

DRESS AND PERSONAL ADORNMENT IN MODERN PALESTINE. II.¹

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THE garments worn by the women of Palestine do not greatly differ from those worn by the men, which have been already described in the previous number. There are some modifications in the shape of the garments worn next the body, and they bear different names. The outermost garments, however, call for notice. Among all the poorer classes in Moslem towns, not villages, the *'ezār* is worn. This is practically a white sheet arranged to envelop the whole person, except the face, which is covered with a muslin veil—the *mandeel*. The richer women have taken largely in modern times to a more elaborate cover of silk, often in brilliant colors, called the *habarah*. In some villages, *e. g.*, Nazareth, a cloak is worn almost identical with the *'aba* of the men. In towns, Moslem women are compelled by society to veil their faces, and in communities in which Moslems predominate the Christians and Jews to some extent do the same, but in village life and in the desert this veiling is never carried out. A village woman will simply draw her head-cover half across her face on the approach of strangers. Among town Moslems a woman, even in her home, is carefully excluded from all male friends except her relatives, and it is not polite even to inquire after her except in general terms, *e. g.*, “How is the family?” In more primitive communities, the villages and encampments, women have much more freedom, and in many parts they make money on their own account by such industries as weaving and carpet-making, or in selling the products of their own industry, from their fowls, their goats, or their gardens. Money obtained in this way is their own personal property, and they frequently either add it to the store on

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MOSES.—*Michael Angelo.*

their head-dress or spend it on jewelry—bracelets, earrings, etc. Anklets are seldom worn today, and rings are generally of common quality. Among men of any position one ring is generally carried—the signet ring,¹³ as all official documents must be sealed. The seal, which may of course be not on a ring but



STREET COSTUMES IN JERUSALEM.

carried separately, is rubbed over with ink, the surplus wiped off, and the seal applied to the paper. It is preferred to a signature as a means of identification, and to give a man your seal is to give him the right to act for you. Rings and most Moslem jewelry are today of silver, as the Prophet is reported to have disapproved of gold. There is, I think, too, a universal fear of displaying wealth, as anyone known to be well off is sure to be exposed to danger from official or professional thieves. I have

¹³ Gen. 38: 18, etc.

known Jewesses in Damascus to go about in very shabby outer garments concealing rich dresses and expensive jewelry which in the house are freely displayed.

In all classes and religions there is a recognized custom that a married woman must have her head covered,¹⁴ it being a special shame to show her hair publicly. Among the Syrian Jewesses (as well as among Polish orthodox Jewesses in Russia, and elsewhere), every bride at the time of her marriage must have her tresses removed and replaced by—as it seems to us—a hideous wig. Until recent years at Damascus and Aleppo this custom was strictly enforced, and even today it can be disregarded only by permission of the bride's new mother-in-law. Some say it is that the beautiful hair which had captivated one man's affection is removed lest it should prove a snare to a stranger; others, that it is a national sign of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem.

It is interesting to observe how oriental ideas of decency differ from ours. It is not, I hold, that they have less refined ideas, but that they have other ideas; indeed, I can unhesitatingly say that on some points they are much ahead of us, that is, of course, in comparing equivalent social classes. But we notice that, while covering the head and veiling the face are the custom, yet in large sections of the community the chest is generally left half uncovered, and the legs from the knees are freely exposed. The *fellahin* women regularly journey or work with their dresses girded as high as the knees, though on the approach of a stranger they usually let them down. Then, too, uncovered feet are a sign of respect and never a disgrace. Also in behavior there are marked differences. Men and women practically never walk arm in arm, and indeed seldom walk together at all; on a journey the man goes in front and the wife follows, accompanied each by members of their own sex. Kissing in public between the sexes, except between parent and child or between little children, is never seen. Among Moslems men alone, with rare exceptions, attend public worship at the mosques; among eastern Jews women, if admitted at all to the synagogues, are allowed only

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Cor. 11:5.

in a screened-off gallery; among Christians the men sit on one side of the church, the women on the other.

The head-dress of the village women is conspicuous and distinctive. Maidens usually have little more than a simple handkerchief—the *wakah*, or “protector”—which is often ornamented



A GROUP OF METAWILEH, SHOWING THE NATIVE DRESS.

with small silver coins over the brow, and sometimes a large piece of silver, called the *hallal*, over the forehead. A further string of coins, the *zanak*, is continued below the chin. This money is the girl's dowry, or at least a part of it. After marriage a more substantial head-dress is adopted, but the design differs much in different villages. At Bethlehem—the costume of which village has been made familiar by many artists—the women wear a heavy, hard cap, like a fez in shape, covered with coins and needlework, known as the *shatwe*, together with a depending *zanak*. At Râmallah, a large Christian village to the north of Jerusalem, the most conspicuous part of the head-dress is a large semi-circle of closely strung silver coins of large

size, accompanied, of course, by a *zanak*. In all forms a *tarbeah*¹⁵ is worn, a kind of coarse, embroidered shawl which covers most of the head and falls over the shoulders. These heavy head-dresses are seldom removed, and many women, if not most, sleep in them. I have known a Bethlehem woman to suffer from severe headaches when persuaded to lay aside her *shatwe* at night.

Among such people the hair is commonly parted in the middle, and after being brushed stiffly back is made into two long plaits. These are tied together at the ends, from which depend ornaments, or not infrequently a bunch of household keys. I shall never forget the amusement with which I once watched a newly wedded woman of Nazareth hitching up her keys from the ends of her very long hair-plaits in order to exhibit to us the mysteries of her new cupboards. In other parts—especially among the *bedouins*—the hair is plaited into a number of small plats, but always an odd number. These are also tied together at the ends and carry ornaments.

Among men the hair is commonly shaved periodically, but, if long enough, is combed straight forward, without parting. Many wandering dervishes have long hair, uncut, untrimmed, and without cover; some tribes of *bedouins* also wear it long. The great *'Aneezeh* tribe is said never to cut their hair at all. The Jews do not as a rule shave their heads, and are particular to allow the locks of hair just in front of the ears to grow uncut. Many of them—especially the strict Polish Jews (*Ashkenazim*) and the Yeminites from Arabia—curl these locks, giving to themselves a very peculiar appearance. Orientals think much of the beard. To shave the chin is allowable in the youthful, except among the



THE GARB OF THE BEDOUINS.

¹⁵ Many names for this shawl are used; this is the name used at Bethlehem.

Jews, who must at most only clip the hairs; but when once a beard has been allowed to grow, it is considered a great disgrace to shave it, and for a man to have this done against his will is a manifest degradation.¹⁶ Some years ago a prominent and able Protestant of Damascus, a Dr. Mashaka, engaged in heated religious controversy with some native Roman Catholics; on their publishing a reply to his arguments they headed their article as follows:

Hato moos ahlika

La nahlik dukn Mashaka.

("Take the razor of the barber,

Let us shave the beard of Mashaka!")

Ecclesiastics and monks of all sorts, even Roman Catholics, grow beards in the East, and it seems sometimes that a fine beard is by no means among the least of the recommendations to preferment. A few years ago I met in Damascus a poor man, a native of Baghdad, who had for some years held the post of patriarch in the Caldean church in India. He managed to offend some relatives, and as a punishment for this, and possibly, too, as a result of church intrigues, he was seized and his face shaved! He was so completely changed, and so much mortified, that he could not, or would not, return, but went to Suez, where he waited till his beard was a little grown, when he came to Damascus.¹⁷ He never recovered his imposing beard nor his office, however, but died after some months, largely, I think, as an outcome of the shock and grief.

The owner of a venerable beard will often point to its silvery hairs as an excuse for not entering on a rash enterprise suitable only to youth, and when talking it is quite usual to detain another man by holding the beard,¹⁸ much as we should "buttonhole" him. An oath "by the beard" is quite common, while *ala rasé*, "by my head,"¹⁹ is the most familiar oath of all.

The only remaining garments to be noticed are the boots and shoes. Today sandals are not commonly worn in Palestine, except by monks and some *bedouins*. The ordinary shoes, the *surmeyeh*, of the *fellahin* are primitive enough. The sole is of

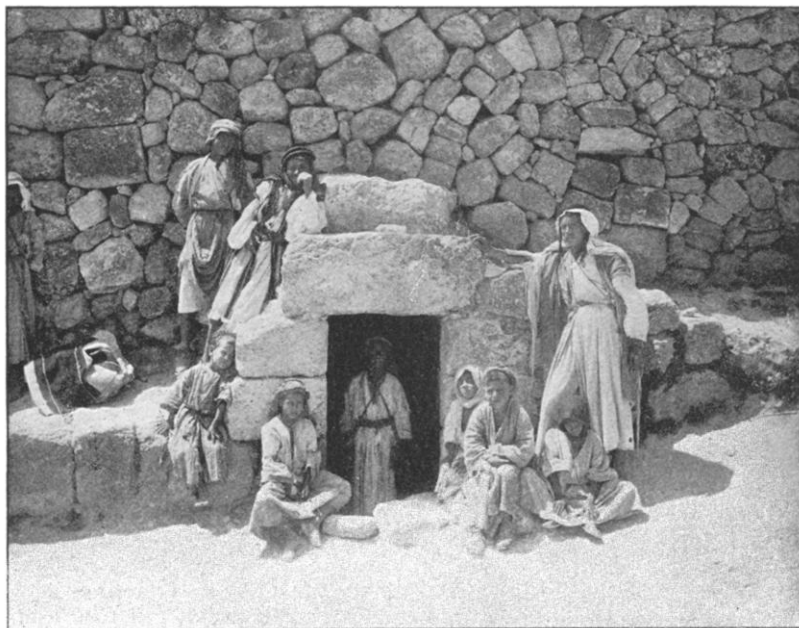
¹⁶ 1 Sam. 10:4.

¹⁷ Cf. 2 Sam. 10:4.

¹⁸ 2 Sam. 20:9.

¹⁹ Matt. 5:36.

half-tanned leather, often with the hair adhering. The uppers, in the better shoes, are of red morocco leather. The toe is pointed. It is not laced, but fits like a loose slipper. In the open country both men and women seem to be more happy, especially in wet weather, in walking shoeless, their slippers



ARAB COSTUMES AT BETHANY.

being carried in the hand or hung to their donkey's saddle. The same is even more true of the *bedouins*, who, both men and women, wear long loose boots of red morocco with pointed, turned-up toes and iron heels, called *jezmeh*, which are particularly clumsy. In the house, and at prayers in the mosque, such boots and shoes are always removed and left arranged in the special place set apart for them; in large mosques a man is stationed near the door for the express purpose of looking after the slippers and boots of the worshipers. This uniformity of custom is the more remarkable as, according to tradition, the Prophet, both in precept and practice, taught that shoes should

be worn during prayer, in contradiction to the Jews who removed them.

Not only must the pious Moslem doff his shoes, but he must wash his feet before prayer. Before the midday hour of prayer in any of the large mosques in Damascus crowds of Moslems may be seen standing around the special tanks of running water performing their ceremonial ablutions. With the Jews the ceremonial ablutions have regard only to the formal washing of the hands²⁰ and are frequently reduced to a minimum.

Although stockings and socks, together with laced boots and shoes, have largely come into vogue, the bare feet, loose slippers, and frequent ablutions, for the poorer people at any rate, belong to a mode of life which has much to commend it, and it would be unfortunate to change. The free, easy, and stately bearing of these villagers, who walk largely with bare feet and with no tight and cramping clothes, is a pleasure to look at; with the women especially, trained to an upright and steady walk through carrying water-jars on the head, the carriage is often a model of grace and dignity. It is frequently in sharp contrast with that of many of their *bedouin* sisters, who are accustomed to carry skins of water or their babies on their backs in a kind of bag supported by a band across their foreheads, a method which necessitates a forward stoop all the time.

Another form of shoe, or more strictly sandal, must be mentioned. In some districts, and almost universally in Damascus, high sandals of wood, generally inlaid in mother-of-pearl and kept on by a loop across the instep, are worn by children and women, sometimes by men. These, which are known as *kikabs*, may be little thicker than a strong boot sole, but are often many inches high. Tall and highly ornamented *kikabs* are used to give height and dignity to a proud woman. Ordinarily, however, they are rather for use than adornment, as they lift the feet out of the mire of the streets or the wet of half-washed stone floors or courts. To walk in them requires a good deal of skill, but it is common to see children, from long custom, even run with them on. As may be supposed, being of wood

²⁰ Cf. Matt. 15 : 2.

and quite loose on the feet, they make a curious tapping on the stones as one walks.

In conclusion, a word may be added about personal adornment apart from clothes. The application of *kohl* to the eyelids is a custom with all classes.²¹ This is a fine black powder which



BEDOUIN MOTHERS AND CHILDREN.

is painted on the edges of the lids; if properly done, and not overdone, it gives, it must be acknowledged, a not unattractive fascination to the brilliant dark eyes of oriental beauties. Among the *bedouins* and many of the *fellahin* it is common to tattoo in bluish spots part of the face, the breasts, the wrists, the back of the hands, and the ankles. The face marks are on the forehead, sides of nose, and chin; many go farther and discolor the whole of the lips a hideous blue color. This custom of

²¹ 2 Kings 9 : 30. Jezebel put *kohl* on her eyelids.

tattooing is very ancient, and, though expressly against the teachings of Mahommed, is almost universal among some desert tribes.

A less objectionable method of ornamentation, because less permanent, is the very common one of staining the tips of the nails, and indeed the hands and feet generally, with henna. In former times it was the habit among the older Moslems to dye the beard red by the same means, and it is said Mahommed used it ; although I have seen this, it is not very common.

In the previous articles on modern Palestine the extreme conservatism of the Orient has been frequently referred to, but in nothing is it more manifestly exhibited than in the subject of the present one. In essential features the dress of the common people has remained almost unchanged from the earliest historical periods.



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