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The Bedouin.

(By Mr. G. Nyland, Ramallah, in 'C. M. S. Gleaner.')

The Bedouin are the descendants of Ishmael, the true Arabs from Arabia. Their religion is Islam or Mohammedanism, but they are very ignorant, the arts of reading and writing being unknown by but few of them. There are dervishes among them who teach them the Mohammedan system of belief; but they have no further opportunity



A NARAK SHEIKH.

of further education, and do not care about it. The men are very lax about observing the five appointed hours of prayer, while the women hardly ever pray.

They observe some of the Mohammedan festivals, specially the sacrifice at the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca. A black goat without blemish is selected. Its long silky hair is carefully combed out; its eyes are anointed with 'kohl,'* like the eyes of brides. The owner then steps over it three times, after which it is slaughtered. The offerer does not eat any of the flesh, but gives it to the poor, believing that through this sacrifice he receives pardon for his sins.

They practise circumcision and believe in the coming of a false prophet, whom they call Dejjal. They hold strongly the doctrine of 'el Kaddar,' or the 'divine decree,' which teaches that everything that a man does is fore-ordained by God, practically making men mere automata, and therefore not responsible for their evil deeds.

HOSPITALITY AND HIGHWAY ROBBERY

As among other races, there are generous and niggardly Bedouin. As a race, however, they are decidedly hospitable. If visitors come to their camp they give them a hearty welcome, and kill a goat, sheep, or young camel (according to the visitors' rank and numbers), and quickly prepare a meal for them, at the same time giving their horses fodder.

Visitors have the right to stay three days

*A black paint used as a cosmetic

and a half as guests, and often do so if they can spare the time. Even enemies, if they come as guests, are entertained hospitably.

If the visitors are strangers, the nobler tribes will send some horsemen with them to see them safely into the territory of the next tribe, but in other cases the moment the guests reach another district, their late guard turns on them and plunders them. The rapacity of the Bedouin is notorious, but if no resistance is made they will, after taking what they want, let their victims go unhurt. Should any resistance be offered, they think no more of killing a man than a sheep. A Bedowy who never brings home any plunder is not considered a respectable man, and I have often heard that a young man who does not go out to rob is not allowed to marry. No man's goods or cattle are secure. If a Bedowy is caught stealing he must be punished and restore four-fold. If one has killed another and is caught, he must pay a fine, in kind if he has no money; if he has neither goods nor cattle he goes off to try and steal the wherewithal to pay his fine. To steal and plunder is no sin, but it is a sin to be found out.

There are many tribes among the Bedouin, such as the Harabin, Shaalan, Anezeh, and Beni Sakhr. Some of these tribes are but small in numbers. The first of those above mentioned is the largest and put at least 20,000 horsemen in the field, and the second about 15,000.

The Bedouin, as has been said, are pure Arabs, but they have slaves among them who are often fugitives from their masters. Though occupying an inferior position, these slaves are often allowed to marry the daughters of the Bedouin. The slaves are very black, whereas the Bedouin are only blown.

THEIR DRESS.

The Bedouin are very simple in their

dress of the boys, like that of the women, is made of blue cotton, but the men always wear white.

The men have scanty pointed beards. They never shave their heads as the fellahin and townspeople do, but plait their hair.

The Bedouin have large herds of cattle, as their forefather Abraham had. Consequently they place their camps where there is pasture as well as water to be had for their flocks. The tents are pitched in a circle, and guarded at night by two or three men and the dogs. The latter are very quick to detect a stranger.

Their camps are invariably in the neighborhood of water, but never close to it, as they have a superstition that there are always evil spirits about a large body of water. They are afraid also of their children falling in, and consider it unhealthy to be too near.

If there is plenty of grass in the spring they make much butter. The fresh milk is curdled by means of some plant which is put in it, and after standing for a while it is put into a goat skin, dressed with the hairy side inward. The skin full of milk is hung up and shaken about by a woman for half or three-quarters of an hour till the butter comes. As the butter will not keep long, most of it is boiled down in a large kettle and is used for cooking. In this state it will keep indefinitely.

Those tribes which use bread make it into thin flat cakes, unleavened, which they bake on a round iron plate. Where no wood is to be had as fuel, dried camels' dung is used, as this gives a clear, hot fire. A different sort of bread, thicker and smaller, is sometimes made on such a fire. This kind it was which Sarah made at Abraham's bidding for the three celestial visitants (Gen. xviii. 6).



A FELLAH PLOUGHING.

dress. The women have usually a gown of blue cotton, for which they take thirty or forty yards of material. Those who are well off have two dresses and a garment of blue or green cloth over all. The poorer ones have only one dress. The women do not plait their hair, but leave it just as it is. They adorn themselves with rings and bracelets of copper and silver, but the sheikhs' wives usually have ornaments of gold. The

The Bedouin are very fond of coffee, and understand how to make it better than any one else. They drink it pure, without milk or sugar, and very strong. Both men and women are also great smokers. They never touch any alcoholic liquors.

JOINT-STOCK AGRICULTURE.

Some of the tribes who do not live in the remoter deserts, especially those in the Jordan valley, cultivate land. However, they