

رحلة عبر شمال شرق الجزيرة العربية

A Journey through North-Eastern Arabia

بقلم النقيب ليتشمان

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A JOURNEY IN NORTH-EASTERN ARABIA.*

By Captain G. E. LEACHMAN, Royal Sussex Regiment.

THE following is an account of a three months' journey in North-Eastern Arabia, undertaken by the writer in the spring of this year; the original object was to pass by way of Hail in Jebel Shammar through El Kasim to Riadh, but, owing to circumstances which had been to a certain extent foreseen, it was found impracticable to carry out the programme in its entirety. Chance, however, led me to the camp of the Emir of Hail, Ibn er Rashid, who is master of a power which differs greatly from that of any other of the great Arab stocks. An account, therefore, of this journey may be of interest.

The Europeans who are known to have visited the Jebel Shammar Emirate are few in number, the most recent being the late Baron Nolde in 1893, while, previous to him, not more than eight have left any record of their travels. All these came down to Hail from the north or west, and four of them left Jebel Shammar by the Baghdad route, namely, Wallin in 1848, the Blunts in '79, Huber in '81, and Nolde in '93. These travelled by one or other of the three usual routes to Meshed Ali (Nejef) and Baghdad.

In the past winter a section of the great Shammar tribe had crossed the Euphrates into the Jezire of Irak in search of grazing, and their sheikh, on the strength of a former acquaintance, readily permitted me to accompany him and his tribe on their return journey from Irak to the neighbourhood of Hail.

Leaving Baghdad, I joined these Beduin in the tract known as the Shamie, six hours to the west of Kerbela, on January 26; their camp was situated on the edge of the Abu Dibis, a lake which figures in the latest map of Turkey in Asia, published by the Society. The encampment consisted of two hundred tents, composed of members from the four great divisions, or "firka," of Shammar, Abda being in the majority. Moving by short marches in a south-westerly direction, we crossed the district named El Wadian. This, as its name implies, is a flat gravelly desert, cut by a series of wadis running in an easterly or north-easterly direction into the Euphrates valley. The latest travellers to cross the western limits of El Wadian appear to have met with a great number of wadis, but many of these would seem to disappear in the sand or merge into one, for the only wadi crossed by me was the Wadi el Khar,† which the

* Map, p. 348.

† The Wadi el Khar has been discovered by the author, and is an important geographical feature, as it indicates that water can be found at regular intervals between the oasis of Jauf and Nejef in the basin of the Euphrates.

The Wadi el Hisib is of a somewhat similar importance. Huber did not traverse it, but mentions a "depression with good pasturage" in el Wadian. Some

Beduin say has its head near Lubbe in the Nefud near Jauf, and runs into the Bahr en Nejef. The bed of this wadi, which we followed for three days, is generally 4 to 5 miles broad, and after the winter rains water stands in it for some weeks, and water can also be found in it in most places a few feet below the surface of the soil. Apart from this, El Wadian appears to be a singularly waterless tract, and wells were met with but six times in eighteen days' marching.

On February 5 we struck the wells of Samit, which are situated on the most westerly of the routes between Hail and Meshed Ali, marked on some maps as the *Derb el Ghazal*, a name at the present time unknown to the Arab. This is the longest and least frequented road, but somewhat safer than the others. Wallin followed it coming down from Hail in 1848. At Samit were encamped some Madan Arabs from the Euphrates valley. These Arabs move out into the desert in the spring in search of grazing for their donkeys and sheep (they do not own camels), returning to the river when the heat of summer begins to dry up the spring vegetation. They are, as a rule, better armed than the Beduin, and are a constant source of danger to the caravans of Ibn er Rashid on their journeys down to Meshed Ali. From Samit we more or less followed this road to the neighbourhood of the wells of Hazil, the nature of the country changing and becoming more stony, and intersected by watercourses. A small wadi known as the *Wadi el Hisib*, running into the Bahr en Nejef, was crossed at *El Majamir*. At this latter place, in the bed of the wadi, are several hundreds of curious flat-topped mounds; these appear to be of gypsum, from which at some time the surrounding sand has been washed away; many of the mounds are 40 feet high.

All this country is in the "*dirat*" of the great tribe of the Anaize, that is to say, they have the grazing and watering rights over it. The Anaize are the hereditary enemies of the Shammar, but by one of the curious courtesies of the desert an arrangement had been made with the sheikh of the *Amarat* section of the Anaize, by which the Shammar with whom I was travelling would be allowed to pass in safety, and there were, in fact, several of the Anaize in the camp. In the neighbourhood of Hazil we met with a party of *Slayb*, the great news-carriers of the desert, from whom we learnt that the whole of the Anaize tribe with the exception of one section were moving south to attack Ibn er Rashid. Three months previously the *Roalla* section of the Anaize, who camp in the districts round Jauf, had attacked that town and taken it. Killing Ibn er Rashid's governor, Ibn Sheilan, the sheikh of the *Roalla*, appointed his son governor in his stead, and proceeded to levy taxes on the inhabitants. The Anaize hoped now to follow up this success by taking Hail itself, assisted by the Amir of *Riadh*, Ibn es Saud, who was said to be moving

enterprising traveller should traverse the route between Nejef and Jauf, and settle the interesting question as to whether a track leads from one to the other along the *Wadi el Khar*.

up from the south. On February 12, soon after dawn, we caught sight of the Anaize moving parallel to our march, but, unfortunately, the Roalla, who knew nothing about the above-mentioned arrangement between the Shammar and the Amarat, were marching on the flank nearest us. Their horsemen soon swept down, and by nightfall had seized the whole of the belongings, tents, camels, etc., of the Shammar after a running fight of several miles. My own small party of three managed to get away, and making a circuit to avoid the Roalla, succeeded in reaching the Amarat, whose sheikh, Fahd Beg, received me most kindly. He himself had only heard of the mishap to the Shammar when the fight was over, but he immediately took steps to recover the stock and property, and succeeded in doing so as regards a part of it.

The Anaize, by far the largest tribe in Arabia, were at this time in exceptional strength. The sheikhs repeatedly told me that they could not remember a previous occasion on which the Anaize had marched on a "ghrazzu," or foray, in such numbers. Looking from an eminence, the desert as far as the eye could reach was a moving mass of Arabs, each section moving on its own line. As a rule the mounted men marched in front, behind them coming the thelul riders, while in the middle of them, on a picked "thelul" (dromedary), was the "Mirkab" of the Roalla. This consists of a frame covered with black ostrich feathers, in which a maiden from the sheikh's family rides in battle, exhorting the combatants to deeds of valour. In former times the "Mirkab" was a familiar sight in Beduin warfare, but now the Roalla are the only Beduin in possession of one. Three days after the fight with the Shammar, the great pilgrim road known as the *Derb ez Zobeide* was reached at Jumeima.* This road, which runs from Meshed Ali *via* Jebel Shammar to Medina, is the route which at all times has been used by the pilgrims from Persia and Baghdad. Both the Blunts and Huber marched by it from Hail to Meshed Ali. The road of Zobeide takes its name from the favourite wife of the Khalif, Haroun ar Rashid, who caused reservoirs known as "birkets" and rest-houses to be constructed at intervals along the road for the convenience of pilgrims. These have suffered considerably at different times from invading powers, and especially at the hands of the Wahabis, and now one "birket" alone remains in good condition, and this is at Jumeima. It is constructed in a depression, the water draining into it from all sides, and is made of cemented stone; it is 90 feet square, with a depth of 20 feet, with steps leading down to the water, and troughs round for the watering of animals. When the Anaize reached this "birket"

* El Jemeima. This is the only point at which the author's route crosses that of Huber from Hail to Nejed. The latter mentions here a well-preserved square cistern, about 30 metres square and 4 metres deep, then full of water.

Huber also mentions that, on passing the Shaib Abaruats, a few miles to the south, thanks to the rain fallen during the night (February 9), the valley was filled by a stream 100 yards wide and 2 feet deep.

they had been thirsting for several days, and as it was feared that the supply would not suffice were the whole camp allowed to drink their fill, orders were given that no baggage camels were to be watered, but men and "theluls" only. In many instances these orders were disregarded, and large numbers of thirsty baggage camels were driven down to the water. Exemplary treatment was meted out to the offenders, the sheikhs' sons and servants riding out and firing into the mass and using their swords freely, whereupon the owners were as eager to get their camels away undamaged as they had been before to water them.

At Jumeima news arrived that Ibn er Rashid was two days distant in the direction of Hail, and the Anaize therefore formed their camp in compact lines, instead of in the usual straggling Beduin fashion. In the depression in which the "birket" of Jumeima is situated I counted roughly 3500 tents, which was only a small portion of the whole. Daily there arrived contingents of Arabs from the tribes of the Euphrates valley, who had been brought to join this movement in the hope of loot, an irresistible attraction with the Arab. These tribesmen are not true Beduin, but are infinitely better armed, most of them carrying a good type of Martini carbine; they invariably, however, knock the sights off, as having no use for them. They are of great fighting value from the fact that, being unmounted, they cannot easily run away, which the Beduin is in the habit of doing as soon as things appear to be going against him. These Arabs are of the Madan tribe, and are distinguished from Beduin in that they own sheep and donkeys and cultivate in the season a certain amount of land on the banks of the river. The arrival of parties of Madan was usually heralded by heavy firing, and each party would dance into the camp, and leap about in front of the sheikhs' tents, chanting the battle-cry and discharging their rifles into the air, quite regardless of where the bullets fell. This proved the undoing of the Anaize, for a few days after their arrival at Jumeima, heavy firing was heard in the distance, and was put down to the arrival of new reinforcements, which were expected. It was, however, Ibn er Rashid with his force, mounted on "theluls," each with a "redif," or man, riding behind the driver. He had made a forced march and completely surprised the camp. The Anaize had but time to drive in their camels, and without much fight poured out the opposite side of the camp, followed by masses of women and children on foot, as Ibn er Rashid came in on the other side. The latter swept through the camp, but did not pursue the Anaize, it by this time being almost dark. Early the next morning the camp was looted, and after a short time only the dead animals showed where this huge force had had their tents. As an instance of the good feeling with which Arab fighting is carried out, Ibn er Rashid allowed none to touch the tents of the two chief sheikhs of the Anaize, and after the battle the leader of Ibn er Rashid's fighting men sent a letter to the Anaize sheikh, regretting that he had not had an opportunity of paying his respects to him. The losses,

as is usually the case in Arab fighting, were not heavy on either side ; among them was a Shammar youth, who, on hearing that his uncle had been killed, shot himself. I was much struck by the fact that several Anaize women, in passing me in their flight from the camp, thrust upon me their silver ornaments for safe keeping, rather than entrust them to one of their own countrymen.

On this occasion a Shammar who chanced to be in the Anaize camp protected me and my theluls, and I returned with the "ghrazzu" to Ibn er Rashid's camp, which was at ez Zobala, also in the Derb ez Zobeide ; but at this place the reservoir has been partially destroyed. The present Emir of Hail is Saud ibn er Rashid, a boy of twelve, son of Abd ul Aziz, who was killed in battle in 1906, his eldest son Mitaab succeeding him ; in 1907 he met an untimely end at the hands of his cousin, Sultan ibn Hamud er Rashid, who put to death at the same time the remainder of the family with the exception of the present Emir, who was taken to Medina. Sultan was shortly after murdered by his own brother, Saud ibn Hamud, and he, in his turn, was murdered by his uncle, who then brought the present Emir, Saud, from Medina. This last event took place in the winter of 1908-1909. On arrival in the Shammar camp I was called to the Emir, who was sitting in audience in a great tent with the regent, Zamil ibn Sabhan, by his side. Saud is a handsome little boy with beautiful features and very fair. He is a fine horseman, riding being in fact his only amusement, and being but a child he becomes very weary of the long sittings in the "maglis," where tribal affairs are discussed at an inordinate length. He exhibits at times a most violent temper, which, with his features and other characteristics, he seems to have inherited from his father, Abd ul Aziz. Zamil ibn Sabhan, the regent, is a man of thirty-four, but, in spite of his youth, is probably a stronger man than the Ibn er Rashid Emirate have seen for many years. He is largely responsible for a very great change that is taking place in the position and character of this Central Arabian power.

The Emirate of Hail may be considered to be at a very low ebb at the present time. During the whole of his reign, Abd ul Aziz er Rashid was engaged in a struggle with the Emir of Riyadh, chiefly over the question of the possession of the district of El Kasim. Though at times successful, this warfare was an immense drain in men and horses ; even now among the Hail folk there are few who do not carry the marks of this struggle in the shape of wounds. This has had such a weakening effect that the Amir has found his influence over his own and surrounding tribes waning. His present policy, or rather that of Zamil, is a policy of conciliation ; this is chiefly to be observed in the change in the religious inclinations of the people, and it is certainly a fact that they have quite dropped the strict Wahabi tenets that were formerly prevalent. A few years ago smoking was a punishable offence, and though there was probably a certain amount of smoking in private, it was never seen in public. At the present day

tobacco is practically used everywhere, and privileged persons smoke even in the diwan of the Emir, and on one occasion Zamil himself smoked a cigarette in my presence in his private tent. He also once played a Turkish game of cards with me. In their dress also they no longer affect the simplicity dictated by the Wahabi, but wear clothes richly embroidered with gold and interwoven with silk.

The relations of the Emirate of Hail with surrounding powers have also undergone a change. The old disregard for the Ottoman power has given place to professed sentiments of cordiality, and communication is kept up constantly with the Porte; in speaking of the Porte, Zamil always named it "doulatana," our government. As is always the case in Arabia, the relations of Ibn er Rashid with the great Beduin stocks are constantly changing, but at present the Ateiba, the tribe between Hail and Mecca, appear to be friendly, as are portions of the Beni Harb between Hail and Medina, and also a section of the Umteir in the direction of Koweit. Mubarak ibn Sabah of Koweit professes a friendship which cannot be very great, considering that at present he and Ibn Saud of Riadh, the perpetual enemy of Hail, are comrades in arms. Saidun Pasha, sheikh of the Muntefik, and also the Beduin tribe the Dhafir, both from the East, are friendly to Hail.

Notwithstanding a conciliatory attitude toward the surrounding tribes, the Emir does not hesitate to deal in a summary manner with refractory sheikhs. In his recent struggle with the Anaize, the chief sheikh of the Beni Harb, who, in Zamil's opinion, should have supported him, waited until he saw that the Shammar had gained the upper hand, and then came into the Shammar camp to offer his congratulations. Zamil immediately put him into horse shackles and confined him in the tents of the slaves, threatening to execute him if a certain ransom was not received; this threat would undoubtedly have been carried out had not the ransom—200 theluls and 25 caste Arab mares—been forthcoming. And this man was the great sheikh of one of the most formidable tribes in Arabia.

Previous travellers to the Jebel Shammar have remarked the cordial relations existing between the townfolk and the Shammar Beduin. Though this feeling is still strong, one can imagine that it is not what it used to be, and now the people of Hail, and even the family of Ibn er Rashid, seldom speak of the Beduin in anything but a tone of contempt; at times also very serious differences of opinion arise between the townfolk and the Beduin, usually over a question of the division of loot. It has long been the custom of Emirs of Hail to spend the winter in the desert in districts round Hail, taking this opportunity to make "ghrazz" on refractory subject tribes or enemies. To form a force one male is taken from each house in the towns, or in the case of a large family two or more; these are provided with a thelul, arms, and food, and are paid 10 reals (about 16 shillings) a month during the time they are absent from their

homes. They are allowed to keep all loot taken, with the exception of theluls and horses. Beduin subjects of Ibn er Rashid can accompany him on a "ghrazzu" or not as they choose. The majority prefer to go with him. These receive no advantages except that they are allowed to keep half the loot taken by them. A large part of the force is made up of slaves and servants of the family of Ibn er Rashid, who are excellently armed and generally mounted on horses.

While in the field discipline and general arrangements are of a comparatively high order. In the early morning a crier announces a move of the camp, and the standard-bearer unfurls the flag, and when the latter mounts his thelul, the whole force moves off headed by three purple standards of Hail, one for the Emir and one for each of the quarters of the town. In camp the tents, which are of white canvas and not of black hair like those of the Beduin, are always pitched in the same formation. Scouts are out constantly in search of enemy, water, or grazing. An armourer with a fair knowledge of his work is kept busy doing repairs to the extraordinary variety of arms, for which he is paid by the Amir. In battle the Beduin thinks little of the fighting and much of the loot, but the Shammar are kept in hand till the enemy are beaten, and then only are they allowed to loot. Prisoners taken are beheaded, though sheikhs are often spared. Hospitality on the "ghrazzu" is most lavish. On arrival, a guest is received by a magnificent personage in a gold coat, Abdulla ibn Feraik, hereditary standard-bearer to the Ibner Rashids. His is a powerful though dangerous position, as he must always be in the forefront of the battle. Abdulla, a man of thirty-five, has no less than ten bullet wounds in his body. The guest is then led to a special tent and regaled with coffee until the Emir receives him in the public diwan. If a man of position, he is given a private tent, and provided with everything he desires, and even eats from the Emir's dish. Other guests are fed in a special tent, their number seldom being below sixty or seventy. Amusements in camp are few, mimic warfare being the chief one. This is always led by the Emir in person, who gallops among the tents, lance in hand, followed by his band of horsemen. At night the conversation in the diwans is of a most enlightened character, chiefly consisting of battle stories or family history, while a poet usually recites or intones a "kasid," or poem. These poets are men who wander from tribe to tribe composing "kasids" in honour of the sheikhs and receiving gifts in exchange; this is nothing more or less than a form of blackmail, as, if not well treated by a sheikh, they compose poems ridiculing him in other camps.

The Hail folk are most strict in their observance of prayer. "Muezzins" call at the usual hours in different parts of the camp, when all form up in various places, when absentees are noticed and often beaten. In spite of the fact that they are strict Moslems, they are not fanatical, being in this quite the reverse of the bigoted riverain Arabs of Irak. In the course of a stay of five weeks with the Emir, I hardly heard one offensive remark

about Christians, and in the "meglis," if at any time one asked me questions concerning religion, he was invariably silenced by the sheikhs, and Zamil, the regent, himself, when repeating for my benefit, as he often did, extracts from the holy books, always asked first if I had any objection. The mullas, of whom there were a large number with the "ghrazzu," had no hesitation in coming to my tent and drinking coffee or eating food with me, and when I left the Emir, many of them came to bid me good-bye. They were fond of impressing upon me the fact that though they would eat food with me, they would not do so with a Shia.

During this time the "ghrazzu" moved by short marches about the district known as the Hejera. This is a calcareous stony tract lying between the Nefud and the Shamiye. It seems well provided with water, and must have been at one time the seat of a large fixed population, as in many places there are remains of stone houses. These are, as a rule, perched upon a ridge overlooking a well, and are in clusters of thirty or forty. The walls appear to have been cemented, and the roof is beehive-shaped. The Arabs say that they are from a time previous to Islam, and that the inhabitants died of starvation.

In the middle of March the ghrazzu left the Hejera and camped at the famous wells of Leina,* lying in the valley between the Nefud and the Hejera. The wells at this place number some hundreds, spread over an area of 5 or 6 miles. They are bored in hard white stone, and as many of them, though of a depth of 20 to 30 feet, have a diameter of only 2 feet, it is difficult to understand how they were originally excavated. In the neighbourhood are the ruins of many stone houses. Leina is on the road known as the *Derb es Selman*, the most easterly of the three routes from Hail to Meshed Ali. There we met the Haj, or pilgrim caravan, returning from Medina to Meshed Ali (Nejef). Owing to the unsettled state of the country, pilgrims had not been able to use this road for six years, preferring the longer route by Damascus, or else travelling by sea from Baghdad. As the Haj is a source of considerable profit to Ibn er Rashid, as well as to the townsfolk of Hail, he was endeavouring to popularize this route by allowing pilgrims to travel through his country at a minimum of cost. In former times it was the habit of the rulers of Hail, when once they had got the pilgrims in their clutches, to delay them until they had extracted the last coin from them. This year, however, Ibn er Rashid had only taken 2½ liras (about 45 shillings) from each member, and

* The wells of Leina have not been previously visited by a European traveller, although Huber passed some miles to the west of them. He mentions being told by his Arab attendants that the wells of Leina were not dug by mortal hands, as no one could be found who could penetrate rock as hard as metal. It was Solomon, the son of David, who, passing along that route one day, fell athirst, and ordered the "afrit" or demons to dig him wells in an hour's time. But even with the most strenuous exertions they could only accomplish the task in two hours, so hard was the rock. Wallin also heard that these wells, and others in the district, were made by Suleiman ibn Daud, aided always by the complacent demons.

besides this, the hire of a camel from Medina to Meshed Ali (Nejef) is about 17 reals (about 51 shillings), so the cost compares well with passage by sea, or by road by way of Syria. The majority of this Haj are Persians, for whom the Arab has the most supreme contempt, as one who cuts but a sorry figure upon a camel.

After parting from the Haj, the "ghrazzu" entered the Nefud, here known as the Dahana. This sandy desert is separated from the Hejera by the valley in which Leina is situated, which is about 10 miles broad. Out of this on one side the Nefud rises abruptly with an escarpment 150 feet high, while on the opposite side of the valley the Hejera terminates in a cliff of a similar height. At this point the sand of the Nefud is not of any great depth, and in places the rocky strata underneath are uncovered. The sand appears to the eye to be of a light red colour, almost yellowish, but the Arabs say that it is both heavier and redder here than towards the north. The usual rolling dunes are found here with their axes north and south. The intervals between the crests are rarely more than 1000 yards, and the difference in height between crest and trough from 100 to 200 feet. The Nefud has a great attraction for the Beduin, especially in the spring months, when it provides grazing far superior to any other district, and even in summer it provides dry grass for the camels. This year, owing to exceptional rains, the Nefud was covered with grass and weeds growing to a height of at least a foot, while many familiar forms of flowers, such as dandelions and daisies, gave it a bright appearance. A bush known as "arfuj," much appreciated by camels, is very common, and also a tree called "sidr," a species of acacia, growing to a height of 6 feet or more, and considered the best wood for fuel in Arabia.

I had repeatedly begged Zamil to send me to Hail, distant about three days, but he put me off with the excuse that the road was not at present safe. He probably never had any intention of allowing me to go, and finally sent for me early one morning, and bade me leave at once with a caravan for the neighbourhood of Zobeir, near Busra. He pointed out that both my life and goods were in his hands, and that he would be quite within his rights in taking either or both. Judging from the experiences of the most recent travellers in these parts, I wonder that he took nothing from me; indeed, the sheikhs used to send daily for various possessions of mine, but they were at all times most careful to return them; hints were, of course, thrown out that certain things would be acceptable. After most friendly farewells, I left the "ghrazzu" and travelled with a party of Shammar going down to er Khamisie, between Zobeir and Suk esh Sheyuk, on the Euphrates, to buy food. Travelling very fast, we left the Nefud, passed across the Hejera, and entering the "dirat" of the Dhafir Beduin traversed a featureless gravelly country to the camp of Saidun Pasha, Sheikh of the Muntefik, a large and powerful tribe inhabiting the southern part of the Jezire of Irak. He was in a war camp awaiting the attack of Mubarak ibn Sabah, Sheikh of Koweit, and Ibn

Saud, Emir of Riadh. These had attacked him a few days previous to our arrival, and had been beaten off with heavy losses, heavy at least for Arab warfare, as I counted nearly a hundred bodies on the battlefield itself, and many must have died afterwards. It was reported that Mubarak and Ibn Saud were advancing again, and there were incessant alarms, when there was an immediate sortie of warriors in the direction of the expected attack. During my stay with Saidun Pasha I witnessed an occurrence which I have not seen mentioned before by travellers. In a previous fight between the Dhafir and the Anaize, a man of the Dhafir was captured, and in the ordinary sequence of events would have been killed. The Sheikh of the Dhafir, however, had made a last attack and rescued the man; the latter waited until the Dhafir reached the camp of Saidun, and one night rode slowly through the tents mounted on a thelul, singing two lines of a "kasid" describing his rescue, and of which the refrain ran, "I whiten the face of Ibn Suwait" (Sheikh of Dhafir and his rescuer). The Arabs say this form of recognition of a valiant action, though well known by tradition among them, is rarely seen.

After being most hospitably entertained by Saidun, I marched to the Euphrates in the neighbourhood of Samawa, whence I passed through the Shia Arabs of the riverain plain to Baghdad, experiencing a certain amount of the boorish treatment for which these sectarians are notorious.

During my journey I encountered at all times a number of that curious people the Slayb, about which so little seems to be known. It is a curious fact that the Arabs appear to be as interested in their origin and characteristics and as ignorant concerning them as Europeans. I have heard Arabs inquiring from Slayb as to their religion, asking if they are Christians, and receiving a not very indignant denial. They are usually met with in small parties of half a dozen men with women and children. They avoid as much as possible known watering-places, and have therefore become famous among Arabs for their knowledge of the country. They usually have donkeys only, but some have camels. They dress in one long smock-like garment made out of gazelle-skins with a hood, and when hunting, in which they are most extraordinarily expert, they usually cover up their heads with this hood, and it is said can approach within a few yards of a herd of gazelle without alarming them. Arabs speak of the comparative luxury in which these people live as regards food, and say that they always have "flesh to eat and leben (sour milk) to drink." They appear to wander over a very extensive area, and the only Arab I have met with who do not know of Slayb in their "dirat" are the Kahtan from south-west Arabia.
