger-ring which Amor handed her. It was evidently a wedding present, but whether from Amor himself or from his brother, the bridegroom, I was unable to ascertain.

In the meanwhile, on the small clear space in front of the gate, a carpet had been spread, and on it a mattress, on which was placed a large flat pan filled with sand.

The men busied themselves stripping the palanquin of its canopy of hangings and kerchiefs, and when this was done they lifted down the closely veiled bride and set her on the ground. The negress took her by the hand and led her within a couple of paces of the edge of the carpet, where they remained standing. Round it some men had stationed themselves, holding unfolded burnouses spread above their heads, so that carpet and mattress were hidden from view.

I could not understand what these preparations could portend, and asked Hamed. He explained, in a whisper, that some small boys were to be circumcised, and pointed out three men each holding a child in his arms. These children were from two to four years old : one of them was little Hamed, the bridegroom's son by his first wife ; another, Amor's son Mahmud ; and the third little boy was also a relative.

The children wore red caps with tassels richly adorned with gold and silver ornaments, and, so far as I could make out, chains hung about their ears and necks. They were dressed in coloured coats, below which appeared white shirts and bare legs encircled by anklets. The two elder children cried incessantly, as if they knew what awaited them, but the youngest smiled and looked about him.

The music in the meantime drowned the screams of the small boys. Belkassim disappeared beneath the coverings, and one of the small boys was carried in. After a time he was brought out, fainting, and was taken to the cave; the other boys followed in the same manner.

During this ceremony, which lasted at least twenty minutes, the bride stood, closely veiled, by the carpet. Extending her right hand, decked with gold and silver rings, she took some leaves from a basin held by a negress and strewed them over the covering, and, whilst the music played and the drums boomed, I saw the slender little arm continually moving to and fro sprinkling the "henna" leaves above the boys and men.

At last the boys were taken away, and the carpet, etc. removed. The maiden bride had fulfilled the first of her duties—she had blessed the ceremony. The children being now purified, in token thereof water-coolers were broken on the ground. I observed

also that chopped eggs and a great quantity of food were distributed to the assembled children.


The scene I had just witnessed was so full of charm, and, above all, so impressive, that for a moment I was almost awed by its solemnity.

At the end of the enclosure the crowd kept moving restlessly backwards and forwards, endeavouring to see what was going on, for the bride was about to enter her house.

Mohammed's first wife, closely veiled, came forward, and, taking her rival by the hand, led her into their dwelling. On the other side of the bride walked the negress, who for the last time, after many years of loving care, directed her little Mena's footsteps. On her head was held a little mirror, whilst she herself grasped with her right hand the hilt of a long, straight, double-edged sword, the point of which, carried foremost, was borne by a man. "Beware! Ill befall those who would injure this pure young woman; the sword would avenge her!"

Thus, to the screaming of the music, the young bride entered the gate.

As soon as the door had swung-to on its creaking hinges, guns were discharged in every direction with a deafening noise, and I was compelled to abandon in haste my exalted seat, for the smoke nearly choked me as the men and boys fired wildly in front of the gate.



It was then past noon, and there ensued a pause in the festivities, the musicians requiring rest, being expected to play with renewed vigour in the evening.

The numerous guests were fed in the dwellings and tents. Before the meal the people collected in groups under the trees, and friends and acquaintances conversed together. The Khalifa, who sat surrounded by the sheikhs of the villages, requested me to seat myself near him.

Several of these men were known to me, and I thanked them for their hospitality ; others invited me to their villages. I replied that time was short, and I must hasten over the mountains and on to Medinin on the plains ; so on this occasion they must excuse me, for I could not accept their invitation.

“ But you have visited Judlig, Ben Aissa, Tujud, Zaraua, and many other villages in our land. You accepted the invitations of their sheikhs—wherefore, then, will you not also visit Beni Sultan ? ” said the sheikh of that village. “ Come to our ‘ Ksar, ’ and if you will remain a long time you will be welcome.”

I explained that I had to go all the way to Medinin, where I was expected, but the sheikh would take no refusal, and the Khalifa put in his word, saying—

“ You can ride to-morrow to Beni Sultan, and eat ‘ kus-kus ’ there ; thence you can go on to Tujan,

sleep there, and next day ride straight to Medinin."

"But I was informed at Gabés that I could not ride a horse over the mountain on account of the road being rough and impracticable."

"You shall have a mule which will carry you anywhere."

"But my horse and my Spahi's horse, what shall I do with them?"

"I will take them to Gabés with greetings from you," said the Sheikh of Tujan. "I am just about to travel there to confer with the Khalifa, and so must also the Sheikh of Beni Sultan."

"That is all very well, but I shall not see anything of yourselves."

"No, unfortunately we are compelled to be away, as the Khalifa has summoned us; but the men in our villages will receive you well, and be pleased at your visit."

I could but consent, and thank them for their invitation.

The Sheikh of Beni Sultan was a proud, generous man, who was said to be very wealthy.

Tujan is under the Khalifa of Gabés. This official had sent his friend, the Kha Hadeij, a fine bull and five goats as an offering towards the feast.

For an hour I sat in conversation with the men,

to whom I offered cigarettes, the old Khalifa having a positive weakness for these, to him rare, articles of commerce.

After sauntering for some time amongst the various groups to greet the people, I returned to my cave. It was quite dark; I lit a couple of candles, and occupied myself making notes of all I had seen and heard, Mansur, Amor, and several others sitting round me, and giving me any explanations I desired. Little Ali and his brother were my faithful interpreters, but my work was often interrupted, so many came to salute me, perhaps in hopes of being offered cigarettes; and the room filled by degrees.

At last meal-time approached, and they left me. So for once I ate all the good things in peace. **Soup, ragout of fowl, roast kid, kus-kus, bread and honey, and dates.** Only Mansur remained with me, and overwhelmed me with assurances of his friendship, which I heartily returned.

When I had eaten, I looked out into the courtyard. The great vaulted chamber opposite was lighted, and was choke full of men eating amongst the pillars. Deep silence reigned, for it is not considered to be noisy when eating.

Next my cave were Ali, Hamed, and busy eating up the remains of my the long cavern passage stood

our horses devouring their plentiful fodder. Under the palms, the olive trees, and beneath the tents, all were in full enjoyment of the wedding feast.

I stepped out and went up the hill, where the stars twinkled above me, and all was still.

Out of the caves in the heart of the earth, streaming up from the courtyards on every side, I saw rays of light coming from the women's dwellings, where they and the children also enjoyed the banquet.

It was nearly seven o'clock, and it would not be long ere the rejoicings recommenced in the enclosure before the gate with song, music, and dancing. But the hour was also near when the bridegroom would present himself to his bride, accompanied only by a few friends.

As I stood, lost in thought, Ali came hastily and pulled at my burnous, whispering that the bridegroom had sent me a message by one of his friends, who was seeking me.

As I returned to learn particulars, I met the messenger.

"Mohammed asks if you will accompany him, Sidi. Will you? And shall I lead you?"

I consented without hesitation, whereupon we, the messenger, Ali, and I, started at once on our way in the dark, going through narrow lanes in the direction of the mountains.

All around was quiet, and became even more so as we put a distance between ourselves and the festivities. Suddenly a dog barked in the darkness; we were probably in the neighbourhood of a dwelling-place. Soon after, it ceased barking; we were beyond its domain.

The messenger, who was one of the bridegroom's intimate friends, took my hand and led me, as he perceived that I had some difficulty in finding secure footing, and my little Ali walked on the other side of me, clinging to a fold of my burnous.

When we had proceeded thus some ten minutes, I made out some dark figures before me. These were the bridegroom and his friends. They were squatted on the ground, but rose when I approached.

By the faint light of the stars I distinguished an average-sized man clothed in a red burnous, beneath which showed a white haik—could it be, perchance, my gift? On his head he wore a red fez with a tassel. This was evidently the bridegroom.

Addressing me he said, "If you will be my friend, as you have become that of my father and my brothers, I shall be grateful to you, and will beg of you to accompany me shortly to my house."

I thanked him for his invitation, which I was delighted to accept.

The bridegroom's toilet was evidently only just

completed, for a young Jew was still present, whose father I had visited during my first visit to Hadeij. He was very busy arranging the folds of the bridegroom's costume, having doubtless acted as his valet.

We all sat down together. A pleasant scent of attar of rose was wafted from the bridegroom's clothing towards me, and he produced a little phial of this, and passed it to me to use from. When he stretched out his hand, I noticed that rings glittered on his fingers, and that he held a pocket-handkerchief, a luxury I was not accustomed to see hereabouts.

“Are you married?” he asked me.

I answered, “Yes, surely.”


“How many wives have you?”

“I have only one.”

“Only one!”

I explained that in our country we were in the habit of having only one wife. It was forbidden to us to have several. Why, he could not comprehend, and at that moment I did not think fit to explain.

“See, Mohammed,” I said, “I will confess to you that it is not good to have only one wife, for a man is her slave. Two wives must doubtless be worse, for then there can be no peace; but I tell you that, in my opinion, a man ought to have three



wives, neither more nor less. With that number he can pit two against each other, and take refuge with the third ; but in such case he must be careful to vary."

Mohammed understood my joke, and invited me at once to visit Hadeij next time he should marry.

Lighting one of my cigarettes, I passed them round. When I was about to offer them to the Jew, little Ali hastily pulled my sleeve and whispered, "You must not offer him any ; he is a Jew." I did so notwithstanding, and probably by this act fell low in Ali's estimation, so innate is the contempt for the Jewish race—"Those dogs!"

Afterwards I found it had been a great piece of stupidity on my part to have shown civility to the Jew. He misunderstood it, and became intrusive and impertinent, so that later in the evening I had to set him down sharply, causing little Ali to laugh a laugh of superiority.


Although much tempted, I did not try to converse with the bridegroom about his home life, knowing that it would be considered indelicate. For an Arab never asks even his best friend after his wife's health. The most he may say is, "How is it with your house?"

When we had waited there for about an hour, a man came running in to say that it was time. We rose, and I was told that amongst good friends

it was always customary to carry the bridegroom part of the way to the bride's apartment. So, lifting the heavy Mohammed, I carried him a few paces. He was evidently pleased at my doing him this friendly service, and, the form having been gone through, sprang quickly down, and, taking me and one of his other friends each by a hand, began to run. Before us sped a young man; the rest followed. We were breathless when we reached the caves.

All was in order. A crowd of spectators began to gather immediately, and we slipped in through the gates and down the passage, rapidly crossed into the first court, thence through the underground passage and out into the other court. This was half-dark, but from one of the caves shone a light. Here we entered. The vaulted oblong room with its whitewashed walls was brilliantly lit up. At the far end a carpet hung right across the room, concealing something on the ground; in front was spread another carpet. Here Mohammed seated himself, facing the door. There was no other furniture visible.

On the bridegroom's left his friend took a seat, pointing to me to take my place on the right. There was not the slightest sign on the features of the former expressive of any emotion, either of gladness or gravity. To the looker-on he appeared



merely phlegmatic, and sat, wrapped in his cloak, staring into vacancy. His friend, who was also clothed in red, sat, like himself, in silence.

In the open doorway I saw the faces of Belkassim and Mansur, also some children, Jews, and the men who had followed us. No women were present.

When we had been seated thus for a while, there appeared, from the part of the room divided from us by the hangings, a large dish of kus-kus and, soon after, a pitcher of water. These were placed before Mohammed, who took a mouthful of the food—the first meal prepared for him by his bride.

We sat silent a moment longer, then Belkassim dismissed the spectators from the door, and I rose, shook hands with my friend the bridegroom, and left. In the doorway I looked back. There sat the bridegroom, dumb and stiff, but behind him I saw the carpet being drawn a little aside, and in the dim light beyond it fancied I caught sight of a woman's face. Whether it were pretty, young, or smiling, I know not. I only know that it must have been the bride's.

In the open air the festival was in full swing. Closely packed in front of the gate, and all along the approach, sat veiled women. The banks and hollows were white with spectators. The negroes danced, played, and drummed. There a mulatto

sang a droll ballad ; here two men danced a stick dance, and so on.


I had been requested to take my place amongst the bridegroom's friends, who held themselves in a group apart, prepared to show him this last day's homage.

About an hour elapsed, then from the bridal cave a muffled gun-shot was heard ; it was scarcely noticeable, as the shrieking and booming of the music overpowered all sounds. Ali hastily handed me a gun, which I discharged, and several shots were fired from our group. Every one of those present knew what this meant, and rejoiced, but none more so than the family of the bride. They, who had waited anxiously, were reassured, for she would not now, under cover of the silent dark night, and wrapped in a grey blanket, be hunted at a given word out of the village, and driven home to sorrowing and disgraced parents and relatives.

The festival was not interrupted, but continued as before.

With the Khalifa by my side, and surrounded by his sons, the sheikhs, and the principal guests, I remained seated all the evening and far into the night, watching the entertainment, that in course of time became very monotonous.

Now and again some men stepped forward,




either singly or two together. Over their shoulders hung red cloaks, and they posed in graceful attitudes, with their heads held high, one foot forward, and the left arm hidden beneath the burnous and the red cloak, whilst the right hand was extended. On each side of them crouched a negro, with the flaps of his burnous spread out before him to catch the coins shortly to be thrown to him. Round these figures danced other negroes, whilst the drums played.

Now one of the red figures raised an arm and threw a coin into the negro's lap, then again, slipping his hands into the folds over his breast, pulled out another coin. This went on incessantly, that all might witness how much money was distributed.

First it was the turn of the representatives from Beni Sultan, then from Zaraua, Tamezred, or other villages, who in this way paid the tribute expected of them on such festive occasions for the benefit of the negro musicians.

When at last the men ceased, and the chink of coin was no longer heard, one of the negroes advanced towards the group of women, and, half-singing, half-declaming, told them that the men of such and such villages had given so much, at the same time praising not only their generosity, but also their other virtues. Now and then his song was interrupted by the "Yu, yu" of the women,



which this evening, owing to the number of voices, sounded quite imposing. When he concluded, the applause was deafening.

Now and then a solo was sung, two or three voices joining in the chorus that followed, the singers sticking their noses as close together as they could during the performance. These songs are always sung in a nasal tone, without any modulation, and the time never varies.



CHAPTER XI

OVER THE MOUNTAINS AND ACROSS THE PLAIN FROM HADEIJ TO METAMER

DURING the night most of the guests wended their way homewards, but a few still remained next morning ; some of whom desired to accompany me to Beni Sultan.

The bridegroom was expected to emerge from his cave at any moment, so I lingered awhile, partly in hopes of bidding him farewell, and also because I had been told he would be received with rejoicings, and would distribute sweetmeats amongst the village children. But the time fixed for my departure came, and I had to ride off without witnessing this concluding scene of the festival.

Mansur's mule was brought me. The Khalifa himself arranged my saddle and lengthened the stirrups, thus showing me the final marks of courtesy. He then gave the guide his instructions, and I took my leave with warm expressions of thanks to him and to his sons, and also to the assembled men. I rewarded little Ali for the services he had rendered me, bowed respectfully to the Khalifa, and rode off

with my heart full of gratitude towards him and his people for their great hospitality, and with the pleasant impression that my stay in the Matmata mountains had given me the opportunity of seeing manners and customs which, to my knowledge, no European had yet witnessed in these regions. I thankfully recognised my good fortune in having had the goodwill and assistance of the authorities; and was, above all, grateful for the great hospitality of the people from whom I had then just parted, and for their friendship which I flattered myself I had gained.

A mule saddle is very broad, and resembles somewhat a pack. Its peculiarity is that the stirrup-leathers are not secured to it. A leather strap with a stirrup hung at each end is slung over the saddle, so that, to mount, one must either vault into the saddle without setting foot in the stirrup or be lifted into it. To anyone accustomed to the ordinary English saddle it is an extremely uncomfortable seat, as it is necessary to bear equally on both stirrups, or one risks losing one's balance and falling off; but I must say my mule proved to be altogether a success on the difficult mountain road.

For nearly an hour we rode along the mountain top, whence we had a lovely view; then we descended into a long valley in which were many

half-dead olive trees and green palms. Just as we began the descent, we met a couple of men on their way to Hadeij from Beni Sultan to complain to the Khalifa that their sheep had been stolen.

In the valley was a deep, broad river bed, then dry, and the mountain sides were furrowed with deep watercourses leading thereto. In these furrows stood a number of palms surrounded by embankments.

We halted in a lovely grove of olives, amongst which sprung a few palms. Here some of our guides awaited us. They had crossed the mountain by a shorter but precipitous path, whilst we had circled round by a less steep and fatiguing route.

From an eminence some way down the valley we observed a village looking like an eagle's nest. This was the ancient Beni Sultan, now deserted and in ruins, the present village lying on the incline on the farther side of the mountain. A few of the houses in this deserted village were excavated in the ground.

We travelled directly across the valley, and by a very dangerous and slippery path reached the lowest point of the mountain ridge. From thence we looked down on the valley on the other side. Facing us were the ruins of the old village, standing picturesquely against the sky. We rode down in a zigzag line past the farms and houses scattered on the mountain side; the dwellings were crowded

with domestic animals, with men and women, and especially with children.

Not till we reached the valley did we halt, close to the descent to a cluster of cave dwellings belonging to the Sheikh, in absence of whom I was most cordially received by one of his nearest relatives. The passage to the cave was not covered, and was cut into steps where it sloped down into the ground towards the gate. On one side of the wall by the steps was dug out a vaulted and somewhat decorated cave; this was the guest-room where I dined. Afterwards I visited the nearer of the Sheikh's houses, with permission to examine them from top to bottom.

In the main these dwellings were on the same plan as those of Hadeij, but I found several cisterns in both the farms and the ruins. Water flowed from the mountains into these through canals and primitive pipes.

The caves were not all dug down and around a courtyard, but were often high up on a perpendicular wall, and were reached by steps.

The women offered me dates and showed me their looms. I saw where they slept, generally on benches like low tables, called by them "mokera."

In one of the underground vaults, to which the access was through a very heavy gate, was an oil-mill, and in another a granary.

After spending a couple of hours in the shelter of the caves, we again started riding through the valley in a southerly direction, and passing through large palm and olive groves. Nowhere in the mountains had I seen such rich vegetation.

Close to the village were some ten women clad in dark blue, drawing water from one of the few wells on this mountain. Two large columns, formed of hewn palm stems, were inserted on either side of the well, so as to slope inwards. These supported another palm stem placed horizontally on the top of them; this again sustained a wooden disk by means of which the water was hauled up. This system of drawing water is rather comical, for the women, instead of hauling up the bucket by moving their hands on the rope, seize the latter and take a quick run, the distance covered being equal to the depth of the well. When they have thus drawn a pitcherful of water they return to the well to take another run.


We constantly passed spots in the valley planted more or less largely with olive trees, but some of these were in an unhealthy condition, showing grey or yellow instead of a deep fresh green. If rain were not soon to fall these would die, and it would be many years before others could be grown and bear fruit.

It cut me to the heart to see all this wealth on

the verge of destruction, and the more so when I learnt that the Khalifa owned many of the trees. Rain had fallen in many other districts, but none in this.

Quitting the valley we turned to the right, and rode in a westerly direction amongst colossal cliffs and into a wild ravine, where we were surrounded to the north, west, and south by towering rock pinnacles. Only the very centre of this chasm was reached by the sun, which, hidden behind the mountain, streamed in glorious radiance through a rift in the wall of the cliff. On either side of this rift, with the light playing on their roughly piled grey masses, were the two villages of Tujan, clinging to the precipitous sides like swallows' nests to a wall. On one side, high up the mountain, I caught a glimpse of what appeared to be an eagle's nest as the sunlight glanced on it. On inquiring what it was I received the reply that in old, very old, days the village people resided there, before they moved lower down the slope.

When we arrived at a difficult pass, my guide, "Erzib ben Hamed," who had his home in the village, asked me to dismount. So, leading our animals, we walked slowly up, our feet slipping, and the stones rattling down behind us. Beneath some olive trees we again mounted to make our entry.



We were now near enough to discern that the rift was a deep ravine; on either side was an irregular mass of dreary, grey houses piled one over the other, above which the nearly perpendicular cliffs rose steeply to almost the very top of the mountain, broken only in one place by a flat surface. On the side nearest to us stood the ruins of the village of bygone days, perched like a mediæval castle on the summit of the cliff.

I sat in silent contemplation of this imposing sight, till interrupted by Hamed, the faithful Hamed, who came up dragging his horse behind him. He told me to turn round and look at the view of the Mediterranean.

Great heavens! how glorious was the sight when I raised myself and looked back. It was so beautiful that even Hamed and the Arabs were awed by its splendour.

Looking down directly over the slopes, the valley, and the mountains on either side, we saw the blue sea far away beyond the plains. In the evening light all the tints of blue, violet, brown, yellow, and green were softly blended and intermingled as into a veil which spread over the whole landscape, and imagination divined more than was actually visible, thus adding to the fascination of the scene.

By the first house, the Sheikh's, we halted.

Some people came out, one of whom, I suppose, acted as his representative, since he invited me in; but Hamed was already off his horse and had gone in to look at the quarters. He returned and announced that they were very bad, upon which I inquired whether notice had been given of my coming, and whether the Sheikh had not directed that I should be given decent accommodation. The spokesman insisted that there was no other room available. I suspected this to be false, and ordered Hamed and Erzib to mount their horses at once, and we rode up a narrow lane and alighted outside Erzib's dwelling, where he had already told me I should be welcome. I heard the man following us, and saw that a number of people had gradually assembled.

Erzib's dwelling lay high up on the side of the cliff, but there were others that were higher still, and yet others below. In front of these dwellings ran a narrow path, that, starting from the highest farms, led in a zigzag course down to those below. The outside of the path was on the edge of a steep declivity, down which all refuse was thrown, and was therefore dirty; looking, as did all the other banks when seen from a distance, as though scored with black stripes. On the slope below us was a house with a courtyard between it and the cliff wall. This yard, in which a woman was working, was

completely open to view. Thence the ground fell gradually away till it ended in palm-grown gorges and valleys; beyond these were low hills, then a plain, and, last of all, the sea.

Below us, and a little to one side, was the principal edifice of the village—a little mosque, or Marabout's tomb, outside which a crowd of men had gathered to perform their evening devotions. Kneeling almost simultaneously, they kissed the earth and rose again. A few of them presently disappeared through the open door of the Marabout's tomb, but the remainder stayed outside.

Looking upwards, the eyrie on the summit was visible above Erzib's house, that is, one could discern it by stretching one's neck. On the opposite side, at the end to the left, lay the other village.

In the evening the women sallied forth in numbers to fetch water from the cisterns in the valley, and the village dogs barked, answering each other from every side. Below us, at the foot of the slope, a crowd of men gathered. I could hear their shouts and see their gesticulations, as, with extended arms, they pointed to one figure. Some of them turned and called up the bank to us, one of them being the man who had met me on the Sheikh's behalf. They shouted that I should come down and live wherever I pleased with the other men, and when I replied that I was well installed, they informed Erzib

that fowls, eggs, and bread would shortly be sent, that the stranger guest might have a really good meal prepared for him.

Through a very broad gateway I descended into a court. Opposite was a long house with its own entrance, to the right another resembling it; and between the two was a passage leading to a third dwelling that was situated at the back. To the left was a wall.

On the flat roof of the nearest of these houses stood some enormous rush-bins for corn, and in the courtyard was another. There also were two fire-places, one on either side, screened off with branches. Behind the screen to the left sat a woman laying small faggots on the fire to warm her hands, for it was cold since the sun had set. Some children came out of the door, but fled when they caught sight of me, wrapped as I was in the folds of Erzib's burnous. From the door on the left peeped out an elderly and rather nice-looking woman.

These two were Erzib's wives: each had her own house; the children belonged to the woman I saw seated by the hearth.

Erzib told his wives to come forward. This they did quite naturally and willingly, retiring again after I had shaken hands with them.

Soon after, I saw people arriving with screaming fowls and a basket of eggs and bread. Erzib at

once drew his knife and vanished with the hens—his intentions were easy to divine.

In the meanwhile carpets had been spread on the floor of the house, and a couch arranged for me. I lit a candle which had been placed in a small square recess in the wall. The room was very irregularly shaped. The floor was of beaten clay, and the walls not whitewashed. In the background a door led into another room containing a loom, and where gala dresses hung on a cord, and household goods on the wall. Through yet another door in the wall to the right was a room with a bed in it raised on four slight stumps: this was made of twigs, and had no coverings.

This dwelling was inhabited by the younger wife and her children—two boys and a little girl. The wife was pretty and not old.

In the house in the courtyard the elder wife resided. In this the anteroom was larger, and contained household goods and implements; behind it was the sleeping apartment.

A grown-up married son, then absent, occupied a house tucked away at the back, and designed on the same plan as the others. His wife was at home.



Whilst the pile of wood burnt and crackled in the yard and the women were busy preparing food, I sat on a bank outside the house in company of my host and several other men.

The moon had risen and shone clearly over mountain and vale. I could see down into a courtyard at the foot of the slope, where a fire burnt brightly on a hearth. Over it hung a cauldron watched by the housewife. She was young and pretty, and as she moved to and fro a couple of little children trotted after her. Now and then she stood still, shading her eyes with her hand, and gazing up in our direction ; possibly in the stillness of the night our voices reached her, for it was not likely that she could see us. By the hearth a white dog lay and growled, and when the woman paused and looked up he moved restlessly, for he also was watching the stranger.

Erzib's first wife came out and stood leaning against the doorway. She did not speak, but was evidently interested in our conversation. Her husband glanced at her and said abruptly—

“She has a great sorrow, and has grieved and wept for many years. Ali, her only son, who was in service at Gabés, was sent to prison, accused of having stolen money from the tradesman he served. But he was innocent—that we know ; he was a good boy, and his mother loved him. It is now four years and four months since we heard from him, and eight months more must pass before we can have him home again.”

“Do you not even know if he lives?”



“Yes, we have learnt through strangers that he is alive, and supposed to be imprisoned at Bona in Algeria.”

The old woman drew herself along the wall till she was close to me when she heard of what we were talking.

“Are you from Bona?” she asked, whimpering.

“No,” I replied, “I come from a much more distant place, and have never been in Bona.”

“Ah! then you do not know Ali,” she said, with a sob.

“No, poor woman,” I replied; “that I do not; but now you will soon see your son alive. You have waited so long for him that the remaining time will soon pass ere he return to you and be happy with you again, for you love him. He will have thought so often of you, and he will be so good to you that both of you will rejoice.”

“Ah! it was a great misfortune, for he was innocent—I am sure of that; another must have been the culprit, for he was so young.”

“How old was he?”

“That I do not remember.”

“Don’t you know what year he was born?”

“No, I cannot recollect; we never know anything of that.”

“Don’t you know either, Erzib?”

“No, Sidi; but it was before the strangers came to this country.”¹

The poor woman sobbed audibly, and Erzib pushed her inside the door that her weeping might not trouble me, saying, “She is very unhappy, Sidi.”

“Oh yes, Erzib. Would I were able to help you to get back your son sooner, or at least to procure you tidings of him. But this I can promise—I will speak to the Khalifa of Gabés on the subject, and, if possible, send you greeting from your son.”

To my regret, however, I must confess that I was unable later to do anything for these poor folk. Whether the boy is still in prison I know not, and whether innocent or no, I know less. My sincere hope is that he may be worthy of his parents' touching affection.

The repast was now brought and set out in the house, on the clay floor, where I enjoyed it; the father, surrounded by his children whom he caressed, sat aside with Hamed and the younger wife.

When I had finished, and Hamed and Erzib had also eaten, we remained seated. I talked with the wife about her children. The eldest may have been about ten years old; he was a lively boy, who

¹ The Arabs in this country keep no account of their age. The most they can remember is that they were born the year this or that happened.

nodded continually to me, and was indefatigable in showing me all the treasures of his home, from an old musket to his father's agricultural implements. When I showed surprise at a very primitive and curious harrow used to break up the soil, his father gave it to me.

Next in age to the boy was a very pretty little girl about six years old. Unfortunately she had lost one eye; her father told me that it was in consequence of a severe attack of inflammation when she was quite little, and that the eye had fallen out of itself. Here in the south one meets with an alarming number of people who are blind or suffering from eye complaints. A doctor told me that many are born thus; with others it is the result of dust, heat, and uncleanness.

The youngest child was a bright little fellow of two, who clung to his father, whose neck he clasped tightly in his arms.

Feeling disposed to take a stroll before retiring to rest, I bade Erzib follow me. As we crossed the court, he inquired whether I would not like to see all the dwellings. Accordingly we went first to visit the elder lady. When we entered with a light we found her crouching in a corner, her face buried in her hands; beside her lay a large dog which growled at me.

Thence we went into the son's house. Asleep

on the bed, quite dressed,—for the natives never undress at night,—was a woman wrapped in blue clothing ; she was evidently the son's wife.

We walked on and up amongst other houses till we were nearly at the top of the village. Beneath, we saw the lights and fires in the courts, and heard the incessant barking of dogs. Shortly after, we climbed a difficult ascent just over the village, to a ledge or terrace of some width cut in the side of the cliff, which from thence rose, quite straight and steep, to the old deserted village that lay in darkness on the very summit. According to Erzib, we could not reach it from the side we were on.

I contented myself with examining some real cliff caves, which I lit up by means of matches. They were excavated from the terrace, and, according to tradition, had once been inhabited ; they were irregular in form, and not very large.

After an hour's enjoyment of the beautiful evening, we descended from this high point.

Wrapping myself in my burnous I lay down on my couch on the ground ; in the same room lay both Hamed and Erzib. In the side chamber, of which the door remained open, slept the children and their mother. Just as I was falling asleep a woman came and spread a covering over me ; it warmed me well, and I slept till daybreak, and was only once disturbed by a little kid coming in through the open

door leading from the courtyard and tripping over me. I heard then the children, who with their mother were sleeping in the next room, Hamed and Erzib moving on their beds, and, out of doors, the distant and continuous barking of dogs. I slept again, and when I awoke saw that what had been spread over me was a brand new festal garment that evidently was considered none too good for the guest.

From the doorway overlooking the courtyard I saw through the gate and down into the valley, where grew a solitary palm, and at the same time had a view of the flat roofs of several houses, and of the path where the horses and mules stood ready saddled. From a side chamber the head of a cow came peering in at the gate, and above the gateway a white dog lay on the wall watching me.

I gave some money to the children, ate a couple of dates with a sup of water, and, having thanked the women for their hospitality, mounted, with Erzib in front and Hamed behind me. As we left, the women came out to throw refuse down the slope, and vanished again behind the wall.

From the hearths rose a light blue smoke that was wafted over the valley beneath us.

We had a view over the mountains of the valley, the plains, and the Mediterranean Sea, as we followed the route along the western declivity of the Mat-

mata range, which commands the low-lying land that extends right away to Tripoli.

For a while we were accompanied by two women who were on their way to the mountains. They tripped along beside our horses, and stared at me in astonishment through carelessly drawn veils.

The mountain tops, where lie the villages of Shenini and Sguimi, are a continuation of the southern range. As I was aware that the inhabitants of these villages were absent sowing their crops, and having been told that the dwellings were similar to those I had already seen, I decided not to visit them. We therefore left them on one side and rode down the mountain and across a small plain encircled by hills, behind which lie the great steppes. Towards the east this plain is bounded by low hills, where water springs are found, and where we could descry herds grazing. It was here that, when passing through a little thicket, we spied a covey of partridges running amongst the bushes. Erzib tried to fire at them from his horse, but it would not stand long enough, and when he got off it was too late—the birds had flown.

Before traversing the last of these hills, we halted and partook of dates, bread, and water, as many hours would elapse before we could arrive at any place of habitation.

The ride on the mule had tired me, so I preceded

the others on foot, and reached the farther side of the acclivity. There lies an interminable flat plain stretching as far as the eye can reach from the east to the north-west ; whilst towards the south the mountains fade away in long undulations. In the midst of the plain I distinguished a hill, and on its summit what appeared to be a tower or fortress. This was the signal station near Metamer. It corresponds to the one we saw near Gabés, and also to another farther south.

I wandered down the gentle slope, through bushes and among stones, and crossed the bed of the river, that, coming from the mountains, winds out into the plain. There were many paths, all leading in an easterly direction. I followed one of these, crossed yet another stony torrent bed, and continued steadily towards the east, making the signal station my point of direction ; until, looking round, I discovered the two riders in their white burnouses far away towards the south. They beckoned to me, as we were compelled to make a *détour* to avoid a rough and uneven river bed.

Joining once more my party, we rode farther and farther over the plain, which becomes dismally desolate and monotonous ; with the exception of the hill and its signal station, nothing breaks the long line of the horizon.

At last we viewed in the distance a couple of

palm trees, and concluded that the Ksar of Metamer was probably near them, but we could not see it at all, as it lay in a hollow.

For long, naught but these trees showed on the level horizon. Then at last the tops of other palm trees appeared, and a little later some huts; the number of these increased, and proved to be the outskirts of the town. The huts—of straw and branches—were round, as a rule, with a pointed thatch. But it was easy to infer that the inhabitants were absent, as the network which usually encloses the verandah that runs round each hut had been removed, and only the centre of the huts remained, their thatched eaves sticking out all round, so that they resembled thick mushrooms on short stalks.

As the day advanced, the heat became stifling, so that I took off my gaiters and bared my legs. But after a couple of hours they were so scorched by the sun that, on arrival at Medinin, I had to ask a doctor to dress them for me, to ease the pain of the sun-scorch, and it was eight days before they recovered.

CHAPTER XII

METAMER AND MEDININ

ARRIVING at the palm grove in the hollow we had seen from the distance, we found that it lay by a river bed. The trees were not particularly well cared for, as could be seen at a glance; they were far apart, and there were few ditches for irrigation.

On a slope to the east of the valley and above it, there is a village of peculiar construction, with whitewashed buildings that are dazzling in the sunlight. This is the "Ksar" Metamer. The ground plan of the houses is oblong and rectangular, and their raised roofs are vaulted. They lie lengthwise, as the houses do at home in towns dating from the Middle Ages—the gable ends turning towards the streets. In general they are erected round an open square. The fronts of those facing the plain are without any aperture, except some loop-holes here and there. In other words, every quarter, and also the town as a whole, forms a little fortress. This is the style of building adopted here in the plains; it is, in fact, the same plan as that employed in cave construction, but in this case carried out

aboveground ; since the natives have found it impossible to reach the inaccessible mountain peaks, or to dig down into the rocky ground. The houses are very often seven storeys high. On every storey there is a well-barred door to the inner gable. This is reached by steps or by stones projecting from the walls. The effect is most peculiar and picturesque. Each inhabitant carries in his hand a key that he takes with him everywhere. This locks his rooms, which are mostly used as corn stores.

Not far from the "Ksar" are barracks for the little garrison, and shops that supply the needs of the soldiers, not only of the place, but also of those quartered in the neighbouring town of "Medinin." I did not wish to visit the camp just then, so dismounted outside an Arab dwelling, and was invited to enter and partake of stewed kid.

After a hurried visit to the town, and having taken leave of Erzib, who desired to ride a long way towards his home that evening, I procured a new guide and rode eastwards over the plain, so as to arrive before nightfall at the Ksar of Medinin. As we approached its neighbourhood we turned into the highroad from Gabés.

Before us and to our left lay the "Ksar" of Medinin, illuminated by the evening sun. The ends of the houses were turned outwards, producing the effect of a circular wall scalloped at the top. Above





A STREET IN BENI BARKA.



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these vaulted gable ends I caught a glimpse of higher buildings, and amongst them, in the centre of the town, a large square block. This was the Kasba. Through a narrow opening in the row of houses I saw the inner gable ends of dwellings, and doors disposed one above the other, the whole calling to mind the pictures one sees of Mexican "pueblos."

Parts lay in deep shadow, parts blinding white in the sunshine. These lights and shadows were mingled in such dazzling contrast that the eye could scarcely discriminate what it beheld.

We rode along the exterior wall till we came to some palms; farther on grew others. These plantations are to the south of the Ksar and between it and the European quarter, which showed up gradually on the right, and consisted of barracks for the cavalry and infantry, quarters for the officers, and those occupied by the "Bureau de Renseignement." The soldiers work amongst the palms, and have enclosed a plot of ground as a garden. In the beds I saw tender young green plants sprouting, which proved to be cress. In the open square in front of headquarters, and before the other houses, holes were being dug for plants by soldiers in light linen clothing.

In the future the whole military quarter will be surrounded by a beautiful palm grove, affording

shade to the dwellings now completely exposed to the glare of the sun.

I rode up to headquarters—a large building—where the flag was hoisted half-mast high on account of the death of Marshal MacMahon.

Lieutenant Henry, who was at the Bureau, came out to welcome me. He told me that I was expected, and added that I should meet the officers of the 4th Light Brigade, whom I had known well at Gabés, they having arrived to relieve the southern station. I was quickly conducted to real bachelor's quarters, consisting of a couple of rooms. All over the walls hung weapons and curiosities collected in these regions. The furniture, though camp-like, was very comfortable. At last I was able to indulge in the luxury of a bath and change.

In the meantime Hamed arrived to say farewell. He wished to ride back to Metamer on his donkey and accompany Erzib as far as Tujan, whence he hoped to take the donkey back to Hadeij, and return later to Gabés.

When I was dressed I called on the Commander-in-Chief of the district, Commandant Billet, a young man, who invited me to be his guest.

When I told him that I was most anxious to meet some Tuareg if possible, he replied, to my great joy, that by riding some thirty-two miles farther south I should probably have my wish

gratified, as a telegram had just arrived from the signal station that two of these men had come to Tatuin, the most southerly station, to purchase corn.

Whether they might not have again left he did not know, but at any rate there was a chance for me. Relays of horses and an escort should be at my disposal whenever I desired them; but he hoped I would stay over the morrow, that I might meet the officers.

The garrison at this military post consists of a company of infantry, a squadron of cavalry, and a small detachment of artillery. The soldiers are lodged in large airy barracks, and the officers have comfortable quarters in new buildings.

There are no women within the camp, therefore all domestic service is performed by soldiers, who act as cooks and chambermaids. The officers form themselves into committees for the control of supplies, and at their table one dines remarkably well, as I had occasion to verify that same evening.

Lieutenant Henry introduced me to his mess. There I met most of the messmates of Gabés, and we renewed acquaintance to the clink of glasses.

After dinner we adjourned to the military club, where we met all the officers of the garrison, both young and old.

Next morning Lieutenant Henry accompanied me to the Ksar. We first ascended the minaret, from

which we had a beautiful view over the town and plain. Then we visited the various groups of houses, with their vaulted gables and remarkable steps to the upper storeys. These steps were merely stones projecting here and there from the wall for the convenience of those who wished to climb up.



MEDININ.

Several of the groups of houses clustered so closely together, and leant so much the one upon the other in endless confusion, that it was extremely difficult to find one's way through the labyrinth.

By a narrow opening, so low that we had to pass through with bowed heads, we arrived in a courtyard, emerging thence by a larger opening like a

gateway, built as a defence. Through loop-holes in the sides, a severe fire might be kept up on an attacking enemy.

In a few of the outer walls overlooking the plain I noticed the same loop-holes; but defence is supposed to be maintained from the roofs, or rather from the central building.

It surprised me not to see more men about; but my cicerone explained that nearly all the inhabitants had sallied out on the 20th of this month, and had gone towards Moktar and the Tripolitan frontier nearest the sea, to follow their agricultural pursuits.

There they live in tents—first to sow, later to watch their fields, and finally to gather the harvest; not returning until the month of June the following year. Then they bring home the harvest, and store the products in the Ksar, which thus becomes what it is intended for—a great fortified granary.

At the time of my visit, there remained in the Ksar only about a couple of hundred men, who were merely left to guard the houses.

The place looks quite different in the month of July, when some one thousand five hundred or two thousand men arrive and pitch their tents above the Ksar; they depart again in October, after they have stored the barley, wheat, maize, “sorghum,” beans, and millet.

The inhabitants belong to the Berber tribe of

“Tuasin,” and number some fifty thousand souls, dwellers in the Ksar and on the plain. They possess at least the same number of camels, a couple of thousand asses and twenty thousand sheep, from which it may be gathered that the greater portion are nomads, rather than dwellers in the oasis. In fact, they care little for their plantations.

In the groves near the Ksar grow palm, olive, and fig trees, also a few pomegranates, peaches, and apricots; but they are ill tended, and produce but poor crops.

The mode of life of the inhabitants and their perpetual feuds with the tribes on their frontier have caused them to develop into a brave and warlike people. Every man owns a firearm, which he does not hesitate to use on the slightest pretext. If hardly pushed, he flies to his fortress with all his possessions and cattle—there he is in safety.

It is natural that the Turks in Tripoli should regard with mistrust the French occupation of Tunisia, which they have never consented to recognise; and on that account have never been disposed to have the frontier defined. To this day it remains undetermined, perpetual frontier conflicts being the result; for the tribes on either side still look on the country, as they have always done, as their own to dispose of according to their will and pleasure; and, as hitherto, prefer to settle disputes in their

own way. But the French occupation of Metamer, Medinin, and Tatuin has been of no small service in bringing about peace and quiet in these regions.

The northern side of the frontier is especially desert and barren, consisting only of interminable sandhills destitute of vegetation. South of this are far-stretching steppes, seldom trodden by human foot, and over which a deathlike silence reigns. No paths are traced through these deserts to guide the lonely traveller who may venture to penetrate them. Even the natives fear to enter a territory where any man they may meet must be regarded as an enemy.

To the south the steppes form a junction with the Matmata mountains, and are frequented only by the Tripolitan tribe of Nuail and the Tunisian Urghamma. These alone, therefore, would be capable of defining the boundary of this desert region, as their wanderings have made them well acquainted with its limits.

The Urghamma tribe—from which this continent apparently takes its name—the “Aurigha” of the ancients having become Africa—numbers some thirty thousand souls. At one time they mustered some four or five thousand soldiers, and were exempted by the Bey from payment of taxes, as they had bound themselves to defend the frontier.

The fact was, that they would not pay taxes. They took advantage of their peculiar position to make armed forays to rob and plunder far and wide; and gloried in deeds of bloodshed, engraving a mark on their guns for each man they slew. Guns covered from stock to muzzle with such marks are still to be met with.

With the advent of the French, circumstances altered, and now, thanks to the supervision of the military authorities, the Urghamma behave more like peaceful nomads.

Everywhere in the plains of Southern Tunisia I found remains of ancient towers—now lying in ruins, since the need for them no longer exists, but where formerly the nomads sought refuge when they were pursued. The decay of these towers proves that the French have known how to establish quiet and order in the country.

According to inquiries which I made in the south, the Urghamma are divided into the following groups:—

The Khezur and the Mehaben in and around Medinin.

The Accara on the coast.

The Tuasin on the plains.

The Uderma on the mountain slopes and on the plains.

The Jelidat people the eastern mountains.

The Duri are found in the mountains and on the high tablelands.

We visited the Jews in their own quarter, and conversed with a couple of women, who, with their children, lived in a little hut stuck away in a corner of a yard. One of the women was a sooth-sayer, and showed us a book with closely written leaves, evidently the source of her cunning.

In a large open square on the outskirts of the Ksar stood a hut, occupied by a family of whom only the women and children were at home. We entered. It was dirty and comfortless, containing no furniture, not even the indispensable "senduk."¹ The hut was built of slender branches wattled together, and in many places was covered with old rags to keep out rain. The form was circular with a high-pointed roof, evidently carrying out the idea of a tent. The fireplace was outside.

In the evening, after a jovial dinner with Commandant Billet, at which most of the officers were present, Lieutenants Adam, Coturier, and Druot started southwards with a company of Zephyrs, to return in two night marches to Tatuin, a distance of thirty-two miles. They invited me to breakfast with them next day at Bir el Ahmer. The bugles rang, and the sections tramped off as we said *au revoir*.

The water in Medinin is very unwholesome, and

¹ Chest.

requires to be distilled before it is fit to drink ; a huge distilling apparatus has therefore been erected ; this has a number of taps, whence the distilled water flows drop by drop. A sentinel watches it, that the precious liquor may not be wasted.

Not far from this is the post office, which is also the telegraph office for private telegrams, the heliograph being used for military purposes.

Night and day, watch is kept on the tops of the mountains and far out on the plains to the north-west, that the flash connection between Gabés, Medinin, and Tatuin may be constantly maintained. It is expedient that a strict watch be kept, for frequently in the middle of the night a summons is flashed, and there must be no delay in replying ; Commandant Billet not being a man to be trifled with on matters connected with the service.


He rides long distances on horseback to inspect the various southern posts and to see that all is well ; and many a night has the startled guard seen him arrive, having ridden over the mountains in pitch darkness to make a visit of inspection. He is ubiquitous, and of an astounding energy, only allowing himself four hours for rest, then mounts his horse once more, or goes to work at his writing-table.

As an example of the Commandant's iron will, one of the doctors told me that some months ago

he was attacked by fever, just at the time that the General arrived to make an inspection. Notwithstanding the fact that his temperature was at 104° Fahrenheit, Commandant Billet left his bed and accompanied his superior officer on horseback round all the outposts. When he returned his temperature was still 104°.

On his spirited horse he has covered prodigious tracts of country in the south, often under very trying conditions. Lately he rode over eighty miles on a mountain track in five-and-twenty hours; not being met by the persons he expected, he took a couple of hours rest beside his horse, lying lightly clad in the cold night air, and then resumed his journey.

He told me himself of a rather amusing adventure. On a pitch-dark night he was riding home to Medinin from Bir el Ahmer. When he had ridden so long that he believed he must be near home, his horse became restive and left the path. After some time had elapsed, to his great delight he rode against a telegraph post, for he knew that by keeping along the telegraph line he should find his way home. But, alas! when morning broke he was back again at Bir el Ahmer, whence he had started; to the great astonishment of the soldiers, who evidently thought he had returned to take them by surprise: he then rode home.



As in Algeria, the army in Tunisia has literally paved the way to civilisation by making roads across the mountains and over the plains.

But their work is far from confined to this alone ; they plant trees and dig wells, and are soon followed by telegraphic and postal officials, but above all by the schoolmaster. Where the soldier has cut a way, the schoolmaster can begin his work. If we call to mind my little Ali we can best understand and value his labours.

I called on the postmaster and the schoolmaster of Medinin at the officers' club. They were energetic young men whose work goes hand in hand with that of the soldiers. There also I met the interpreter, a perfect gentleman who spoke faultless French. A tattooed mark on his forehead alone betrayed his origin ; he was a Mohammedan and a married man. Besides himself, only one other of the officers in Medinin, a captain of cavalry, was married : he lived with his wife within the Ksar.



CHAPTER XIII

SOUTHWARDS OVER THE PLAIN TO TATUIN

IT was early morning on the 28th October; the sun was just rising, the horses were ready, and I swung myself into the saddle to start on a day's march of a little over thirty-two miles. Commandant Billet and Lieutenant Henry accompanied me part of the way, then bade me farewell and galloped off in a different direction; the gallant chief intending to join that morning one of his companies then on the road to the north.

The sun rose above the plain, and lit up the mountains which encircle it to the eastward like an outlying wall, and, beginning in the north, stretch along to the south as far as the eye can reach. In front of us rode a Spahi from the Bureau in his light blue burnous, and behind, wrapped in his crimson cloak, paced the trooper furnished by the Spahi regiment.

Theirs are beautiful uniforms, but should be seen in brilliant sunshine and with Africa's golden sands as a background. I have seen these uniforms in the streets of Paris in dull weather, and they were disappointing.

We had ridden long at foot's pace, and it was time to push on. "Forward, forward" I shouted to our leader, after taking off my burnous and laying it before me on my saddle. My handsome brown horse broke into a gallop. The trooper in front of me rose in his saddle and stood in his stirrups, as his horse "threw his head and his tail to the winds and let his legs dance like drumsticks," as my friend the "Jægermester" at home used to say. The red Spahi followed. My horse was eager to join the others in front of him, but I held him in.

After a good long gallop we slackened again to a foot's pace, and I ejaculated, "He pulls like the deuce!"

"Oh, sir, he thought a mare was leading."

"Nonsense; can't he tell the difference?"

"No, sir; the Arabs always ride mares, therefore stallions, when they see the broad back of an Arab saddle, conclude that it is on a mare."

I observed here some of the small round mounds I had seen elsewhere, and which may be either graves or the remains of vanished dwellings.

A couple of hours later we descried, beyond the mountains, a white spot on the horizon. This is a Marabout tomb on the plain—not far from the well of "Bir el Ahmer."

The sun was very hot, but, rain having recently fallen, the earth smelt fresh and pleasant.

At long intervals we saw here and there people at work, for the tribes had scattered in every direction to sow and plough. There, where at other seasons flocks of antelopes are wont to gladden the sportsman who roves over the barren plains, are now gathered little bands of men and women to till the ground rendered moist and fertile by Allah; and the smoke from their encampments may be seen rising from all points of the compass.

From the Marabout's tomb the ground falls away a little towards the south, and on the level, not far ahead, we saw the square-walled enclosure of the well with in one corner an old, low, squat tower, against which was propped a house.

Soon we distinguished the little *tentes d'abri* pitched in straight lines, and, moving amongst them, the soldiers.

We reached the well, having covered the twelve miles in two hours and a half, and I found a fresh horse and new escort awaiting me.

The company had arrived during the night. The men had slept and cooked their food. Lieutenant Adam and the regimental doctor, M. Cultin, had ridden out to shoot on the neighbouring mountains, so I went in quest of Lieutenants Coturier and Druot, who greeted me with "Bon jour, camarade."


Whilst the horses were unsaddled, fed, and watered, and the cook busied himself preparing

breakfast at a fire in an angle of the wall, I was refreshed with a glass of wine.

The officers' camp beds and canteens were conveyed into a cool room in the house, and the tables and chairs were arranged in the shade outside.

The walls of the fort, or rather the caravansarai, are so low that one can see over them when seated within the courtyard. It is not garrisoned, and is inhabited only by an old Arab, who strolled about in an enormous straw hat. He had barley to sell to those who required it, and presided with much pride over a large register, in which the "Chefs de Detachments" have to note the numbers encamped at the well. Moreover, it is his duty to take care that the well is not damaged or misused by the Arabs who wander over the plain, and who, under certain conditions, are allowed access to the enclosure. His straw hat interested me greatly, and with some little difficulty I succeeded in purchasing it from him.

Lieutenant Coturier and I took a walk on the plain. Just outside the fort were some miserable huts built of branches and straw, where we saw an ancient crone, probably the wife of the old Arab, fussing about her hearth. Near the huts were three two-wheeled carts all ready laden and with the horses in the shafts. In the shade beneath them some Europeans and Arabs lay and dozed, whilst the horses and mules closed their eyes and slept in



their harness, the flies buzzing about them in the intense heat.

Farther on, we found on the plain two women and a man busy ploughing. To two of the ploughs were yoked camels, and to the third a mule.

Both the women were very lightly clad on account of the heat. The younger was exquisite in her grace as she paced, goad in hand, behind the plough, and by the movements of her arms revealed her perfectly formed figure. From afar we could see her bracelets and anklets glittering in the sun.

We stood and watched them awhile until, saying "En route, mon ami," my friend took my arm and we sauntered on over the heated plain, where through refraction, distant objects, even though small, appeared to be in constant leaping movement.

We turned towards the blue mountains, in hopes of catching sight of the sportsmen, for breakfast time drew near, but no one was in sight; so we strolled back to the fort, and lying on the camp beds dozed the time away.

It was nearly eleven o'clock before we heard the riders arrive. Lieutenant Adam had shot some partridges, and the doctor a hare, which hung from their saddles.

In the meantime breakfast had been prepared, and the table was laden with good things.

Before we sat down, the doctor examined a

number of sick men, of whom some hobbled up unassisted; others were carried on their comrades' backs. Not a few were really unfit to march, but many were shamming.

The African Light Brigade—the Zephyrs—is composed of men who, through misconduct and frequent punishment, are removed from their regiments in France to serve the remainder of their time in Africa.

The heterogeneous troops that form the Foreign Legion can, to a certain extent, be moulded into a united body, imbued with a strong *esprit de corps*—thanks partly to stern discipline, and also to the fact of the Legion being aware that it has burnt its ships; but the case of the Light Brigade is quite different.

The men enter it on account of offences committed in other localities, but they retain their evil propensities, and indeed it would not be easy for them to improve while forced to associate with so many bad characters of every variety: fear alone keeps them straight.

It is true that a "Zephyr," if he conduct himself well for a certain length of time, may be sent home to his division, but this rarely occurs. In fact, he may even be promoted in the Zephyr Brigade itself, but this is yet more rare.

A French officer told me that the difference between a soldier of the Legion and a Zephyr was,

that a Legionary, even though he were a thief, would be forced to cease from being one, but a Zephyr, if he were not a thief, would certainly learn to be one.

In old days the Zephyrs fought well in many a close action, and their behaviour in time of war has often been brilliant, but in time of peace they are of little worth.

It follows that the commanding officers must be of the best—for it is sharp work for the chiefs. For that matter all the officers in Algeria and Tunisia are especially selected. Many lieutenants have year after year sought in vain to be sent on service with the troops in Africa, whilst others speedily obtain this privilege. Every year's service there counts as double, both as regards pension and decorations.

I have seen lieutenants wearing the Legion of Honour solely because they had had sufficient length of service in Africa, whilst a young *chef de bataillon*, newly arrived from France where he had served during all the earlier portion of his career, had earned no decoration.

Indeed, it is really surprising that an officer who serves in Algiers or Oran should thereby gain so many advantages over another who is stationed in a little provincial town in France. As regards Tunisia it is intelligible, many parts of the country

being unhealthy, and the heat ruining the nerves and being the cause of mental strain : but in Algiers—a bit of Paris !

My new escort, sent from Tatuin, was ready, and the hot midday hours being past I said farewell until the morrow.

There still remained between four and five miles to cover, and we might not loiter on the way ; so we pressed on, alternately walking and cantering, keeping close to the mountains on our right.

Half-way between Tatuin and Bir el Ahmer we passed some soldiers who were busy digging a well. They had pitched a little tent, and provisions and water were sent them occasionally. Raising themselves from their work they saluted us as we passed.

Presently mountains appeared in the south and south-east, and on the summit of one on our front we distinguished the signal station of Tatuin. At the foot of this mountain we passed some palm trees, and then turned into the valley. This is full of palms, and on the southern side lay a little Ksar, similar to those with which we had already made acquaintance at Metamer and Medinin.

At a little distance, but nearer the oasis and on the slope, stand the military buildings.

As we rode towards the Bureau we met a

couple of natives. "Are the Tuareg still here?" I asked.

"No, they have probably left; they came to buy corn, but there was none to be had, so they went away."

Just as the sun set I dismounted, and saluted a group of officers who awaited me.

The whitewashed walls of the two rooms into which I was shown were hung round with weapons, implements of the chase, and ethnographical objects collected from the Tuareg. It was a typical lieutenant's quarter; the owner was in France on leave, and in his absence his comrades had placed his rooms at my disposal.

Captain Beranger, who was to be relieved the day but one following, invited me to dine at the little mess where the infantry officers, the post-master of the town—young Cavaignac, a descendant of the celebrated general—and an officer of engineers were to dine.

After dinner we spent our evening with other officers at the casino. There I met Ben Jad, an old native lieutenant of Spahis, with a handsome Arab face, and wearing the Cross of the Legion of Honour on his breast. He promised me a good horse for the morrow when I took my way to Duirat, the southernmost village of Tunisia. I met also the interpreter and the lieutenant of the

Bureau and Dr. Renaud, their medical man, who talked with me about the country, and promised to do what he could to get hold of some of the Tuareg, whom I so longed to see; but of this he told me there was little hope.



CHAPTER XIV

DUIRAT

THE route to the south from Tatuin leads through a valley. At first we traversed the oasis, riding under the shade of the palm trees, then followed the course of the dried-up river bed in the bottom of the valley.

On the top of a hill to our left were a couple of villages. To the right were other dwellings, some of which were caves; others were white houses with vaulted roofs.

An hour later we saw on a height to the eastward the fortress of Beni Barka. This is a village of narrow streets enclosed within a wall. The houses are similar to those of other African villages.

Yet a little farther on we passed another village, which was built in a square, and composed of the same oblong vaulted buildings we had seen at Medinin and Metamer; it also appeared to be fortified.

We then emerged on an open golden-yellow plain that rose gradually to the left, a solitary steep mountain lying to the south. To the west also was a large group of magnificent, precipitous

mountains; behind these we were to find Duirat, but to reach it we had to go round the mountain we saw to the south.

When, later, we approached this mountain, we found the ground completely covered with every kind and shape of rocks and stones; never have I seen elsewhere such a rocky waste.

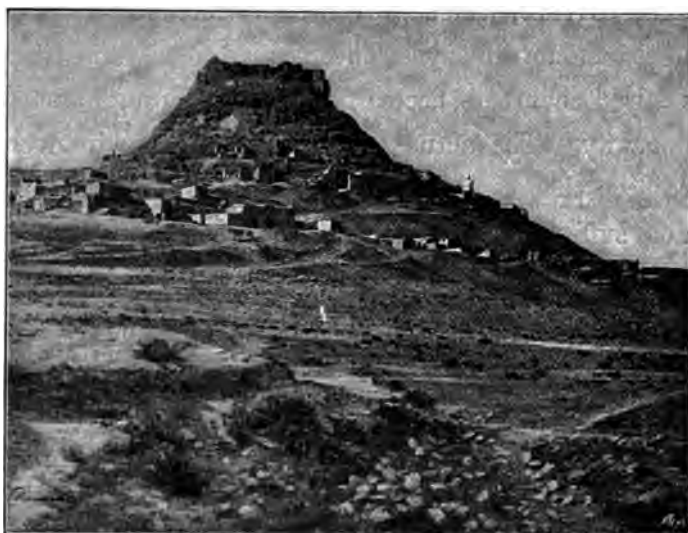
We wheeled round outside this beautiful rocky region, picking our way very carefully lest our horses' legs should be injured. On the steep slope, broken rocks of every size were tightly packed together, and, at the very top, great beetling crags seemed prepared to plunge down the precipice.

On the southern side of this stony waste, and standing away from the rocky range, were a few tall cones of truncated form. To make a short cut I rode between them and the mountain itself, but had to proceed very cautiously, as the ground was terribly rough.

The sun was frightfully hot; not a breath of wind stirred as we plodded along, my Spahis chanting now and then a monotonous song. Beyond us, the plain appeared to quiver in the glare of the sun, reflected from a bright, white, gleaming surface, which last appeared to be a lake, but was only a "shott," where the water that had flowed from the heights during the rainy season rose in vapour.

I could not conceive whence came the sound that during some few minutes had reached my ear. I looked for a cause, but my eyes detected nothing.

At last I saw, far away in the shade under the overhanging cliffs of an isolated peak, some dull, dark spots and dots, and amongst them made out



DUIRAT.

the indistinct outline of a female figure—evidently a shepherdess with her goats. As we approached, her song rose and fell clear and ringing in the pure air.

We now entered the valley, and turned in a north-westerly direction. Before us lay Duirat, a grey mountain, shaped like a sugar-loaf.

At first it was impossible to distinguish any

dwellings, but after we had crossed the valley and the bed of a stream, and had reached rising ground, we made out clearly an old castle on the summit. Below it, at different heights along the path that wound upwards, we saw houses, and in one place, amongst or behind these, we caught a glimpse of dark cavities, which proved to be entrances to caves in the mountain side. These caves consist of several vaulted chambers, access to which is through a small doorway. The actual chambers resemble in every respect those of the *Matmata*. As a rule, they do not suffice for the requirements of a family; an ordinary house with a flat roof is therefore built in front of them on the terraced cliff. Through the house a passage leads straight into the cave, so that anyone outside can see right through the house, over the little courtyard, and into the doorway of the cave.

There are doors to most of the dwellings, but, as these cannot be constructed of palmwood, the materials have to be brought from a great distance; a costly undertaking, and the cause of many poor wretches living doorless and exposed to the elements.

I went in to see the *Khalifa*, an exceptionally clever and amiable man, to whom I brought greetings from Drummond Hay, who had visited him during his tour.

As I had no interpreter with me, our conversation was limited. I managed to make out his replies to my questions, but it took time.

The breakfast I had brought with me I ate in company with the Khalifa, the Sheikh, and another man. The preserved meats and the delicate bread especially delighted them. In return they offered me kus-kus, eggs, and black bread.

The Khalifa and the Sheikh wrote their names in Arabic in my sketch-book, that I might carry away a memento of them; in return I presented them with my visiting-card, which was put away with great care to be exhibited to future travellers.

I inquired about Hamed-ben-Amar's relatives, but at the time none were at home.

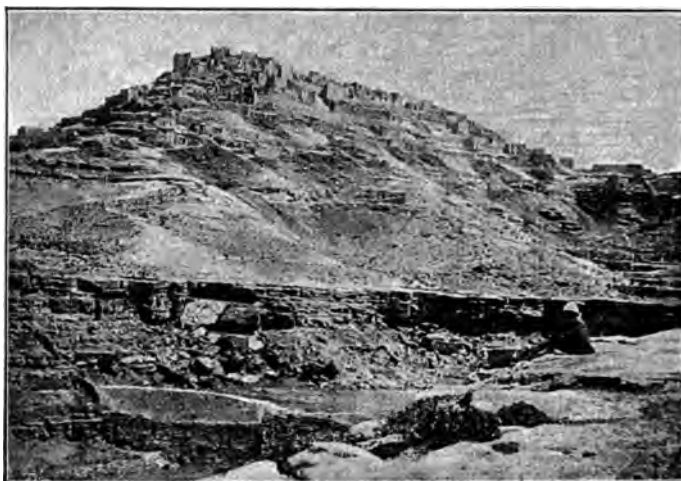
On the whole I saw very few people at Duirat. The inhabitants were probably away, occupied in agriculture, as was the case in other villages.

The Khalifa spoke much of Drummond Hay, who had evidently made an ineffaceable impression on him. From him I learnt that the latter had scaled the mountain, visited a spring in the valley, and had afterwards galloped to Shenini, a village on the summit of a neighbouring mountain.

I am convinced that the secret of the success of the English Representative amongst the southern tribes—for it was not the first time I had heard his name mentioned in these parts—originates as much

from his having inherited his father's remarkable insight into the manner of thought of the Moslem, as from the fact that he speaks Arabic like a native. Again, he has inherited his father's strong, fearless nature, and lastly—he is an Englishman.

It was near noon, but I had not time to wait till later, so in the intense heat, and guided by a young



SHENINI.

Arab, I clambered up to the old and now forsaken town on the top of the mountain.

The walls, built of large slabs mingled with smaller stones, completely enclose the town on every side, and stand from seven to nine feet high, rendering it absolutely inaccessible to an enemy.

The interior can only be penetrated by climbing

a covered way which, ascending higher and higher, leads to a passage so low and narrow that one must creep in on all fours. Then on till, with many turnings through bewildering chambers and passages, the uppermost houses are reached, and thence the streets, which are no wider than a man's breadth.

Now all lies in ruins, and one can climb over the crumbling walls and up on to the few flat roofs which still hold together, but are dangerous footing.

From the roofs I could see over mountain and vale to the plain, and the blue peaks on the southern horizon.

Looking far down the precipice at my feet, I saw, through the spreading smoke that floated upwards from the fires on their hearths, the women moving in the courts of their dwellings. Now and then the muffled sound of their voices reached me. A man's voice shouting, however, sounded almost as if close to my ear. It must have been an echo which was the cause of my hearing it so distinctly.

How wearisome life must have been in this little town, so near the sky. To the women especially, who had to fetch water daily from the valley, it must have been very hard. One can but admire the folk who endured existence in such a spot. The very difficulties of their

mode of life made their bodies supple, their minds keen and vigorous.

Sliding down through the dark passages we emerged once more on the cliff.

By throwing back the upper part of my body, and seeking foothold with my legs, whilst I supported myself by my arms, I succeeded in reaching without mishap the uppermost tier of buildings. Here stands the mosque, a picturesque little building, in the courtyard of which is a minaret.

I began to make a sketch of this. My guide was down on me in a moment. A two-franc piece did its work, and we went within.

The surrounding wall formed a low arcade. I scanned the view over this down to the slope below; investigated everything, and found a cistern in the middle of the courtyard. Pulling at a cord attached to the cistern, I discovered that to the end of it was fastened a drinking-cup, made of the horn of a mouflon. Whilst examining this I heard a loud yell behind me, and saw an old man come up out of a cave, shouting and shaking his fist at me. My guide went to meet him, evidently intending to try and pacify him, but the old fellow persisted in screaming and threatening. Again I put my hand in my pocket, with as good a result as before.

The Khalifa and the Sheikh awaited me in their dwelling, and after a little conversation with them, and a stroll in their company through the lanes, and to visit some of the dwellings, I ordered the horses to be saddled.

As I set foot in the stirrup, the Khalifa came



A HALT IN THE DESERT—TENT OF A TRIBAL CHIEF.

forward with a mouflon horn, which he begged me to accept. It was the same that I had seen in the mosque. My guide had evidently told tales out of school.

When we had descended into the valley I turned and looked up. Near the Khalifa's house stood some white burnous-clad figures. I waved

a farewell, and saw a couple of arms flourished in reply.

So, by the same path, we rode back to Tatuin. The goats on the mountains were now grazing amongst the rocks.

My horse was fidgety, and the flies worrying him made him constantly toss his head. I was careless, and he struck me a blow on the right hand, causing it to swell, and compelling me to carry it in a sling; and thus I had to ride for several days.

After riding hard for full five hours, we reached Tatuin a little before sunset. Lieutenant Adam had arrived there with his company, and a great surprise also awaited me.

CHAPTER XV

THE TUAREG

I DISMOUNTED at the office of the Intelligence Department. In the archway a number of burnous-clad men waited to be admitted into the office, where the interpreter, M. Grosset-Grange, and Lieutenant Donau were at work.

My eyes roved over the crowd of waiting men, who hailed from far and near. They were fine types, all wrapped in white or grey cloaks. Then I started, for on the stone bench sat—yes, by Jove!—two stalwart figures, with black kerchiefs wound round about their faces, so that only their fine eyes were visible, most of the nose and a little of the forehead being covered. Their light brown complexions surprised me.

Below their white garments appeared bare legs and sandalled feet, and, if I am not mistaken, they wore light blue trousers. A tuft of black hair protruded above the dark head-covering. They were evidently Tuareg.

Lieutenant Donau came out to receive me. Pointing to the two men, I ejaculated, "Tuareg?"

"Yes, certainly," he said with a smile.

I seated myself on a bench opposite to them, while Donau fetched the interpreter, so that be-



A TUAREG.

tween them they might interrogate the Tuareg. At first I could not realise that I indeed sat peacefully face to face with the dreaded sons of

the desert, and that I should have the luck to take home for our National Museum their costume and equipment. It seemed too good to be true.

"Do you think I shall be able to buy their clothes?" I asked the interpreter.

"It will be very difficult to manage," he replied. "The Tuareg are suspicious, and will not understand that anyone would sooner buy their old rags than fine clothes, such as you wear. Besides, similar costumes are not to be had here, and they will not like to return home in ordinary Arab dress."

"Very well, tell them I am a stranger from a distant country, who has come here to see whether my people may not be of the same origin as theirs. Tell them I should be glad if I could take their costume with me to show to my countrymen. I will pay for them more than their value, or, if they will not take money for them, I will undertake to send them corn by caravan from Gabés, for I know that they have been unable to buy any here."

The interpreter then began the lengthy and tough transaction.

It then transpired that one of the two, Akhemed-uld-Bai, spoke Arabic, but not so his compatriot, Mohammed - ben - Mohammed. The conversation therefore took time.

First I addressed the interpreter in French, he then translated what I had said into Arabic for Akhemed, who again repeated it in the Berber language to Mohammed.

After the matter had been thoroughly discussed by the pair, the reply was returned in the same way.

They informed us that they belonged to the "Foghass" section of the Azgu tribe of Tuareg. But though the name of Akhemed-uld-Bai had the true Tuareg ring, as much could hardly be said for his companion's patronymic. Their proper home was on the farther side of Rhadamés.

When they learnt that I was anxious to become the possessor of their property, both of them stared at me long and fixedly, after which they consulted together for a while. Then Akhemed began to divest himself of his white "Tuat" burnous, for which we bargained. As I gave him what he asked, his other garments soon followed, and bit by bit he stripped himself, until he was actually clothed in nothing but a scanty shirt, or under-tunic, and the black veil, of which the lower part concealed his mouth.

A Tuareg never exposes his mouth before others so long as he can avoid doing so; it would be a breach of propriety.

But in the presence of foreigners they had evidently less regard for decorum than they would

have had before their own people. Now and then Akhemed, as he talked, dragged the kerchief away from the lower part of his face, and I saw the handsome well-formed beardless mouth and white teeth. Whether he were shaved I know not; but it is said that the Tuareg do not care for beards, and therefore shave.

When he rose to take off his clothes, his fine muscular form towered above all those present; a truly herculean specimen, he was some six feet high, sparsely but splendidly built.

His costume was as follows:—

A shirt-like under-tunic (akhebail), above it a grey patterned tunic with short white sleeves that came from the Sudan (taiden).

Trousers, which were wide at the top and narrow below; they reached half-way down the calf (kortebba).

Sandals (ghetimèn) of tooled leather, with crossed latches that passed between the toes and fastened round the ankle.

A long, narrow black veil, used to enwrap the head. This veil is furnished in two places with a broad flap; one serves to cover the forehead, the other the lower part of the face. The crown of the head is left bare, and shows above the veil a black tuft of hair (tadilmus). Outside the veil a long piece of white material is rolled turban-wise, but so

arranged that the veil shows both above and beneath it (ash shash).

Over this dress is worn an ordinary light wrap, a "haik" from Tuat (kheiki).

The costume was completed by three square amulet cases (tira) made of tin, and apparently fashioned out of old sardine boxes. They hung by leathern strings on the man's breast and outside his clothes.

Supposing that these cases contained inscriptions in the Berber language, I was very anxious to get possession of them. But all my endeavours in this respect were unsuccessful. Akhemed would not part with them. He declared that to him they were worth more than the value of a camel. He had bought them from a Marabout, they protected him from danger and misfortune, and since he had possessed them no ill had befallen him.

"Then sell me the cord and the cases and keep your amulet."

For a high price he agreed to this, but I could not get permission to see the contents. Next morning he brought and handed over to me an unsoldered case.

When there was no more to be bought from this man, I turned to his companion.

His costume differed little from the other, so I did not trouble about it, but on the wrist of his

left hand was an embroidered leather ring, and the same hand grasped the hilt of a dagger (tilek).


The Tuareg always carry one of these in the left sleeve, so disposed that the point is turned up the sleeve, whilst the sheath lies along under the forearm, and is secured by a sewn band which is slipped over the wrist. The handle of the dagger is cross-shaped and bound with brass wire. The dagger is therefore, very evidently and literally, handy.

I bought it and a large leather bag (agherid), made apparently of antelope or gazelle hide. Through holes on the edges of the bag were drawn leather thongs, which again were made fast with a very peculiar iron lock. This is the only lockfast receptacle owned by the Tuareg, for they rarely possess even a chest (senduk), as do the Arabs.

Of other weapons they had none, though the Tuareg generally carry spears, but rarely swords, bows and arrows, or shields.

Next I bought one of their light smart saddles for riding the dromedary (mehari). The saddle has a broad cantle at the back, and that in front, though narrower, is also high and terminates in a cross.

The cross is often found in Tuareg ornaments, and, as I show by an illustration in my book called *Algiers and the Sahara*, is supposed to be a relic of the time when this people were Christians and



inhabited the more northern regions whence they were driven by the Arabs.

All the wearing apparel that I purchased was, according to the vendors' account, manufactured by Tuareg or brought from the Sudan.

The price of each article was named in piastres, and the interpreter having added up the total, I paid in francs, without the Tuareg overlooking the account, their trust in the interpreter being so entire. A sign of their confidence in the French.

M. Grosset-Grange told me that these two Tuareg examined all that was novel to them just like children. That when they entered his room they at first stood dumfounded, then touched and examined everything. The system by which the window was closed and bolted was carefully investigated, and pleased them much. The handle of the bolt chanced to be decorated with the representation of a man's head, and the Tuareg naïvely asked, "Is that your father?"

Commandant Billet told me many amusing anecdotes of these children of nature, who are so sober and abstemious in their daily life, and who can subsist for days in the desert almost without food.


Once a "Targui" (the singular of Tuareg) happened to come to him at one of the stations. "Are you hungry?" asked the commandant.

Yes, it was long since he had tasted food ; so an enormous quantity was set before him, enough to have satisfied six or seven ordinary folk. When he had consumed all this he went to see a captain, by whom he was as generously treated. One might have supposed that he would then be satisfied ; but no, half an hour later the insatiable son of the desert called on a third official, and again complained bitterly of hunger, and was fed with a couple of dishes of " kus-kus."

It is inconceivable how any one man could swallow so much food, but probably it had never before fallen to his lot to fully satisfy his appetite.

Apparently the Tuareg are at present anxious to keep on friendly terms with the French. On several occasions small caravans have travelled as far as the southern stations of Tunisia, most of them certainly with a view to trade, *mais enfin*, it is always a move in the right direction, which, prudently encouraged, may lead farther.

It would be to the signal advantage of the French that the old caravan road to the Sahara should be reopened, so that traffic from Rhadamés could proceed direct to Gabés or other towns of Tunisia, instead of, as now, *viâ* Tripoli. The chief impediment at present lies in the fact that the caravans, not being permitted to carry slaves, are not profitable. The baskets, leather goods, weapons,



etc., which the last caravans brought with them—though in small quantities—were disposed of with difficulty in Tatuin and Medinin, which will not tend to induce them to make another trial.

No; that traffic through the Sahara may be remunerative, slavery is essential. In fact, so long



A TUAREG.

as slavery continues to flourish in Tripoli, so long will the stream of trade flow that way.

Neither does slavery appear so terrible at close quarters as it does when read of in heartrending romances in the style of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The truth is, that slaves are well treated everywhere in the East, so well that even if given their freedom,

as they were by decree in Tunisia, they, as a rule, remain in their master's house.

The transport across the desert is, indeed, full of horrors, but when once arrived at their destination the slaves do not suffer from want—quite otherwise.

Amongst the caravans that came to Tatuin in 1893 was one in charge of two nephews of Aissa, the Tuareg Sheikh who rules over the tribe of "Imaughasat."¹

The elder of these, named Uan Titi, brought a letter to the officer in command of the military station at Tatuin, in which he reclaimed several camels and a negress robbed from the Tuareg by the tribe of Uderma.

As it was politic to show a friendly disposition, the camels were forthcoming at once, though they were probably bought; but it was otherwise with regard to the negress, who was a cause of great perplexity.

According to law, every slave is free who sets foot on territory under French control, consequently nothing could be done.

That the Tuareg were afraid of again coming to blows with the tribe of Uderma, is evident from the fact that the Tuareg Sheikh had written to the Khalifa of Duirat to beg him to take care that the

¹ Correspondence in the Paris newspaper, the *Journal des Debats* of 5th September 1893.

emissaries went no farther north than Tatuin, and had also taken the precaution of ascertaining whether absolute peace prevailed in Uderma.

Uan Titi spoke of the latest French explorers, Foureau and Méry, who travelled last winter in the Sahara. He had conducted the first named, who, however, had not reached Rhadamés. Méry had spent some time with the Azgu tribe from whom the Imaughasat had then separated themselves. They now camp together and are fairly united under their Sheikh Aissa, but they still have some "duars" near "Rhat."

According to Uan Titi's account, the highroads in the Sahara pass Fezzan, Rhadamés, and Tuat. That by Rhadamés may be considered the most important.

The Tuareg, amongst whom perfect peace reigns at present, come to Rhadamés from the southern regions to escort the caravans and to supply camels for hire.

It is rare, however, for them to go farther than Tripoli or than Southern Tunisia.

The Turks in Tripoli refuse, of course, to acknowledge French rule in Tunisia; and as the people of Rhadamés are mainly Berbers under Turkish administration, these do all in their power to destroy the little trade there is with the French territories of Duirat, Tatuin, Medinin, and beyond them to Gabés.

For the moment the Tuareg place no obstacles in the way of persons who venture to travel from the Duirat mountains through the desert to Rhadamés; so the route is open, but no one who is supposed to have the slightest relations with the French is allowed to enter the oasis.

The traveller who desires to visit this town, which in the time of the Romans had constant intercourse with the coast, must start from Tripoli; if he has letters of recommendation from the authorities there, he is sure to be admitted; the journey on camel back is wearisome and even distressing through the heat and lack of water, but of danger there is none—for the present—the Tuareg not being camped by the roads in any appreciable numbers.

The French authorities have done all they could to establish peaceful relations with Rhadamés and to explore the southern frontier. Officers have reconnoitered the country from the southern mountains to far into the desert. Commandant Billet in person has ridden through the mountains as far as the Tunisian frontier. On one of these expeditions he visited the ruins of a very ancient village in the mountains, known as “Ksar Uni,” which lies eighty miles south of Tatuin.

An interpreter who spoke Arabic like a native, and who was, further, a Mohammedan, was sent to the desert not long since to endeavour to penetrate

as far as Rhadamés. His mission failed entirely. He was robbed, imprisoned in Rhadamés, and sent to Tripoli, from whence, after much difficult negotiation, his release was obtained.

West of the Matmata mountains and south of the belt of shotts is a steppe where are found a number of small wells, but south again of this and as far as Rhadamés is an almost waterless desert, barren and waste and very dangerous to cross. A few earlier travellers may possibly have passed through it, but in March and February of this year the desert was traversed by two French officers, under such marvellous conditions that I cannot refrain from giving an account of their journey, exactly as I heard it related by Major Gausset in Gabés.

Lieutenant Dumas of the Spahis (now captain of the 6th Chasseurs at Oran), and Lieutenant Caze-majou of the Engineers, both courageous and determined men, who feared neither exposure to the elements nor the sufferings of hunger and thirst, determined on trying to make their way secretly from Nafta, by the shott and through the desert, to Rhadamés. Well aware that a request for permission to travel during the difficulties in connection with the frontier would be refused by their superiors, they only asked for leave to take a trip to Algiers. This was granted without suspicion being aroused,

and, accompanied by a guide, they disappeared in the desert, both in Arab dress and mounted on camels.


After a dangerous and fatiguing ride they drew near to Rhadamés, and were already rejoicing over the happy termination of their journey; but no sooner had they reached the gates than they were driven off like dogs, their lives were menaced, and they were compelled to retreat.

Their coming had been announced by some Marabout whose kubba they had passed shortly before arriving at the town.

There was nothing to be done but to return as quickly as possible, which they did; but as they thought it possible that they might be pursued and attacked on their homeward way, they took another route, where water was very scarce, and with which none of them were acquainted.

After incredible exertions and having suffered much from hunger and thirst—they were reduced at the last to a little chocolate with which to allay the pangs of hunger—they succeeded in reaching home.

Their journey was, of course, to a great extent a failure, but they had reconnoitered an unknown country and proved themselves to be a couple of exceptionally energetic, brave men. They resumed their duty in silence, but a rumour of their exploit leaked out and reached the ear of the General. He demanded an explanation, with the result that




they received a slight official reprimand — soon shaken off.

Since Duveyrier undertook his memorable journey, of which the brilliant results are related in his book, *Les Touaregs du Nord*, no one probably has dedicated himself so entirely to a desert life as Cornitz, a young Swiss, of whom the officers in the south spoke in the highest terms.

This man, who appears to be a thinker and philosopher of no mean order, came for the first time to Southern Tunisia some years ago, in order to study the mode of life and opinions of the Bedouins. He was so charmed with their nomad existence that he returned every year for three years. He dressed as they did, and lived amongst them in the desert, and, under equal conditions, shared in the joys and sorrows of their tent life, their hunts and their boundless horizon. But the time came when even this did not satisfy him, so he purchased palm trees, a house and a herd, and settled down in the town of Duz to the west of the Matmata and south of the shotts.

To enable him to take long journeys to the south, he bought two "mehari" (chameaux coureurs) and practised the difficult art of riding them. After eight days' hard exertion he could ride as well as any "Targui."

He then travelled with his flocks, or alone, in the



south as far as Rhadamés, but neither was he able to gain admittance to that town. While on this journey he completed the French map.

Each year, after a visit home, he returned. The last time, in May 1893, that he travelled home he passed through Gabés, where he was struck down with fever and was very ill. The French officers begged him to go into the military hospital, but he declined their offers and started for the north. During my stay in the south I was told that he had written to one of the Khalifas that he would soon return to visit his herds, left in charge of an Arab, and to again resume his life in the desert.

“Il est un peu original, mais très intelligent,” the officers at Gabés said of him.

In truth, there are many who are attracted by the free life that is led under tents, where no one need fear troubling his neighbour, since space is unlimited.

If one place is unpleasing, you move to another—laying your tents on camels and vaulting into the saddle, you drive your flocks and herds onwards, ever onwards, for the horizon has no limit.

Whilst dwelling on the men who rove in the alluring, mysterious desert, which has engulfed so many in its deadly embrace, my thoughts turn to an evening at Gabés, when, after my return from the south I sat in the guest-room of the “Hotel de

l'Oasis" and refreshed myself after my exhausting ride.

The landlord, M. Saissy, a man of about fifty, was setting in order the tables, after the guests, who were mostly officers, had left. I was the only one who remained and trifled with a cigar and a glass of beer to pass away the time before retiring to bed.

I was absorbed in thought and long remained so —so long, indeed, that M. Saissy probably concluded it was time to turn in, for he approached me and began a conversation by way of rousing me from my reverie, with, "Have you had a pleasant journey, sir?"

I replied in the affirmative, and gave him a sketch of my travels and described the Matmata mountains — not a little vain, I confess, of my expedition. "Have you ever been there?" I asked in conclusion.

"No, I have not," he replied. "I came here some years ago with the regiment which I followed as sutler, and, as the officers could not find a place where they could dine, they proposed that I should cater for them. This my wife and I agreed to do. By degrees we organised this hotel, but to make it pay we have to be careful, and we cannot leave it; since our arrival at Gabés I have positively only been twice absent."

Good heavens! thought I, how dull never to

have a change and look about one a bit ; but I said, " You ought some day to go south ; it would interest you, for instance, to meet the Tuareg of the west at Tatuin. I had the luck to be there just when two arrived, whose equipments I bought."

" Ah, those may be the same that I once saw."

" Indeed, and when ?"

" Ah, yes—it was a long time ago ; I was quite young then, and the love of travel drew me away from home. I do not remember how it came about, but eventually I started with two companions to shoot ostriches in the Sahara—in those days it was not so difficult to penetrate there. We hunted with the Tuareg."

" Did you venture far ?"

" Yes, I do not exactly know how far, but certainly to the other side of Tuat. The natives were a peaceful people, and we were never at enmity with them. Our hunting was successful, and we made money for our employer.

" Once I was on the point of going there again with Dr. Nachtigall, but something intervened, and to my bitter regret I could not leave—for I have always had a longing for that sort of life. It was very different from slaving as we do now, my wife and I ; for it is not easy to please everyone—no, indeed ! But to return to those days. You see, I have been acquainted with many of the well-known

travellers. Most of them behave badly—for they do not respect the natives. Some rely on force—which is a mistake—it is always best to be unarmed. If ever I should venture there again, I would take a stick in my hand and naught else.

“Miss Tinné I knew well. She would not listen to good advice and was murdered. Good heavens! she needed only to ask the chief of the Tuareg for a safe conduct and all would have been well, but she would not wait till the matter could be arranged, believing that she could safely penetrate farther with the protection she had.

“No—believe me; it is easy enough to push one’s way forward, but one must avoid offending the natives.

“There was another traveller who deserved to have been slain also—but escaped. He simply stole cattle when he required them.”

We conversed long, and I gathered much information with many interesting details, as old recollections were recounted by him as they came back to his mind.

Saissy’s wife joined us, and we sat together and discussed a glass of wine. Saissy promised me then to note down his recollections, which are to be forwarded to me, and I hope to be able to publish them later; for the present I confine myself to what I have already mentioned.

On my referring to the great desire I had to visit Rhadamés some future year—"Take me with you," burst from M. Saissy. "I am in earnest; pay me only sufficient to enable my wife to live in comfort in my absence, and I will accompany you. You may be assured that I should be of use to you."

"From Tripoli?" I asked.

"Of course from Tripoli."

"Nous verrons, M. Saissy." And so we went to bed.

When I left, a couple of days later, Saissy came to me and gave me his portrait, saying—

"You will let me know when you have come to a decision."

CHAPTER XVI

BACK TO TUNIS

IN the course of the night a telegram arrived, ordering Dr. Cultin to return with me next day to Medinin, as his colleague had been suddenly seized with fever and was very ill.

We were a little late in starting, and the sun was scorching hot. Followed by our two Spahis and a led horse, which bore my purchases from the Tuareg, we hurried homewards.

After a halt near Bir el Ahmer, where we breakfasted, and where a fresh horse awaited me, our progress was rapid.

But it was after nightfall when we reached Medinin. Outside the camp we met the lieutenant of the Spahis, who said that the doctor was worse, and was about to be sent in a carriage to Gabés.

Dr. Cultin hurried away to his sick comrade, and I dismounted at the quarters of the commandant, who came galloping in to receive me, and invited me to a splendid dinner with some of the officers.

I need scarcely mention that I expressed my thanks in the warmest terms for the brilliant recep-

tion I had received, and for my memorable trip to the southernmost military stations.

I was offered a horse for an expedition to Zarsis and the island of Jerba, but had to decline with many thanks, as my time was limited.

After a comfortable breakfast with the infantry officers, I bade my friends farewell before the commandant's house, and, waving my hat in a final salute, rode off to Gabés.

Commandant Billet accompanied me nearly as far as Metamer, where we parted.


"Should you ever go to Rhadamés by way of Tripoli and return by this route, you would be heartily welcome, and this would certainly be your best way home," said the commandant.

I replied that should the journey ever be attempted by me, Medinin would have a great attraction for me, and thanked him heartily for all his kindness.

Then I rode with my Spahi towards the camp at Metamer, where the lieutenant on guard came out and invited me in.

After a short halt, I continued in a north-westerly direction along the foot of the mountain of the signal station, and thence by a hilly country north; the Matmata mountains lying to the west of us, and the plain to the east.

On both the plain and the hills I saw ruined



Roman remains. We also passed a spot where a few soldiers were encamped for the purpose of digging a well, and as we ascended a hill saw a vehicle come swinging towards us. Before it rode a red Spahi, behind it another. The carriage was a heavy box on four wheels, and had an awning over it; it was drawn by four mules, and two soldiers acted as postillions. From within peeped a woman's face. It was a captain's wife who had taken advantage of the opportunity of going *vid* Medinin to visit her husband at Zarsis—the carriage being on its way to fetch the sick doctor.

It was nearly sunset, and I urged on my horse to avoid arriving late at the little caravansarai where we were to spend the night.

Soon it became so dark that the horses stumbled on the rough road, and we had to slacken to a walk. For a long time we saw nothing but each other's dim figures and heard only the tramp of our horses.

At last, at the village of Aram, lights shone and dogs barked as we passed amongst its palms.

After riding in the still night about an hour longer, we again heard dogs barking and saw lights. We were then near the oasis of Marath, where, having ridden fully twenty miles, we were to rest some hours and start again at sunrise for Gabés.

In the caravansarai—which resembled that of Bir el Ahmer—a Spahi from Gabés awaited me with a fresh horse.

The lights in the house streamed from the rooms into the courtyard. Within were some soldiers, who had bivouacked round about a candle placed on the floor. They came out, received our horses and conducted me to an officer's room. Four bare walls; raised on masonry was a sloping plank-bed which extended along the inner wall; besides this there was a table and a bench.

A native, who was in charge of the place, I sent to the oasis to buy me some candles. The soldiers eagerly offered to lend me, till his return, their little taper stuck in a bottle.

The Spahis then laid the table, and I dined, after first dividing with them and the soldiers the eatables with which I had been so sumptuously provided, for no one knows better than I do how a small extra ration tends to put a soldier into good-humour. I have not forgotten the old days in South Oran when I was myself a mere private.

The Spahis and the four soldiers drew up in line at the table, and I began the distribution—bread and dates to the Mohammedans, and wine to the soldiers, which I poured into the tin mugs they held out to me, and to whom I gave also bread and meat.

“Right about face, march!” I gave the order involuntarily, and the troop at once vanished through the door.

Soon the sound of gay voices singing reached my ear from the adjoining room.

When I had finished my repast I lit a cigarette and took a turn through the courtyard to have a look at the horses, which still stood saddled and had not yet been either fed or watered, they were so overheated from their journey.

Having given orders that they were to be unsaddled, fed, and watered, I returned, and, lying on the bed, listened to the singing.

I had rested but a short while when a smart soldier entered, and, with his hand to his cap, asked if he and his comrades might enliven the evening for me, as if so, they would come in.

I agreed willingly; so they came in, each carrying his mug, and sat on the ground facing me.

After I had questioned them, asking each where he hailed from, and had talked with them about a soldier's life in the desert—a life I also knew something of—I asked them to sing; then the usual barrack ballads with comic choruses woke the still night. Afterwards I chatted again a little with them, refilled their mugs which they emptied, wishing me a happy journey, and then withdrew.

I wrapped myself in my burnous and slept, but

was disturbed, first by the stamping of the horses, and later by the noise of some carts being yoked in the yard.

Before it was light next morning I was broad awake. The soldiers made and brought me some coffee that I drank with relish, and it was just day-break when, wrapped in my burnous, I got into my saddle, after having inscribed my name in the register. The soldiers stood at attention and saluted as I bade them farewell and thanked them for the songs they sang for me, while they, in return, wished me a happy journey.

Our road was towards the north through the palm groves of the lowland, where we now and again crossed the dry beds of torrents that began in the mountains.

After a couple of hours we traversed the Ketena oasis, leaving other palm groves on one side.

Here the level of the country rose a little, and far away on the northern horizon we could see the palm forests that lie south of Gabés, and now and again caught a glimpse in the east of the sunlit surface of the Mediterranean.

Presently the temperature became very sultry, and a hot wind rose, which whirled the sand in our eyes. This was the sirocco.

When we reached the high ground, where stands the Marabout's tomb of "Sid Hamed ben-Habib,"

and had passed its palms, we saw, through dust clouds and flying sand, Gabés, looking like a white riband in the distance, while behind us the palms of the oasis waved in a long unbroken line from east to west.

Soon after, we arrived, both tired and thirsty, at Gabés.

In the afternoon, when I was busy packing into cases all the weapons, ornaments, and costumes I had collected in the country, Arab visitors were announced.

This was no less than the Khalifa of El Hamma, "the mild, friendly" Khalifa, accompanied by three of the Matmata mountain sheikhs. They had heard that I was in the town and wished to greet me.

Their visit pleased me much, as a token of a friendly feeling on the part of the natives.

I found seats for them all to the best of my ability—the Khalifa on the bed, one of the sheikhs on a low chest, another on the floor, and a third on a chair; and then Moorish coffee and cigarettes were served.

The conversation turned on my late experiences, and I thanked them for their hospitality and received the reply—

"You will always be welcome amongst us."

"I am now going home," I said, "but perhaps some day I may return, and then, my friends, I

will seek you, and we may shoot wild boar in the mountains towards El Hamma. Is it not so, Khalifa?"

"As you will, Sidi. We have horses and men, and nothing you need shall be wanting," he replied with charming courtesy.

When later in the day I paid a farewell visit to Captain Simon at the Bureau Arabe, I found the office crammed full of Arabs, who had been summoned from the mountains.

As I pushed my way through them I caught sight of first one, then other faces that I recognised. In short, nearly all these brown-skinned chiefs with dark eyes and black beards were known to me, and each and all stretched out their hands in greeting.

"How is this?" said the captain. "Do you know the whole of them?"

"Yes, indeed," I answered with pride; "they are my friends from the mountains."

On the 2nd November I left for the north by the steamer *Isac Pèrere*. My good Hamed helped me faithfully with my packing and the embarkation of my numerous cases, and his figure was the last that I could distinguish on the pier-head.

The *Isac Pèrere* crept slowly north, and reached Tunis in four days. Life on board was pleasant enough, for there were several officers with us, but,

being so long accustomed to ride daily, I missed my exercise.

We lay before Sfax for one day. The cavalry officers of the garrison there came out in a boat to call on Colonel Gousset and on us, dined on board, and amused themselves with their comrades, or fished for small fry from the deck or the accommodation ladder of the ship. To visit these ships twice a week is their chief distraction. The sight of fresh faces and the chance of hearing some news give a little zest to their dull lives.

At Monastir the same happened, but here the callers were officers of the Tirailleurs, and their visit was evidently intended for a newly promoted captain of their battalion, lately detailed for service at Gabés, whence he was now on his way to Tunis to meet his wife.

It so happened that he, as a young lieutenant, had served in South Oran through the same campaign, but not in the same detachment, as myself, so we had many amusing recollections in common, and were soon good friends.

At Susa he invited me to land and visit his comrades, but I was prevented doing so by the quarantine imposed on account of the cholera then prevalent.

Generally these quarantine regulations were utterly senseless. The officials and the functionaries

connected with shipping who came on board were allowed to do so without being disinfected, whereas the passengers from the ship who wished to land had to undergo that process.

A lieutenant of the Tirailleurs, who had come from Kairwan and was on his way to Tunis, came on board. He told me of the frightful heat in the country during the past summer. Yet he absolutely preferred residing in the interior rather than on the coast, the heat not being so distressing there and the air purer and fresher, whereas the damp heat of the coast was almost unbearable.

At Kairwan the temperature might rise as high as 120° Fahrenheit, but one could rub along pretty tolerably, though it was difficult to sleep at night. Want of sleep is, without doubt, the worst effect of this climate, as it weakens and destroys the nervous system.

I had informed the Danish Consul at Goletta, by letter, when I should arrive, as he was of opinion that it would be right for me to call on the French Minister Resident, Rouvier, who had just returned from France; and also on the Bey, to thank them for the brilliant receptions and the support afforded me in consequence of their orders to the authorities to assist me.

At Susa I received a telegram to the effect that the Minister Resident would receive me next

morning at nine o'clock, and would afterwards conduct me to the Bey.

“ Shall we arrive in time at Tunis ? ” I asked the captain. He hoped for the best.

Steaming along the beautiful mountainous coast in the early morning hours was enchanting. To our left lay the mountains near Hamman-lif ; before us were the white walls of Goletta ; and to the right the cathedral on the ruins of Carthage ; Marsa, and the villas on the sea-coast. Beyond Goletta, we could see, across the shining surface of the lake, the white houses of Tunis and, behind them, the blue mountains.

At eight o'clock we passed through the canal and steamed up the lake to Tunis, but it was slow work, for care has to be taken not to stir up the water ; so working a ship in this harbour takes time ; it was therefore twenty minutes to nine before I landed, after having taken leave of Colonel Gousset and the other officers.

A carriage took me full speed to the hotel, where I found my luggage and hurriedly changed my clothes.

I kept my appointment punctually to the moment.

CHAPTER XVII

TUNIS

MONSIEUR ROUVIER¹ may be described as an unimpeachable gentleman attired in black; of his statesmanship I will offer no opinion. He had only just returned from Paris, and the Press had not received him favourably. Evidently he had not achieved all that had been expected of him, and was attacked accordingly, but whether with or without grounds I know not. In any case, it is said by those who know him, that he, who had formerly shown himself friendly to all, now began to be haughty and distant in manner. He had perhaps discovered that every man's friend is no one's friend.

After having paid my respects to M. Rouvier, I had, according to previous arrangement, to call on His Highness the Bey. Our Consul was ill, and could not present me; I therefore drove alone to the palace near the Kasba, outside which was a crowd of carriages and waiting Mussulmans.

The General of Division, Valenci, the Bey's

¹ M. Rouvier is newly appointed to Stockholm as French Representative.

interpreter, received me, and with an insinuating and affable smile clasped my right hand in both of his, assuring me of the great pleasure it gave him to see me.

Valenci is by birth a Jew, and was once a tailor; he became a favourite at the Court—how, I know not—and was gradually promoted until he was made a general, though he has never been in command of a soldier, much less of a division.

As a matter of fact, the French soldiers regard the Bey's officers with contempt; they do not even salute them unless they happen to be personally acquainted with them. The Bey's entire army now consists only of a bodyguard of some two hundred men, who are paid by the French, and with whom the old man is delighted, as they are well drilled and equipped and regularly paid, so that they no longer need to knit stockings when on guard, as in old days.

Seldom have I seen a breast glitter with so many orders as Valenci's; his brilliant uniform was—in front, at least—literally covered with large crosses, bestowed on him by the many European Powers, whose emissaries have been received by him—as the Bey's chief interpreter—when presented to the Bey. In the case of the "Legion d'honneur" alone, he has to be content with a low rank, as of that he is only an officer.

It must be admitted that praise is due to him for his great tact and extraordinary discretion, on account of which he has been allowed to remain in his present position since the French occupation.

But now the great man appeared on the scene—Rouvier, the real Regent of Tunis, who at one and the same time is Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Bey, and also Representative of France—that France which has made of the Bey, the kind, amiable Bey ; a shadow king.

For him the drums beat and the guard presented arms. The sound must, I think, strike with a jarring note on the Bey's ear.

Whilst M. Rouvier stood beside the Bey, I entered and thanked him for the great assistance His Highness's subjects had afforded me. I named especially the Khalifas of Gabés and Hadeij, and gave a cursory account of my journey in the south. General Valenci translated sentence by sentence. The Bey replied, put questions, and expressed his pleasure at my having been so well pleased. He shook me warmly by the hand, the poor old shadow prince with the white beard and kindly eyes, who is led out now like a chained animal on his reception days.

Officially speaking, the Bey reigns over his subjects without interference, but, in fact, he is bound to be guided by his Minister's will.

The Commander-in-Chief in Tunisia, a Brigadier-General, is at the same time the Bey's Minister for War; thus all the political posts are filled by Frenchmen. The Bey has Civil Governors in his provinces, under whom are Khalifas, and under them again Sheikhs. General Allegro at Gabés was one of the first of these. These Governors exercise supreme power in the Bey's name, but they are watched by the "contrôleurs civil" and the Intelligence Department, so that in reality the administration is managed in accordance with the will of the French, and the Governors are freed from responsibility in the conduct of affairs.

But now peace and quiet reign over nearly the whole country; the plundering and fighting which formerly laid the land waste has ceased, arms are put aside, and trade flourishes, roads have been improved and extended, and colonists arrive.

Before the French occupation, the tribes in Tunisia were divided into two parties ("Sof"), of which the adherents changed according to circumstances. One of these parties termed itself the Bey's, but only with the intent of being able to plunder and rob the other with impunity.

At the head of what were known as the independent tribes were, as a rule, the Beni Zid, in the neighbourhood of the oasis of El Hamma, who pretend to be the descendants of a French renegade.

The French traveller Pellissier, in his time, was well received by them on that score, and they called him cousin. Some years ago the Beni Zid seized the Kasba at Sfax by a *coup de main*.

Again it was these independent tribes who offered armed resistance to the French, though certainly not always in great force or with much success. After the conquest of the country, some thirty thousand of them emigrated across the frontier into Tripoli, whence they have now mostly returned.

We have seen that the tribe of Urghamma, on the Tripolitan frontier, adhered ostensibly to the Bey, but only that under cover of his name they might commit the worst excesses.

After taking leave of the Bey I returned to my hotel. First I glanced through my letters, and, after a bath and having dressed, I enjoyed an excellent breakfast, at which I met M. Gauckler, who promised to help me make various purchases,—which promise he faithfully kept. On the whole,



MOORISH WOMEN IN A STREET IN TUNIS.

I cannot sufficiently thank him for all his valuable assistance. As it turned out that many of the photographs I had taken were failures, he handed me a collection of views of the whole of Tunisia, photographed for the "Service des Antiquités," and which had in great part been exhibited in Madrid in 1892, and presented me with all those that I selected, that I might make any use of them I pleased. Thanks to his generosity, I am able to adorn my book with many of these interesting pictures. He also undertook the troublesome task of bargaining on my account with the Jews and Moors who were to pack all I had bought.

During my absence he had been engaged in making excavations, and had brought back some fine mosaics for the museum at Bardo. Under his direction the latter will be enlarged, and will in time contain some priceless treasures. A law now prohibits the exportation of antiquities of any kind to foreign countries. Still, under certain circumstances, exceptions are made, as, for instance, with regard to some objects found at Carthage, which I had acquired, and which, during my absence in the south, were stopped at the custom-house; but, on our Consul applying to M. Gauckler, he had them passed for me.

The remainder of the day I spent in the shops of the Sok, and in paying visits, amongst others

to Drummond Hay, who had long expected my return. I found him in his beautiful government house, near the "Porte de France," where I also called on his wife. They invited me to spend a day with them in the country, where I had an opportunity of thanking Drummond Hay for his valuable assistance and advice, without which my journey would have been made with no fixed purpose, and, notwithstanding all the kindness and hospitality so generously shown me, it might have had a far less interesting result.

SUPPLEMENT

THE TRIBES OF TUNISIA—A SYNOPSIS

FROM a geographical point of view the actual Regency of Tunisia does not comprise an entire country; in features it does not differ from the rest of Barbary, since its mountains form part of the same system as those of Algeria and Morocco. Its chief rivers have their sources in Algeria, and, as in the above-mentioned countries, mountains, high tablelands, and the belts of the Sahara succeed each other from the north to the south, each with its special aspect, climate, fauna, and flora.

But Tunisia is better situated than Algeria, for its coast trends towards the south, thus bringing every part of the country near the sea. For it is a fact that the palm groves of the oases about Gabés extend right up to the Mediterranean, and there, though virtually in the heart of the Sahara, one may yet feel the mild influence of the sea.

The whole of Barbary is in a geological sense sundered from the rest of Africa, being in reality a continuation of Southern Europe, of which the

mountain formation is found again here. The climate, therefore, resembles that of the Mediterranean littoral. In the interior of Tunisia, indeed, it may be extremely hot, but the average heat over the whole country is about 76°. The winter lasts only during the two months of January and February, but the summer from May to October.

Barbary, from Cape Bon to Cape Nun, is everywhere peopled by a mixture of races, who differ from each other in origin, customs, and character.

In the fruitful valleys of the northern coast dwells an agricultural race, whilst the high lands are chiefly peopled by nomads; and one again finds the agriculturist in the southern mountains and in the oases. All these different races have settled in those spots where, according to their circumstances and their temperaments, they were most likely to find the means of existence.

The Berbers were the aborigines, and, although they comprise more than two-thirds of the present number of inhabitants, these peaceful agriculturists—who have always been heavy in their movements and slow at assembling—invariably succumbed to the warlike Arabs from the high-lying plains.

The Arabs, when they left Arabia, moved from the east towards the west.

A great number of negroes are also to be found in Tunisia, brought principally from the Sudan

as slaves. They are everywhere closely intermingled with the native population.


Lastly, in the towns are found Jews and Moors. The latter are generally typical of a mixed race; although the type in the different towns is composed of many races intermingled, it assumes in general a common resemblance. Their mode of life, habits, hygiene, and surroundings have produced a hybrid race. In Tunis there are numbers of Moors, and also in several other Berber towns.

In accordance with the results of the latest researches, I will endeavour to give a short descriptive sketch of the different peoples who at the present time inhabit the Regency of Tunisia.

THE BERBERS.

The indigenous population comprised in the races of Tunisia, and known generally as Berbers, may be computed at about one million. They are a hybrid people, the descendants of the "Libyans" of Herodotus and Scylax, of the Mauri or Maurusii, of the Gætulians, of the Romans, and of the Numidians. All these races have nothing in common with the Phœnicians. Herodotus already knew this, and remarks that whereas the Libyans and Ethiopians were the original inhabitants of North Africa, the Phœnicians and Greeks were immigrants.

It was long before any distinction was made



between the various racial groups of Berbers; it was only observed that there were amongst them both fair and dark types. It was not until men such as the archæologist Tissot and the well-known Duveyrier had broken the ground, and in later years the famous anthropologists, Doctors Collignon and Bertholon, had succeeded in throwing light on the native languages, that a way was opened which led to a correct solution of the origin of the Berber peoples, and their division into groups.

I made the acquaintance of Bertholon in Tunis; he is at present President of the Geographical Society there, the "Institut de Carthage." From my conversations with him, and from the information I acquired from his works and those of his predecessors, I think I am able to indicate the principal groups.¹ Within these are again included lesser groups, not, however, needing special mention here.

1. The Berbers of the oases (of the Néanderthal type).

These are the Gætuli of the ancients, who at the present day live where they were found in olden times; that is in the southern oases—the home of the date-palm.

This race, so far as can be ascertained, has always

¹ *Anthropologie Criminelle des Tunisiens Musulmans; Les formes de la famille chez les premiers habitants de l'Afrique du Nord; Exploration anthropologique de la Khroumirie.*


inhabited El Jerid, to the west of Gabés, for Sallust mentions this people as dwelling there, and regarded them as the oldest inhabitants of this country.

They are a peaceful and somewhat indolent race, who cultivate their gardens and tend their palm trees.

From olden times they have been maltreated by the surrounding warlike nomads and mountaineers, against whom they were incapable of defending themselves. Indeed, they have frequently been compelled to pay their tormentors largely to protect them from other predatory tribes.

They have, therefore, always been in a wretched dependent position, which has tended to develop their indolence, and has been the source of the deterioration of their morals.

For instance, since olden days, they have had a regular marriage law, but this institution has little meaning for them, women being held in great contempt, and the men not even doing them the honour of being jealous of them. This state of affairs can be accounted for by the tendency of the men to form illicit connections. Formerly, deceived husbands were openly ridiculed in the oasis of Gofsa and never took serious offence; in fact, it was customary to select as kaid one of those who had been most compromised in this respect. The nominee had to undergo a strange ordeal on his election. He



had to ride through the oasis on a donkey, seated facing the tail, and wearing a grotesque head-dress. Thus he was paraded to the great amusement of the inhabitants, and, perhaps, to his own satisfaction.

These kind of husbands are known in Tunisia and Algeria alike as "Tahan," the word signifying not only he who is betrayed, but further, he who is betrayed for the sake of gain.

2. The dark Berbers (Dolichocephalous, or long-headed type), of short stature, like the Iberians, the natives of the Mediterranean littoral, the Cro-Magnon, and the Sordi types.

The Tunisian Berbers of this group closely resemble the natives of the Pyrenees and of Languedoc, and of the great islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Their chief characteristic is a tendency toward murder, feud, and fray.

In the three "arrondissements" of Ain Drahm (in the Khrumir mountains), Bizerta and Kef, all in north-west Tunisia, where this type prevails, no less than forty-one murders and assaults were committed last year alone, whereas in the whole of the rest of Tunisia there were only twenty-nine. This computation includes only the crimes committed by natives. This propensity to shed blood exists also amongst the kindred race north of the Mediterranean.

It is startling to observe that this temperament

prevails wherever the brown dolichocephalous peoples are found.

Other characteristics which they have in common are their warlike disposition, their devotion to agriculture, and their pronounced clannishness.

For example, when the French came to Tunisia, the Khrumirs, the most typical of the tribes belonging to this group, were formed into three leagues, composed of fifteen tribes, which were again subdivided into forty-three divisions, although the whole population numbered only five thousand and seventy-one persons, of whom only one thousand four hundred and seventy were men capable of bearing arms. In other words, there were only forty-three armed men in each division.

The tribe Nefza in the same province had innumerable chiefs of clans.

A peculiarity of the people on either coast of the Mediterranean is their strong inclination to fetichism, whatever may be the form of their religion.

The Khrumirs are Mussulmans only in name. Their religion is confined to observing the fast (Ramadan), and to a holy horror of all unbelievers. They never pray, and are unacquainted with any ritual. They own some Marabout tombs, enshrining saints to whom peculiar influence is attributed, and who are worshipped like positive idols.

One of these is adored because he takes care that

parents who ill-treat their children shall be punished through his intervention.

Some punish perjurers.

Sid Abdallah-ben-Jemet, the famed Marabout, at whose tomb the Khrumirs assembled to oppose the French when these arrived in 1881, is, like many others, celebrated for the cure of fevers. One protects the crops, another is the special patron of fountains. In short, all these Marabouts are worshipped as lesser gods. Beneath Islamism, idolatry flourishes as in olden days; the gods have merely changed their names.

Amongst the Khrumirs, family ties are very slack, woman being regarded as a mere beast of burden. Marriage can be dissolved with the greatest facility. In many tribes a man can take to himself a wife without the intervention of any sort of authority. When the price agreed on—generally a pair of oxen—is paid, the man takes his bride home, and then invites the elders of his tribe to a banquet.

Among the Ushetta a peculiar custom holds. After their feast is concluded, the bridegroom and his friends plunder all the tents of the “duar” for edibles for another meal—continuing until they can find nothing more to devour.

The woman is usually bought without her consent being asked, and it often occurs that, just after

a daughter's marriage, the father will request the bridegroom to return the bride, as in the meantime another man has offered for her a higher price. Thus he sometimes gets double payment, as, when a couple is compelled to separate, the purchase money is not returned.

The intellectual condition of this people is of the narrowest. Scarcely a hundred can be found who can read, and few can count up to a hundred. Neither have they any knowledge of what has occurred in their own country even within the last century. Their industrial arts are primitive; even pottery-making is unknown.

The Khrumirs are extremely quarrelsome, and are always fighting among themselves. No market or feast can pass without blood being shed.

The abduction of women by armed men is common. The comparatively unattached existence of the women facilitates illegal connections. A great number of these nomads have, therefore, as mistresses married women, either in their own "duar," or in the neighbourhood.

A Khrumir will rove at times both far and wide, and even in winter will brave snow and bad weather to reach his beloved. Formerly death was the punishment inflicted on a woman whose guilt was discovered; since the French occupation they do not venture to kill her, but she is severely chastised, or

sometimes handed over to her lover, who is forced to pay to the betrayed husband the sum for which he bought her. Still women continue now, as formerly, to be the primary cause of many a murder.

For "to die in your bed" the Ushetta say "to die like a donkey."

The vendetta with all its consequences prevails to a greater extent than in Corsica.

In some tribes it was the custom when a mountaineer had been murdered, and after his death had been sufficiently howled over, to slaughter a sheep. Kinsmen and friends were invited, and all those who partook of the meat united in an oath to avenge the death. Blood money (*dia*) existed, but was seldom accepted.

When it suited them, all individual differences were laid aside that they might unite to plunder in fellowship. Anyone venturing amongst the Nefza tribe in old days was immediately despoiled.

So lately as 1878, when the *Auvergne* was wrecked near Tabarka, all on board were completely stripped, even to their shoes. In 1885, when another ship was wrecked at the same place, its cargo was instantly pillaged, though under the guardianship of the French authorities. Needless to say, robberies are of daily occurrence. Even in 1888 an officer's horse was stolen on the road to Ain Drahm, in the Khrumir mountains.

The prevalence of theft has originated a peculiar mode of earning a livelihood. Certain individuals gain their subsistence entirely by pursuing and finding stolen cattle. They follow the track of the animals, mark the road taken, and, as a rule, discover where the booty is concealed. They often offer terms to the thieves if these show signs of fear, and thus extract money both from the man who has been robbed, when they recover his property, and from the thief, who pays not to be given up. The robbers naturally commit murders and other serious crimes, for to them the concealment of their robberies is all-important. In 1888 two Kabail were thus plundered and murdered by the Khrumir. The latter had ordered their women to burn the corpses, but an inquiry was made and all was revealed, and subsequently three of the culprits were hanged at Tunis.

Until the French in 1881 put a check on them, the Khrumir were uncontrolled. When the Bey's soldiers arrived to collect taxes, they were received with gun-shots, and were generally compelled to retreat.

Very often they defeated the Bey's whole army, as in 1855, when they cut down Ahmed Bey himself as he fled from them; and when the Nefza massacred three hundred men in a pass north of Beja.

Even since the French occupation they have

broken out. When, in 1887, the officials who controlled the tobacco monopoly went amongst them to make certain inquiries, they rose in arms, and a regular battle was fought in which men were both killed and wounded.

To this day they frequently revolt against their own chiefs, and very often kill them.

Like practical people they sometimes palm off on the authorities a decrepit old man, who is hung instead of the actual murderer.

They do not venture to make open war against the French, but they wreak their vengeance by setting fire to the grand cork-woods in the Khrumir mountains, although aware that if caught and imprisoned they are undone.

Finally, we must bear in mind that, according to Sallust, the mingling of the races of Gætuli and Berbers of short stature (the Cro-Magnon type) resulted in the people known as the Numidians. In ancient times they had no fixed dwellings. Thus Polybius relates that Massinissa's greatest triumph was that he had induced them to live in settled abodes.

3. The fair-haired Berbers (Brachycephalous—short-headed, the Grenelle and Celtic type).

(a) The Grenelle type is found in Spain and probably in Morocco, as in Malta and on the coasts of Tunisia.

(*b*) Brachycephalous Berbers of the Ligurian type. In Tunisia these are found on the island of Jerba, in the Matmata mountains, and, again, along the coast, more especially about Susa; but they are also scattered throughout the interior of the country. They are akin to the Mozabit and the Kabail, and to the old Celtic cognate races.

The resemblance of these types to those of the people on the corresponding northern shores of the Mediterranean is very striking. The brachycephalous population of the ancient "Gallia Cisalpina," in the valley of the Rhone, in Auvergne, and in the Alps, is of light complexion, and peaceful temperament, for neither vendetta, coltetta, nor maffia, nor, generally speaking, any similar description of crime, is known amongst this people.

In Eastern Tunisia, along the coast from Susa as far as the island of Jerba, the soil is, comparatively speaking, well cultivated. The Berbers there wear a peculiar costume (narrow blue trousers and a woollen coat, but rarely the burnous). The peaceful agriculturists are, in some districts, also traders, and in others remarkably good seamen. The region they inhabit is therefore more highly civilised than the rest of Tunisia, and most of the soldiers of the 4th battalion of Tirailleurs are enrolled from amongst these natives, since they lend themselves

better to discipline, and are more easily commanded than the natives of Algeria.

On the whole, the agriculturist in Tunisia is found only amongst the brachycephalous tribes. This alone is a remarkable connecting link, but there are many others which certainly indicate that on both sides of the Mediterranean we find a cognate race.

As the Auvergnats, the Savoyards, and the Piedmontese leave their hearths and homes for a while to earn money in various ways in European towns—how many little Savoyards have we not seen formerly in Denmark with their hand-organs and marmots?—so do the Berbers journey forth, the Mzaboas, the Kabail, the people of the island of Jerba, of Eastern Tunisia, or of the Matmata mountains, to the towns on the south coast of the Mediterranean to earn a substantial sum of money, with which on their return home they may buy palms, a few head of cattle, and—a wife. For instance, at the Grand Hotel in Tunis I found a couple of men from Duirat serving in the kitchen.

Like their brethren in France, the Berber traders are born democrats.

Between their social organisation and that of the Celts one finds more than one point of resemblance.

Thus there is a comparatively limited religious spirit, combined with great superstition, equally

amongst the Roman Catholic Auvergnats and the Mohammedan Kabail.

On my way to Tunis I passed through Auvergne, where I observed many old villages built on the tops of hills. In the Matmata, and later in the Kabail mountains, I was struck with the similarity of the Berber villages to those I had seen in Southern France.

Finally, I may remark that in many places on the North African coast one sees stone cairns and monuments that are strikingly like those found in France, and, moreover, at home in Denmark also.

It stands to reason that in a country like Tunisia, which since time immemorial has been inhabited by so many different races, it is not always easy to trace the various types when these are closely intermingled. Still there may always be found amongst these mixed peoples a few individuals who bear, in a greater or lesser degree, the impress of a marked racial tendency.

In the oases that lie towards the south-east, one finds, for instance, brachycephalous Berbers intermingled with the original Berbers of the oases—the descendants of the Gætulians.

One is soon struck with the consequence, amongst others, of the high value set on the chastity of the girls whom they desire to marry; in direct contrast in this respect to the dwellers in other oases.


In Central and Western Tunisia one finds not a few Berbers mingled with the Arabs. Those who are nomads live as do the aristocratic Arabs; but those who have fixed abodes are, on the contrary, republican in thought and feeling.

They were originally governed by a "Jemáa," or superior assembly, whose decrees were made in accordance with local tradition (kanun), which was regarded as law; the kanun being held in even greater honour than the Koran.

Since the French occupation, legal jurisdiction has been established over the whole country, with kaid, khalifa, and sheikh, and a superior tribunal in Tunis. This curtailment of their former liberties has placed the Berbers on the same footing as the Arabs, and has led to the disappearance of their ancient institutions.

The Berber language is distinct from the Semitic. It has now nearly died out in Tunis, and is supplanted by Arabic, but it still survives on the island of Jerba, where at least one document exists written in the ancient characters. Also I found it still spoken in many of the villages near Duirat in the Matmata mountains, but the written language is absolutely forgotten there.

According to Tissot, this language is in the main similar to all the dialects spoken in the Sahara by the Tibu and the Tuareg right away from Senegal



to Nubia, but of course not including the new dialects spoken by the Negroes or Sudanese.

The Tuareg language is that which most nearly approaches that of the Berbers; but those independent peoples, who call themselves Imoshag, Amazigh, Shloh, may be said to be more closely akin to the Kabail, Zauau of Algeria, and the Berbers of Tunisia.

In my book, *Algeria and the Sahara*, I described my travels through the Sahara, and at the same time gave a short sketch of the Tuareg bands. Here I will give from the best works¹ of French travellers, but adhering as far as possible to Bertholon's account, a brief supplementary commentary on the status of woman in these desert tribe communities, for their position is quite different from that occupied by their sisters in Mohammedan countries.

A Tuareg woman exercises a decided right of option in the matter of marriage. Indeed, without her consent, and unless she herself has chosen a husband, she cannot be given in marriage, and, in spite of the Koran, she has found the way to prevent her husband taking a second wife.

Amongst the Tuareg tribes in the Western Sahara, monogamy is so firmly established that it has given rise to the following adage: "The man who takes two wives invites death to his tent."

¹ Duveyrier, *Les Touareg du Nord*; Captain Bissuel, *Les Touareg de l'Ouest*; Largeau, *Le Sahara Algerien*.

Divorce, so easily obtainable amongst Mohammedans, is almost unknown to the Tuareg, and is, besides, very difficult of accomplishment. It can only take place after the case has been submitted to a court of arbitration composed of four persons—two for each of the married pair.

The Tuareg woman is not her husband's slave; she is his equal, she sits beside him at meals, and can take long journeys alone, for she is not shut up like an Arab woman.

Whilst the man journeys afar with the caravans, or on freebooting expeditions, she remains at home to direct affairs. But this is not all, for she studies old traditions, is highly enlightened, and far in advance of the men in knowledge of old customs and manners, and also of the art of reading and writing the Tuareg language. In short, it is she who preserves their traditions and is acquainted with their literature, and indeed sometimes ranks as the highest authority of the tribe.

Duveyrier relates that amongst the eastern Tuareg the women take part in the councils when the tribes assemble, just as did the Iberian women in ancient days.

In the battlefield it is often dread of the women's scorn which drives the men to make the utmost efforts to return victorious.

“This trait reminds one of the Iberian maidens,

who chose their husbands from amongst the bravest warriors."

Descent on the mother's side alone ennobles, and the children belong to the family of the wife.

For instance, the son of a nobly born woman and a slave is acknowledged as free born, whereas the son of a slave and a free man remains a slave. But, in favour of the latter, certain tribes have created a particular caste called "Iradjenat," who, though yet slaves, are exempt from certain heavy labour.

It must be added that the women have entire control over their own property.

Inheritance in the tribes goes from a man to his brother, and, in default, to the son of a sister, but never to the direct progeny.

In such communities misconduct on the part of women is not tolerated, it is simply punished with death. Captain Bissuel relates that a native of the province of Setif killed his sister by order of his father, they having learnt that she was leading a dissolute life. Both father and brother mourned for the poor culprit, but were convinced that they had only done their duty.

On the other hand, according to Duveyrier, the Tuareg lawfully claim *le droit du seigneur* from their female slaves, before these marry.

The same custom is mentioned by Herodotus as

obtaining amongst the Adyrmachidæ in the neighbourhood of Egypt.

The western Tuareg regard this custom as despicable.

The Tuareg have to give their wives a dowry, which varies in amount. The western Tuareg, for instance, give at least six camels, a negress, and a complete costume.

These are the principal features of Tuareg customs. They have many points in common with those of the mystical Amazons and the Iberians of antiquity.

Even now among the Basques the man plays a subordinate part. The woman rules and controls the house. "The husband is her head servant," who brings to the house only himself and his labour, together with a stipulation for progeny.

THE ARABS.

The Arabs in Tunisia are, like those in Algeria, nearly all nomads. They reside chiefly in the southern and central portions of the Regency.

They are recognisable by their tall, slender figures, their lean, muscular build, and by their dignified nobility of carriage.

The Arab cast of countenance is narrow, the nose curved, the lips thin and graced by a delicate black beard, the black eyes are lively, but the expression crafty.

The Arab woman is endowed with a pretty, well-formed figure, but she is of small stature. She is, on the whole, attractive, but fades early, being old and ugly through hard work by the time she attains her twentieth year. Unlike the Berber woman, she is usually obliged to go abroad veiled.

As the Bey was too weak to collect his own taxes, he united the various groups of nomad Arabs to form his auxiliary troops. These tribes were thence designated "Mahzen," were almost exempt from taxation, or only paid in kind, such as oil, dates, etc. In return they bound themselves to fight the robber bands (Jish) who frequently harassed the country. Were they victorious, all spoils were theirs. Their ostensible duty was to assist the Bey's own soldiers to recover the taxes. This collection resolved itself into sheer plunder. The least of their perquisites was the right to "difa" and "alfa," which means hospitality for themselves and their horses; of this they took advantage to the greatest extent, often pillaging wherever they appeared.

For instance, the holy city of Kairwan was often compelled to raise forced contributions under this pretext.

Their morals, as a rule, are very lax. The abduction of married women and girls is common, and adultery a matter of course.

The upbringing that an Arab woman receives in a tent is not exactly calculated to ensure in any way a moral tone. A young girl is from the very outset of her innocent life apt to see and learn much that to us appears offensive.

Whereas the man has every possible right of control over his wife, she has only the "justice of God" (el hak Allah), meaning that he must fulfil his obligations towards her as her husband, failing which she can demand a divorce, not an infrequent occurrence.

After the enactment of the law emancipating slaves, the men in some tribes married their negroes, with a view to thus evading the law. But it befell that the former went into court and complained that they were defrauded of their rights as wives.

Although the Arabs, as aliens, have always been in a minority in the land of the Berbers, yet they were the masters until the arrival of the French. They had steadily spread themselves over all the open plains and lower tablelands, moving ever from east to west. Thus each tribe continually changed its territory, one tribe ever pressing another before it farther westward.

Long before Mohammed's day this immigration had already begun, but it was not until after his time that it made any real headway, and the con-

quest of the country and its conversion to Moham-
medanism took place.

Not until much later, in the middle of the eleventh century, was the great migration accomplished, in which both Mongols and Egyptians were included. Such great waves, however, always cause a counter wave. When the tribes reached the shores of the Atlantic on the most distant coasts of Morocco, the tide turned. Thus the tribe that claims to be the chief of all the tribes, namely, the Shorfa, or "Followers of the Prophet," is precisely that which, having been to Morocco, returned eastwards.

Yet another receding wave brought back the "Arabs" who had conquered Spain, and who were afterwards driven forth again.

These Spanish "Arabs" were for the most part Berbers who had been carried westward by the tide, and who returned, after a long sojourn on the Iberian peninsula, blended with other races — Ligurians, Iberians, Celts, and Western Goths.

The greater proportion of these refugees, who are known in Barbary as "Andaluz," established themselves in the towns, where they introduced a new strain into the already mixed race of Moors. These Spanish Moors are more especially represented in Tunis.

It is quite natural that, in a country so often

invaded and peopled by foreigners who to this day have never really amalgamated, there should be an entire lack of patriotism such as is found in Europe. It is as Mussulmans that these races have united to make war against the Christian. Amongst themselves they are often at enmity.

MOHAMMEDANISM.

Though it is an undoubted fact that the various races of Berbers and Arabs have preserved much of their identity, it is also noticeable that, to a stranger arriving in the country for the first time, the inhabitants appear, as it were, to be fused into one race. This fusion is the result of their creed, for Mohammedanism has been drawn like a veil over the whole country.

Mohammed, through the Koran, gave to even daily labour the stamp of religion, and in a marvellous way moulded all the various races, who thus became "the faithful," into one mode of thought and life, which gradually shaped them all to one pattern, although hereditary inclinations and customs contended, and are still contending, against such constraint.

The features which appear most strongly marked in these various races who have become Mussulmans, are their individual absorption in their religion and their family organisation.

The stubborn influence of Islamism on the community is entirely expressed in the phrase "Mektub" (it is written). Fatalism has destroyed all initiative, all progress. How men may act is immaterial. "It is written."

To the Mussulmans, authority is of divine origin. Their creed ordains that everyone must bow to authority. This has given rise to the most complete absolutism, alike from the Bey, whose title is "The chosen of God and the owner of the kingdom of Tunisia," down to the lowest of officials.

But yet the yoke may prove too heavy—then the oppressed revolt, as has so often happened.

The influence of religion is manifest in the treatment of the insane, whose utterances are held as sacred. The number of real and pretended lunatics is consequently very great. Hospitality is not exactly gladly offered to such afflicted persons, but they are permitted to take whatever they please from a house, a liberty often very widely interpreted. Latterly a madman in Tunis declared several houses to be under a ban. All the inmates at once fled, and could not be persuaded to return. This individual was also inspired with the sublime idea of erecting a barricade in one of the most populous streets, by means of doors which he lifted from their hinges.

The Prophet organised the family on the lines

best adapted to the nomad tribes, who were destined to be great conquerors. He ordained the absorption of the vanquished into the family; while the males were killed or, if fortunate, made slaves, the women were allowed to enter the family.

This was the foundation of the rapid conquest of North Africa by Islam.

To ensure unity in the family, composed of so many and varied elements, the man is invested with the most absolute authority. He does not marry but he *buys* his wife, who becomes his property. He is unquestionably her lord and master, he can maltreat her, kill her if she is untrue to him, without risking injury to a hair of his own head. All that he owes her is the "hak Allah."

Crimes against women are more rare now through fear of the French; but as there is no legal census, many murders may be committed which are never brought to light.

Religious influence first and foremost, also life in common under equal conditions of many generations of different extraction, have obliterated many of the characteristics of the natives of Tunisia. Many Berber tribes have been entirely transformed into Arabs, and, on the other hand, many Arab tribes have been Berberised. Indeed, there are tribes forming a subdivision, of which it is well known some are Berbers, some Arabs.

Of the religious brotherhoods, so numerous elsewhere under Islam, there are comparatively few in Tunisia. We find the "Tidyanya," "Medaniya," and the "Aissaua," and, besides these, many scattered "Shorfa."

In the towns there is more fanaticism than in the country. In this respect "those who can read and write are the worst."

Yet many customs and reminiscences may be found of a former age before Mohammedanism was forced on the Tunisians.

For instance, the people hang bits of rag all over sacred trees; many fear the "evil eye," or honour *five* as a peculiarly lucky number. For this reason they set the mark of their own five fingers on their houses to protect the latter. Indeed, it is not uncommon for a man who has more than five children, if questioned as to their number, to reply that he has five, rather than be obliged to name an unlucky number.

If rain is long delayed, they take refuge in exorcism, and will on occasion even dip their kaid in a fountain so that his beard may be wetted—that surely brings rain.

THE MOORS.

Nowhere has all origin of race been so entirely effaced as in the towns. There have sprung up the

Moors—quite a new race of town dwellers, which may be said to have absorbed all others.

Whereas the population of the interior of the country to a great extent escaped intermixture with the new elements, up to the time of the arrival of the Arabs, it has been quite otherwise in the towns, where foreign traders settled and intermingled with the native inhabitants.

Amongst the Moors in the towns are found, as has been said, the so-called "Andaluz," who were driven out of Spain. Several of these distinguished families have carefully preserved the records of their genealogy, and some of them still possess the keys of their houses in Seville and Granada. They have certainly intermarried with other families of different origin, but still cling to their traditions, and retain and exercise to a certain extent the handicrafts and occupations of their forefathers in Spain. The gardeners of "Teburka," for instance, are descendants of the gardeners of the Guadalquivir, and the forefathers of the potters near Nebel were potters at Malaga.

The blood of slaves of all nationalities has also been introduced into the people known as Moors.

The complexion of the Moor is fair, or, more rarely, olive; it resembles that of the Southern Italian or Spaniard. The shape of the head is oval

the nose long, and they have thick eyebrows and very black beards. Of medium height, they are well built, and their carriage is easy and graceful. They are considered more honourable than either Jews or Christians, and were noted formerly for their kind treatment of their slaves. Though clever workmen and well educated, their moral tone is not high. In old days the town of Tunis was the great market frequented by the people of the Sudan ; nothing was considered worth having that had not been made by a Tunisian.

The Turkish element, as represented by the Bey and his surroundings, has long since ceased to have any influence on the Moorish race in Tunisia. No real Turks are now to be found in the country. In the towns, however, are a few descendants of Turkish soldiers and Tunisian women ; they are called " Kurughis," and are lazy, vain, and ignorant, and consequently not much respected.

The Moors, or the town dwellers, on the whole, are, however, not so vigorous and energetic as the nomads and the mountaineers ; their manners are more effeminate, and they are lazier.

Crimes against the person, such as assault or murder, are rare in the towns, but drunkenness on the sly is common, and immorality is prevalent.

THE JEWS.

The ancient conquerors of the country, the Carthaginians and Romans, who covered it with towns, forts, and monuments, have left no impress of themselves on the appearance of the present inhabitants, nor do there survive amongst the tribes any traditions concerning them.

No more remains to recall the Vandals and Goths, yet the latest researches prove the existence in early days of other Semitic peoples besides the Arab.

The earliest importation to the country of Semitic blood was doubtless the Phœnician. To this is due the fact that many of the types portrayed on Chaldaic and Assyrian ruins are now found scattered throughout Tunisia.

At the same time as the Phœnicians may be mentioned the Jews, the earliest of whom probably came to Barbary at the same time as the former, but their number was largely added to later, after the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus. Moreover, it is known that many Berber tribes were converted to Judaism and remained Jews, even after the Arab conquest. The classic type of European Jew is therefore rarely met with in Tunisia.

After the Mohammedans the Jews are, numerically, most strongly represented in Barbary. They

form somewhat important communities, not only in the town of Tunis, but also in all other towns, even in the island of Jerba. Possibly with theirs has mingled the blood of the ancient Carthaginians.

There are also a great number of Jews whose ancestors were ejected from Spain and Portugal; these are called "Grana," from their former most important trading city in Spain.

These "Grana" were under the protection of the foreign consuls, and therefore have had nothing to complain of; but the old Jews were in a disastrous condition in former days, and suffered much, so much that some isolated families abjured Judaism and became Mohammedans; such they are still, but they always associate with their former co-religionists. Other Jews—those of Jerba, for instance—have modified their religious forms, pray to Mohammedan saints, and hold their Marabouts in honour.

A peculiar head-dress distinguishes those Jews who are under no protection, from those who are protected by the consuls. It is an irony of fate that many Jews have placed themselves under Spanish protection, because they knew that Spain was their home in old days. Now they are protected by the country that formerly drove them forth. Somewhat similar is the case of the Algerian Jews in Tunis who seek French protection.

All the Jews of Tunis retain the ancient **Spanish**

ritual. They are peaceful and well behaved, and not so grasping as others of their faith, but they are clever at taking advantage of a good opportunity when there is a prospect of making money, or when their trade may be extended. Commerce is therefore in great measure in their hands.

In the whole Regency of Tunisia there are over fifty thousand Jews, and their numbers increase rapidly. In the town of Tunis there is a "ghetto," the quarter formerly devoted to them, and where they were compelled to dwell. It has long since become too small, and the Jews have now spread over all the other quarters, and in the bazaars have wrested from the Moors many of their shops.

This Jewish community is an interesting study, and one is astonished to find how in many respects they so little resemble their co-religionists in other countries.

COSTUMES

THE DRESS OF THE COUNTRYWOMEN (ARABS—BERBERS)

OVER the whole of Tunisia the countrywomen, whether Arab or Berber, wear a similar costume, which must be almost identical with that worn by the Grecian women in olden days.

The dress of the women of ancient Greece consisted of what was known as the "peplos"¹ (πέπλος), a white wrapper gathered in by a belt about the waist (ζώνη), and supported on the shoulders by pins (περόναι and ἐνεταί). As head-dress, or for ornament, they wore a kind of forehead band (χρήδεμνον) or veil, and, in addition to these, earrings, necklets, bracelets, etc. etc.

The "peplos" was a large piece of stuff without seam, which was folded round the body from one side.

The dress of a Tunisian woman of to-day is the same. It consists of a "m'lhalfa," which resembles the "peplos," being a long narrow piece of stuff, wound round the body in such a manner

¹ From Dr. E. F. Bojesen's *Handbook on Greek Antiquities*.

that it entirely covers the back and shoulders. One end is brought over the breast, and hangs down in front; the other end covers the lower limbs, and forms a skirt. The piece is so long that it hangs in folds, which partly conceal the sides. Whilst the Greek "peplos" was held together by "fibulæ" on the shoulders, the clasps that confine the "m'lhalfa" are placed rather forward—over the breast. The Grecian woman's neck was bare, her chest covered. But it is the contrary with the Tunisian woman. In other words, the "m'lhalfa" is merely a "peplos" which has been drawn forward. Many Tunisian women draw the "m'lhalfa" over the breast, and arrange one end to form a full drapery; others, as in the Matmata villages, omit this, but wear over their bosom a thin square of stuff called "katfia." This is secured by the clasps already mentioned.

In a few places, such as the Khrumir mountains, the "m'lhalfa" is composed of two pieces of stuff worn one in front and one behind, held together by the breast clasp. Over the neck and shoulders is laid a rather large towel. The "m'lhalfa" is always bound in at the waist by a long woollen belt, generally white or of some bright colour.

The clothes for daily wear are, as a rule, of a dark blue woollen material, but for festivals or

weddings they wear red, yellow, or parti-coloured garments of silk, cotton, or wool.

In most regions a kerchief is worn on the head (tadchira); round this is wound a turban (assaba), composed of a long piece of stuff ornamented with coins or trinkets. Over this again is thrown a large, often embroidered, cloth, in which the face is enveloped (begnuk).

Generally speaking, the Tunisian women wear no underclothing, at all events not in daily life in the country. On festive occasions, especially in the towns of the oases, they assume a white shirt (suïera). It has very short or no sleeves. A bride, as a rule, wears one. The bridal shirt (gomedj) is generally embroidered about the opening at the neck in silk or cotton, in stripes of black, yellow, blue, and red.

In daily life they do not wear shoes, but go barefoot. At the feasts the women put on yellow shoes without heels (balgha).

The ornaments worn by the poor are mostly of brass, copper, or horn; by those in better circumstances, of silver; or sometimes by the rich, of gold.

Round the neck are worn strings of glass beads, and in the ears large slight earrings ("khoras," from cross); on the wrists, broad open bracelets (addide). Finally, they wear large heavy anklets

called "kralkral," that are generally made not to meet.

To fasten the "m'lhalfa" on the shoulders large brooches are commonly employed. These are in the form of an open circle, through which passes a pin (khlel).

On the breast they wear a silver chain (ghomra), from which depend coins or flat plates of metal. These chains are fastened to the breast-pins. All these ornaments are made by the Jews of the towns or oases, and are really artistic productions.

The women do not usually wear straw hats, though some may amongst the Berbers of the island of Jerba. These hats are precisely similar to those depicted on some of the Tanagra figures found in Greece.

In Jerba are worn crescent-shaped breast ornaments, said to come from Tripoli; also ornaments in filagree work from Zarsis.

The women often carry a little looking-glass tied to their breast-pins, and also the requisites for applying henna and kohol.

When they fetch water in their great pitchers they carry these slung on their backs by means of a wide band round the forehead, or in the end of their turban, loosened for the purpose.

Their hair is never plaited, but is covered by the cloth or turban. A woman is rarely seen in stockings. In a few places where the roads are

bad they wear wooden shoes. The Khrumirs are proficient in making these.

Much of the material employed in the women's dress is woven or made by themselves in the region in which it is worn, but some is brought from Tripoli, the Sudan, or from Europe. As a rule, however, the countrywomen wear only their own handiwork.

In the Matmata mountains and the neighbouring oases I was able to collect and buy a complete costume, the whole of which had been made in that region, and chiefly of native materials.

It must be mentioned that the Berber women have everywhere more freedom than their Arab sisters, and are therefore often unveiled. Yet many of the tribes have gradually adopted Arab customs, and in this particular follow their example—at all events in the vicinity of a town, for in the country the women all go unveiled, only hiding their faces on occasion.

We will now examine the dress of the men, both Arabs and Berbers.

In contradistinction to the Kabail of Algeria, the Arabs always cover their heads. In Tunis, where the races are so mixed, nearly all the men go covered. They wear white cotton caps under the red "shashia," allowing a narrow edge of white to appear beneath the latter.

The Arabs always wear a haik or burnous; the Berbers, generally.

The burnous, as is known, consists of a cape united at the breast.

The "haik" is a piece of thinner stuff, which is worn as a drapery, usually under the burnous, but also alone.

In the southern mountains of Tunisia I found that many of the mountaineers wore, instead of burnous or haik, a piece of stuff without hood or seam. In this they draped themselves so that the head was covered. It was usually of brown or grey wool. The burnous is as a rule white, as is also the haik. Many of the poorer folk, especially amongst the Berbers, wear nothing else in daily life; but they assume a shirt, waistcoat, and coat, as also a gala burnous (sjebba) on festive occasions. This last is shorter than the real burnous, and is made with short wide sleeves, of bright coloured stuff, often embroidered in silk.

The people on the coast near Susa and to the south have a still shorter brown-hooded garment in place of a haik or burnous, and they wear trousers. This costume is convenient for fishermen.

A large broad-brimmed straw hat is worn by the denizens of the plains. Shoes or sandals of morocco leather or hide are worn by many.

Red morocco leather boots, worn inside a shoe, are used by riders, also spurs.

The purse is a long, narrow, knitted or woven bag.

The Berber often wears a shirt, and, in such cases, only a haik over it, and no burnous.

The usual costume of the Arab is that worn in Algeria—the burnous and the haik, the latter bound on with a camel's-hair cord; shoes (or boots). Of the Berber, shirt, haik, burnous, bare legs, and uncovered head.

Such variations of these costumes as may exist in Tunisia have been brought about by an altered mode of life and the admixture of races.

Dr. Bertholon declares that most of the costumes are of very ancient origin. That of the Jews, for instance, he dates back to the days of the Carthaginians; the burnous, he says, resembles the hooded Roman cloak.

The Moorish woman's dress is very pretty, but extremely coquettish. It is overladen with ornaments.

“In the morning she wears a very scanty costume. If one has the luck to catch a glimpse of her at an early hour as she moves hither and thither in the harem, she is not easily forgotten. She is clad in a simple shirt, with short sleeves, which leave her plump arms exposed. Under this she wears trousers, so short that they scarcely reach the knees;

a little shawl, of which the ends are knotted in front at the waist, replaces a skirt, and enfolds her pretty form. Her bosoms are supported by a narrow bodice, and about her hair is bound a silk kerchief, but her locks fall down over her neck" (*Des Godins de Souhesnes*).

When she leaves the house she wears a "gandura," a kind of cloak of transparent material, fastened on the shoulders by gold or silver pins. Besides this she has put on wrinkled white linen trousers reaching to her ankles; over her head she throws a white kerchief; and, lastly, she conceals her face with a long embroidered veil.

The Moorish woman blackens her eyebrows, enhances the beauty of her eyes with antimony (khol), and stains with orange-red henna the nails of her fingers and toes and the palms of her hands.

The dress of the Moor much resembles that of the Jew. He wears a tasselled cap (shashia), surrounded by a turban, and a silken vest or coat, embroidered in gold or silver.

The trousers are very wide, and fall in heavy folds; the lower part of the leg is uncovered, and on his bare feet he wears broad shoes of red or yellow morocco leather (babush).

The costume of the Jews, as worn by them before they were free, to distinguish them from the Arabs, is very picturesque, and, fortunately, still universal.



The men, who are generally handsome, wear a tasselled shashia, often surrounded by a turban. Their wide, pleated Turkish trousers reach a little below the knee, and are secured at the waist by a belt. They wear also coat and waistcoat, stockings, and shoes.

Many have now adopted European attire, but the characteristic Jewish type is easily distinguished.

The Jewish women are not veiled. They wear shirts, narrow embroidered silk trousers, cotton stockings, shoes, and on their heads a pointed cap.

These women, when young, are very pretty, but also very immoral. They are generally spoilt by being too stout, young girls being fed up to make them attractive for their wedding.

There is no native industry peculiar to Tunisia, but there are a few which may be considered worth notice.

The holy town of Kairwan is famed for its beautiful carpets. In Gefsa and Jerba also curious and beautiful carpets are woven.

Clay ware is a speciality of Nebel, where, to this day, pottery is made that recalls that found in the Phœnician and Roman tombs near Carthage. Pottery is also made at Jerba in the form of jars, vases, etc., which are sent to different parts of the country — northern Tunisia obtaining its pottery from Nebel; southern, from Jerba.

Amongst the tribes, pottery is also made by the women and negresses, but generally without the aid of the potter's wheel. The Khrumir in particular are noted for their peculiar ornamented pottery.

In the towns, moreover, and especially in Tunis, there are numbers of shoemakers, leather workers, saddlers, harness and pouch makers, etc. etc. There are also excellent dyers and makers of perfumes.

In the oases are made fans, and baskets of palm leaves and of alfa straw; baskets, hats, and great crates for corn, which take the place in these regions of the clay jars of the Kabail.

Tripoli lies quite close to Tunis, and there manufactures attain a high level; a great quantity therefore of stuffs—carpets and worked leather articles—are imported thence. The Jews are the goldsmiths, and, even in the interior and in the southern oases, possess the art of making pretty bracelets and ornaments.

The inhabitants of Zarsis are renowned for their peculiar filigree work.

POSTSCRIPT

THE information adjoined regarding the number of souls included in each of the Berber tribes, and of their domestic animals, came to hand only after the first portion of my book had gone to press. I therefore add it here. This information has been collected with great pains throughout the Government of El Arad by the kindly help of M. Destailleur, Contrôleur Civil to that Government. It is positively reliable, the calculations which I was able to make in person during my stay in several of the villages, with the same view, corresponding exactly to those in the table. Only—as an outsider—I must aver that the number of horses may not be quite correct, but for some places appears computed too low. As for instance in Hadeij, where, it is said, none are to be found, which was certainly not the case. Possibly the explanation may be that the sheikhs feared that the inquiry made by the Government arose from a desire to know how many mounted men this tribe could place in the field in time of war.

Names of Tribes and Villages.		Number of Inhabitants.	Asses.	Oxen.	Horses.	Camels.	Sheep and Goats.	Mules.	
Beni-Zider, South of the Shott.	Jara	1925	500	40	100	40	700	40	
	Menzel	2200	600	60	35	40	410	90	
	Shenini	1040	300	2	25	30	185	30	
	Ghenush	350	100	4	3	8	200	40	
	Bu Shma	50	20	10	30	...	
	Udref	750	280	70	8	120	450	2	
	Metuia	1800	200	20	10	100	600	60	
	Tebulbu	235	45	25	4	38	350	1	
	Zarat	165	45	55	3	12	1000	...	
	Ghraira	450	100	...	8	390	1450	...	
	Alsia	232	30	20	351	...	
	Hazem	1229	210	4	36	240	2880	...	
	Hamernas	2100	600	57	37	300	2100	1	
	Gassur	900	140	70	20	50	350	10	
	Debdaba	1390	115	22	40	92	520	19	
	El Begla	1455	432	...	41	535	1830	...	
	Shelalisha	1689	400	...	95	1400	10,000	4	
	Matmata	1000	120	8	20	400	1800	...	
	Shehel	1100	150	...	25	1200	2500	...	
	El Heurja	1000	140	...	30	420	2000	...	
	Zauiia	868	320	...	35	800	8000	4	
	Tujud	210	15	30	2	55	520	...	
	Zarua	604	55	27	1	207	713	2	
	Dehibat	100	20	3	2	50	1000	...	
	Ben Aissa	340	25	25	3	65	311	...	
	Guelaa Ben Aissa	495	40	45	3	115	410	...	
	Smerten	105	10	...	1	25	265	...	
	Beni Sultan	632	43	73	1	55	200	2	
	Tujan	1071	51	80	3	169	1000	1	
	Uled - Sliman -								
	Hadeij	1300	200	200	...	300	2700	8	
	Lasheish	1020	120	223	6	263	2036	2	
Tamezred	1082	50	100	7	400	4600	4		
Neffat	3830	828	46	221	3371	9926	3		
Accara	5496	750	250	110	1335	6060	...		
Tuasin	2461	1203	15	600	6945	15,263	...		
Khezur	3411	890	150	142	1353	9745	...		
Ghomrasen	1376	565	3	43	684	2848	...		
Shenini-Duirat	410	80	20	3	300	1960	1		
Guermasa	460	80	30	8	170	1150	...		
Uyghanma.	Uderma. {	Hamidia	287	60	...	25	255	890	...
		Uled-Debab	389	150	...	20	200	2000	...
		Deghagha	585	250	10	34	300	300	...
	Uled Shada	330	125	...	42	320	1200	...	
	Suabria-Duirat	153	7	2	2	32	800	...	
	Beni Barka	125	25	7	2	60	240	...	
	Zedra	117	25	12	1	14	360	...	
	Gatufa	130	30	15	4	11	400	...	
	Jeidat. {	Uled-Lazareg
		Uled-Aun	302	100	4	50	300	1100	...
		Uled-Ashiri
	Quadid	125	30	4	4	80	600	...	
Duiri	1357	63	54	10	280	3400	...		

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