



AN AMERICAN TEA PARTY ON THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN.



THE JERUSALEM PACKMEN. The packmen are as loud as a city.

**THE UNCHANGING EAST.**

*Despite Its Railroad, Holy Land Is a Thousand Years Behind Time.*

By W. G. Fitzgerald.

I never yet met a visitor to the Holy Land who was not struck by the fact that Palestine is over a thousand years behind the times, notwithstanding the queer little railroad from Jaffa to Jerusalem which enables prosaic porters to yell out incongruously "Jerusalem, Jerusalem—all out!"

This sort of thing is a little disturbing to the pilgrim—especially the woman pilgrim, who on the journey up from the port has been trying to compose her thoughts with becoming solemnity. It would be so much more interesting if one could ride up from Jaffa on a caravan of swaying camels, but that cannot now be done. There is at any rate a bit of progress in the Holy Land—a crowd of insistent hackmen who tout for custom in front of the railroad station building in the Holy City!

Truth to tell, many a cultured visitor to the Holy Land is exceedingly glad to turn his back on Jerusalem. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre they are amazed and disgusted to see hundreds of dirty Armenian, Greek and Russian peasants sleeping and eating in this fane of hoary antiquity, which the flower of Christian chivalry strove to wrest from Islam more than a thousand years ago; and, more wonderful still, Moslem troops were ordered by the Turkish Mutesarrif of Jerusalem to keep order among the excited Christian sects, lest they shed one another's blood in the square on Easter morn!

The dirt and confusion, the beggars, the "holy places" shown with unblushing effrontery in three places at once, the uproar and extortion—these things cause the traveller to call for horse and pack mule and "mukhari," or caravan man, and go rattling out of the Damascus Gate toward the great silent heart of Palestine, where time's frantic rush is unknown and men live precisely as they did in the time of Moses.

All other nations advance. Palestine is fast losing the few industries she picked up since the Crusades. The Levantines on the coast will tell one great times are coming; that the perilous landing through the rocks in small boats at Jaffa is to be done away with; that the solitary little railroad from that port to Jerusalem is to be extended; that the outrageous and baffling rates of exchange—the government has one, commerce has another, and the Christian post-offices a third—will be made uniform, and so on.

Uproar, confusion, extortion, deception! Truly it is good to get outside the gates and in sight of a Bedouin encampment of sombre camel hair tents—the black "Tents of Kedar" of "Solomon's Song." And to be entertained by a shepherd sheikh-patriarch, and hear by night the old, old songs of love and war. And to watch the vast flocks and herds, and see with one's own eyes the daily life of the Pentateuch which the Mosaic scribe has made so familiar to us all.

The Arab population consists of the Hadari, or settled tribes, and the Bedawi, or nomad shepherds, who live under the patriarchal government of Abraham. The nomads regard the settled tribes as their prey, and levy blackmail accordingly. Between the two races there is no comparison in point of physical and moral character. The Hadari Arabs are poor, spiritless creatures—lazy, dishonest in petty ways, yet professing great faith in the "kilhem fren-jeyeh" or "word of a Frank." Yet in fact they are suspicious of his every movement, and the

traveller will have difficulty in persuading a Hadari sheikh to change a paltry Turkish mejedi.

These settled Arabs have their little mosques and medresehs, or schools, in which a squatting turbaned fiteh teaches small boys to recite unending Suras of the Koran. The Hadari are found in Palestine proper, the Hauran, the Bekaa and North Syria.

The Bedouins, on the other hand, are found in numerous shifting tribal camps to the south of the Dead Sea. The Bedawi refuse to cultivate the soil, but the Hadari do practise a weird sort of agriculture, scratching the stony ground with a forked branch dragged by a grumbling camel, and sowing seed which is expected to produce (and commonly does) a most generous crop.

But it is in the free nomad Bedouin Arabs that one finds true children of Nature—stalwart, brave and hospitable, without fixed dwellings, living in patriarchal tribes, ruled by a chief shepherd, or man of age, and of wealth estimated in sheep and oxen, goats and camels, horses, mules, dogs and women.

The chief occupation of the men is fighting and robbery. They may tan a little necessary leather with bark of the pomegranate tree, but beyond such minor industries the women do all the work, while the men go off fighting or robbing. They spend their lives in the open air, these children of the desert. Their "club" is a quiet, shady corner, where nargilehs may be smoked and a quiet game of "tric-trac" indulged in—a kind of chess known to these nomads from time immemorial. They will sit playing thus the whole day long, uttering no sound save an occasional "Ya waled," "O boy" (for more coffee), or "Ghayyin en nefes!" "Bring another pipe!"

The women weave the coarse black felt for the tents out of camel hair. The material is thick and waterproof, and is stretched on poles, one side being left open to a height of five or six feet. Each tent is divided into two compartments—one for men and the other for women.

In the women's half is the fireplace, where all cooking is done with brushwood and dried camel litter as fuel. Round about the camp roam the herds of camels and cattle, sheep and goats, dogs, mules, fine horses and the superb white asses for which the Bedouins of the Syrian Desert are especially famous. A common sight in the desert ways is a big Arab mounted on a tiny donkey, which sight irresistibly reminds one of the unfortunate man in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who was travelling between Jericho and Jerusalem in just this way, when he "fell among thieves"—as he may do to-day.

The hospitality of these nomads is wonderful. They will kill a goat, a sheep, a camel even, for a guest, whether Moslem or Frank, and a "sit down" banquet (without tables or chairs) is given with unlimited coffee and pious ejaculations of "Bismillah!" As they eat they hear the women pounding coffee berries in wooden mortars, or grinding corn between two stones, the strokes rhythmical and musical, accompanied, it may be, by a low crooned love song.

Although the women are Moslems, they are never veiled. Their menfolk depend on them for material as well as moral support in the tent, the pasture, and in plunder and war. They can throw a spear with any warrior.

The life is one of utter freedom from care. Their dress, for example, is simplicity itself—a blue cotton robe for the women, a burnous for the men, with perhaps a sheepskin cloak for the cold altitudes of the mountains. The house may be here to-day and packed on a camel's back to-morrow, to seek "pastures new" in the most literal sense. Furniture is of the simplest—a few earthenware pots and pans, some stones for grinding corn, a few knives and sleeping quilts. The entertainments are peculiar and as old as

the hills. There may be performing bears from Mount Lebanon, with musicians, jugglers and story tellers, or there may be an Arab theatrical entertainment. There is in this only one character. One old man acts all the parts with wonderful ventriloquial skill. He is alone, behind a screen. An old woman is apparently asking questions of a boy, who answers in a shrill treble, or one hears the deep bass of an old man, answered by a girl's voice begging for pardon. The old man chastises her. There are shrieks and prayers; the mother comes on the scene; all yell at once. And all the time the whole effect is produced entirely by the solitary actor "behind the scenes," who illustrates his play with big figures rudely cut out of bark.

These people know nothing of the world outside. A railroad they never saw. They lead the life led by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even admitting that their religion and their quaint and frequent ablutions in the desert sand date from after the Christian era, we are still strictly accurate in saying they are "a thousand years behind the times"!

**GET MAIL BY SKYROCKET.**

Continued from second page.

apex of its ascent, started in a horizontal course and finally headed downward. With the descent came a mad rush and scramble on shore, for the Governor had offered a prize for the persons bringing the skyrocket mail. I asked the captain how it was that on that seagirt bit of land, with its steep shore, any could read the letters after they once reached them. He was unable to tell me, but later on I met him and had the privilege of furnishing the information which I here append.

Some twoscore years or more ago there came two outrigger canoes heavily laden with dark-skinned native Christians from Kepple's Island. They were anxious to carry to their neighbors on New Nut Island good news. But ninety miles of ocean noted for its heavy storms and seas rolled between them, where many a native



RAPID TRIP. Much the same as the



A BEDOUIN HOUSEHOLD NEAR THE JORDAN. TENT OF CAMEL'S HAIR.