

## FAMOUS LADY TRAVELLERS.

## IV.—A GREAT ARABIAN TRAVELLER—LADY ANNE BLUNT.

By EDWARD WHYMPER, Author of "The Ascent of the Matterhorn."



LADY ANNE ISABELLA BLUNT, only daughter of the Earl of Lovelace and granddaughter of Lord Byron, must be regarded as one of the most ambitious and adventurous lady-travellers of our day. With her husband, she has penetrated districts of the far

interior of Arabia, never before seen by European eyes, for it is a fact that the names of those travellers who have visited anything more than the mere outskirts of that little known land may be counted on the fingers—almost of one hand. Several of them, notably Burckhardt, Palgrave, and Burton, went among the Bedouins or townspeople in disguise, while Lady Blunt and her husband went boldly without disguise of any kind, and were everywhere known as foreigners. There is much uncertainty to those who thus venture among the Arabs. They do so at the risk of their lives; but once you have tasted bread and salt, or laid your hand on the tent pole, you may be safe; though, before these desirable rites have been accomplished you may have been slaughtered, for the sake of your horses, weapons, and other belongings.

The Blunts received much politeness and hospitality from the Turkish officials, but no encouragement to proceed on their pilgrimages, indeed every effort was made to hinder them. It was a time when two great rival tribes were at war, and the Turks were occasionally interfering between the combatants. Their first journey was made when the Bulgarian war was at its height, and when the strain on the resources of the Porte had caused it to relax its hold on the tribes, its soldiers being wanted elsewhere. This put the people more at their ease with the Blunts, who were able to reap a harvest of information, which it would not perhaps have been possible to get under other circumstances. Both Lady Blunt and her husband seem to have had much sympathy with and intuitive feeling for these children of the desert.

Lady Blunt left England on Nov. 20, 1877, on her first journey among the Bedouins of the Euphrates, with the intention of visiting Bagdad, and of spending the winter in some part of Asia not too much frequented by Europeans. Some inevitable alteration in her route turned out to the advantage and interest of her trip, enabling her to visit Arab chieftains and tribes of renown, some of whom had never seen an European face. This journey occupied the winter and early spring months of 1878. At the end of the same year she again left England, this time on a pilgrimage to Nejd, which is, so to speak, the cradle of the Bedouin races, not merely of the people but of their horses also. Lady Blunt's works\* contain much that is interesting in regard to the Arab breeds. Nejd, though in northern Arabia, is far south of the districts traversed in the preceding year. It is, to a large proportion of Bedouins who have never seen it, a region of romance, the home of their forefathers. What Palestine is to the Jew, or

England to the American or colonist, that is Nejd to the Bedouin.

Accustomed as one is to associate the desert with intense heat and drought, it is almost a surprise to read in connection with it of half-frozen feet and hands, of ice an inch thick on the water in a camp-pail, and of a boy with the whooping-cough. Sometimes the travellers could not sleep for the cold, and remained shivering all night. It must be noted that both of Lady Blunt's journeys were commenced in the winter months. None, however, of their camps could have been much more uncomfortable than that where they joined a date-caravan, consisting mainly of about one hundred donkeys, who drowned their masters' voices by day, and brayed incessantly and viciously all night. In spite of fatigue, it was impossible to sleep. The travellers do not appear to have run much risk from wild animals, and enjoyed an occasional wolf-hunt. The desert lion is evidently scarce. Lady Blunt heard of two which had recently been shot, and were being exhibited in a *stuffed* condition by some enterprising native Barnum, who carried them round among the tribes on the back of a donkey, and was making a small fortune by the show. This is the Babylonian variety, whose peculiarity is that it has no mane.

The art of cookery is at a low ebb amongst the Arabs. The first thoroughly Bedouin meal of which Lady Blunt partook does not seem inviting, and is typical of many others which followed. The party had encountered the tents of the Jerifa, a pastoral tribe of the Euphrates Valley, one that has lived there possibly since the days of Job. The chief man appeared to receive them boorishly, and they at first thought that they were not welcome; but it soon turned out that this was owing to mere shyness on his part, the effect of the overwhelming honour which he felt was being done him. "I suppose," says Lady Blunt, "he has never entertained so much as a merchant from Bagdad in his life, and a small country-squire in Sussex, receiving an unexpected visit from the Pope or the Empress of the French, could hardly display more sense of the solemnity of the occasion than did this poor man." He pounded coffee as though his life depended on the pounding, and busied himself with hospitable orders. When the meal was ready "the sheep seemed to have been cut up with a hatchet quite independently of its anatomical construction,—bones, meat, and all mangled and messed together, so that it was impossible to get at a clean looking piece free from gristle or splinters. These had been thrown into a pot and boiled without seasoning, and then turned out into a great, round, wooden dish, a yard in diameter. Butter had next been plastered round the mass, and flat, half-baked loaves of dough set to garnish the edge of the plates, all damp and clammy, and half-sopped in the broth. In the middle lay the great, fat tail of the sheep, a huge lump of tallow, with bits of liver and other nastiness near it." With such a dish they could not be expected to make much progress, but the darkness fortunately concealed the failure from the chief, who stood hard by, in genuine, hospitable anxiety for the enjoyment of his guests. Indeed he proved so thoroughly kind that not knowing what else to say the Blunts appear to have invited him, with his flocks and herds, to spend the summer with them in England!

Lady Blunt had permanently engaged for the journeys a treasure of a native cook in Háma, who (whatever a cockney may think) was a male and not a female servant; but on Christmas Day, 1878, they had little to give him for the pot, although they had seen gazelles about. "We were," however, "in a most unexpected manner provided with dinner; for while we were still talking, behold a grazing camel all alone on the plain, not a mile away; when, with a general shout of 'a prize,' the whole party on horseback and on foot rushed in pursuit, and in a brief space of time the camel was caught, killed, and cooked. When young, camel meat resembles mutton."

Lady Blunt thus describes the delights of a sandstorm, which they experienced the night after their Christmas dinner of camel. "The servants having thus feasted were all soon sound asleep, and even when suddenly, between two and three in the morning, the wind rose with a deafening noise, they did not wake, not till their tent blew down upon them as ours did upon us. We were awake, and might have kept our tent standing had we not been too lazy to get up and drive in the pegs. It was too late when the tent had fallen on us to do anything but lie as well as we could beneath the ruins and wait for daylight. Fortunately the main pegs had not drawn, and the sand, for this hurricane was a sandstorm, soon covered over the edges of the fallen tent, and no further damage was done. In the morning, the servants proposed staying where we were; but we would not hear of this, as we had water for only two days, and it would have been folly to dawdle, so after rubbing the sand out of or rather into our eyes, we set to work packing and loading. The wind continued violent and bitterly cold, and carried a great deal of sand with it." . . . Leaving this spot, "we found ourselves on a perfectly open bit of plain, exposed to the full fury of the gale, now more violent than ever. Sandstorms are evidently common here, for the Tell Gateyfi, which is of black volcanic boulders, is half smothered in sand. We saw it looming near us in the thick air, and soon after were almost hidden from each other in the increasing darkness. The sun shone feebly at intervals through the driving sand, but it was all we could do to keep the caravan together, and not lose sight of each other. At one moment we had all to stop and turn tail to the wind, covering our eyes and heads with our cloaks, waiting till the burst was over. Nothing could have faced it. Still we were far from having any idea of danger, for there really is none in these storms, and had plenty of time to notice how very picturesque the situation was, the camels driven along at speed, all huddled together for protection, with their long necks stretched out, and heads low, tags and ropes flying, and the men's cloaks streaming in the wind, all seen through the yellow haze of sand, which made them look as though walking in the air. The beasts looked gigantic yet helpless, like antediluvian creatures overwhelmed in a flood." At length they reached the shelter of some tamarisk bushes, where they made themselves comfortable with hot coffee, while the tent they had rigged up was soon half buried in deep sand, white as snow.

Sandstorms are one of the most serious troubles of travellers in Central and other parts of Asia. Those who have perused Vambéry's *Travels in Central Asia* will not

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soon forget how, when almost dead with thirst, they were overtaken by the dreaded "fever-wind." Their camels had been dying off one by one, the oppressive heat of the day had left them all without strength. Two of their poorer companions had fallen so sick that the others were forced to bind them at full length upon the camels, as they were perfectly incapable of riding or sitting. As long as they were able to articulate they kept exclaiming, "Water! water!" and these were the only words which escaped their lips. One speedily succumbed. "It is a horrible sight," says Vambéry, "to see the father hide his store of water from the son, and brother from brother; each drop is life, and when men feel the torture of thirst, there is not, as in the other dangers of life, any spirit of self-sacrifice, or any feeling of generosity. . . . Our beasts were incapable of further exertion, and we passed a fourth day in the sand. I had still left about six glasses of water in my leathern bottle. These I drank drop by drop, suffering, of course, terribly from thirst. Greatly alarmed to find that my tongue began to turn a little black in the centre, I immediately drank off at a draught half of my remaining store, thinking so to save my life; but, oh! the burning sensation, followed by headache, became more violent towards the middle of the day, and when we could just distinguish, about mid-day, the Khalata mountains from the clouds that surrounded them, I felt my strength gradually abandon me. All eyes were searching eagerly to discover a drove of cattle or shepherd's hut, when the Kervanbashi and his people drew our attention to a cloud of dust that was approaching, and told us to lose no time in dismounting from the camels. These poor brutes knew well enough that it was the Tebbad that was hurrying on; uttering a loud cry, they fell on their knees, stretched their long necks along the ground, and strove to bury their heads in the sand. We entrenched ourselves behind them, lying there as behind a wall; and scarcely had we, in our turn, knelt under their cover, than the wind rushed over us with a dull, clattering sound, leaving us, in its passage, covered with a crust of sand two fingers thick. The first particles that touched me seemed to burn like a rain of flakes of fire. Had we encountered it when we were six miles deeper in the desert, we should all have perished."

Lady Blunt while at Aleppo, making up her party for the desert, visited the prisons in the hope of seeing Curro, a certain celebrated Arab robber confined there, the hero of many exploits. In this she was disappointed, as the brigand had just been removed to Jaffa.

Amongst the numerous stories which were current about him the following may be related.

He had commenced life as proprietor of a small vineyard, in the neighbourhood of Aleppo, and for some time led a quiet, commonplace existence. Unfortunately, a grasping neighbour coveted his land, and commenced a suit for its possession, in which, being the richer of the two, he was successful. Curro, disgusted with law, took to the hills, as in former days in England he might have done to the road. His first exploit was to stop a captain of infantry, from whom he took seven thousand piastres, which happened to be just

donkey?" "No," said the man, "my donkey died, and I had no money to buy another." "What do donkeys cost in your village?" he asked. "Five hundred piastres." "Well, here is the money. Get a beast to do your work, or, when I come this road again and find you with your baggage on your head, I will cut it off." Another time he met a poor fellow who had been working in Aleppo for a twelvemonth, to get money enough to marry a girl to whom he was engaged, and who was now on his way to his village with the produce of his year's labour. The man entreated Curro to leave him his money, or he would have to go back, and begin again. "What," said Curro, "can you be married for six pounds? Nonsense. You can never have dancing at your wedding for that. There is something to make the sum respectable. I hate a pauper wedding." The man went on his way rejoicing.

A Turkish Effendi, had encamped near a village, the inhabitants of which being Kurds were friends of Curro, and played into his hands. They invited the Effendi's servants to a merrymaking, and the great man, suspecting nothing, gave permission to most of them to go. In the dead of the night, when they were in the thick of their fun, Curro lifted the flap of the Effendi's tent and politely requested him to hand over his money. This done, our brigand looked round, and saw several firearms, and among them an English double-barrelled gun, which he coolly took up and examined. "I must have this," he said. The Effendi in vain besought him not to deprive him of it, as he was a great sportsman, and would be miserable without it. But Curro laughed, and handling the weapon, finding it was loaded ejaculated "Coward! and you did not dare to shoot me!"

Once, meeting a bridal party on the road, he joined it and introduced himself. They assured him that they were quite poor people, and had no money, but he answered that the gold coins on the bride's neck were legal tender. "What," said the girl, "and you call yourself Curro!" She could not have made a better appeal, and the brigand immediately handed back the coins. Curro used to walk openly about the streets and bazaars of Aleppo, where, though well-known, no one would betray him. But his career of crime was eventually stopped, and he was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.

The Bedouins, though rarely large or tall, are often good-looking, with bright eyes, and a pleasant smile, and very white teeth. Lady Blunt tells us, however, that "after the age of thirty, the habit of constant frowning, to pro-



LADY ANNE BLUNT.

the price of his lost vineyard, and sent him to Aleppo with a sham bill for that amount, drawn on the Valy, or Governor, a piece of impertinent satire. After this he got together a band of followers, choosing only those who could run about as well as himself, he being a champion in matters of foot-racing; and, as he was also a polite and jovial little man, he was a great favourite at weddings and feasts, and might be met at most of the merrymakings in the country, where he was often known. In justice to him, let it be said that he would never shed blood, except in self-defence, while, like many a highwayman of old, he was extremely liberal with the proceeds of his robberies. He once met a peasant carrying a basket of grapes on his head. "What are you carrying that heavy basket for?" he said; "have you no





PORTRAIT OF LADY BLUNT IN ARAB COSTUME.

hood, which binds the swearers to give mutual aid and protection in time of war. Jedáan on a certain occasion, however, found that he had to fight out one of his numerous quarrels alone, although he had sent word of his difficulty to Akhmet. As soon as the fighting was over, he despatched a messenger to ask explanations of his "brother," and the answer he received was as follows, "Akhmet refuses to fight for the husband of a woman he loves." This was the first intimation Jedáan had received of the other's jealousy and displeasure at his marriage with a certain Moáli girl. Jedáan's conduct on the occasion was characteristic. "This is too small a matter," said he, "to stand between friends. Take her; she is yours," and he immediately despatched her to Akhmet's tent.

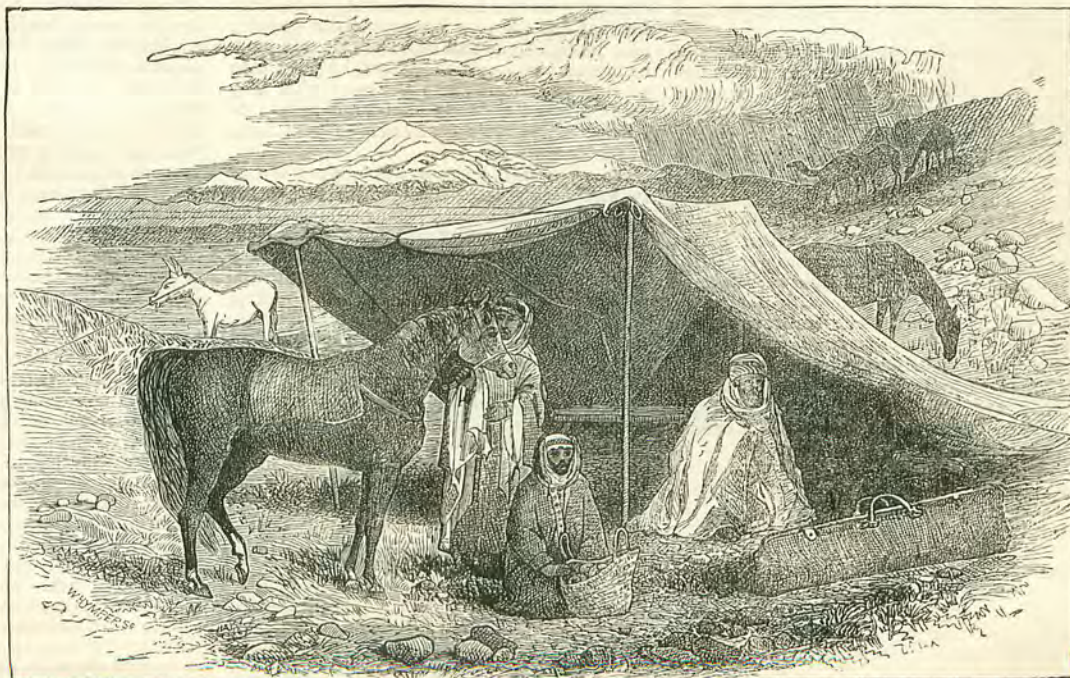
Arabs, like the rest of the world, are not all formed after one model. Burckhardt tells

fect the eyes from the glare of the sun, gives their faces a fierce expression, often quite at variance with their real character. Hard-training too, and insufficient food, have generally by that time pinched and withered their cheeks, and the sun has tanned their skin to an almost Indian blackness. At forty their beards turn grey, and at fifty they are old men. I doubt if more than a very few of them reach the age of sixty." After their first, youthful ardour for enterprise and adventure has been satisfied, they retire from all unnecessary exertion, leave their forays and marauding expeditions to the younger men, and seem to care very little even for sport. A result is that men of middle age, especially those in a high position, are much troubled by such maladies as indigestion and rheumatism.

The Bedouin Arab of pure blood is seldom more than five feet six inches high. Though long-limbed he is generally lithe and graceful, actual fatness being unknown amongst them. There are exceptions to the general rule, as, for example, Akhmet Beg, a desert hero, is described by Lady Blunt as a man of herculean strength, and standing over six feet high. The appearance of him would

put thirty men to flight; the shaft of his spear was sixteen feet in length, and he had a passion for horses to suit his size and weight. He was covered with the scars of old wounds, and had sworn not to "die in bed like a gentleman of Aleppo," a term of contempt, for the roving Arabs despise those who have settled in towns. This giant was once in love, and his conduct of his affair affords a good trait of desert manners. There had been an old alliance between him and Jedáan, chief man of another tribe, and they had taken the oath of brother-

us of a Bedouin who shot and killed himself when he learned that his wife, from whom he had been divorced, had married again. The ladies themselves evidently do not regard the matter of marriage as a trivial or indifferent one, for the authority just cited tells of two young girls who twisted their long ringlets together, and dashed themselves over a precipice because their friends had arranged marriages which were distasteful to them. It would appear that divorces are too easily managed. If there is a quarrel between man



OUR OWN TENT, WITH A VIEW OF MOUNT HERMON.



and wife, the neighbours soon know all about it, and take sides, and an affair which might have easily ended in nothing soon assumes importance. The eloquence and loquacity of the wife may apparently carry the day; but the husband cannot bear to see himself slighted before his companions, and in a moment of irritation he, likely enough, pronounces the fatal words "*Ent taleka*," which of themselves are sufficient to constitute a divorce, and cannot be revoked. The bystanders applaud. "Well done! now we perceive you are a man!" and so on, and these compliments banish whatever remains of cool judgment may still exist in his mind. He gives his late wife a she-camel, and sends her back to her relatives. No disgrace whatever is considered to attach to her, but she must wait forty days before she can marry again.

A Bedouin in his tent is the laziest of creatures. While the women are employed in manual work and laborious occupation, the men do nothing but smoke their pipes, and play at a kind of draughts. The women are not, however, like those of the Turks or Egyptians, under any restraint, and go out freely, whether to gather wood or visit in each other's tents, and are generally in the highest spirits and good humour. Lady Blunt says that no people are so kind to children as the Bedouins. The young son of a Sheik is nursed and petted by the men all day long, and children are never scolded or ill-used. She says that the Bedouins, though hot-tempered, seldom allow their passions to pass wholly beyond control. It is not often that a quarrel is more than a war of words, or that a knife is drawn in anger. One reason for this is their extreme temperance. They look upon the use of all fermented liquors as disgraceful, and take sour milk as their strongest drink.

The well in the desert or settlement is so important to the Arab, his camels, horses, and asses, that it is incidentally interesting to learn how he draws his water. He merely fixes a tent pole or other piece of wood across the mouth, and then runs with the end of the rope as far as it is necessary to bring the leather bucket to the surface, never thinking of winding it up. This is more simple than scientific!

Lady Blunt gives us the following story of Bedouin chivalry, which is by no means extinct in the desert. "On one occasion Jedáan, with fifty followers, was surprised and surrounded at nightfall by a large body of Arabs, who, according to custom in the desert, waited till the daylight to make their attack. The others had little chance of escape, and were resigning themselves to capture and spoliation in the morning, for their horses were tired and those of the enemy were fresh, when in the middle of the night a man came in from the attacking force with a message from the other chief. The emissary rode a white mare, and the message was to the following effect,—Abd-ul-Kérím, in token of their former friendship, sends his own mare to Jedáan, begging that he will ride her to-morrow. 'She is the best in all our camp.' Thus mounted, Jedáan fought a losing battle on the next day, and had all his men taken prisoners, but escaped capture himself, thanks to the mare of Abd-ul-Kérím, and thus his adversary saved him, for old friendship's sake!"

Palgrave, who has by no means so high an opinion of the Bedouin as Lady Blunt, admits that they are anything but a bloodthirsty race, and avoid murder so far as can be managed in a state of habitual brigandage. Their feuds and frays are continual, but at little cost of life. The main object of a raid is booty and plunder, not slaughter, "and the Bedouin, though a terrible braggart, has at heart little

inclination for killing or being killed. They will relate for hours together raw-head-and-bloody-bones stories of their wars and combats with this and that tribe, and will give in a gazette worthy of Balaclava or Waterloo, till when you come to examine coolly into the number of victims, thus dashingy designated by 'thousands,' your humanity will be consoled by finding them reduced to the more moderate number of 'two' or 'three,' and even these you must not set down at once for dead, as they were probably only 'slightly wounded,' and will reappear alive and well in next day's report." These are Palgrave's words. Lady Blunt considers the Bedouin essentially humane, and that if he has killed a man in war he would rather conceal the fact than proclaim it aloud, while murder and homicide are almost unknown amongst the tribes. "Truth," she says, "in ordinary matters is not regarded as a virtue by the Bedouins, nor is lying held shameful. Every man, they say, has a right to conceal his own thought. In matters of importance the simple affirmation is confirmed by an oath, and then the fact may be relied on. There is only one exception to the general rule of lying amongst them. The Bedouin, if questioned on the breed of his mare, will not give a false answer. He may refuse to say, or he may answer that he does not know, but he will not name another breed than that to which she really belongs."

One of the most binding ceremonies among the Bedouins is that involving the oath of brotherhood, and Lady Blunt's husband actually went through it with one of the most powerful of the Bedouin Sheiks. The following is necessarily a condensed account of this interesting episode. "At a bend of the Wady we came suddenly on a great tent, with seven peaks, which we knew by its size must be the Sheikh's. . . . As soon as we were perceived, servants came out to meet us and hold our horses, while all those present in the tent stood up and answered our salutation in a friendly voice. Faris himself, a young man of most attractive countenance, appeared from the inner tent and greeted us with a smile that had so much honesty in it and good will that we felt at once that we were safe in his hands. . . . He said that he had been long expecting us, and now we must stay with him: his tent was our tent, his people our people; and though these and other phrases are more or less conventional in the East, he put a tone of so much sincerity into the words that they really touched us." In brief Faris proved to be one of Nature's gentlemen—a gentleman of the desert.

This powerful Sheikh, whose word is law in half Mesopotamia, and whose people are devoted to him, soul and body, and proud of him as the handsomest man and the best rider in the whole country, speedily contracted the warmest friendship for the Blunts, and the feeling was quite mutual. So one evening, while they were talking about his early troubles, hopes, and prospects, he said that now he and Wilfrid (Lady Blunt's husband) must be as brothers, "to-day and to-morrow and hereafter," to which a warm response having been vouchsafed, it was agreed that they should take the oath of brotherhood, a solemn compact often made among the Arabs. "They took hold of each other by the girdle with their left hands, and holding their right hands up as appealing to heaven, they repeated the prescribed form of words very seriously, for this is a pledge no Bedouin ever takes lightly. Faris began: 'Wallah! Wallahi!' (O God! O my God!) and Wilfrid repeated after him 'Wallah! Wallahi! Wallah! Wallahi!' each perhaps twenty times: then 'Billah! Billahi!' (by God, by my God), 'Tillah! Tillahi!' (through God, through my God); 'akhwan, akhwan, el yom u bokra o baaden, akhwan!' (brothers to-day, to-

morrow, and hereafter)—an oath as impressive as those of our marriage service, and considered quite as binding by those who take it. This pledge of brotherhood, once taken, cannot be dissolved. It binds the swearers to be henceforth brothers, as though born of the same mother, in all things, except that it is no bar to marriage of the one with the near relations of the other. Personal combat is henceforth not allowed, even if the tribes of the two brothers should afterwards be at war; nor can the property of a brother be seized by a brother or by any of his people. The swearers have, on the contrary, a right to aid and assistance in case of need; and a brother, if called upon, is bound to avenge his brother's quarrel.

"There was something so impressive in the ceremony," continues Lady Blunt, "that for some minutes after it was over we all three sat without speaking, till Faris, seeming to recollect that something more was necessary, got up, and calling to his mollah, or secretary, who was in the other tent, to come, made him attest the validity of the act by stating to him what had happened. . . . The mollah put his hand to his head, and said gravely: 'The Beg is now one of our people! let him come into our tent.' He went on to tell the news to the rest of the Sheikh's household, and when Wilfrid entered, they all stood up, and the eldest made him a little speech to the effect that this tent and all the Shammar tents were his, and their camels and sheep and all that they had; and Faris said: 'You must stay with us. Our people shall make you tents like their own, and I will give you camels, and you shall live with us instead of going away to your own country.'" Lady Blunt goes on to tell us that their relations with the tribe were at once on a different footing; before they were polite and friendly, but now they were shown what was very like affection. The mother of the Sheikh sent for Lady Blunt and kissed her, saying that she was now her mother, and that if they were ever in any difficulty her son would help them. Faris, who had till then refused all their invitations to eat or drink with them in their own tent, they being his guests, now sent a message that he would dine with them. So Lady Blunt produced her best curry, sweetmeats, etc., and poured a whole tin of sugar into his coffee, the thing of all others which he liked the best, for the Bedouins crave for sugar. The dinner was so successful that he announced his intention of taking his meals with them every day, which probably made it rather difficult for him to go back afterwards to his own coarse food.

On parting from their encampment, they had to cross a tributary of the Euphrates, a considerable stream, some sixty yards wide. A cord had been stretched across, and made fast at each end. "Floating on the water," says Lady Blunt, "we saw the most rickety-looking thing ever people trusted themselves to on deep water. It was a square raft, made of eight goats' skins blown out to serve as bladders, and tied together with a slight framework of tamarisk boughs. It was at most four feet six inches square, and lay nearly level with the water's edge. On this we were expected to embark, and I confess that I had no pleasant anticipations of the voyage. But first there was the baggage to be ferried, and the camels and mares to be swum across.

"A camel forced to swim is a very ridiculous object. He hates the water sincerely, and roars and moans piteously when he is obliged to face it. Ours were of course unloaded, and then brought one by one to the river bank. A man on the back, and half a dozen others to push behind were needed to get them down the bank, a steep slide of mud, down which the camels went, with all their legs together,



souse into the water. The men, who were stripped, then jumped in after them, and, shouting and splashing water in their faces, forced them on, till at last they were out of their depth and everything had disappeared except the camels' noses. Then they seemed to resign themselves, and swam steadily, but slowly to the opposite shore, where, fortunately, there was a better landing-place. One of the camels, however, obstinately refused to approach the bank, and, when other means had failed, was thrown down and dragged by the legs into the water, when it at last made up its mind and followed the rest. Once on shore, they all set off, scampering and kicking up their ungainly heels, at full speed, and were with some difficulty got back again by a couple of horsemen. The mares managed it with much less difficulty."

And now it came to the turn of Lady Blunt and her husband to be ferried across. "There was an old man," says she, "who acted as ferryman, and with ourselves and a pile of luggage I thought it more than a load, when just as we started, in jumped Faris too; and, before we could stop, we were off, our feet dangling through the framework of the raft, and clinging to each other to keep ourselves balanced. As we got to the middle the strain became too great for the old man, who let go the rope; and in an instant we were swept away down the river, without any means of stopping or guiding ourselves, and expecting every moment to upset. . . . As soon as they saw what had happened, every shammarr on the bank jumped straight into the water, and we had hardly gone fifty yards before they were around us and guiding us to shore. There we found Hána (their cook) wringing his hands and shedding floods of tears, after his custom, at our loss—a new source of amusement to Faris, who had never seen a gown man weep before. The mirth, indeed, was so infectious that everybody was agog for fun, and poor fat Ali was made a speedy victim of, and upset in mid-stream amidst roars of laughter. Fatness is a never-ending subject of joke with the Bedouins, who are lean as whipping-posts themselves, and look upon any other condition as a deformity."

It is impossible to follow Lady Blunt in detail, but a few of her more interesting experiences may be quoted. Here was a spectacle indeed worth seeing. "An Arab march is slow, even when at its quickest, and in an hour or so we came upon the stragglers, and then upon the main body. We rode up a height, and from it saw the wonderful sight of twenty to thirty thousand camels, with a proportionate number of horsemen and footmen, converging by half a dozen winding wadys towards a central dell, in which the horsemen were gathering." A still grander sight was the great camp of the Róala. "We came upon it," says Lady Blunt, "quite suddenly, as crossing a low ridge of rising ground we looked down over the plain, and saw it covered, as far as the eye could reach, with a countless multitude of tents and men, mares and camels. In the extreme distance, at least ten miles away, lay the Lake of Saighal, glittering white in the sun; and the whole space between it and where we stood seemed occupied, while east and west there was at least an equal depth of camp." Lady Blunt estimated the whole number of tents at 20,000, and of camels at 150,000—probably the largest collection of either at any one spot in the whole world.

Where so much is desert, it must be pleasant indeed to come to such a spot as the fine stretch of country south of the Euphrates. "If the season is a favourable one, this affords one of the most beautiful sights in the world, a vast undulating plain of grass and flowers. The purple stock, which predominates on the better soils, gives its colour to the whole

country, and on it the camels feed, preferring it to all other food. The hollows are filled with the richest meadow grass, wild oats, wild barley, and wild rye, the haunts of quails; while here and there deep beds of blue geranium take their place, or tracts white with camomile. On the poorer soils the flowers are not less gay; tulips, marigolds, asters, irises, and certain pink wall flowers, the most beautiful of them all, cousins each of them to our garden plants. For it was from this desert, doubtless, that the Crusaders brought us many of what we now consider essentially English flowers."

Although the following episode ended happily, it must have been a severe shock to a lady traveller. Lady Blunt and her husband had cantered on in advance, and were enjoying a few minutes' rest, when they suddenly heard "a thud, thud, thud on the sand, a sound of galloping. Wilfrid jumped to his feet, looked round, and called out, 'Get on your mare. This is a ghazú' (attack or foray). As I scrambled round the bush to my mare, I saw a troop of horsemen charging down at full gallop with their lances, not two hundred yards off." Lady Blunt, then suffering from a sprained knee, was knocked down by a spear. Her husband had on a quantity of heavy clothing, so the lances driven at him did him no harm; but at length his assailants managed to get his gun from him, and broke it over his head, hitting him three times, and smashing the stock. Resistance was useless, so Lady Blunt shouted out to the nearest horseman, "Ana dahilak" (I am under your protection), while her husband, thinking he had enough of this unequal contest, which was one against twelve, threw himself off his mare. Yet when their companion, Mohammed, a young man of some family among the Bedouins, had explained matters, and how the two "Franjis" (Franks, or foreigners) were friends of a sheykh, one of their friends, orders were at once given by the chief of the party to his followers to restore the mares, gun, and everything, including Mr. Blunt's tobacco-bag.

"The young fellows," says Lady Blunt, "who had taken the mares made rather wry faces, bitterly lamenting their bad fortune in finding us friends. 'Ah the beautiful mares,' they said, 'and the beautiful gun.' But Arabs are good-humoured, and presently the whole party were on the best terms, sitting in a circle on the sand, eating dates, and passing round the pipe of peace. They were now the guests of the very people they would have robbed, and might have killed, a few minutes before.

We have seen that the Arab women of the desert tribes are almost unfettered in their domestic relations, and are in no way shut up, or placed under restraint. Those of the towns, however, more especially when wealthy, are confined in harems, precisely as amongst the Turks, and lead an utterly idle, listless life. "What do you do all day long?" asked Lady Blunt. "We live in the Kasr." "Don't you go out at all?" "No, we have no mares to ride." "What a pity! and don't you ever go into the country, outside the desert?" "Oh no, of course not." "But to pass the time, what do you do?" "We do nothing." Here a sharp black boy interrupted. "Oh! Khatún, these are daughters of Sheikhs, they have no work, no work at all to do; don't you understand?" "Of course, I understand perfectly; but they might amuse themselves without doing work. Don't you even look at the horses?" "No, we do nothing." "I should die if I did nothing. When I am at home I always walk round the first thing in the morning to look at my horses. How do you manage to spend your lives?" "We sit." Thus the supreme happiness of the harem is absolute idleness.

Lady Blunt believes that the ladies of these harems seldom dress with any care unless they want to display their silks and jewels to some visitor; but on such special occasions their toilet is a most elaborate one, and occupies a long time. During their stay at the furthest southern part of Nejd which was reached, Lady Blunt visited the Emir's harem. "All the persons present," says she, "rose to their feet as I arrived. Amúsheh (the chief wife) could easily be singled out from among the crowd, even before she advanced to do the honours. . . . Hedusheh and Lulya, the two next wives, who were present, had gold brocade, as rich as hers, and lips and cheeks as red as hers with carmine, and eyes with borders as black as hers, but lacked her charm. Amúsheh is besides clever and amusing, and managed to keep up a continued flow of conversation, in which the other two hardly ventured to join. . . . They have no idea of amusement, if I may judge from what they said to me, but a firm conviction that perfect happiness and dignity consist in sitting still," a happiness Lady Blunt enjoyed, or endured, with them for some time, sitting together on a carpet spread over a mattress, cushions being ranged along the wall for them to lean against, the fire in front scorching their faces while they talked. The rich clothes worn by the ladies, we are told, presented an appearance "of splendid shapelessness," more like bags or sacks than anything else. To a European their condition would appear one of splendid misery. "When," says Lady Blunt, "we talked of riding, Amúsheh seemed for a moment doubtful whether to be completely satisfied about her own lot in life—she would like, she said, to see me on my mare; and I promised she should, if possible, be gratified; but the opportunity never occurred." It is more than probable that the Emir, her husband, had no desire that it should.

Here we must conclude, strongly recommending Lady Blunt's books to the reader,\* who will find in the volumes much that is interesting regarding the Bedouins, their wives, and families, as well as learn much of wild countries as yet unknown to all save a very few adventurous travellers.

[THE END.]

## VARIETIES.

MUCH TOO YOUNG.—"No!" said a fond mother, speaking proudly of her twenty-five-year-old daughter, "no, Mary isn't old enough to marry yet. She cries when anyone scolds her, and until she becomes hardened enough to talk back vigorously, she isn't fit for a wife."

### A CONTENTED MIND.

A mind content both crown and kingdom is.  
—Robert Greene.

IN MODERATION.—As plants are nourished by moderate watering, but overwhelmed by too much, so the soul is improved by moderate studies, but overpowered if they are excessive.

WOMAN'S HEALTH.—Women have themselves to blame for the greater part of their weakness and diseases; it is caused more by their foolish and unhealthy habits than by anything else.

IN THE PATH OF DUTY.—It is no use talking about being more careful and trying to ease a thing off. My principle is, that if I find a thing interposing with my duty, I cut it off root and branches. Make an end of it at once, that is the only way.—Commodore Goodenough.

\* *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*. J. Murray 1879.  
\* *A Pilgrimage to Nejd*. J. Murray. 1881.