The Morocco Berbers

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The MOROCCO BERBERS.

By J. E. BUDGETT MEAKIN.

PROBABLY no nation has played a more important, yet withal an unseen, part in the European historical drama than that very little known people the Berbers, of North Africa. A hardy race, dwelling in mountain strongholds, they have preferred their bracing hill-top breezes to all the soft allurements of the plains, and they remain there, masters. Holding intact the highlands along the whole southern coast of the Mediterranean, many a nation have they seen rise and fall, many a one has laid hold upon their coastline, but none has penetrated far their cherished home. Egyptians, Phœnicians, Grecians, Romans, and lastly, Arabians, all who have come in contact with them, have been the better for it. Powerless to conquer those warrior tribes, the strangers have each one in their turn gained from the infusion of their busy blood, and have returned from Africa with gathered force. The settlers on those fertile plains were suckled by the mountain wolf, a beast they could never tame. So years rolled by, and centuries, but the Berbers changed not. They are little to-day that they were not in the days of Jugurtha—we might almost go back to the Ptolemies—save in one most vital

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point. They have all embraced Islám. What every invader from the north had failed to do, one earnest hungry band of desert wanderers did. Their Arabian cousins had an influence which no outsider could obtain, and by at once assimilating with their conquered converts, reaped new life and vigour to push on the cause. Then was it that the crescent progressed, but it was not till nearly three hundred years after Mohammed had fled from Mekkah, that the Morocco Berbers had all accepted Islám. By the time that they were ready to swarm over into Spain, the Muslimeen were no longer a handful of nomad adventurers, they were a horde of sturdy hill-men, the Arab and the Berber blended in the Moor, with the latter element predominating. These were the people who over-ran Spain, and whose northward march was the terror of Europe, among whom science flourished and art reigned supreme. Had it not been for this potent factor the Peninsula had never known the Moor.

The greater part of the Atlas mountains, and right away across North Africa, that back-ground belt of snow-capped mountains, is the Berbers' dwelling place, and though many of the hill tribes are of mixed origin, so that it is to-day sometimes extremely difficult to assert off-hand the nationality of this one or that; by their language, by their customs, they are linked together as one race; so utterly distinct from their neighbours there is no confounding the vast majority of tribes. Yet what do we know about them? Just next to nothing! Let me therefore attempt in a few words to epitomize the leading features of that section which dwells in Morocco.

In all my dealings with this people, extending over a period of some nine years, I have found them a fine, open race, extremely suspicious of foreigners, but ever ready to become good friends when they have proved the stranger to be true. I consider them in every way superior to the Arabs, in physique and in moral character.

From the first the conquering Easterns inter-married with them, accepting those who "resigned themselves" as brothers, and appropriating the women of those who did not. Those nomad Arabs who still dwell on the plains are not descended from the original invaders, but from immigrants of several centuries later.

The Berbers pay but little respect to the authority of the Sultan, whose chief power and influence is religious, for on them the religion of Arabia sits lightly.

Every summer the Sultan undertakes an expedition against them for the extension of his rule, or the collection of tithes. United, these wiry mountaineers could easily overcome him, but their inter-tribal rivalry has ever been their weakness. This

alone enabled the wanderers from Asia to master them one by one, and it is the experience gained by the Moorish government of to-day, in pitting one against another, which gives it so much success in employing the same tactics towards European nations.

Race.

As yet no decision has been arrived at as to the family to which the Berbers and their language belong. Some hold them to be Hamitic, but I am inclined to believe that while certain portions, notably towards the south-west, have largely intermingled with, and become modified by, the sons of Ham, they are themselves of another stock. Why should they have no Aryan blood? There may be something after all in the well worn theory that these people were descended, in part, at all events, from the tribes expelled from Palestine by Joshua. The name by which these Berbers know themselves, Amazeergh, and in some places Amashek (language Tha Tamashek), gives colour to the supposition, based on traditions of old writers, that their forefather was Meshech, the son of Japheth. The name Philistine (Pilistin) is recorded by several original authors as used in different districts, both as denoting Jews and Berbers. Some Berber tribes are doubtless partially of Jewish blood. There is a strong supposition that the mysterious Iberians of the Peninsula were of this stock, and I am inclined to believe, from internal evidence, a theory which at first struck me as very far fetched, that they were closely allied to the "little black Celts," the genuine Celts being a tall, red-haired people. If so, they were ancestors to a portion of the population of the western parts of Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, to say nothing of Biscay and Finisterre, and the builders of those rude stone monuments which exist as well in Barbary as in Britain. Dr. Brenton makes out the old Etruscans to have been Berbers. Whoever in Europe may or may not have claimed kindred with them, the fact remains, as stated by Latham, that the Berbers, or more strictly speaking, the Amazeergh, occupy yet the largest area of any race in Africa.

Language.

Though the Berber tongue has a strong affinity to the Semitic in the construction, both of words and sentences, and especially in its verbs,¹ its vocabulary is so entirely different that it can

¹ De Slane, in the notes to his translation of the Berber historian, Ibn Khaldoun, points out the following features of similarity to the Semitic class: its triliteral roots, the inflexions of the verb, the formation of derived verbs, the genders of the second and third persons, the pronominal affixes, the aoristic style of tense, the whole and broken plurals, and the construction of the phrase,

hardly belong there. It has been suggested with some show of reason that the present form is an older and less perfect language, moulded grammatically on the Arab model.

The vast number of *Arabic* words which have been incorporated into the modern Berber, by some writers estimated as *a third*, which I do not think excessive—have all been more or less modified to bring them into harmony with the original rhythm, but I believe that from one dialect or another, all the real Berber words might be collected. This task would, however, be a useless, though interesting one, as in no part would all of it be intelligible. The proportion of negro words in use towards the south, though large, is not so great as that of Arabic in the north. Some have imagined that the ancient Punic bore some relation to this tongue, but this has been disproved, though it is almost certain that Jugurtha and his people spoke it, and it must have been well known to the Carthaginians. M. de Rochemonteix has pointed out that the same pronominal roots, the same methods of inflecting them and the substantives, and of forming derivatives, existed in the ancient Egyptian, as is met with in the Berber of to-day. There is a strong belief that the Guanchos of the Canaries were Berbers, and evidence of at least an intimate connection is afforded by the similarity of many of their words and grammatical forms, as shown by a study of the language of Teneriffe. It is indeed strange that a language spoken so near at hand by such a numerous race, occupying so extensive a territory, should still be practically unknown to our scholars. Several authors of note have from time to time occupied themselves with it, mostly treading on one another's heels, instead of faring afield. Among those who have done real service, mention must not be omitted of Prof. F. W. Newman (publications on it from 1836 to 1887) and Venture de Paradis, who have studied at great disadvantages, of Delaporte and Hanoteau, with their Algerian Berber grammars, Brosselard and René Basset with their dictionaries, nor De Slane with his able translations. Prof. Basset has been at work on the subject for some fifteen years, and has produced a comparative vocabulary of several dialects, and a collection of fables in those of no less than twenty-three tribes. A few years ago M. Louis Rinn issued a pains-proving work, in which he makes the Berber language and character parent to Greek, Latin, French and family! My own feeling about his work, however, is that it is more ingenious by far than conclusive.

whereas it differs from it in the dative of the third personal pronoun, and in the mobilization of the pronominal affixes. It differs essentially from the Coptic and Haussa languages in conjugations, declensions, and vocabulary.

Literature.

The great difficulty with Berber is that it is a language without a literature, only one or two dialects possessing any writings at all, these being chiefly of small account, and in adapted Arabic characters. Traces of an ancient alphabet are to be found in some districts of southern Algeria, and these have been collated, showing that there were thirty-two letters. In addition to the twenty-eight of Arabic, it boasts tsheem, تڨ, jain ڨ (like the Persian) shád, ش, and gáf, ڨ. The Tooareg possesses no âin, ع. It is full of the gutturals, ghaïn غ and khá خ.

Doubtless a careful search among the female ornaments would discover something akin to this character in Morocco. As a rule the women speak less Arabic than the men, and among the Tooaregs, more of them, it is said, read than men. The writings discovered have usually been but inscriptions of various sorts.

The many dialects into which the language has in process of time become subdivided are attributable to this lack of a literary standard. The difference is indeed so great between distant parts, as to have led many to suppose that they were different tongues. It may yet be proved that some are as distinct as Spanish and Italian. St. Augustine, however, recognised their fundamental unity, for he wrote ("De Civitate," xvi. 6), "In Barbary, Africa, we know many people with one tongue." Such comparisons as I have been able to make between the styles used in Morocco have satisfied me that they are essentially one. The only dialect I have attempted to learn is that of the province of Reef, but I can lay claim to no deep acquaintance with even that. To give an idea of its sound, I quote the Lord's prayer in Reefian Berber.

·Bábáth-nakh wunní dhí ·ijnathin, ·ádheetawakaddas ·isim innishl, addlas
 Abá-ná álladhí fí es-samawát, leeatakaddas ·ism-ák, leeáti
 ir-hakamth· innish, atteri ir-khardir· innish mammish goojinna· hamíá
 malakoot-ak, litakun masheeat-ák kamá fí es-samá' kadálík
 kha-tha-moorth : ághrom idhakhaírizimin ooksha-nath áidhá ; 'thaghfer-
 ála el árd ; khubza-ná kafáfa-ná ááti-ná el yôm ; wa ághfir
 thanakh· dhanoob innakh mammish 'ghánagghfer nishshin ·thanar· ir-mudni-
 laná dhunooba-ná kamá naghfir nahan áidán lil-mudhni-
 been· in-nakh ; wa-ra-khsídif dhí 'tajrīb, 'lakin sinjmanakh izg-Ibrís ;
 been ílaí-ná ; wa lá tadhíil-ná fí tajribat, lakin najji-ná min csh-shirreer ;
 ·liánna gharik ir-murk· d hir-koowith d hir-majd· ghar dáim· Am·en.
 lián lak el-mulk wa el-koowat· wa el-majd íla el-ábad· Ar·een.

In the above specimen the Arabic version as pronounced in Morocco is placed under the Reefian, word for word. To simplify comparison, hyphens are used to separate words from particles, though not so separated in writing, to make it more distinct. A point (·) before or after a portion of a word, shows that that portion is corrupted Arabic. This has not been done in the case of particles.¹

This is from the translation now being prepared for the Bible Society by Mr. Mackintosh of Tangier. The only other volume of any importance in either of the Morocco dialects of which I am aware, is the Toowāhhid (the Unity of God), a very rare and highly prized treatise believed to be the oldest African work in existence, except in Egyptian or Æthiopic—written by an early Moorish Sultan, Ben Toomert the Mehdi, also the author of a work called “Morsheedah,”—to convince the Berbers of the truth of his creed, in which he was successful.

This volume still exists in rare copies. It is divided into sections, chapters and verses, for facility of study, and was held in greater reverence, if possible, than the Kor’án itself, among the Berbers, who think a great deal of it to this day. As the Masmoodah tribe, the first to support this Mehdi, could not speak Arabic, Ben Toomert counted the words in the first chapter of the Kor’án—which is an excellent prayer used in all Moham-medan devotions—and calling as many men, seated them in a row and named each one with a word. Then, each pronouncing his name in order, they repeated the chapter.

When Arabic is spoken of as the language of Morocco, it is seldom realised how small a proportion of its inhabitants use it naturally. Berber is the real language of Morocco, Arabic that of its creed and government. Some centuries ago a Mowahadî Sultan (Almohade) dismissed the officials of the great Karueeîn mosque at Fez because they could not speak Berber as well as Arabic.

The word Berber itself, from which we have formed the word Barbary, is of very doubtful origin. Equivalents, denoting indistinct sounds, seem to exist in Latin, Greek and Arabic, while it is not probably a genuine Berber word. It serves, nevertheless, as a convenient and widely accepted name for the whole race, which is known to the people themselves by a different title in each district. Only certain portions acknowledge the name of Berber, *pl.* Beráber.

Physique.

As might well be expected of such a race of mountaineers, the physique of the Berbers is splendid, and among them are to

¹ A peculiarity of the Reef dialect is the change of the Arabic “l” to “r,” as will have been observed in this quotation, a fact which lends support to the theory that the word Reefian or Reefi is identical with Lybian or Leebi, “b” and “f” being of course interchangeable, viâ “v.” I have no opinion to offer on this point.

be seen a good proportion of fine-featured men. They are of a fair height, often tall, strong and wiry, capable of sustaining exertion. They are well-knit, spare in flesh, and though as a nation fair of skin, often tanned by the sun. Those who inhabit the Soos province—the Slooh—are as a rule shorter by far than those of the north, and those of the Draa and the anti-Atlas—the Dráwīs—whose mingled origin has before been alluded to, are considerably darker, more thickly set, and shorter, though none the less jovial—perhaps even more so—and certainly no whit less enduring than their brethren of colder regions. The darker families are known as Harateen (*s.* Hartáni). Some of their countenances are most striking, being of very pronounced type, keen eyes, jovial mouth and white teeth. Their brain-power, to judge from the outward appearance of their craniums, should be in no way deficient, and I do not fancy that the thickness of their skulls in any way equals that of the negroes, though I believe I have seen lads of this race also play at “billy-goat,” and butt at one another’s pates with an astounding crash. Following the custom of the country, all the males shave their heads, except one tribe only that I know of, the Ida-oo-Blal, believed to be of Arab origin; but many tribes leave a patch on one side to grow into a pig-tail, the exact reason for which I have never been able to ascertain, though in this they would seem to maintain an ancient Egyptian custom, judging from ancient sculptures of that country. Other tribes are known by a tuft called a “sheaf” on either temple, but it is noteworthy that in this case the hair is always curly. The Oodàìà, the hereditary body-guard of the sultans, follow this custom, but they bear few traces of the Berber now beyond their splendid physique. Perhaps it is intermarriage with negroes which accounts for the “woolliness.” Debauchery being less common among the Berbers than among the town dwellers, they have a better chance, and succeed in living longer. Their callousness to extremes of heat and cold is astounding, and their powers of endurance noteworthy. They have in some districts been noted for their acrobats as far as history extends. Herodotus speaks of them, and the Egyptian monuments are said also to record their visits from the West in those days. Of recent years companies from Soos have played in Europe and America.

Characteristics.

I have already mentioned some of the characteristics of this people, but there are other points which should not pass unnoticed. Like hardy mountaineers all the world over, the Berbers are essentially an independent and a warlike race. One of the greatest insults to be offered to one of them is to say

"Your father died in his bed." In some districts the coward is paraded in a Jew's cap till he has retrieved his character by some brave deed. The petty warfare which is incessant among them, renders their tenure of life very uncertain, and there is a saying that the Arab fears hunger and is starved; the townsman fears death from too fast living, and kills himself thereby, while the Berber fears murder and is assassinated. Two gunshots are a common summons to an armed affray, where everyone goes armed, ready to defend or to attack as occasion offers. The quiet plain-dwellers have a wholesome dread of these highlanders, and nothing could be more comical than the awe of one of our servants at the sight of an Aberdonian, after having been duly instructed that he belonged to one of the Berber clans of Great Britain!

Leo Africanus says of them, quaintly translated by Pory, "No people under heaven are more addicted unto courtesies than this nation. Mindful they have always been of injuries, but most forgetful of benefits. . . . The greater part of these people are neither Mohammedans, Jews, nor Christians, and hardly shall you find so much as a sparke of pietie in any of them." They certainly display untamed cupidity, and are delightfully ignorant of truthfulness and honesty to a degree most truly Oriental.

In most other points almost every tribe differs from its neighbour. For instance, one will be found extremely religious, with saints, shrines, and teachers in abundance, and next to it will be a tribe in which Islám is a mere form and even the rite of circumcision is but scantily practised. In one spot the grossest ignorance prevails, while hard by is a tribe of which many women even can read. I remember the mother of one Berber Káid (Governor), who not only spoke Arabic as fluently as her own tongue, but also read it with ease, and could discourse most intelligently. One general custom, or rather absence of it, is to allow the women to go unveiled, except where more Arabicised, while on the borders of the desert the men wear veils as a protection from the sand and glare. A pall of gross superstition, however, casts its gloom over all alike.

Government.

The methods of self-rule followed by the Berber tribes vary considerably. In some cases the governing body is a gathering of representatives of the various sections, veritable little republics, as near the democratic ideal as possible. The more original custom, however, seems to have been to entrust supreme power to a chief called an *amghar*, of a hereditary stock. These are feudal lords who, as a rule, realise that the less they oppress

their people the more secure their position will be. There is still a third style, in which the assembly nominates a sort of governor. It is strange that so vast and so distinct a people should own no leader round whose standard to rally in the face of a common foe. It would seem as though, rightly or wrongly, the curse of Ishmaël had descended upon them. Among themselves there is always warfare. No traveller is safe from pillage unless accompanied by a member of the tribe through which he may be passing, of sufficient importance to protect him from injury, for fear of retribution.

Laws, &c.

As a Mohammedan nation, the Berbers are nominally ruled by the Kor'ân, but it is only natural that a number of ancient usages belonging to an earlier faith should have survived among such a conservative folk. Genuine Berber civil laws, called *inserf*, are, like the customs, entirely traditional, and are upheld by an assembly called the *infaliz*. A verbal summons before witnesses on the part of the plaintiff is all that is necessary to secure a trial. The defendant may refuse to appear before any particular judge whom he may deem to be partial, or he may demand a fresh trial by another judge if dissatisfied with the first, but bribery is alone successful in practice. Criers go round to offer rewards in the case of theft, and houses may be searched, but if in vain, compensation has to be paid, which is prohibitive of extension of the practice. Their punishments are not as a rule severe, though much suffering is often inflicted by the great people of a tribe by the imprisonment of offenders or enemies in underground granaries unfit for a human being to live in. The bastinado is also employed, but not so much as further East. Criminals are subject to the *lex talionis*, of which the vendetta is a natural consequence; this continues till either put an end to by some superior civil or religious authority, or by the practical extermination or expatriation of one side. Capital punishment is rare, with the exception of cases in which the culprit is handed over to the avenger of blood to do what he will with him. The blood feuds which result from the operation of this law are among the chief sources of the continual fighting among the tribes, though often it is a simple raid or highway robbery which gives rise to a quarrel in which eventually some thousands become involved. Plunder of passers-by is looked upon as quite a respectable method of subsistence, and excursions are often made to the lowlands or to the outskirts of some city for this purpose, or to carry off the droves of steeds and oxen which have been sent out to graze. Another fertile source of quarrels is the right to the use of streams for irrigation purposes.

Social Customs.

The hospitality of these people, if not so profuse as that attributed to the Arabs, is sufficiently extensive when fear or prejudice is removed. Were it not for their lack of a staple government, and the tempting ease with which crime of all sorts may be committed among them, even the present system of escorts would doubtless be unnecessary. Travellers must always pay "zetát" to be provided with "mezrag," or protection, the latter word meaning literally a lance, as the sending with them of a chief's weapon used to be their guarantee. Space will not permit of my going into the methods adopted for the protection of the weak by the strong, or the offering up of a sacrifice to secure such protection, the fact being attested by a notarial document, and the subsequent payment of tribute; suffice it to say that the confidence reposed is rarely abused.

In some districts all the visitors make for the mosque, whence the chief sends any number up to ten who may come on the same day to be the guests of a certain resident. Each "householder" takes his turn, which alone counts, not the number entertained.

Monogamy is far more common than polygamy, and there is less vice than in the towns, even though a good deal of drunkenness has to be included in some parts. Syphilis, the national disease of Morocco, is said to be unknown across the Atlas, and to be cured by going there. The marriage customs are peculiar, in one case the women being practically sold on the market once a year. The ladies promenade unveiled, and the intending suitor, when fancying one of them, goes with her to seek her father or other guardian to ask her in marriage. The only engagement entered into is to bring her back to the same place on a market day if tired of her, that she may better her lot. This is sworn to in a saint's shrine, and the present of a pair of slippers or some garment to the father seals the bargain. Certain tribes expect no more virtue among the fair sex than among the men. Several are noted for their beautiful women, and others for their love of ornaments, usually silver bracelets, anklets, brooches, and amber, bead or coral necklets. I have also seen stone bracelets.

When a marriage is celebrated in more orthodox style, it is made the occasion of a great deal of innocent rejoicing, and a large quantity of powder is "made to speak." The spears with which, in a more primitive condition, these people were wont to arm themselves, and in exercises with which the Arabs taught great proficiency, have been replaced by long-barrelled flint-lock guns of native manufacture, often beautifully ornamented

These are brandished, pointed, and finally fired, while at full gallop on horseback, in much the same way as the earlier spears were manipulated in their day. The bride is borne under cover in state to the bridegroom's dwelling after certain jollifications have been indulged in, and this is a signal for great exhibitions of this powder-play, performed, however, among the Berbers very much on foot. When the bride is a widow but little fuss is made, if any. Intermarriage between the tribes is not so common as it might be, owing to their constant jealousies. The same bars of relationship obtain, of course, as throughout the Mohammedan world. Circumcision is often postponed till the age of twelve or thirteen, and the operation is performed with a pair of scissors in the shrine of some saint. No kindred rite is inflicted on the females, who have very much more liberty than on the plains.

Festivals.

The Berber festivals are mainly those of Islám, though a few traces of their predecessors are observable. Of these the most noteworthy is midsummer, or St. John's day, still celebrated in a special manner, and styled "el ânserah." It is worthy of note that the old style European calendar is maintained among them, and it would be very interesting to know whence they obtained it.¹ Some opine that once, as a nation, they were Christians, but this I believe to be quite a mistake. The influence of the various bishoprics established along the North African coast was never very far-reaching, and in many cases they were little more than nominal. The special estimation in which the Virgin Mary is held in some parts, and certain ceremonies maintained here and there, are often adduced as proofs of a former profession of Christianity, but I am inclined to doubt the whole thing. Space will not permit of any description of these relics, of whatever they may be, which differ so in various parts of the country, and I have not yet had the opportunity to give either them or the folk-lore of the people the attention which they deserve.

Dress.

The dress varies as much in different localities as anything else. Far in the interior it is almost entirely of wool, needles and thread being unknown. A piece of oblong white blanket or dark blue cotton with a longitudinal slit in the centre for the head—like the Mexican "poncho"—is thrown over the

¹ A curious custom for recording time has been noted among them, the standard measure being the time a certain basin with a hole in it takes to fill and sink.

shoulders, simply knotted at the lower corners round the waist, over which a skirt cloth is tied on the left hip. The women often secure the former in their places by massive silver brooches of a peculiar pattern on the shoulder, and wear a waist cord. Cotton of cheaper European manufacture is steadily finding its way to supersede these more primitive garments. Brooches of precisely the same peculiar pattern are found in parts of Ireland and Scotland. I have seen them in Dublin Museum.

A toga-like arrangement of a light blanket serves as overall, with another small piece of flannel or dark blue cotton or camel-hair cord twisted round the shaven crown. The most distinctive garment, however, is the *khaneef*, a thick, black, goat-hair waterproof hooded cloak, with no arm-holes. Across the back is a striking yellow embroidered assegai-shaped patch, the variations in which denote, I believe, different clans. Sandals are worn towards the desert, but only by cavaliers. No description of the Berber wardrobe will serve for two districts, so I had best intrude no further.

Manufactures.

Cooking utensils, saddlery, arms, musical instruments, and other articles of native manufacture, if rude in some parts, in others have attained what may be considered a high state of perfection, with due regard to their resources. In their decorative art considerable talent is displayed, and in the more remote districts, where Arab influence is less felt, the affinity of design and colour to those of Central Africa is very marked. This is especially the case with the black and blue-green leather work. To the south-west the comparative proximity to Guinea makes itself felt in the same way. As compared with more refined Oriental productions, however, everything is extremely rude.

It is a striking fact that far away on the other side of the great Atlas is to be found a decorative taste in building, which is quite remarkable among a people usually setting so little store by the beauty or otherwise of their dwellings. Ornamentation is to be seen upon every hand, and instinctively the question is asked how far these people we call Barbarians are accountable for the prosperity of the arts under Moorish rule in Spain. While the Arab or Moor of the plains is content to dwell in the meanest of huts, or a tent, and the strongholds of the Governors are of rough rammed earth, outside a shapeless mass worn by the wind and rain, these Berbers dwell in comfortable houses with projecting eaves to their flat roofs, and the citadels which dot the Atlas are crenellated like some mediæval fortress, wearing quite an imposing appearance. In some districts strong store-towers are observable on every hand, which in time of war

serve as forts. The people dwell in homes as various as their dress. It is believed that, like the Arabs, they were originally nomads, and many live still in huts which they are nothing loth to quit and rebuild elsewhere. Sallust's comparison of their thatched homesteads to the upturned keels of boats is well known, but is not a very good one. Sometimes they are oblong with square ends, but they are sometimes round like bee-hives, and pointed on the plains. On ascending the northern slopes of the Atlas this class of dwellings entirely disappears, and is replaced by the erections of stone and mud, roofed with sticks spread over with trodden earth, already alluded to. For protection, as the villages are seldom walled unless of some size, all the doors of a group are turned to the centre, and the walls are windowless. One district I know of is peculiar in having its dwellings each in the centre of its owner's plot of ground.

Built mosques are infrequent, though saints' shrines are common enough—sometimes the only white-washed structures to be met with—and often an ordinary hut or room has to do duty for both school and church. For ovens they build a sort of dome with a hole in the top, which is first well-heated by lighting a fire in it, and the bread is put in while it is still hot. Adjoining almost every village, or not far from it is another one, occupied solely by Jews. These live as slaves to their respective Berber protectors, and are subjected to all sorts of indignities. These they lose no opportunity of repaying with the proportion of interest they endeavour to obtain for their loans of cash, by their superior subtlety and cunning.

Food.

The food of these people is of the simplest, and very nearly vegetarian. Barley porridge—âseedah—eaten with oil or butter, is esteemed a great delicacy, and as the national dish, takes the place of the excellent granulated maccaroni—kesksoo—of the plains. Meat is the portion only of great men, except on market days or festive occasions. Agriculture is much neglected. Fruits and vegetables become exceedingly scarce in the country. Towards the desert dates are a staple article of diet, and walnuts are plentiful in the mountains. As a specimen of the daily round of meals I may give one: on waking a bowl of vegetable broth, at eleven o'clock a dip in the family dish of porridge, at sunset a similar share of kesksoo, made, perchance, as I have tasted it, of barley with fresh broad beans or turnips on the top. A favourite breakfast for those who have cows is sour milk and dates. Making a virtue of necessity, it seems to

me that most of these dirty people like their milk sour. Honey is much used, but the wax chiefly wasted. Salt is found in abundance in certain regions, while further south it becomes extremely valuable. Soap—always soft—is unknown far inland, cinders and herbs replacing it, though where it is made—solely by the Jews—it has a good sale. In many parts even cows are scarce, as well as horses, &c. Those steeds still found there, as well as the mules, are very small and wonderfully agile. Had not they possessed the latter quality, I doubt whether I would be here to-day, for sometimes in those roadless mountain wastes one has to ride as the Moors say, “liver in mouth.” The sheep, too, are small, and many of them black. The men use the black wool, and the women the white in some districts.

Several of the tribes are very fond of smoking, using pipe bowls of hard black wood from the Soodan, or hollow bones. Their tobacco is sold by the leaf. Snuffing is more common, the preparation employed consisting of equal parts of pounded tobacco, walnut shells, and wood ashes. I do not think that hemp is so much patronized further south as it is on the northern plains. Intoxicating drinks—usually thick syrups—are prepared from dates, figs and raisins, but inebriety is not general anywhere.

So much have I ventured to set down about the Berbers, not because I desire to pose as an authority, but to attract the attention of capable scholars to this interesting people. Had I a less ingrained fancy for restricting myself to either what I knew from personal observation, or on the best of authority, I could have no doubt made my paper much more entertaining. I am glad to say that of late years several Berber and other North African historians have been translated from the Arabic—such as that of Ibn Khaldoon by the Baron de Slane—and that several scientists, most of them French, have been paying considerable attention to this nation, of which we yet know so little.

FEBRUARY 13TH, 1894.

Prof. A. MACALISTER, F.R.S., *President, in the Chair.*

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and signed.