

## SOME SLAVES IN MOROCCO

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The first was "Orange-flower Bud" and she is now an elderly woman; all her children are married and have children of their own. Their father, her master, died years ago and left her children and their brothers and sisters,—sons and daughters of his free wife and of other slave wives—quite well provided for. Her sons have, as part of their inheritance, a small house adjoining the big family dwelling and to it they retired with their mother who, as she was a slave, did not inherit anything at their father's death. She is the head of the household and her daughters-in-law are under her care and guidance just as if she had been a free wife; but at the same time she is under the guidance of her eldest son and if he chose to give the order that she must never go out of the house she would have to recognize his authority and obey it. He has not done so and they are quite a united family, and she has considerable freedom.

It is when the slave-wife's family get married that she comes into her own; even during the lifetime of her master she goes on visits to her married children, is in their home an honored guest and beloved by her grandchildren. Once a slave girl becomes the mother of her master's child he cannot sell her though she still remains his property; so she is, to a certain extent, free. If the master tires of her, or for any reason wishes to get rid of her, the only thing he can do is to arrange a marriage for her and present her to the bridegroom. In this case she is legally married to her new husband and becomes a free woman.

"Orange-flower Bud" is a native of the Sus country just beyond the Atlas mountains and south of Morocco proper. She is only slightly darker in color than the fair

Fez people. She told me once that her father was a tribal governor in the Sus, and that when she was a little child, there was an inter-tribal war going on; it went on for years and many people were killed. Then at last the two tribes decided to make peace, and, as was the custom in such cases, each tribe sent children as hostages to the other till the terms of peace should be decided upon, when the children would be returned to their own people with some gift to each child; it might be a pair of silver bracelets or anklets, or some such thing. She was sent with other little children as one of the hostages, but she was very young and very homesick, so made up her mind to run away home to her own people. One day she got her opportunity and fled; but very soon she realized that she did not know her way and that she was lost, so she began to cry lustily. Before long a man on horseback came along and he asked her what was the matter. When she had told him, he asked, "What is your father's name?" On hearing it he said, "I know him well; come up behind me on my horse and I will take you to him." She was delighted and willingly let him pull her up on to his horse. Then he rode off with her and took her to the city of Marrekesh where he sold her in the slave-market.

The public slave-markets, where auctioneers, having opened the proceedings with prayer, paraded the slaves around the enclosure, that intending purchasers might have the opportunity of examining their points as they would have examined horses or cows, no longer exist. Slaves now are sent to one of the recognized houses which are kept for the purpose, where prospective buyers can go to see them, or whence they can have them sent to their houses on trial before deciding whether to purchase them or not. Newly enslaved women are not common now. The French authorities are doing all they can to prevent slaves from entering the country; but those already slaves are still sold from house to house, privately or through the medium of the agencies just mentioned. Now, if a slave girl can satisfy the French authorities that she has some

home to go to, if freed, they will give her a paper of freedom and then her old master has no claim whatever on her. But very wisely they do not give freedom to those who cannot give such an assurance. If they did, the girls would have no life before them but that of the streets. Even in the olden times, any slave had the right to refuse to allow herself to be purchased by anyone to whom she objected, and also the right to demand that she should be resold if she were not happy in the house in which she found herself. They generally refrained from using this power, lest they should find that they had only made their position worse. In all fairness it must be said that, revolting as any slavery is, slaves in Morocco were not, as a rule, badly treated.

Then there is "Star", who also is a Sus woman and a very fine, well built one. We first saw her about a year ago in the house into which she had just been bought. Her mistress had always had two slave girls as housemaids and one of them had, a short time before, "demanded the market," i.e., had claimed her right to be resold, as she wanted to belong to people who would send her out on errands and so give her more freedom than she had in that house where no woman—free or bond—was ever outside the door or even allowed up on the roof. When we saw "Star" we asked how it was that such a fine woman had just become a slave, for the great complaint now is that new slaves are hard to get since the French have stopped the trade from its source. Her mistress replied, "She is from the Sus and there was fighting going on among themselves. All the men from her village had gone out to the fighting, leaving only the women and children at home. Then one day a man came to tell the women that the enemy was likely to come down upon them and that their husbands had sent him to tell them to come at once to a neighboring village and wait there till they returned.

"The women, quite unsuspecting, tied their babies and their bundles on their backs and rushed out of the village only to find that they had been entrapped and that a band

of men was waiting to take them off and sell them." Star said that she resisted until she was wounded in the thigh by a knife and her baby girl was killed on her back. Her mistress was very busily trying to teach her how she ought to behave as a slave; not sit down, but stand and watch her mistress so that she should understand at once what was required of her and then do it. (Ps. 123:2). "She is not yet accustomed to being a slave", she said, "She doesn't know."

After some months we missed Star and asked where she was. "She demanded the market," said her mistress. "This house gave her no chances of getting out; what she wants is to manage to get out and run away and get home to her family." This was said in a tone that meant, "Did you ever hear of such wickedness?"

Once we knew of a slave who did manage to get off and, presumably, rejoin her family. We said that we hoped she had succeeded and that we wished her much good because of her bravery; but the people were quite shocked and said, "But she's our money."

Another slave is "The Little Weaned One." Hers is a very remarkable story for several reasons. She looks now about eighteen years of age. She told me that her home was in one of the coast towns of Morocco, that she used to live with her mother there, and that her mother one day (she does not know how long ago but remembers the circumstances quite well) gave her a bottle and said, "Go and buy me some oil." The mother followed her to the door and stood looking after her. She turned towards her mother and said, "Farewell, farewell." "Don't say that word," said her mother, evidently taking it as a bad omen. So she turned towards her and roguishly again said, "Farewell, farewell." "I had hardly turned the corner to go to the shop for the oil," she continued, "when a soldier, (the son of wickedness,—I'd know him again if I saw him,) caught me and either gave me a blow that stunned me, or put some '*benj*' over my mouth (I don't know which), for the next thing I knew I awakened in an

automobile and was resting against my master (May God have mercy on his soul!) and was being taken to his home in the Soos where he was an under Governor. When he died I was sold again, and here I am now."

Then there was "Jewel," who was a Sudanese girl, a beautiful young black girl—one of the old style who are almost unobtainable now. She told how her father took her one day into their town in the Sudan, when she was very small, and how he left her sitting on a mounting-block outside a business house while he went inside to speak to the master of the place, and how an Arab came along and caught her up under his long, wide cloak and shewing her a knife, said, "I'll stick that in you if you scream." He took her to a place outside the town where he had many other boys and girls gathered together, just waiting till he and his partners had sufficient to form a large caravan of slaves; they were then taken on the long, weary journey of weeks over the terrible Sahara where many died on the way.

"Jessamine" was another little girl who once said to one of us, "I don't care where I go when I die—to heaven or hell—but I *do* want to see my mother again."

"Peace" is the first slave *boy* of whom I write. He was a nice, very black boy and had quite a smile when we first knew him. He came up from a southern town with his master and family and several other slaves, some of them children like himself, and some middle-aged. His master was a government official and a man of wealth and importance, who died soon after he brought his family to Fez; as is usual in such cases, his property—slaves included—was divided amongst his heirs. Peace and a young slave girl named Blessed became the property of the elder son, then a minor. After a few years, during which there were many changes of fortune in the family, Peace came to his owner and said, "I'll serve you always faithfully if you will give me Blessed in marriage. But if you refuse to give her, I'll run away." They thought it over and decided that it would be best to give him Blessed. Soon

after that, when one of the daughters was being married, they made another wedding in a side room where Blessed sat in state, as her young mistress was sitting in the chief room, and Peace and Blessed were united.

Four babies were born, but each one died in early babyhood. Then Peace himself died of consumption—that scourge of the Sudanese slaves, who cannot stand the cold winters of this more northern land. Blessed is married again—this time to a free man, so her quite nominal slave status is over. I have not seen her since her second marriage. Her mistress told me that they had had her marry again because she was still young, and they could not condemn her to be always in mourning. And yet if she, not having a husband, were to dress up, it would be a shame in the eyes of her master. Her mistress is the wife of her young master, and Blessed and her husband have gone south with the family in the position of servants, or retainers, Blessed giving herself up to caring for the little children of her master. They are of the same ages as some of her own little ones who died, and are much loved by her.

Other stories of slaves are known to me. Here is an old one. I copy what I wrote in 1924: Twenty-eight years ago, rather more perhaps, the writer first visited Marrekesh. While there, she was taken by some of the missionaries of the South Morocco Mission to visit in the house of a wealthy old Moor whom we will call Bushta, of Tarudant. It was an ordinary Moorish house and household of the wealthy class, with very many children—children of many mothers. One wife had lately died, leaving a very beautiful little boy of about three years; there were grown-up sons as well. Numbers of slaves—women and girls—crowded around or went about their household duties while we were there, just in the ordinary way.

After we had left the house a fellow-traveller who was also of the party, told me that Bushta of Tarudant was one of whom there was much of interest to tell. He was a British Protégé, and some little time before had been mentioned in the only British newspaper in the country as

a slave-owner. He promptly denied that he possessed any slaves. A law-suit between Bushta and the editor of the paper ensued. Bushta employed a Gibraltar solicitor to defend him, the result of the trial being that he won the suit, all his slaves swearing that they were free. One said that she was an orphan whom, for charity's sake, Bushta had taken in and provided for; another that she received wages and could leave if she wished to do so; and so on through all the number. It was well enough known that they were slaves, but it could not be proven, especially as the witnesses did not mind how many lies they told in order that Bushta might win the case.

Last year we again visited Marrekesh—Bushta had died some time before that. His property had largely passed out of the hands of his family. We were told that they were living in comparative poverty on what was left. The editor of the newspaper was also dead. His sons who had known about the case were dead too, and the whole affair seemed to be a closed chapter.

But, "Truth is mighty and will prevail." It was only the other day, more than thirty years after the law-suit won by Bushta of Tarudant, that the writer, visiting in the house of Shereef, in Fez, asked a fine-looking young black woman, plainly a Sudanese, what part of the country she was from. "From Marrekesh," she said. "Yes", we replied, "But what is your country before you were stolen and brought to Marrekesh?" "I was born in Marrekesh", she answered. "Our Master was Bushta of Tarudant; when he died we were all sold." A slave, born of slave parents in the house of the man able to prove that all his slaves were really free people!

One could but wish that Mr. M——, the Englishman who had exposed Bushta as a slave owner, could have heard the girl's answer."

Another story is about a girl in the same house as the one who told me she had belonged to "Bushta of Tarudant:"

Last week the writer took a stranger, an American lady, to visit in a very beautiful house in Fez. We were

welcomed very warmly by the master and by his two wives and quite a number of slave girls, some of them perhaps eight or nine years old. When we had been shown through the house, which is very prettily tiled, tea was prepared for us in the room of the elder wife. We all sat on high mattresses covered with bright chintz, while the slave girl who had made the tea sat on a lower mattress or cushion near the open doorway, with the tea-tray on a low, round table before her and the tea-urn by her side, and quite in the doorway. The tea was not like our tea but was what is universally used here—green Chinese tea. The tea-tray had on it the teapot and about a dozen tiny cups and saucers, pretty glasses and one teaspoon. Another tray had on it two plated boxes and a bowl of fresh mint. One of the plated boxes was quite large and held the big lumps of sugar ready for the teapot; the smaller box contained the dry tea.

As we drank our tea the American lady said to me, "From what country is the girl who makes the tea?" I asked Orange Blossom and she replied, "I am from the River Nun." This is in the south of the Soos country which is beyond the Atlas, to the south of Morocco. I need not give her story in her own words; this is the gist of it.

When she was quite a little girl she went one day, with several other children, outside her village at Wad (River) Nun to pick up dates which sparrows had pecked at and let drop from the palms, which surrounded all the villages in that district. The children went on and on, following where the sparrows had been, picking up the fruit and thoroughly enjoying their outing.

When it was about time to go home, they had some little quarrel among themselves and one of the boys of the party struck Orange Blossom. She threw herself down on the ground and screamed in temper. She was not hurt, she says, but she was "offended" at being struck.

The other children tried to get her to get up again and go home, but she would not be pacified and remained crying, with her face to the ground. They told her that it was



getting on in the afternoon and that they must go home and would have to go without her; but still she would not move. So off they went and she remained alone, meaning to follow very soon when her pride would let her do so.

But they had hardly gone when some men appeared, picked her up and rode off with her. They brought her several days' journey, to the south of Morocco proper, where they sold her as a slave. One master after another bought and re-sold her until now she is here in Fez. She is well treated but she is a slave; may be sold again or given away as a present; and, of course, she knows nothing of her own people, whether they are alive or dead.

One more story of a slave girl. This time a happy sequel to her having been stolen, for she was very much loved by her mistress, by whom she was bought when very young and who treated her almost as if she had been her own child. (It is only right to say that most of the slaves here are well treated though not petted as this child was).

When this girl, Musk, was about eighteen her mistress died and by her will, freed her three slaves. The two older women thankfully accepted their freedom, but Musk called out, "I won't be free; I don't want to be free; If I'm free I have no one belonging to me; Sell me so that I may belong to someone; I want to be able to say, 'My Master,' 'My Mistress.'"

Writing of these three having been freed by their mistress at death reminds me of how common such a "Good Deed" used to be. Now there is no such thing, for all slaves are practically free. When slaves were so freed they were handed their papers of manumission at once on the death of their master; they then carried the papers aloft, inserted in a cleft stick or cane, at the funeral of their benefactor.

The last time I heard of this being done in Fez was at the funeral of the old ex-Grand Vizier, Si Mohammed Jamai, whose house is now the Transatlantique Hotel, known as Palais Jamai. He died a good many years ago.

One day lately in the dispensary I overheard some

women talking together and one of them saying, "Oh, she has gone to the Sudan." This was such a strange thing to hear that I said, "Who has gone to the Sudan?" This caused them to laugh, and I saw that the expression had some double meaning. Quite possibly it meant, "She's wool-gathering." At any rate, they did not answer me, but an old slave woman who heard them entered into the conversation and said, "It was *from* the Sudan they *used* to bring us; when I was a very little girl I was gathering "*Nebuk*", i.e., the fruit of the lotus, with my little sister, quite near to our home in the Sudan, when two men came along and one of them picked me up and threw me over his shoulder on to his back; (suiting the action to the word she threw her arm over her shoulder; just as the country women here throw their babies with a swinging movement on to their backs and then tie them on with a towel, so that they do not fall off). The other took my sister under his arm; then they brought us up here where they sold us as slaves. But," she continued, "thank God for the French; they can't do that *now*."

J. G. Whittier wrote of those early days in his "Song of Slaves in the Desert":

"Bornou land was rich and good,  
 Wells of water, fields of food,  
 Dourra fields and bloom of bean,  
 And the palm tree cool and green:  
 Bornou land we see no longer,  
 Here we thirst and here we hunger,  
 Here the Moor-man smites in anger:  
 Where are we going, Rubee?  
 When we went from Bornou land,  
 We were like the leaves and sand.  
 We were many, we are few;  
 Life has one, and death has two:  
 Whitened bones our path are showing.  
 Thou all-seeing, Thou All-Knowing,  
 Hear us, tell us, where are we going?  
 Where are we going, Rubee?"

*Fez, Morocco*

—AN OLD MISSIONARY.