

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

By PHILIP J. BALDENSPERGER.

(Continued from Q.S., 1916, p. 172.)

*The General Characteristics of the Different Towns.*II.—JAFFA.¹

Yāfa (يَافَا), like all the coast towns, has had its ups and downs; certainly one of the most ancient towns of the Levant, it has only slightly changed its name between Japheth, Japho, and Yāfa. When an Egyptian conqueror once more had destroyed the town, he said: "Hāfa, and not Yāfa, shall your name be"; *hāfe* (هَافَة) is "famished," but the name only remained in tradition. This reminds us how often conquerors tried to change names, either as punishment or in honour of the victor, but the old name appears again after a few years. To give a nickname, or an imprecation to rhyme with the old name, or resembling the name in some distorted way, has been the habit of the Hebrews as well. An admirable example of this is found when the prophet Zephaniah, foretelling the judgment of the Philistine cities, says (chap. ii, v. 4): "Gaza shall be forsaken (*'azūbah*); Ashkelon a desolation (*shēmāmah*); Ashdod driven out at noon; Ekron shall be rooted up (*tē'ākēr*)."

Jaffa is now the most important town in the maritime plains, and second to Jerusalem. Being its nearest port, its fortune depends wholly on Jerusalem, through the pilgrims and commerce which follows. It is principally famous for the immense area occupied by the orange gardens, where the finest oranges of the Mediterranean region grow, and are exported in large numbers into Europe. But the fertile plains of Sharon and Philistia pour in their wealth, consisting chiefly of wheat and barley, sesame and dura. The town is

¹ [It will of course be borne in mind that these sketches, including this account of Jaffa, were written by Mr. Baldensperger several years ago.—ED.]

built on a cliff, and has a very bad harbour, protected by a line of rocks which render the approach most dangerous in bad weather. As a consequence, the Jaffa sailors are the most intrepid throughout the whole Levant. Being intrepid, they are often impudent, and, when the tempest-tossed travellers arrive in the roadstead of Jaffa, with the alternative of continuing the tossing for perhaps many days, or paying many pounds for crossing the half-mile of angry sea, this last expedient is often chosen; and, be it said to the honour of the sailors, they conduct their boats artistically over the foaming waves and round the dangerous line of rocks safely into the harbour. Accidents are very rare indeed, and it is safe to entrust oneself to these strong men, who will not venture if they think it impossible. The extortion may therefore be excused—at least very often—and their impudence is calmed at once if gold can be expected as a reward for their courage.

As the gardens are watered by the water-wheel system, drawn up by mules, the repairing and arranging of the chains and cog-wheels employ many blacksmiths. In bygone days the water-pots, which are now made of wood or iron, were of earthenware, and the Ramleh potteries flourished. Wood for the boxes in which the oranges are packed is imported from Marseilles, Trieste, or Messina. Hundreds of porters are employed in carrying the boxes; others pick the oranges and wrap them in silk-paper. The common oranges for Smyrna and Constantinople are packed without wrappers. Though a considerable seaport for commerce, no docks are to be found in Jaffa, probably on account of the absence of forests. Beyrūt builds the boats of all the towns from the Nahr Ibrahim to the River of Egypt. In consequence of the import of European goods exclusively by this port, the population has more than trebled in the course of the nineteenth century, and as it is not possible to have increased to this extent naturally, the actual inhabitants are more than two-thirds strangers, being not only foreigners of the region, but even of Palestine. The merchants who formerly lived in Ramleh, the Government seat, began to come here when Jaffa became safer. The present inhabitants can even all of them be called *witlanders*, for the town was uninhabited from the day of its destruction by Bibars in A.D. 1267 to the end of the seventeenth century, and was re-colonised by S'leiman Pasha in the beginning of the eighteenth century; thus, for nearly five centuries, it was virtually abandoned. The present population, though chiefly Arabs, yet has

representatives of at least twenty-five different nations. Palestine Arabs and Egyptians form the great bulk. Every community has an acknowledged leader responsible before the authorities for those who are in any respect under his orders.

The mariners are generally Neo-Jaffaites and mostly Moslems. The merchants are mostly Christians, and often in connection with Greeks and Cypriotes, who are the owners of cafés and brandy-shops. Jews are steadily increasing, especially since the Russian immigration in 1880, and whole colonies have been formed north of the town. Necessarily they possess the minor commerce for the wants of their own people. The Ashkenazi are the most numerous, not only from the continual fresh arrivals from Europe, but because Jaffa is the head station of the many colonies which are spread about in the plains round about; but as agriculture is not very much to their taste, those who are dissatisfied return here to try their hands at a more congenial occupation.

The negroes, under the supervision of their chief, the *Sheikh el-'abid* (شيخ العبيد), live mostly amongst the Egyptians, in the small colonies in the midst of the gardens. Though originally inhabitants of almost every country north of the Equator in Africa, they fraternize and are all zealous Moslems, and are often more fanatical than the founders of Islam themselves. The more aristocratic negroes of Darfur and Takruria, known as *takârnet* (تكارنت), and who, in past years, were the indispensable doorkeepers of every respectable house, are now disappearing. The older residents of Jerusalem used to see them in their snowy white gowns and turbans. They would sit almost motionless at the gates of the convents or houses, saying their prayers on their rosaries, and were very much sought after on account of their sobriety and fidelity.

The present black population differs in many ways. They are recruited from runaway slaves, or from those who have been liberated in consequence of the law for the freedom of slaves, or from returning pilgrims who cannot fight their way home. They are said to be very vindictive and proud, irascible, and fond of gaudy clothes; when they are bound to some feast or voyage, they pass hours in the meticulous arrangement of their toilets. As a rule they are day-labourers, and are especially employed to pick up oranges and carry them to town. Few or none are sailors, but some are artisans and agriculturists. Though, as above remarked,

they are zealous Mohammedans, yet they often meet together after work and feast in noisy revels around the *buza* (بوزا), a fermented drink made of barley or dura. A drummer or two will sit and begin their rhythmic tapping: the negroes first take a cup of *buza* from the central vessel: then one of them begins to dance round the fire which burns in the courtyard (as they are generally out of doors): a second and third dancer gradually begin drinking and dancing is increased. A wooden pipe, the *shabābat*, is brought forth and an expert piper plays negro airs, which never vary very much, rising and falling along the notes of an octave or two. When the *buza* has begun its effects, they accompany their native airs in their native tongues—first a few, then more and more, till the height of frenzy is reached. They now dance against their own shadows, bending themselves in most fantastic shapes, and making hideous grimaces against them. When the *buza* is ended and the revellers are drunk, the fires are quenched; they lie down often tired out, and the feast ends after midnight as quietly as it has begun. The negroes marry and divorce very easily amongst themselves without many ceremonies. They are disliked by the white population for being without family ties and, as a rule, without property.

The Egyptians live in the settlements called *saknāt* (سكنات), and though they have been here for about seventy years, they have still the Egyptian fashion of clothes, the black mantles (شالة) for the men, and the nose and mouth veil, *burko*' (برقع), for the women. The pronunciation of the *j* [ج] in *jamal* or *jum'at* is still preserved by the elder generation, who pronounce it like the Hebrew *g*, as *gamal* and *gum'at*; but the younger generation will pronounce the Jaffa Arabic *ere long* and also renounce the Egyptian veil. They are chiefly gardeners in the orange gardens, or agriculturists, and are of less violent character than the Palestine Arabs.

The North Africans, *Maghārbet* (مغاربة), live around the mosques and are generally employed as guardians of the orange groves, or of the melon gardens and dura fields. There are a few settled families, but the bulk of this population are here only for a few months, sometimes year after year, as they find employment on their way to the Haj, or on their return home. They may marry here among the indigenous population, a step which neither the negroes nor the Egyptians can boast of. They are good guardians

on account of their natural character, but at the same time can become very dangerous to their employers. The homeward journey is usually calculated to last two years by land: they visit the shrines on their way, and accept service as they proceed through Egypt, Tripoli, and Tunis, and so forth. Much as they seem to dislike French rule on the outward journey, they all claim French protection as soon as they live under Turkey, and ask the French Consul's assistance. They carry all their worldly goods with them, consisting of a few clothes, and arms, such as sword, rifle, dagger, and a club. Consequently, a serious dispute with them is very dangerous: they easily slay a man and disappear, pursuit is rare as they would never hesitate to slay a second or third man; in contrast to the local Arabs they become even more fierce after a murder. Their bellicose disposition has been put to the test for ages in the Orient, and before the establishment of regular Turkish troops, the Pashas, as Ali Bek and Jezzar, in the eighteenth century, always had a small garrison of those Maghrabis as well as body-guards.

Asiatics from every part of the Moslem world, such as Persians, Afghans, Hindus, Beluchis, are merchants. They sell carpets, arms, knives, and all small iron and steel articles of their countries' manufacture; they sit down in a corner of a street or have little shops, and never learn very much Arabic, but what they do they speak with a very strong foreign accent.

The European settlers are mostly Germans, living in the two colonies of Jaffa and Saronia belonging to the Templars. They are artisans and agriculturists, or drive carriages between Jaffa and Jerusalem, Nablus and Haifa. This last is another of their colonies. As a consequence of their exclusive methods, they know little or no Arabic at all.

Jaffa idiom is not a very marked one, as is only to be expected from the presence of so many representatives of different nations, for the rural population, mostly Egyptians and Gaza inhabitants, pronounce the *j* (ج) and *k* (ك) or *k* (ق) almost alike, as the Hebrew *g* and the English *g* in gold. The negroes have, beside their own language, a corrupt Negro-Arabic, pronouncing the ' (ع) and *gh* (غ) with difficulty, and making no difference between *h* (ح) and *kh* (خ) or between *t* (ت), *th* (ث), *d* (ض), and *t* (ط), or *d* (د). The North Africans talk the Arabic of their country, with as few vowels as possible; thus, instead of saying *baharr* (بحر), "the sea," they

pronounce it as though it were written *bhr*, and *mattarr* (مطر), "rain," as *mttr*.

The others have a firmer pronunciation than the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but they also ignore the *k* (ك), and pronounce *sh* as *s*.

(*To be continued.*)

BONAPARTE'S EXPEDITION TO PALESTINE IN 1799.¹

By the late Colonel Sir C. M. WATSON, K.C.M.G.,
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AT the present time, when there is so much talk as to the prospects of a Turkish attack on Egypt from the east, and an attempt being made to interfere with the traffic in the Suez Canal, it is natural that we should turn to the history of the past, in order to see what lessons can be learnt from what actually happened in days gone by, which may be useful for guidance in existing circumstances. And one of the episodes of special interest from this point of view is the story of the invasion of Palestine by Napoleon Bonaparte, then a young general at the beginning of his remarkable career, as his action shows clearly what he considered was the most effective way of protecting Egypt against an attack directed against it from the east, and the manner in which he would probably have dealt with the protection of the Suez Canal if he had charge of the operations.

The facts connected with the French occupation of Egypt in 1798 are now almost forgotten except by some students of military history, although this occupation led to results of considerable importance in the conflict between England and the French Republic, and, in the following paragraphs, it is not proposed to deal with them except in a general way, and in so far as is necessary in connection with the expedition to Palestine.

There can be no doubt that the advantages to be gained by France, if she could obtain possession of Egypt, had been under the consideration of the French Government for a long period, and the

¹ [Although Sir Charles Watson did not live to read the proofs of this article, it is felt that it is too interesting not to be printed, consequently it is reproduced as it left his hands with only slight modifications.—ED.]