



*A STREET OF HUMAN BODIES.*

IT was promised to God's ancient people that no more should victorious foes say to her, "Bow down, that we may go over;" no more should the chosen race lay down their bodies "as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over."

The custom here referred to was formerly practised in the South Sea Islands, but with a different meaning. It was performed in families of distinction on the marriage of the first-born. For example, a pet girl had recently been wedded, and something must be done to render the occasion memorable. The son-in-law, gaily dressed in the fantastic trappings of heathenism, makes his appearance outside his dwelling, where a continuous pathway of human bodies leads from his own doorway to the house of his father-in-law. The entire tribe, men, women, and children, assemble to honour their dusky kinswoman by permitting her recently married husband to walk over their backs as they lie prostrate on the ground. As lightly as possible does this distinguished individual step over this "street of human bodies." Should the numbers of the tribe be insufficient to reach to the dwelling of the father-in-law, those first trodden on rise up quickly and run through the admiring crowd, again to take their places in front.

I once saw a somewhat similar sight, in quite another part of the world, which I shall not soon forget. I was walking one Sunday morning just outside the walls of Jerusalem, when I found my-

self in the midst of a large crowd of Arabs, all talking and shouting, and in a state of wild excitement. Evidently something extraordinary was about to take place, and so I followed them.

Presently the crowd stopped, and the ringleaders of it cleared a large space in the middle of the road, the people forming a ring round it. Into this open space stepped thirty or forty men, who flung themselves upon the ground, each man lying on his face close alongside another, until there was a compact mass of men stretched on the ground. As soon as the men lying on the ground had been packed closely together, an opening was made at one end of the crowd, and an old man with a long white beard entered the open space, riding upon a magnificent horse! and then, amidst the shouts of the people, he rode over the long row of men lying on the ground. Again and again these wretched men threw themselves down, and allowed themselves to be trodden upon by the horse and its rider!

Were any of them killed? I cannot say, as their friends lifted them up as soon as the horse had passed over them; and if any scream of agony was uttered as the horse trod upon their backs, it was drowned by the wild shouts and clappings of the bystanders.

But why did these men throw themselves down before the horse and its rider? Were they compelled to do so? No. Was it a punishment? No. Were they paid for doing it? No. They did it of their own accord, because they were told that if the horse