ALGERIA FROM WITHIN

R. V. C. BODLEY

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Author: R. V. C. Bodley

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The Author

ALGERIA FROM WITHIN

BY

R. V. C. BODLEY

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To

MY MANY FRIENDS

OF ALL NATIONALITIES WHO

INHABIT ALGERIA

FOREWORD

This is not a preface but merely a few words to state that in writing these pages I have in no way tried to criticize the French administration or to discuss the Arab from any point of view but that of a spectator.

I have no political feelings, few ambitions beyond living simply and far away from the world, and if this work exists at all, it is because I have wished that people should know Algeria as it really is.

Once upon a time I had great ideas about worldly position and the sound of long titles; I believed that greatness was to be achieved in the capitals of Europe or on the battle-fields, but I know now that this is not so. Worldly positions and great titles are the weary outcome of much money laboriously reaped, and the heroes of battle-fields pass unnoticed in the street.

Southern Algeria, with all its charm, with all its capricious moods, has, like some lovely woman, taken me in its arms and I am doubtful if it will ever let me go.

Let this book therefore be read in the spirit in which it has been written by one who, having seen life in many parts of the globe, has found peace and solution to all worldly difficulties among the rustling palm-trees and broad expanses of the Sahara.

I must here take the opportunity of thanking certain kind friends who have helped me in my work, notably:

Monsieur Jean Causeret, Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement Général, who has supplied me with maps, Dr. Alfred S. Gubb, the well-known English physician in Algiers, the Rev. Lucius Fry, British Chaplain in Algiers, and Mrs. Clare Sheridan, who have all lent me photos appearing in these pages. My thanks are also due to Mrs. Welthin Winlo, whose untiring secretarial work has helped me to prepare this work, to Miss Una Thomas who has helped me with the proofs, and to Mr. Julian Sampson, who has not only supplied me with photographs, but who has also brought his expert knowledge to bear in the selecting of suitable illustrations.

LAGHOUAT,

November, 1926.

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ALGERIA FROM WITHIN

CHAPTER I

THE OBJECT OF THE BOOK

A WRITER who sets out to study a foreign country such as Algeria is faced with two difficulties: the first, the natural suspicion of the Mohammedan population; the second, the little information obtainable from the French inhabitants of the country.

It has been possible to overcome the first difficulty by making the Arab realize that there was no intention to interfere with his interior life or to obtain information in order to denounce family secrets. The second difficulty has remained. This is due to two factors. The first is the ignorance of the majority of Frenchmen, whether they be business men or colonists, of the customs and peculiarities of any area not neighboring that in which they actually dwell; the second is the French administrator's apparent lack of information on anything beyond that which is not already to be found in the official handbooks.

When occasionally one meets some one with a deeper knowledge of the matters which should interest him, it is hard, as a foreigner, to obtain any valuable data. The Frenchman finds it difficult to realize that any one can wish to peer into the inner workings of a foreign country without some ulterior motive. If it is not deliberate spying for a jealous government, it is to steal a march on some business enterprise!

Comprehensive books on Algeria of to-day are few, and usually contradict one another, according to the point of view of the writers.

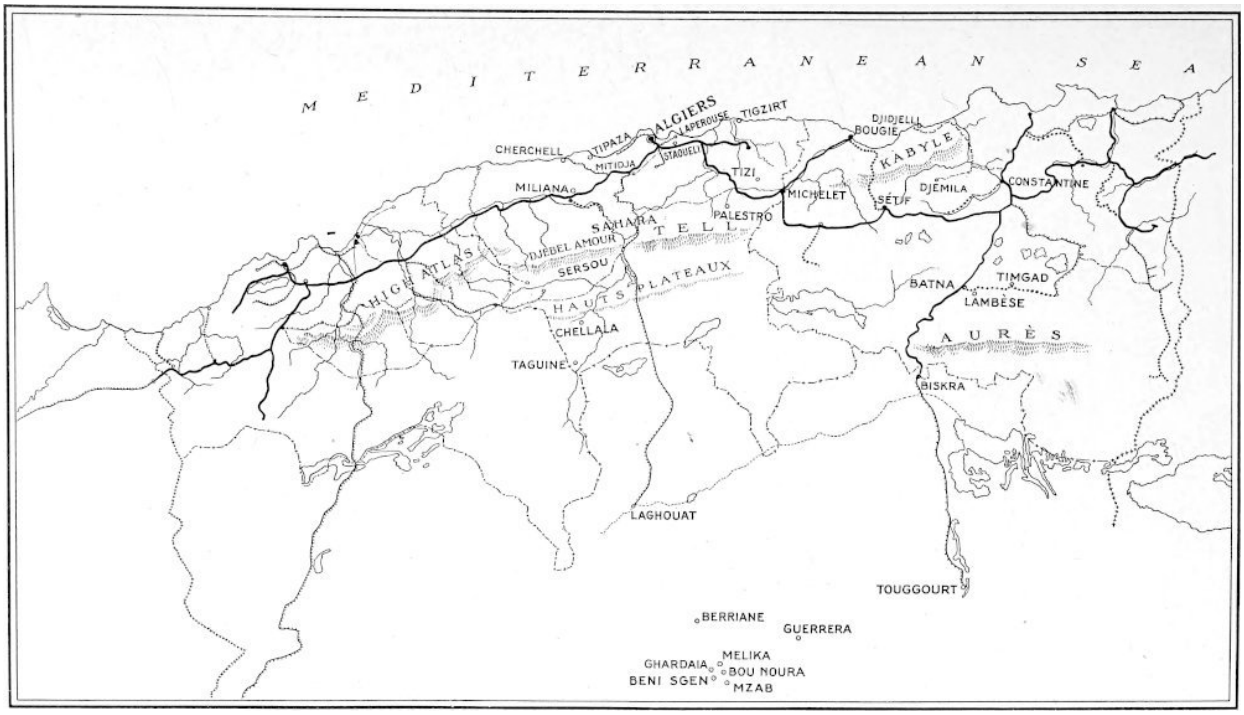
The only solution, therefore, to the problem of writing this book has been for the author to settle in the country, living the life of its people, and gleaning what information was possible as a business man in the city of Algiers, as a sheep-breeder on the Sahara, and as a traveler across the great plains and mountains of this sunny land.

The title of the book has perhaps a pretentious sound, suggesting that Algeria is some unexplored country into which the writer has penetrated, bringing back with him revelations of unknown mysteries never yet set before the public. But though this is not the case, it is hoped that the reader, be he a tourist or scholar, will find in these pages information which is new and interesting—*Algeria from Within* in opposition to the Algeria from "*without*" as set down by travelers who have passed a few winter months in the country and who, returning home, have compiled an inaccurate volume based on first impressions and on legends served up very hot by the hard-worked guides.

These legends will have to be dispelled at the cost of disillusioning veteran visitors who pass winter after winter in the overheated hotels of Mustapha Supérieur. But, against this, the book will endeavor to explain shortly and accurately what this French colony really is, what its people are doing and thinking, wherein lies its future.

There have been no aspirations to make of it a comprehensive guide-book or survey of the country's long history, neither has any attempt been made to criticize the French rule, or to compare it with the administration of other colonies. True facts have been set down as seen by one who has lived many years in the country, constantly studying all about him without confining himself to one area nor to one class of people. Living not only in the big cities, but also in the

cultivated plains, in the desolation of the desert, and mixing with the French administrators, with business men, with the colonists, and visiting the Arabs in such intimacy that it is possible to tell of their daily life as it is really lived.



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It is more a pen-picture of Algeria and the Sahara as it is to-day, drawn in the desire that the reader— be he traveler in all the senses of the word or one who journeys by his fireside on long winter evenings— will close the volume with a feeling that he has peeped for a moment into the intimate life of a country which, with all its youthful future, has a background of history more varied perhaps than any other country in the world. . . .

To the average tourist who leaves the misty London station in search of warmth and sunshine, the country he is about to visit is probably a somewhat uncertain vision of blue skies, palm-trees, and stately Arabs.

The inspired artists of the P. L. M. railway posters have dazzled his eyes with enchanting prospects of palm-green shores and rolling expanses of sand, golden in a perpetual sunset, while the scaleless maps of tourist agencies have graven in his mind the names Algiers, Biskra, Fez and Tunis, leaving him with a vague impression that all these places are in the same country and within easy reach of one another.

His mind is rather in the same state as that of the old lady who asks the officer going to India not to forget to look up her nephew who is stationed in Burmah. He has probably not realized that Algeria differs greatly from Tunisia and Morocco in people and in government, and that it has no connections whatever with either of these two countries which form its eastern and western frontiers.

Even winter residents and regular visitors to Algeria know the country very superficially, and though some have ventured along the beaten tracks as far as the oases of Touggourt and Ghardaia, there are few who have left the main roads and mixed in the private life of the country. And what blame to them? There are few railways, and the motor-transport time-tables are lacking. The guide-books do not dwell upon places off the classical tours, the information at the tourist agencies goes no further, and even if the adventurous traveler pushes into the unfrequented regions, he will find no one to guide him, and unless he knows Arabic he will often be unable to make himself understood. Even when the acquaintance of an Arab chief has been made it takes many months to break through his exterior façade and to obtain a glimpse of his thoughts or his private life.

This book, therefore—which should be read in conjunction with a guide-book—will endeavor to lift a veil on matters which are of the deepest interest to all those who want to learn something about a land which must appeal to the most blasé traveler.

CHAPTER II

A LITTLE GEOGRAPHY

ALGERIA is situated some fifteen hundred miles due south of London, and is accessible via Paris and Marseilles in fifty hours, or by sea from Southhampton in four days. The country is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean, on the east by Tunisia, and on the west by Morocco. Its southern boundary is difficult to define, as, though in reality Algeria extends right across the desert to Senegal, Algeria proper does not go farther than the northerly tracts of the Sahara.

Moreover, although considered as a French colony, the country is divided into three departments or counties, having the same status as if in France. From east to west they are Constantine, Alger, Oranie, and there is a further area lying south of these departments known as the Territoires du Sud.

The actual area of the country, again, is uncertain, owing to the great tracts of desert, but, roughly speaking, it can be said that the cultivated and inhabited areas comprising the three departments cover an area of 222,000 square miles—a little smaller than France. Including the Sahara, the country must be reckoned at 1,071,000 square miles.

By natural configuration the land is divided into four distinct belts: the low hills which border the coast protecting the rich cereal and vine lands from the sea winds; the Little Atlas or Mountains of the Tell, which include the lofty peaks of the Kabyle country; the Sersou, forming a kind of broad valley between the hills and the Hauts Plateaux which, as the name implies, is a high tableland, some two thousand feet above sea-level and rolling down to the desert three hundred miles south of the coast; and the Sahara, stretching away to Senegal.

The desert can, again, be divided into different areas. Its northern belts, covered with a kind of scrub, thyme and mint, afford ample nourishment to the flocks of sheep and goats all the winter, while camels can always find plenty to eat there. Beyond this pasture-land, is the rock and the sand desert, the former greatly exceeding the latter in area. It is a desolate and cruel-looking country, except where the oases spring up and form centers unexpectedly rich not only in palms, but also in all kinds of fruit-trees.

Generally speaking, therefore, Algeria is a hilly country, and the Sahara is far from flat; the whole land is very fertile wherever there is water, but subject to great extremes of climate. What surprises the traveler most, after a tour through any of the three departments and down to the desert, is first of all the astonishing variety of scenery through which he passes, and second, the amount of natural products of the land.

The roads along the coast give a wonderful impression of marine scenery—deep red cliffs and a sapphire sea.

To the east of Algiers, forests of cork-trees border the road, olive-yards cover the slopes of the hills, while every now and then one sees extensive tobacco plantations.

Turning inland, the traveler will pass through more forests, then, climbing into the Kabyle Mountains, he will come to the fig-trees clothing the steep hills, till up and up he climbs to a level

of some five thousand feet above the sea. Towering mountains are about him, deep in snow for four months of the year and quite unexpectedly cold in this sunny Africa.

Following the coast in a westerly direction, he will traverse miles of all kinds of vegetables, grown by the local farmers for export to France and England. The new potatoes, the salads and tomatoes, associated with exorbitant prices in Paris in winter, will be seen ripening under this southern sun.

If the journey is continued farther west into the confines of Oranie a few cotton plantations will be seen, then the vast plains of cereals—the ancient granary of the Roman Empire—which now that the old system of irrigation has disappeared are sadly dependent on the rainfall.

Turning inland from Algiers, the hills bordering the coast are left behind and the vine-clad plain of the Mitidja is entered. For two hours the car will pass swiftly through vineyard after vineyard, while here and there rich orange-groves will relieve the monotony of the interminable lines of vines. The wine produced in this area is much richer and of higher alcoholic degree than that of France, and in a normal year not only suffices for all the wants of the country, but is exported in large quantities to the mother country, where it is used to cut the Burgundies and Bordeaux, and in some cases to be sold as French *vin ordinaire*.

Moving still in a southerly direction, the country becomes mountainous as the Atlas range is entered. The slopes are covered with mountain-oak, pine-trees, and now and then cork, but, though this is supposed to be one of the forest-lands of Algeria, the traveler needs to be notified of the fact. There is, however, one very fine cedar forest above Teniet el Haad, but it is rarely visited as it is off the beaten track. The hills are full of tailless monkeys—the Barbary ape—which come down to the roadside, where there are inhabitants and prospects of food.

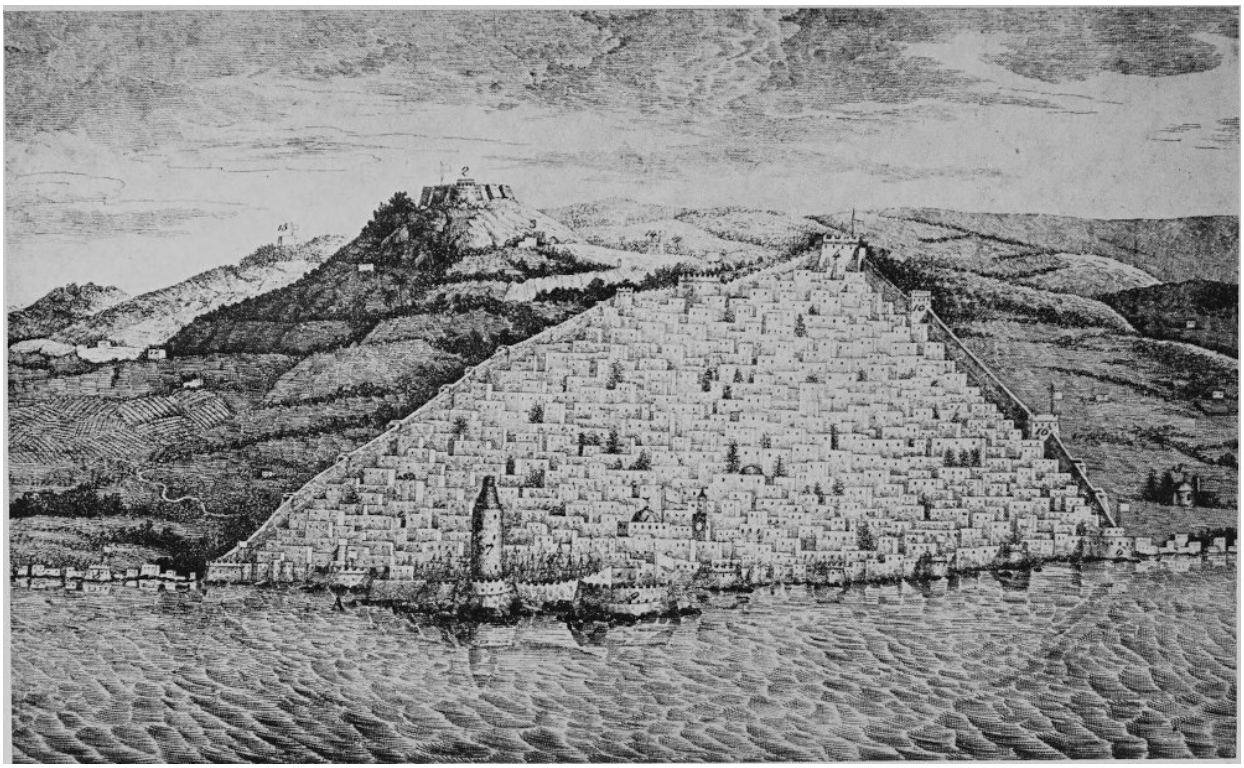
Beyond the Atlas range, here known as the Tell, where cattle and horses are raised, the country slopes down on to the wide pastures of the Sersou; it is now very flat and desertic in appearance. Soon the tufts of alfa grass are noticed growing in tall bunches right away as far as the eye can reach, and farther, for hundreds of miles to east and west extend these tracts of paper-making grass. Many of the concessions are owned by British concerns, which, having picked the raw material, despatch it to the Lancashire papermills to be manufactured.

Leaving the alfa, the country again becomes mountainous and wooded as the Hauts Plateaux are reached. The trees do not, however, last long, as soon the downward grade is begun, with the rich pasture-lands which run right away into the desert. This is the land of sheep-breeding, and as one travels along one sees countless flocks of sheep and goats.

The beginning of the Sahara is clearly defined by the sudden disappearance of the low, barren hills which have marked the descent from the Hauts Plateaux. The reappearance, too, of the palm-tree, which has not been seen since Algiers, reminds one that one is in the land of the oases, while away, away, stretches the desert, till its grayness merges in the sky like some eternally calm sea.

The pasture continues for a few hundred miles and then gradually disappears, giving place to stones and rocks, desolate and merciless, until in turn these give way to rolling sands, and again to barren wastes of pebbles, broken only by the welcome water-point or the green oasis offering relief to weary wanderers.

In a few words, this is the scenery of Algeria, and after a week’s journeying the traveler is really amazed at the thought that all he has seen is in one country, so varied has been his impression.



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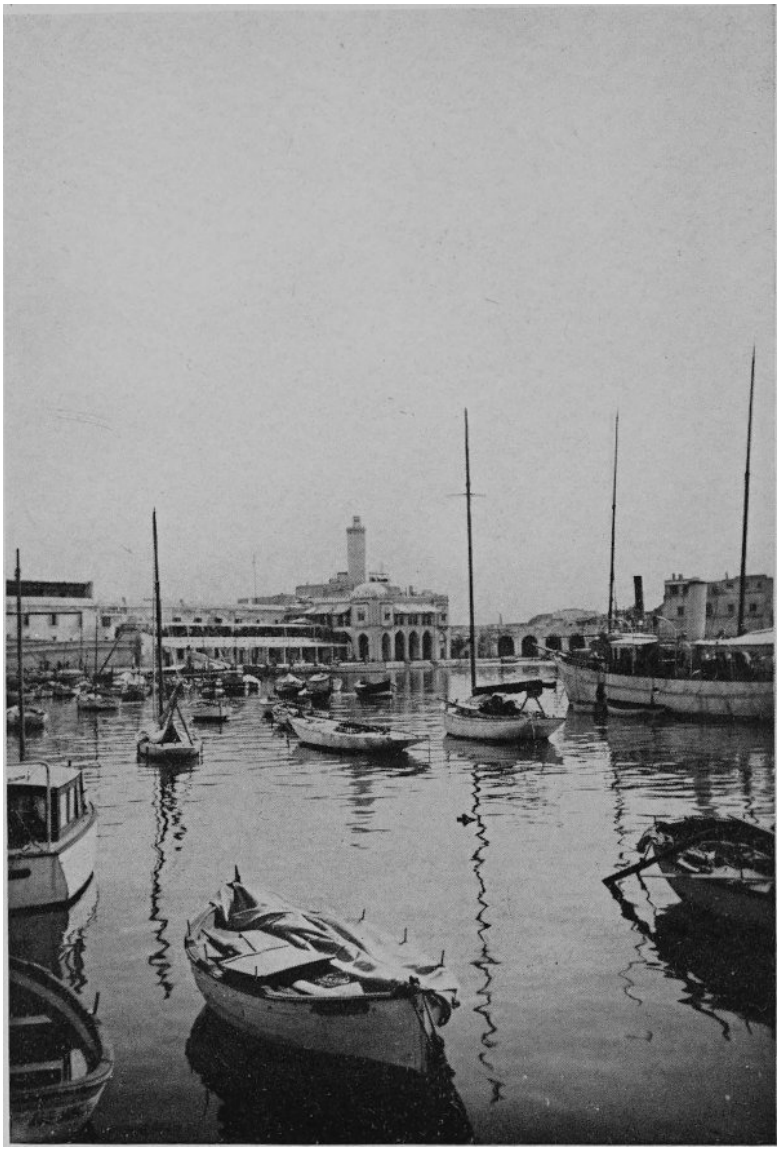
Algiers as It Was before the French Conquest in 1830



The Old Port of Algiers as it is To-day

Algiers, with its sub-tropical gardens and modern improvements, the sea coast, the broad plains of cereals, the rich vineyards, the orange-groves and olive-yards, the forests of cork and pine, the wild mountains, the silent expanses of alfa, the nomads on the pastures, and the limitless Sahara!

Further, if one remains a year in the country one will realize the difficulties with which the settler is faced owing to the extremes of climate. Generally speaking, it rains too much north of the Sersou during the months of November, December, and January. It never rains too much in the south. The summer and spring are too dry, and, whereas in the winter there is frost as far south as the edge of the Sahara, the summer heat is everywhere excessive. The heat is especially unpleasant in Algiers and along the coast on account of the damp; at midday in the plains it is intolerable, and when the sirocco blows from the desert, life is wretched all over the smitten area.

Irrigation is in its childhood; artificial pasturage is unknown, with the result that a good or a bad year depends entirely on the caprices of the weather. Generally speaking, one can say that in a period of seven years there are two very good years, four average years, and one bad year.

When the year is good it is beyond all imagination, and it is, in fact, said that the two very good years should pay for any losses in the remaining five!

A land of light and shade, of everlasting contrasts, a land which, like a lovely woman, charms one by its unexpectedness, by its tenderness and sudden harshness, by all its capricious moods. A land of the future, but a land also of the past—and this, perforce, brings us to the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

A LITTLE HISTORY

THE original inhabitants of Algeria were Berbers. The present native inhabitant of Algeria is the Berber, and yet ask any one who the natives are and they will reply "Arabs"; some of the more intelligent will perhaps say "Arabs with a sprinkling of Berbers."

But this is wrong. When history first threw light on North Africa the Berbers were there, and they have not yet departed. It is true that many invasions and upheavals have passed through Algeria during the past three thousand years, but, though they have left their trace, it is only the Arabs who have really left their mark on the original inhabitants.

The first important landmark in the history of North Africa is the foundation of Carthage about the year 840 B. C. The Phœnicians had already settled on the Tunisian coast for some three hundred years previous to this, but their importance dates from the foundation of their great city, which was to have such an influence on the history of the civilized world for six hundred years.

Since this book, however, is not a history of the country, it will be sufficient to mention the outstanding historical features during those long years during which war and invasion centered round the North African shores. The Carthaginian domination flourished in all its splendor until the year 264 B. C. Up to this period those hardy merchant mariners were masters of the whole of the Mediterranean; they had explored the Atlantic coast as far as Sierra Leone; one expedition had sailed right round the African continent; and they had made it clear to Rome that they would brook no interference. Carthaginian naval power was supreme, and she counted on that alone to ensure her sovereignty of the Mediterranean. In the latter half, therefore, of that century she had defied Rome, and in a few years came into armed conflict with the future masters of the world.

This armed conflict, which was to last for over eighty years, and which was to produce those names famous to every public schoolboy who does not despise classical education—Hanno, Hamilcar, Hannibal, Hasdrubal, Scipio, Fabius Maximus—ended in 146 B. C. with the destruction of Carthage and the foundation of a Roman province consisting of modern Tunisia and part of Tripoli. One hundred years later Numidia, Algeria of to-day, was annexed, and for the next four hundred years the march of empire continued. At first the Romans were not a little embarrassed with their new acquisitions, all the more so on account of the hostile attitude of the Numidian kings at Cirta (modern Constantine). Strifes and minor wars continued for some time. Rome aided first one side and then another, but, finally realizing the futility of her rôle, a strong expedition was despatched and finally succeeded in defeating the Numidian king Jugurtha. It was not, however, until the year 46 B. C. that Cæsar finally routed Juba on the Tunisian coast and in that defeat destroyed the kingdom of Numidia.

The son of Juba, who had been taken to Italy and educated as a Roman, was married to the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, and was eventually placed on the throne of Numidia, where he ruled in splendor until the year 19 B. C. During his reign the empire had spread and extended over North Africa from the Tunisian coast to the Atlantic, and its military posts guarded the entries of the Sahara. The traces of once-glorious Rome remain in various states of ruin to this day, and will be dealt with in further chapters. It would take too long to enter into details of the administration of the country under the Imperial eagle and of the birth and growth of Christianity in North Africa.

The Roman Empire had spread, and it was not until the beginning of its fall that the rule in North Africa tottered.

Ever since the beginning of the fifth century A. D. Roman possessions in Europe were being flooded by the advance of the Vandals. In 428 the terrible Genesric crossed to Africa from Spain, with an army of ninety thousand men, and landed at Ceuta. Like all new invaders, he was welcomed as a savior, and his success was instantaneous. He swept the Roman armies before him, he built a fleet and became the terror of the Mediterranean, and in 455 took Rome.

How far these conquests would have continued it is difficult to say had not Genesric died. With his death his followers, who had drifted into an easy-going state, no longer held together, but became the prey of jealous strifes among chiefs. Their fall was rapid. The Roman Government, now transferred to Constantinople, was awaiting the opportunity to avenge its defeat. A little more than a hundred years after the landing of the Vandals in Africa, Belisarius sailed from Constantinople with six hundred ships, and three months later landed in Tripoli.

The Byzantine invasion had begun, and in three months Belisarius was able to announce to the Emperor Justinian that North Africa was again part of the Roman Empire.

But the Byzantine rule did not last long. The country was rent by wars and revolts; the people were worn out with changes of government; and, though there remain great forts and mightily walled cities as a record of this rule, they are evidence in themselves of the turbulent times which shook the country. When, therefore, the first Arab invasion poured in, there was nothing to quell it, and for one last time Imperial Rome struggled for a moment, staggered and fell.

The first Arab invasion of the seventh century was more a series of raids than anything else. Mohammed had appeared and died, but his teaching had remained, and had inspired those bands of wild nomads to organize themselves. Persia, Syria, Egypt had fallen before the advance, and soon they began moving farther west. The most important of these raids was that led by Sidi Okba, who traversed the whole of Algeria and Morocco, and who, no doubt, would have gone on had he not been arrested by the Atlantic.

He was killed during his return journey by the Berber army under Koceila, and he is buried near Biskra, where his memory is venerated.

Hassan followed him, and finally drove the last Byzantines out of North Africa. Needless to say, the chief object of the invaders had been to convert the people to the new faith, and little by little the Berbers became Mohammedans. It did not take long for them to create dissension in these beliefs, but they remained generally under the law of the Prophet, respecting the principles even more rigidly than their conquerors.

However, the most important point of this conversion is that it created an Arab-Berber alliance for the further march of Mohammedanism into Europe. It is said that it was a Berber named Tarik who first crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, and it was after him that the rock took its name, Djebel el Tarik—the Mountain of Tarik.

The Arabs and Berbers pressed on through Spain until they were defeated by Charles Martel at Poitiers in 732 and retired into the peninsula. The remains of their grandeur can be seen in the glorious palaces and mosques at Seville, Cordova and Granada. But the Berbers, being of an independent nature, did not readily accept the laws and regulations of the allies. In the tenth century there were a number of insurrections in Algeria, and the Fatimides, or followers of the descendant of Fathma, the daughter of the prophet, succeeded for a period in dominating the country. Unfortunately for them their chief tried to go too far in his independence, and in the

twelfth century the Sultan at Cairo launched a punitive expedition composed of the five tribes known as the Hilals.

Unlike the expeditions of the seventh century, these invaders came in hordes, bringing with them their flocks and their belongings, and sweeping mercilessly across the country, leaving devastation behind. Arabs and Berbers united to oppose them, but to no avail. Their armies poured over the land like a cloud of locusts. The little that was left of Roman civilization was destroyed, the cultivation disappeared, and North Africa was the desert of over a thousand years before.

From this period until the end of the fifteenth century North Africa was given over to pillage. With the exception of the cities of Tunis, Tlemçen and Fez, anarchy seems to have reigned everywhere, and there are no records or history of the period. The Arab had shown his worth; the Arab as an administrator had no qualification; he has not yet proved the contrary.

At first it was the Spaniards who took the place as rulers of North Africa. They had gradually driven the Mohammedans out of southern Spain, and during the first ten years of the sixteenth century had occupied the seaports from Oran right down to Bougie, including Algiers. But these conquests did not really interest them as their eyes were turned to the Indies. Moreover, in the meanwhile the brothers Barbarossa were scouring the Mediterranean, and when they were asked to rid Algeria of the Spaniards it did not take them long to do it. But once the deed was accomplished, the Turks refused to leave, and in 1546 took possession of Algiers.

For the next three hundred years the White City became the stronghold of the pirates of the Mediterranean. At first their fleet was nominally a national navy, fighting against Charles Quint, but little by little all form of legitimate warfare disappeared and open piracy became the sole occupation of these wild seamen. Their ships became independent rovers of the sea; built lighter and more handily than the average cargo- or war-vessel of other nations, they fell upon their prey regardless of its flag, captured it, and brought it back to Algiers. Here the cargo was divided: a quarter to the state, and the rest to the owner and crew of the vessel. The sailors or passengers on board the prize were employed as slaves, those who knew trades, to build and beautify the palaces of their masters, the more common to work in the quarries or to row in the galleys. If they were men of importance, they were held to ransom. Among other prisoners who spent a not too pleasant sojourn in Algeria were Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, and the French poet Regnard.

It was not long, however, before the powers in Europe began to occupy themselves with these acts of open brigandage. In 1541, Charles Quint led an expedition, but partly by reason of adverse weather, and partly by the strength of the Turkish lair, he was entirely defeated, and just escaped with a small portion of his forces.

The squadron sent by Cromwell under Blake in 1655 fared better. Part of the Turkish Fleet was destroyed at Tunis, and the release of the British prisoners was obtained. Louis XIV sent two fleets in 1682 and 1688, under Duquesne and d'Estrès respectively, but, though their bombardments did a good deal of damage to the fortifications, and temporarily hampered the pirates' activity, the effect did not last long.

About the same time Sir Thomas Allen, and a little later Sir Edward Spragg, inflicted minor defeats on the Turkish fleets, but on the whole little harm was done; and though Lord Exmouth won a decisive victory in 1816 and seriously battered the fortifications, he was unable to land, and it remained for the French in 1830 finally to shake and destroy a rule which had dominated the Mediterranean for three centuries. With their entry on to the scene, the period of anarchy begun by the Vandals finally disappeared, and the task almost completed by the Romans started again on

almost as barren a soil as that faced by the great colonists of the Mediterranean a hundred years before Christ.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRENCH CONQUEST OF ALGERIA

IT WILL be easily understood that this undisputed mastery of the Mediterranean basin had given the Turks of Algeria a very great impression of their importance, and had left them with little respect for the European powers. Consideration, therefore, for representatives of those powers was on the same scale, and when one day the French Consul, Deval, paid an official visit to the Dey Hussein to protest about the non-payment of a debt to a French subject, Hussein summarily sent him about his business with a flick over the face with his fan.

This took place in 1827, but it was not until 1830 that the French really decided to have done with the insolence of the dey. An army of thirty-five thousand men was organized under General Bourmont, one of Napoleon's officers, escorted by a fleet of three hundred ships. Curiously enough the success of the expedition was greatly facilitated by the lack of vigilance of British guards some twenty years before.

In 1808 Napoleon had practically decided to conquer Algeria and Colonel Boutin had been sent on a secret mission to Algiers with orders to reconnoiter the land. During his return journey the ship on which he was traveling was captured by a British man-of-war and the Colonel was imprisoned at Malta.

He, however, succeeded in escaping, and, returning to France, laid his report before the Emperor, who had by that time decided that Egypt was a more interesting goal.

Boutin's plans were therefore put aside, but when the expedition of 1830 was being prepared they came to light again and were exclusively used in drawing up all the details of the attack.

Wisely avoiding the mistakes of their predecessors who had attempted to take the stronghold itself, the fleet bearing the army sailed to the west of Algiers, and in June, 1830, landed without opposition in the sheltered bay of Sidi Ferruch. The cause of this easy landing has never been clearly established, but it is supposed that Hussein either believed that this invasion would share the same fate as all others, and that by allowing the army to land his victory would be more complete, or else that he did not anticipate an attack from that quarter.

However, the fact remains that the whole of the French army landed without difficulty, and that a few days later they were marching on Algiers. They met the first elements of the Turkish army at Staoueli. The battle was fierce, but the French artillery caused havoc among the ranks of the Moslem troops, which were driven out of their position. The French headquarters were established on the site of the future Trappist monastery, which is now a great wine-cellar.

The advance on Algiers was continued, but there were no roads, and the hills of the Sahel were covered with thick scrub. On June twenty-ninth, however, the army arrived before Algiers. The attack on the fortress where Charles Quint had for a brief moment pitched his tent was immediately commenced. For a time the Turks held out, but, realizing the futility of their task, they set fire to the powder-magazine and blew up the great pile, emblem of their long rule. The French, meeting no longer with any opposition, pushed on, and on July fifth made their triumphal entry into Algiers.

The immediate result of this victory was for the King of France, Charles X, to lose his head. He believed that he was now in a position to exercise absolute power, and he expressed himself by publishing his famous *Ordonnances*. The consequence was revolution. Charles X was deposed, and Louis Philippe, the son of Philippe Egalité, mounted the throne. General Bourmont was relieved of his post as Commander-in-Chief, giving way to General Clauzel.

As can be imagined, this did not tend to help matters across the Mediterranean. The capture of Algiers had taken barely a month—the subduing of the Arabs was to drag on for over thirty years.

In the first place, the new Government in Paris was very diffident about pushing forward the conquest of the country. At first only the coast was occupied. This was interpreted by the natives of the interior as fear, and it was with little difficulty that the young Emir, Abd-el-Kader, raised the population to a holy war. Until the year 1847 this struggle continued with varying success, and it was not until Bugeaud, an old warrior of the First Empire, took charge of the operations that the unruly chief began to lose ground. The capture of his *smala* in 1843 at Taguine in the Sersou was the beginning of the end. Four years later he surrendered and was exiled, and he finally died at Damascus. His memory is venerated by all the Arabs of the country.

Once the emir was out of the way, Bugeaud began to penetrate the interior by colonization. His famous motto, *"Ense et aratro,"* was to prove a veritable success, and little by little the country began transforming itself. In the meanwhile he did not neglect the conquest of the territory still unsubdued. In 1852 the Oasis of Laghouat was captured after tedious fighting, and with it the penetration of the Sahara began.

The last strongholds of the Berbers in the Kabyle Mountains fell in 1857. The country seemed turning toward peace. But in 1864 a fierce revolt burst forth in southern Oranie; the French punitive column was massacred, and the rebellion spread all over the department. It took five years to quell it completely.

Hardly was this over than the Franco-Prussian War broke out and Algeria again became a center of agitation. The Kabyles for a short space threatened the peace of the whole country, capturing numbers of French centers and massacring the inhabitants. The French were obliged to send troops back from France at a very awkward moment, but they succeeded in quelling the insurrection. In 1879 the Berbers of the Aurès made an attempt to rise, but were rapidly repressed; the same lot awaited the insurgents of southern Oranie in 1881. I can not pass this point in the history of the conquest without mentioning a name great in the annals of Algeria though sadly forgotten by many historians.

I refer to Cardinal Lavigerie, priest and administrator, founder of the order of the Pères Blancs who did more by his foresight and calm judgment to bring the Arabs under French rule than any governor during these turbulent times. His political activities were only eclipsed by his evangelical work, and his influence in North Africa has ever remained.

Those who are interested in this subject will find some excellent reading in *Le Cardinal Lavigerie et Son Action Politique* by J. Tournin. This book not only deals with the Cardinal's long administration in North Africa but also throws much light on all those intrigues which finally led to the disestablishment of the Church in France.

Since then little has occurred to disturb the peace of Algeria, and, in spite of a certain amount of unrest during the Great War, there has been no definite rebellion.

The French conquest took long, but, when one looks at the stupendous difficulties which had to be overcome, one is surprised it was completed so rapidly. Everything was against it: an

unstable government, which was overthrown at the outset of the campaign by an equally unstable rule, which itself disappeared a few years later to give place to the adventures of the Second Empire; statesmen who had no definite policy as regards North Africa, and generals who never had sufficient troops nor a free enough hand really to take up the conquest of the country seriously.

Opposing them was an enemy, composed of born fighters, knowing the country as well as their horses, amazingly mobile, capable of concentrating to fight a battle and dispersing again like the sand, and inspired with the spirit of religious war. The country was overgrown with thick brush; there were no roads, great mountains to cross, and, once in the interior, no means of feeding or watering the army, with no towns from which food or cattle could be requisitioned, no wells or springs and a climate of great extremes.

When one traverses the great plains of the Sersou and the Hauts Plateaux leaning back in a comfortable car, or when trekking across the Sahara to some known water-point among a friendly people, one often wonders how it was possible for that small French column in this unknown country to press on after an elusive enemy with lines of communication of such immense length. There is no heroic record of their achievements, and, apart from certain names known to French school-children, no one appears to have been honored or exalted as responsible for this series of campaigns.

Let any trained soldier consider the taking of Laghouat, three hundred miles south of Algiers, in a desert, unpopulated and waterless, and he will wonder how it was done. The conquest of Algeria by the French is one of the greatest pages of military history.

CHAPTER V

THE INHABITANTS TO-DAY

NORTH AFRICA has been very aptly described as a melting-pot of the Mediterranean races, and, though all trace of invaders such as the Vandals and the Byzantines have vanished, the other peoples who came and conquered and were in turn defeated have left their mark on the inhabitants of to-day.

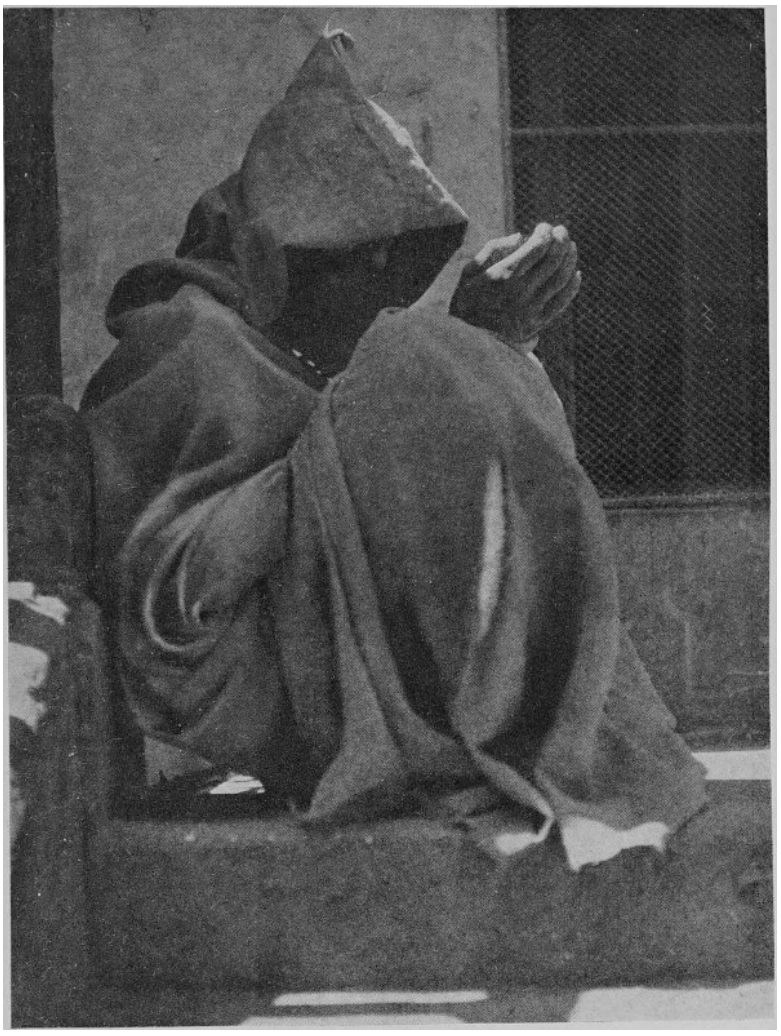
The Phœnician, the Roman, the Arab, the Spaniard, the Turk, can be seen in all parts of North Africa, and, though it requires perhaps a little study and experience to place one's hand on the actual features of the past conquests, they are most striking when one is shown them. The original race of the country is, however, the Berber, and, in spite of these invasions which have devastated, reinstated, and again devastated his country, he has remained in a good many districts as pure as the Celts.

Roughly speaking, it can be said that to-day the pure Berbers are found in all the highest mountains, such as the Aurès above Biskra, the Kabyle country, and that portion of the Tellian Atlas known as the Ouarsenis, strongholds to which they returned during the various invasions, and where they remained unassailable while the tide of war ebbed and flowed beneath them. The people of the Mzab and the Touaregs of the Hoggar are also pure Berbers: in the case of the former because they were determined to remain pure and exiled themselves in the merciless desert, and in the latter because they were too far away to be touched by invasion. In other parts of Algeria intermarriage naturally took place during the various dominations, but, though Roman and Turkish traces remain, these are eclipsed by those of the Arabs.

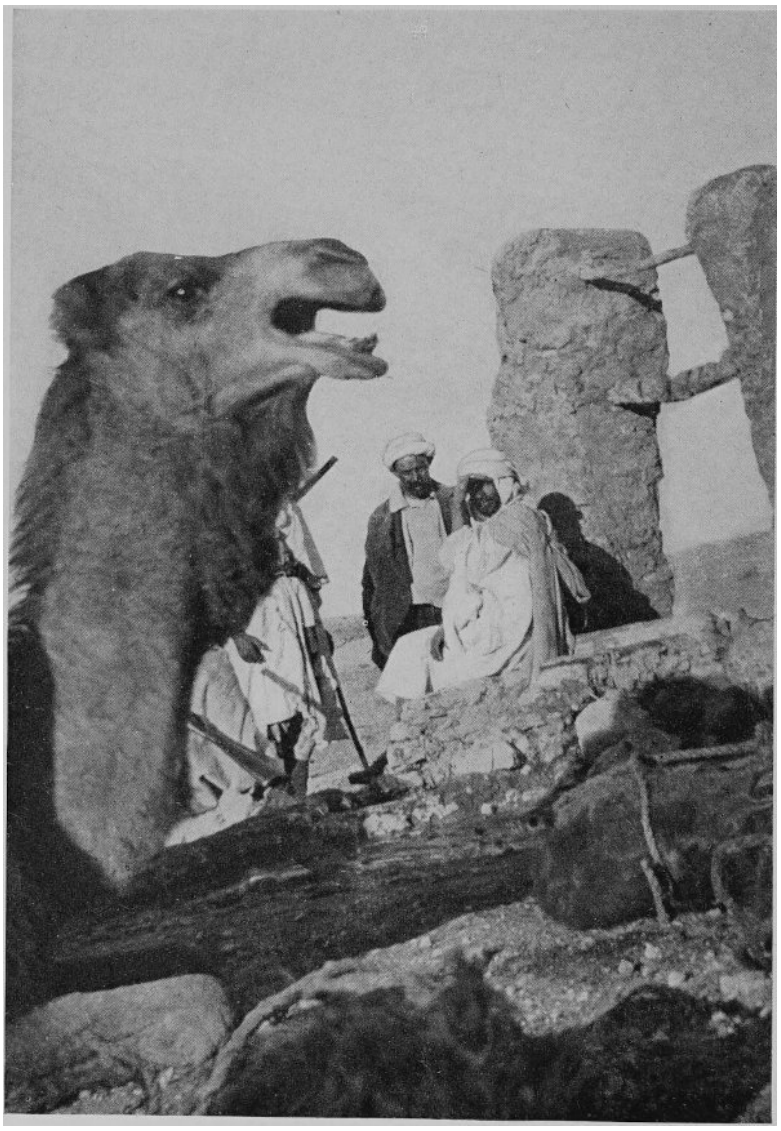
Roughly speaking, therefore, it can be said that the groups of pure Berbers are located in the high mountains, in the Mzab and in the Hoggar; that the Berber influence is predominant among the people who inhabit the country immediately south of Algiers, as far as the southern slopes of the Atlas, the department of Constantine, and an arm of the southern territories running from Biskra down to Ouargla and the great belt of desert running right across the Sahara from the Atlantic to Tripoli on a latitude just south of El Golea.

The whole of the rest of the country—that is, the department of Oran, the whole of the southern tracts of the department of Alger, and the rest of the southern territories other than the belt named above— is decidedly Arab. The Berber is there, but the influence is almost entirely that of the nomad invader.

If you ask an intelligent native what his nationality is, he will reply that he is an Arab who has been slightly Berberized or else he will say that he is a noble Arab—that is to say, a claimant to direct descent from Mohammed. While on this subject it is interesting to note what the conception of nobility is among these people. Outwardly, before the European, it is the title of *bash agha* or *agha* or *caïd*, but in reality this does not count with the people any more than Lord-Lieutenant of a county in England. To them it is merely a title imposed by the French, which they must respect just as they must respect the Colonel or the *Administrateur*. Aristocracy to them is the descent from the Prophet, or as one wise old gentleman once said:



An Arab Beggar



Scene of Arab Life

“To many of us nobility can be achieved by much learning.”

In other words, the scarlet burnous and the loud-sounding title would carry no weight if it were not enforced by the French authority.

To-day, therefore, the inhabitants of Algeria are Arabs and Berbers of whom fifty per cent. claim almost pure Berber blood, and Frenchmen. There are many Spaniards in the department of Oran, and in the east a fair sprinkling of Italians and Maltese. The Jews, too, form an important section of the community; those who live in the north wear European dress, and in the south most of them wear Arab costume, with a certain little difference in the burnous, and in some districts they have robes peculiar to themselves. Their women, even in some families of the north, keep the dress of their people, the embroidered kerchief about the head and the rather shapeless frock. By a law known as the Décret Crémieux, voted in 1871, to facilitate the conscription of recruits for the Franco-Prussian War, all Jews north of a certain latitude in Algeria automatically became French citizens. It was not very popular at the time, but its consequences now are much appreciated. In

spite, however, of this French citizenship and all the wealth acquired in commerce, the Jews of Algeria have kept themselves strangely apart. Even in Algiers all their shops are in a certain quarter; they close without exception on Saturday, and attend the synagogue with the utmost regularity. They never intermarry, and they form as distinct a race as the Arabs. In fact, in many districts—and especially in the south—they are always referred to as Israelites. Sometimes they are persecuted, but this merely knits them closer together. They despise the Arabs, but fear them, and tremble at any sign of force.

The Arabs equally despise the Jews, but unfortunately they have got themselves rather into their hands through making use of them as money-lenders.

The actual French occupation of the land does not penetrate very far—in fact, in a great many areas the Frenchman is leaving the interior and returning to the coast. Again and again one passes through European villages with a church built to accommodate a thousand people or so, and one sees about twenty European dwellings in the town and the rest of the houses in ruins or inhabited by Arabs. What has caused this? Primarily, the inherent dislike of the Frenchman to expatriate himself. If he comes to Algeria it is with no idea of spending the rest of his days here. His one idea is to make enough money to permit him to return home to France and eke out a pinched existence in his native village, but with the satisfaction of being a *rentier*. Secondly, the rather ungrateful task of cultivating in a country where all depends on the rainfall. It is all right for the man who has capital and who can bide his time to pay off his losses of the bad year with the profits of the good, but it is heart-breaking work for the small landowner. Of course there are numbers of families who have settled in the cultivated regions and who have become Algerian, but they are the exception; their names can be counted off rapidly.

These men have great fortunes in wine, in cereals and tobacco, and their children have in many cases never seen France; but, generally speaking, the Frenchman is not a colonist, and it is very, very rare to see him away in the Sahara sheep-breeding or alfa-collecting. He has, however, done one rather contradictory thing in imposing his language on practically the whole country. With the exception of the nomads who wander about the Sahara, it is rare to come to any center and not find a French-speaking population.

The Arabs among themselves of course speak their own language; it is a strange dialect based on pure Arabic, but peculiar to North Africa.

Moreover, it differs in accent according to regions. For instance, the language of the south is much deeper and more guttural than that of Algiers, and the talk in Constantine and Oran, again, has many words and intonations not found in other centers.

I think that the correct name for this dialect should be Arabo-Berber. There is, of course, also the pure Berber spoken by the people of the Kabyle and Aurès Mountains, of the Mzab and the Hoggar; and, though Berbers are often found who can not speak anything else, it is almost a general rule to find them bilinguists, while the majority talk French too. It is interesting to note that when the Sultan of Zanzibar came to North Africa the only people with whom he could speak fluently were the Berbers of the Mzab.

The Jews speak both Arab and French fluently; their Arab is often purer than that of the actual natives. A great number speak Hebrew among themselves.

However, to progress comfortably through the country, French is essential, and Arabo-Berber is a great help and inspires confidence among the people. Grammatically, it is a simple language, but the pronunciation is difficult and the number of words which mean the same thing requires one to have command over a large vocabulary. It is a language that can be learned only with a teacher.

These, therefore, are the peoples and the tongues of North Africa, and, armed with this knowledge, we can now penetrate further into the system of administration.

CHAPTER VI

FRENCH ADMINISTRATION OF ALGERIA

1. *Civilian*

THE administration of any country to a foreigner is always rather incomprehensible, but the manner in which Algeria is administered by the French is more than a surprise.

It is not our duty to criticize the method of government of this country, and let it be said at once that, strange as the method may seem, the results are admirable.

To the uninitiated, Algeria is a colony such as Kenya or the Gold Coast, with a Governor and all the general system of working dominions beyond the seas. But, though the country is administered by a Governor-General, he does not, as might be supposed, depend on the Colonial Office, neither do any of his reports pass through the hands of the Colonial Secretary. His tenure of office is, moreover most uncertain, and he is only appointed for a period of six months at a time, renewable at the end of each period, and this appointment is made by the Home Office (*Ministère de l'Intérieur*) in Paris, under whose jurisdiction he is.

At first this contradiction of things seems hard to understand, and one is forced to penetrate further into the inner workings of Algeria to understand. In the first place, North Africa—with the exception of Tunisia and Morocco, which are protectorates—is divided into three departments, with practically the same organization as in France. That is to say, each department sends to the Parliament in Paris one senator and two deputies, who are elected by the French inhabitants of the country and by those Arabs who have opted for French nationality.

These departments have their *préfets* and *sous-préfets*, as in France, and the towns their mayors, with the municipal council, *juges de paix*, *commissaires de police*, etc. Thus up to this point the system of administration in the three departments is identical with that in the mother country.

The first slight difference we come upon is in the case of what are known as *communes mixtes*. These centers are those where the Arab population is in excess of the French. In this case the mayor is replaced by an *administrateur*. The area covered by the jurisdiction of this individual is much larger than the *commune* under the mayor, and comprises numerous *douars*, or native villages. The *administrateur*, who wears a vague uniform, something between that of an officer and a lion-tamer, is trained specially for his post. He is assisted in his duties by an *administrateur adjoint* and by a *commission municipale*. This *commission municipale* is composed partly of Frenchmen elected in the area of the *commune mixte*, and partly of Arabs belonging to the various *douars*, who are appointed by the Governor-General. The *caïds* and other Arab chiefs—of whom we will speak later—assist the *administrateur* as his agents in their respective areas.

The *administrateur* himself has certain powers of jurisdiction over Arabs, but all those who are French citizens have recourse to the ordinary civil power.

This, therefore, in a few words is the system of administration of Algeria proper, and it would all seem quite simple if we did not suddenly come face to face with the Governor-General. Here,

in the midst of all this peaceful organization associated with the Great Revolution, we have Monsieur Le Gouverneur-Général, with his summer palace, his staff, his aides-de-camp, naval and military, flying the tricolor on his motor-car, while the guard turns out and presents arms. What has he to do with all the senators and deputies and *préfets*?

The answer is simple. For all practical purposes, nothing. He himself may be a French senator with his seat in the upper chamber; at the end of six months he may become a minister or he may be politely dismissed. And how often has the post of Governor-General of Algeria been held by some high functionary not wanted in France, or by one who is merely biding his time to take office again. The Governor-General, therefore, unless he be a man of exceptional value, can not really do very much for or against the welfare of the country, and the most important duties therefore devolve on a permanent official known as the *Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement*.

This gentleman—though he is usually not a man of great ambition, otherwise he would not be in this thankless post—has a great working knowledge of the country and its people, and it is he who keeps his superior in touch with all that is going on. But even he has nothing to do with the French civil administration, which belongs entirely to France.

On the other hand, there are three assemblies over which the Governor presides and which carry out on their own account a certain amount of the administration of the country. They are the *Conseil du Gouvernement*, dealing chiefly with the building of new villages, making of roads and railways, and generally opening up the colony; the *Délégations Financières*, composed of French colonists, French taxpayers, and a certain number of well-to-do Arabs. These financial delegates discuss the budget for Algeria, which incidentally, and contradictorily, is independent of France, as is also the Bank of Algeria, which prints its own banknotes. Finally we have the *Conseil Supérieur* composed of twenty-two members: the *Procureur-Général*, the Admiral, the *préfets* and a few Arabs of importance who meet once a year under the presidency of the Governor-General to vote the budget for Algeria.

But even here the Parliament in Paris is afraid of letting the wretched colony look after itself, and it insists upon ratifying the budget, without knowing anything about it.

Algeria, therefore, is not a colony, but part of France, administered in the same way as any French department, but under the care of the Governor-General appointed by the Home Office, who is all-powerful without having any real authority at all. The *communes* are French or *mixtes*; the Arabs have a certain say in the government, but not much; the budget is separate, but under the scrutiny of the Palais Bourbon.

2. *Military*

All this seems complicated enough, but the mystery is not over—it deepens as we leave the northern districts of Algeria and move south. We have now seen the rôles of the various functionaries in the three departments of Constantine, Alger and Oranie, and we must turn to the area known as the Territoires du Sud.

The actual boundary between the departments and these southern territories varies somewhat, but it can be said roughly that anywhere two hundred miles from the coast one has passed out of civil control and into military. Thence these territories stretch away across the Sahara until the Niger is reached—great, open spaces with small fertile points where there is water. All this waste land is also under the Governor-General and his permanent staff in Algiers. There is one slight difference. Whereas if he were to make a speech to the townsfolk of some smiling vine center near

Algiers he must ask the *Secrétaire-Général* for the necessary data to address the multitudes, in the south he applies to the *Directeur des Territoires du Sud*. This functionary, who is often intelligent, has an enviable post, and if he is interested in the Great South, with its strange people, he can make a study under very advantageous circumstances. Here again, however, we have an anomaly, for, though the *Directeur des Territoires du Sud* is responsible for their order, his administrators are all soldiers and the country south of the civil territory is under the strictest form of martial law. A little explanation on the system of government will perhaps make matters clearer.

The southern areas are divided into what are known as *Cercles Militaires*, and they may cover an area of one hundred square miles. The *Cercle* is under a colonel and is subdivided into *annexes*, each under a captain, who is responsible to the colonel for his area. There are a number of officers attached to these annexes, all specially trained in their duties—in fact, from the colonel down, all the staff have passed through the school of the *affaires indigènes* and have spent practically all their life in the south. For the future we will refer to the military administration as the Bureau Arabe, the name under which it goes in the south. To all intents and purposes the Bureau Arabe is all-powerful. Fines, fatigues, prison for all persons not having a European status are entirely in its hands. The court-martial convened has the power of life and death over the same category of persons; only Europeans and naturalized Arabs can appeal to the civil courts. The rule is harsh, sometimes unjust—it depends on the staff of the Bureau Arabe. The military in the various oases are commanded by regimental officers who have really nothing to do with the Bureau Arabe; they are just in the garrison as they might be in Algiers or Marseilles. But if the head of the *annexe* requires them for any administrative or punitive purpose they are at his disposal.

A flock of sheep disappears, the owner complains, and, if he is considered sufficiently important to take notice of, a section of *spahis* is sent off to trace the flock. Some one has to be ejected from his house—an N.C.O. and four tirailleurs carry out the unpleasant duty.

Unless an Arab carries a great deal of weight he is helpless if the Bureau Arabe decides against him. Apart from this, however, the chief of the *annexe* has other more peaceful and useful duties. He has all the functions of the mayor to perform, and is surrounded by a municipal council. These worthies— who are partly Arabs, partly French and partly Jews—vote silly laws such as traffic regulations for the non-existent vehicles. They decide whether the main street shall be painted green or gold; they vote money to repair the roof of the colonel's house. Their most important function is the distribution of water in the oasis. This, as will be explained in a later chapter, is a question of life and death in the long Sahara summer, and it requires infinite care to arrange it all. But, apart from this, the municipal council does little, and, though the *Chef d'Annexe* occasionally performs a civil marriage, the law and order of the Great South rests in the hands of the military.

I use the word *order* purposely, as it is through their presence that we can travel safely over those magnificent roads which they also have made across the rolling plains. For, though justice is sometimes miscarried, there is little chance of the bandit escaping if he commits highway robbery or murder on the roads of the Bureau Arabe.

These are, therefore, the pros and cons, and let it be said for these colonels and captains who have spent all the best years of their lives in the Sahara, that they are confronted by great difficulties, and that until the day when the Arab is emancipated and set on the same footing as his conquerors, the only method by which an end can be achieved is severity.

So far it will seem that we have left the realm of complication and entered that of straightforward government. A mere illusion.

Living in the same town and almost next door to the Bureau Arabe, we find the Juge de Paix, the Notaire, and the Commissaire de Police. What the first two can do to justify their existence is beyond the imagination. The Commissaire has functions which he exercises, but which seem quite unnecessary, as in all his actions he is entirely paralyzed by the Bureau Arabe.

For instance, if some petty crime is committed he can investigate it, but he can not condemn without the authority of the *Chef d'Annexe*. If one requires a gun-license one has to apply to the Commissaire de Police, but he must go to the Bureau Arabe to get it. He is in charge of the few native policemen who wander about the oases in search of crime and bribes, but, though the prison is next door to his office, it is guarded by the military.

It is all the same curious system which causes the Governor-General's powers—extending across the Sahara, to the verge of Central Africa—to depend on the Home Office in Paris.

Moreover, we have not yet finished with all these different forms of administration, and in the next chapter I shall try to explain how the native functionaries aid in the government of the country.

CHAPTER VII

ARAB ADMINISTRATION

1. *Through the Arab Chiefs*

IT CAN be said that in the northern districts of Algeria, where civilian rule is supreme, the Arab chief's position is more honorary than anything else. It is true that he holds the same titles as his brethren in the south and that he is responsible for an area comprising many *douars*, but his authority is very limited owing to his constant contact with the local *administrateurs*.

In the south it is very different. Here we are among the nomad tribes, who, though they have certain fixed limits of pasturage, roam over vast areas and great tracts of land, rarely remaining one week in the same place.

It would therefore be materially impossible for any European administration to deal directly with these people always on the move, and who have dialects and pronunciation which only an Arab can understand.

The French Government, therefore, appoints Arab chiefs, who, to all intents and purposes, rule over the nomads, and who are responsible for law and order among the people and for the levying of taxes. The head of the Arab chiefs, who is ruler over the whole tribe or confederation of tribes, is known as the *bash agha*. He is appointed by the Governor-General, and he is chosen for his authority, for his capacity as an administrator and for the name he bears.

It must be remembered, however, that though the Government tries as far as possible to appoint men of noble lineage, this is not necessarily done, and the Government does not recognize any sort of official succession from father to son. If the eldest son is considered worthy of the post he is probably appointed to take his father's place, but cases occur where a distant relation, and sometimes an Arab chief of another family is brought in, if the actual ruling house is considered unworthy.

The *bash agha* has under him one or two *aghas* whom he recommends to the Bureau Arabe for appointment. One of the *aghas* is often his eldest son, but here again there is no rule.

The confederation of tribes is divided into subtribes, which, though they each have their own name, all belong to the main clan. These differ in numbers, but the confederation is usually composed of from ten to twenty tribes. These tribes are estimated by the numbers of tents or heads of families they contain. They each represent about two thousand people and have at their head a *caïd*. It is, moreover, interesting to note that the *bash agha* and the *aghas* belong to one of these tribes of which they are honorary chiefs.

The *caïd* is, as in the case of the *agha*, recommended by the *bash agha* to the Bureau Arabe, who, if agreeable to the recommendation, passes it on to the Governor-General for confirmation. Here, again, they try as far as possible to select the *caïds* from the same family as the *bash agha*. The appointment of the *caïd* is most important, as it is he who is in direct touch with the tribe wherever it happens to be. He is assisted in his duties by the *khaliphat*, who does all the clerical work and who acts in the place of the *caïd* when he is absent.

The *caïd's* tribe is subdivided into four or five "fractions," each under a *sheik*. The *sheik*—about whom so much fantastic literature has been written, and who, though he may be a cultivated man, is usually so by accident—has a small command, and his authority depends on his personality. He can usually neither speak nor write French, and to the casual visitor differs in no way exteriorly from the poorest shepherd in his "fraction." In fact, with the exception of a few *aghas* and *caïds* who are rich and who have come in contact with Europe, the Arab chief, with his silk-decked tent and his *smala* of glorious beauties, wielding the powers of life and death at a moment's notice, is a thing of the past. He shambles along on a rickety horse reminding one rather of the bull-ring, and he lives most of his life under a kind of awning which he calls a tent.

Since the war, the Government insists that the chiefs it appoints shall have passed the elementary standard at the local French school, but there are many *caïds* of pre-war nomination who are completely illiterate and who have never lived anywhere but in a tent. Moreover, the official power of a chief is very limited. He is merely a functionary paid by the Government to assist it in its administrative duties in the south, and with this end in view he has the support of all those in authority.

Officially this is all. Unofficially there is a great deal more power wielded in the background, power used sometimes quite unscrupulously to attain a personal end. For example, the Bureau Arabe only recognizes the *bash agha* and his subordinates. A crime occurs among the nomads, the *caïd* of the tribe concerned is notified, and he sets about making his investigations. On his report alone the Bureau Arabe will act. There are, of course, many of these men who are scrupulously honest and who carry out their duties conscientiously, but there are others who do not, and there are certainly frequent miscarriages of justice through personal reasons.

There was a case where the *agha* had a feud with a *sheik* of his tribe. The *sheik* was in the right; the *sheik* tried to make trouble for the *agha*, and appealed to the French authority. The French authority gave the *sheik* his right.

The *agha* said nothing at the time, but a few weeks later he sent the *sheik* on a mission, and while he was away he took his wife and kept her till he thought the vengeance sufficient. The *sheik* was powerless to act, as the *agha* had committed no crime in the eyes of the French law, and he knew if he made any more fuss that his life would not be safe. It is better for a nomad to keep in with his *caïd* if he does not want to lose all he has.

Of course these cases are mainly exceptions, and the average *caïd* does his duty conscientiously. There is one I know well who looks after his people so seriously that he is actually out of pocket when the end of the year comes round. The point to bring out, though, is the danger of giving too much power to people whose idea of justice is very primitive, and who in cases of vengeance are quite unscrupulous. Life and death to an Arab are less important than the evening meal, and it is difficult to say what would happen if ever they were given autonomy. It is a delicate question.

For the moment we must continue our examination of native administration.

2. *Through the Arab Functionaries*

Quite apart from the official chiefs appointed to assist the Bureau Arabe in the enforcement of the law, there are a number of functionaries who have nothing whatever to do with the French civil or military government of the country.

These functionaries exercise their duties in the north as well as in the south, wherever there are believing Mohammedans. They are appointed, of course, with the approval of the Governor-General, but they are chosen chiefly for their knowledge of Moslem laws and rites. In the north, as in the south, they are under the Arab chiefs, but their rulings on purely Arab questions are as final as those of a French civil or military court, and their religious doctrines are based on deep study of the laws of the Prophet.

They are divided into two categories. In the first are those who administer the law, in the second, those whose duties are religious. The young men who qualify for posts in the first category are those whose parents feel that they have a calling for higher things than being shepherds or laborers. While still learning the Koran by heart with the native teacher they are sent to the French school with the definite object of working. Here they are taught all elementary matters in the same way as a European child in a boarding-school, and at the age of sixteen they go up for an examination which, if they pass, gives them an entry into the Medersa.

The Medersa is a college in Algiers where the students study Mohammedan law for a period of six years. Some of those who pass carry their studies further, and go up for the examination for the French bar, but to those who are not so ambitious there are two openings. They can either become Interprètes Judiciaires—that is to say, interpreters in French courts, where Moslem law comes into contact with French law—or else they can definitely take up the Droit Musulman as a profession.

If the student merely passes out unbrilliantly, or even fails to get his diploma, he will probably become a *khodja* in a Bureau Arabe or in some other French office dealing with Arabs. His duties will be to translate into Arabic all official despatches sent out to the tribes or *douars*, and likewise to translate into French all incoming Arab documents.

A successful candidate will, however, first of all find himself appointed to the post of *adel*, a kind of superior clerk in a native lawyer's office, and from that he can rise to *bash adel*, or principal clerk. From the *bash adels* are chosen the *kadis*. The *kadis* have many functions, which in England would combine the duties of solicitor, official receiver, registrar, and judge, without the latter's power of awarding punishment.

All native cases of jurisdiction are first of all brought before the *caïds* and *aghas* of the district. If they are crimes or cases with which he can not deal by compromise, he either sends them on to the Bureau Arabe or, if they are not criminal offenses, to the *kadi*. People who require arbitration can, of course, go direct to the *kadi*, but the nomad prefers the ruling of his *caïd*. The most usual cases to come before the *kadi* are those of inheritance, lawsuits, sales of property, and family quarrels. He also marries and divorces those who wish it.

His decision is final, and even in questions between great chiefs they must either accept the *kadi's* ruling or else carry the case before the French tribunals, which is a lengthy and expensive procedure. In fact the *kadi* is the decisive factor in all native disputes, in all family matters, and in all cases which do not actually incur definite punishment.

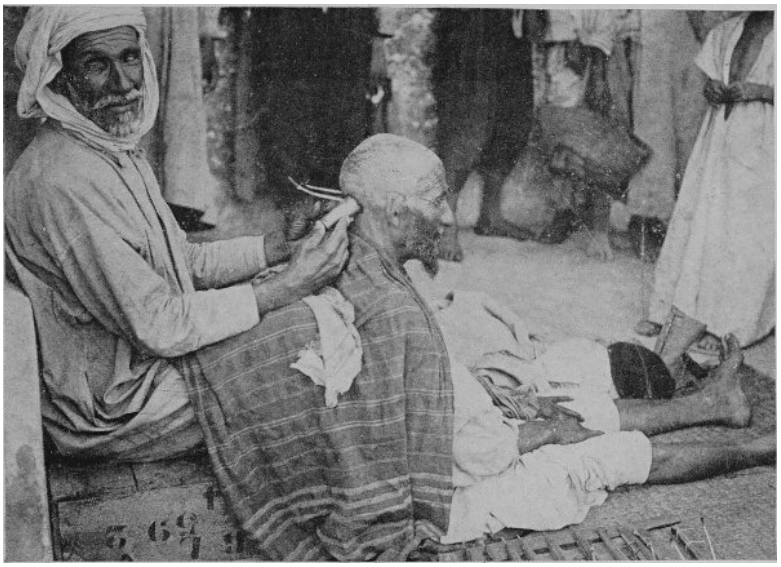
The *kadis* themselves are usually charming people, cultivated, courteous, and full of a quiet sense of humor gathered amidst the comedies and tragedies of daily life which pass before them. Many of them have a great deal of moral influence, and are instrumental in bringing about reconciliations between foolish couples and quarreling families.

There are also learned men, called *talebs*, in Mohammedan centers. These natives teach the Koran in the schools and counsel others who want advice in legal matters. They have also the important function of writing and translating documents and letters for those illiterate natives who require their services, whether it be in French or in Arabic. On the same plane as the *kadi*, but

without the same official education, are found those of the second category, mentioned above—the religious teachers.

First of all the *mufti*. The *muftis* often have had a legal education and are consulted on Mohammedan law before taking cases before the *kadi*, in the same way as in England one goes to a solicitor, but they are chiefly authorities on religious rites, and they hold official positions at the mosques. Every Friday and on feast days they preach and expound the Koran at the midday and evening prayer. Their power has greatly diminished of late but their knowledge of Mohammedan scripture is profound. In cases where there is no *mufti* the *kadi* is regarded as the authority on religious matters.

The priest of the mosque is called the *imam*. He is in charge of all religious ceremonies, and when the collective prayer is said, the faithful follow him in all the chants and movements. He is sometimes an educated man, but it is not the general rule, and one often finds the *imam* attending classes held by the *taleb* to learn how to write and speak literary Arabic. (Literary Arabic in opposition to the bastard tongue spoken in North Africa.)



An Arab Barber

Roasting the Lamb Whole

Children Bathing in a Southern Oasis

Then there is the *muezzin*, who is the verger of the mosque, and whose chief duty is to call the faithful to prayer.

There is no special costume for these different officials, but they usually wear somber or white burnouses, and one can always tell a learned man by the delicacy of his hands.

What strikes one most in all this Mohammedan administration is that it has not altered since the beginning of its creation, and that it has not been in the least degree influenced by contact with laws or customs of other countries.

Even in matters where the application of modern laws would be beneficial, such as in the question of inheritance which causes the greatest muddle imaginable, the old system of twelve hundred years ago is adhered to.

Now previously we noticed the apparent contradiction in the French administration of Algeria, which seemed to be rather overgoverned, and here we have another contradiction in the fact that these native functionaries are allowed to act with complete independence in all matters affecting

their own laws. This is one of France's wisest policies in Algeria, and it is of comparatively recent date.

At first the French did not realize the enormous importance of Islam in North Africa, but now that they have grasped it, they use their knowledge sagaciously.

The French administration of Algeria is complex, but it achieves its end, as the traveler will realize if, on marvelous roads, he traverses this immense country unmolested by the masses of wild men who live there.

I repeat again it is not the duty of a foreigner to criticize the government of another country, but merely to examine it and judge of the results.

CHAPTER VIII

MARABOUTS

STANDING alone and quite apart from the native officials just mentioned are the *marabouts*. The name is derived from the Arab word *marabet*, which originally meant one who served as a soldier in a *rebat* or fortress built on the frontier of Mohammedan countries as defense against the infidel, and which became a base of attack against Christian neighbors.

In the forts the moslem soldiers gave themselves over to acts of piety. When the days of holy war had passed the *rebats* were converted into religious buildings, and a *marabet* was, therefore, a holy man, an apostle of Mohammed.

Marabouts in North Africa are now holy men who claim direct descent from Mohammed. There are a few who by that virtue alone become *marabouts*, and it can be imagined, therefore, that there are a considerable number of these saints in Algeria. Any Arab village which respects itself has a *marabout* or two buried in the cemetery, and a great many have them living on the premises. They have no official position, and their influence depends entirely on their own personality. In some cases they are great figures wielding an enormous amount of power, which is utilized by the French Government for its own ends, and they are incidentally treated with much consideration.

On the other hand, as practically all the male children of *marabouts* inherit the title, there are many who are completely insignificant, I will even say unscrupulous and immoral, and who live on what they can make out of the poor and credulous followers of the Prophet. They are not always educated, and though they have probably studied the Koran their knowledge on other matters is very rudimentary. Many of them profess to be doctors, and though their methods are very primitive, wonderful cures have been known at their hands, chiefly owing to the faith of those treated.

They are almost all rich men, owning flocks in the sheep-breeding areas, date-palms in the far south, and extensive properties in the north. This wealth comes from the offerings of the faithful in return for blessings and prayers for their welfare.

This, of course, leads to a great deal of abuse, and there are very many of these holy men who reap in hoards of wealth which they spend on sumptuous living. Moreover, as it is supposed to be an act of grace to be in the following of a *marabout* their servants are not paid, and are practically slaves whose lives are in the hands of their master. They are beaten or punished at will with no redress, as it is rare that information leaks out officially to the French authorities, who prefer to interfere as little as possible with these holy men, whose religion seems, in their own eyes, to absolve them from all acts of unrighteousness.

They drink alcohol, they rape, they live in the utmost disorder, imposing unscrupulously on the believing faithful. If they find people who oppose them they cast spells on them or curse them into eternity, and the number of credulous folk who believe in this is extraordinary.

Some of them are good at sleight of hand and perform childish conjuring tricks which leave their followers in a state of gibbering astonishment. I remember once confounding a fairly decent type of *marabout* who conjured before me by explaining the trick. But, though he was rather upset,

I saw that the people's faith was not in the least shaken. Naturally the well-to-do Arabs of good family do not respect these law-breaking saints, and say that though their ancestry must be considered, they can not be regarded as real *marabouts*, whose lives are examples to all the faithful.

However, against these rogues there are many exceptions: men of great piety who spend a good deal of time and money in relieving the suffering of the poor, and who have devoted a great part of their existence to the study of sacred writings, while in practise they strictly follow the principles of the Koran.

All *marabouts*, disorderly or otherwise, are at the head of what is known as a *zaouia*. A *zaouia* is supposed to be a kind of retreat for men and women, but chiefly women, who are tired of worldly things. They give up all they have, be it one sheep or a large-acred property, to the *marabout*, and in return are clothed, lodged and fed for the rest of their lives in spiritual beatitude. They also have to work, tilling his land, looking after his horses, weaving carpets and burnouses, etc., the produce of their work being nominally used to raise further money to help the needy.

In the case of the conscientious *marabouts* this is done, but the practise is also a source of personal revenue to the unscrupulous. However, good and bad alike, they all have that Arab spirit of hospitality and charity, and any person, rich or poor, can always claim lodging and board with the blessing of the holy man.

The *zaouias* are occasionally a sort of seminary where young men who wish to be *muftis* or *imams* go to study, but since the creation of competitive examinations at the Medersa the pupils of the teaching *zaouias* have greatly diminished.

Occasionally one comes across female *marabouts*. As a general rule they are not much respected by the educated Arabs, and their field of action lies chiefly among the poor women who believe that they have miraculous powers to cure diseases and ward off the evil eye. These women are sometimes, though not always, the wives of *marabouts*, and they are also the children of holy men who have no sons. There have been two very notable ladies of maraboutic standing, Lalla Zineb, of El Hamel, near Bou Saada, and Lalla Aurelie Tidjani, of Aïn Mahdi, near Laghouat.

The *marabout* is married in exactly the same way as any other Arab, and if he is sufficiently wealthy he keeps a well-stocked harem. Cases occur when the sons of *marabouts* do not take on their father's title but live like ordinary citizens. There are also a few descendants of the Prophet who have never been *marabouts* because they say that their ancestors were never inspired by Heaven; but, generally speaking, the position of a holy saint is too tempting to let slip by.

I have a great friend who is a *marabout*. His name is Hadj Mohktar, and he lives at Chellala, on the rolling plain above the Sahara. He is a dignified old gentleman, about sixty years old; though like most Arabs he does not know his age. His eyes, which are piercingly black, twinkle merrily when he is amused; he has a good sense of humor and a brain far superior to that of most of his caste.

He has been twice to Mecca, but this does not stop him from drinking a glass of wine when it is offered to him. He is rich and has some of the finest flocks in North Africa.

One night, hearing that I was at the hotel, he came up to see me after dinner. I offered him some champagne, which he drank with evident pleasure. After a little preliminary talk about the prospects of sheep-breeding that year, he asked me if I would care to take a walk with him in the village. I accepted, expecting to be taken to a gathering of learned *muftis*, but to my surprise we wended our way to the reserved quarters of the native dancing-girls. Our entry into the house we

sought caused, to say the least of it, a sensation. The girls precipitated themselves towards the old man and kissed his shoulder and his turban. Cushions were brought, carpets and rugs, and a throne was made for him. I was accommodated with a stool at his feet. A tray was brought with honey cakes and milk, but the *marabout* waved it all away.

"Bring me beer," he commanded.

Beer was brought and we solemnly clinked glasses. Dancing-girls from the neighboring houses appeared and kissed his turban. A few men drifted in, but seeing who was present, discreetly disappeared.

The *marabout* turned to me solemnly and said: "In your country do you have dancing-girls as in North Africa?"

I shook my head.

"Neither did we before the French came. Your people have much wisdom," he replied. "They are Christians, are they not?"

"Yes," I said, "but there are also Jews in my country, and in our dominions there are Mohammedans and Hindus and Buddhists."

The old man's eyes fixed themselves on me.

"But are there, then, other sects than Mohammedan, Christian, and Jew?"

"Oh yes," I went on, and I tried to give him a rough outline of the other faiths of the world. He listened to me in silence.

"You are very young," he said at last, "but you have the wisdom of a great *marabout*."

He spoke no more, and sat fingering the coral beads from Mecca, deep in meditation. I sat quiet, too, contemplating the amazing scene before me. The dark blue and red carpets, the flickering candles casting grotesque shadows on the ceiling, the flaming colors of the girls' dresses as they sat in a semi-circle contemplating their noble guest, while their bracelets and anklets gleamed in the dark corners of the room.

Suddenly the old man turned to me again.

"You have a great doctor called Voronoff, have you not?" he asked.

"Well, he does not come from my country, but he is a European," I replied.

"I have studied his teaching," went on the old man. "Can he really rejuvenate the old?"

"For a short time I believe," I said, "but I have really not gone deeply into the question. Personally I do not quite see the value of being made to live beyond our appointed time."

The old man smiled.

"You are wise, but you are young. When you feel the weight of years weighing on you, you will wish again to have all your vitality, all your faculties. And yet our death is destined, and what can a human do? *Mektoub!*"

He bowed his head and seemed again lost in meditation.

"Youth fades rapidly, and old age lasts long," he said at last. Then, rising, he moved toward the door.

Outside a warm breeze struck our faces, the stars seemed large and bright in the dark heavens; over there, down the street, one could hear the deep notes of the Arab flute drawing out its plaintive tune, the rhythmical beat of the *tam-tam* struck our ears.

"They play a melody of the far south," he said. "It is very beautiful, it is very sad. The heart of the Arab dominated is sad. I will leave you. May Allah bless and keep you young long. To-morrow we will visit my flocks. *Inch Allah*."

He held out his hand, pressed mine, raised his fingers to his lips and then placed them on his breast. He flung the white burnous over his shoulder and disappeared into the night.

The note of the flute drifted up with the wind, and I walked back to the hotel with a feeling of great peace of mind.

CHAPTER IX

THE ARAB CHARACTER

BEFORE studying a country and its people it is essential to endeavor to arrive at some conclusion regarding that people's character.

All nations have their outstanding characteristics, characteristics which will always make it so difficult to carry out the ideals of the Bolshevik or even to make efficacious the worthy efforts of the League of Nations.

The Briton, adventurous, conservative, law-abiding; the Frenchman with his horizon and ambitions limited by his home and his family circle, his thrifty instincts, his sentimental patriotism; the German, persevering and disciplined, believing only in himself—give us at once well defined mentalities. The man in the street knows this, the most advanced idealist can not deny it, so that the various nations of Europe remain, as hitherto, defined nations.

It is not possible, however, to say this of the Arab, for though the words *Inch Allah*, (If God wills it), is the main doctrine of the Mohammedan, it is not absolutely Arab. In the first place, who are the Arabs? A race originating in Arabia is the obvious and not entirely erroneous reply. But the Arab is more than this, for since Mohammed appeared and made of his nomad followers a great force the race has passed through a great many evolutions.

There is not space in this book to write a long treatise on this subject, but to those whom this matter interests let me recommend the works of Lothrop Stoddard and Gustave le Bon.

For the moment we are dealing mainly with the character of the Arab of Algeria, or rather the character of the real Arab of the South, and not that of the Europeanized waster one meets in the big centers, or of the effeminate and overcivilized chiefs one sees at tourist-infested centers such as Biskra and Bou Saada.

With few exceptions those men have lost all their fundamental principles and are but the apes of a rather poor class of European. The real Arab of the South belongs to a race to himself, and in spite of this very definite personality his character is difficult to study to any satisfactory conclusion.

Those who have attempted the task will put forward various reasons for this difficulty, but I am certain that the main obstacle is the way in which the question is envisaged.

It is out of the question to try to look at this people from any Western standpoint, utterly impossible because the whole of the conception of life is different from ours. In Europe and America of to-day it is the laws which follow the evolution of the people. As the races become more emancipated, more educated, they require new laws to suit the new conditions of life. Among the Arabs it is the reverse.

Mohammed made the laws, laws which were good and which in many cases remain good, but it must be remembered that they were more applicable to the days of the Arab splendor than to the daily life of the Faithful in the twentieth century.

How can one then attempt to look at these people as having any sort of relationship with us, how can we place ourselves in their position and look through their eyes? It is impossible.

All that we can do, if bent on this study, is to live among them and try to understand their reasoning. This I have attempted to do, and the conclusions I have drawn are set down here for what they may seem worth.

The Arab is primarily before all the world a man of great calm and dignity. His dignified walk down the street in his long robes is typical of his attitude in both private and public life. I have heard the foolish remark:

"Well, he could not hurry anyway in those cumbersome clothes!"

Perhaps not, but has an Arab ever been seen to hurry with his meals, with his prayers, with his ablutions? Does an Arab ever break into a trot or a canter when riding without some definite object of winning a race or hunting game? Never. The Arab eats, prays, washes, rides as slowly as he walks; the humblest shepherd will look dignified while some millionaire sheep-merchant shouts and gesticulates over the price of a ewe.

After his dignity we notice his courtesy. An Arab is never rude deliberately. He may be insincere and say what he thinks will please, but he will endeavor not to jar on any one's sensitiveness.

His temper is quick where honor is concerned, and he will strike with the knife or shoot with the gun if the matter deserves his attention.

His hospitality is proverbial. No one coming to his house at the hour of a meal will be left waiting; rich man or poor man, relative or infidel, he will be asked to come in to share the repast. There are many chiefs I know who never sit down less than twelve to dinner year in, year out, and usually the number is more like twenty.

Charity and fraternal equality, being the chief principles of the Koran, are carried out rigorously. A beggar is never turned away empty handed, no man is despised because he is poor or not of a great family; at the same time those men well-born are very proud of their names and titles, and will tell you at length all about their lineage. One of the questions the chiefs always ask one when meeting some European is:

"Is he, or she, of good family?"

Often and again has my friend and partner in sheep-breeding said, referring to my lonely life in the oasis:

"What you ought to do is to return to England and marry somebody well-born, somebody we can know."

The arrogance of it! And yet there is not the slightest tone of superiority in the statement. It is a foregone conclusion that I must realize that they could not have some one sharing their intimacy who was not a lady by birth.

"All that counts is the blood," is another of their favorite phrases; "we are all brothers, but it is the great families who give the example to the less fortunate."

With this, however, they are very simple in their tastes. It is true that they enjoy putting on their scarlet burnouses smothered in decorations for official parties, and that they have a very extensive wardrobe, but they get tired of their finery in a few hours and return gladly to their more simple daily dress. Their life at home is not at all sumptuous. Few sleep in beds, practically none

eat with knives and forks, and the meals, though sometimes lengthy, are all homely dishes cooked by their womenfolk.

Generally speaking, laziness is predominant in the Arab. A few work very hard, but they are in a great minority. The remainder do nothing which is not necessary for their livelihood, and those who are obliged to earn their daily bread just earn it and no more. This is partly due to the climate and partly to the precept of the Koran, which forbids man to provide for the future as, in so doing, he will lack faith in the infinite power of God alone.

Sportsmen they all are—loving a gun and a horse more than anything else in the world, and ready for any form of hunting.

These, roughly, are the good points in their character, and we must perforce turn to the other side of the picture. To the uninitiated the calm mask of haughty indifference which characterizes their faces conceals a great deal of Oriental wisdom. I do not think this is the case. From an intellectual point of view the Arab is densely stupid, very ill-read and utterly inartistic. With an Arab of good upbringing there are two subjects which he can discuss—religion and sport. If he is interested in business he will talk about his own particular line but nothing else. They have not heard of the most world-famed authors. Shakespeare, Goethe, Voltaire, are not even names to them except when they happen to have been applied to streets which they have frequented.

Music outside their own is an unknown quantity; pictures other than photographs of people they know do not exist. All that which counts for us in the literary, musical, artistic world is as complete a blank to them as a Babylonian cuneiform to an able seaman.

It is staggering sometimes to realize their ignorance. Even those who have been to the French Lycée do not seem to have absorbed anything beyond reading, writing, arithmetic and a little geography. And yet they travel abroad. They go to France, some go to England and Switzerland, and what do they bring back? A recollection of streets and people and race-meetings and gaming-tables.

"*Un point, c'est tout!*"

I think that the appellation of "Wise Men of the East" as it applies to Arabs must come from their profound knowledge of the Koran and its precepts, which in many ways imbues them with utterances of some depth and of a veiled meaning.

I do not say that they would be better off if they had all our Northern learning; probably not. I merely set down what is a fact about the reverse side of the impenetrable mask!

In business the Arab is honest if it is worth while. That is to say, the poor and uneducated shopman or pedler will cheat as much as possible, but the well-to-do merchant or landowner will not risk his name to gain a little more unless he is quite sure of passing undetected. This, however, applies in some degree to most races.

The nomads in their sheep deals are usually quite straight.

The Arab has a sense of humor and will tell a good story; he will lie when required, but it is very rare to find one who will do so on oath with his hand on the Koran.

One side of the Arab is rather unpleasant, and let it be said at once that it applies more to those who have come in contact with Europeans than to others. I refer to their dealings with European women. Their own are sacred subjects not to be mentioned, whose names and position are respected, but the European woman, and chiefly American and English women, do not share the same regard. This again is greatly due to the foolish attitude of a minority of Anglo-Saxon women

who come to the country and are carried away by the glamour of the surroundings, by the starlit nights and the graceful robes of their admirers. If only they could see these men, as I have sometimes in Europe, in bowler hats, they would shudder at the contrast. Now they only see them in their robes under the African sky and—well, they fall very easily.

The only altercation I have had with my Arab friends has been on this subject. A common remark one often hears is:

"*Oh, les Anglaises!*" or "*Oh, les Americaines!*" and a knowing wink. French women and Italian have not this reputation, and what is so lamentable is that through the fact of a few of our race acting in this way, believing they are far from home and unnoticed, these morals are attributed to us in general.

There is little else to add about the Arab; some of these remarks have been elaborated in subsequent chapters, other points dealing with the superstitious side of the character have been raised.

One little story to illustrate the childish side of their nature seems appropriate here:

I was sitting one evening some years ago in the Casino at Biskra with a *caïd* friend of mine. As we sat sipping our coffee an Englishwoman, whom I knew vaguely, came in, and the *caïd* pointed her out to me excitedly, asking many questions about her. I gave him all the information I could, and it then transpired that he was deeply in love with her, but that as she could not speak any French their conversation was somewhat limited. He sat for a while and then, turning, asked me rather diffidently if I would teach him a few words which would express to the object of his passion all he felt.

I was rather amused at his anxious tone and laughingly gave him the following formula:

"I love you.

"Kiss me.

"Forgive me.

"Forget me."

He repeated it again and again until he had got it quite fixed in his mind, and then left me, presumably to offer it to the lady. I did not see my friend again nor the lady, so I do not know how the courtship, based on my nine words, fared, but one day some years after this incident I was reading a novel, written also long after the little English lesson, by an author who could not have known of the incident; the scene was laid at Biskra; a fictitious *agha* was speaking:

. . . "I am learning English," he said gently; "tell me, please, if my pronunciation is correct." And in a curiously indefinable accent he proceeded to recite the little set piece that some one had mischievously taught him:

"Love me.

"Kiss me.

"Forgive me.

"Forget me." . . .[1]

The Arab mind had learned nothing more, but he had kept that sentence fixed in his brain to repeat when the opportunity presented itself!

They are all children, delightful children who never grow up.

Twelve hundred years ago they came to Algeria with their customs and their clothes and their sheep, and they are still in the same place with the same customs and the same clothes and the same breed of sheep. And, *Inch Allah*, they will be there in the same way when Jesus comes to judge the faithful.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Quotation from *Make Believe*, by Clare Sheridan.

CHAPTER X

LIFE AMONG THE ARABS

We must now turn our attention to the inner life among the Arabs, to their customs, to their religious observances; and though it is always difficult for a foreigner, and especially a foreigner in a Mohammedan country, really to see the life as lived by its people, it is believed that sufficient intimacy has been developed between the author and the Arabs to give a very accurate picture of what goes on among them.

The word "Arab" will be used, as it is not intended in this chapter to touch again on the subject of the pure Berber, mentioned before; neither is it considered necessary to mention the Europeanized natives who have adapted themselves to a great extent to the life of the big commercial towns of the north and who are all in favor of the Young Turk Movement and the modernizing of the excellent systems handed down to them by their ancestors.

These pages will be devoted to the average Arab household living either in the native quarters of the smaller *communes mixtes*, in the farms or away in the southern oases and under the tent in the Sahara.

The first thing which strikes one very forcibly is the extraordinary respect shown to the head of the family. It is usual for a great many people of one family to live in the same house, but it is only the head who counts. Moreover, among the nomads the *caïd* of the tribe estimates his people by heads of families. In the home the father reigns supreme; he usually has his meals apart or with his eldest son. In some cases there are three groups of diners, the chief with the older men and the guests, the sons and their friends, and the retainers. The food is brought in and placed before the first group, who eat what they want, then it is passed to the second group, and finally to the third. After dinner the older men talk and laugh and smoke, but the younger men will either sit quiet or, if they want to talk and smoke, they will go outside. In the presence of the head of the family the younger generation show the utmost deference; it is unusual for them to sit down when in conversation with their father, and they never smoke in his presence.

If a dinner-party is being given and some light or inappropriate subject of conversation is brought up in the presence of the father and son, the son will endeavor to change the subject or even leave the room. Apart they will tell as good a story as any one, but together it is not considered respectful. Should a chief come into a café with friends, and a younger member of the family happen to be there, the latter will leave immediately so as to lay no restraint on the older man. Many is the time when Europeans, ignorant of all this etiquette, have asked a party of Arabs to dinner and have suddenly found that four or five of the party have not put in an appearance. The host may be hurt, he may be puzzled, but the solution of the riddle is easy—those four or five guests have found out that one of the party was a senior man with whom they could not sit down at table.

In return for all this the head of the family looks after the whole of the welfare of his descendants, and any relatives are welcome to eat and reside in his house or tent as long as they like.

By nature the Arab is very easy-going. Even the shopkeepers do not worry people to buy, and will often tell a customer that the article he requires is not stocked rather than interrupt a conversation with a friend over the counter. Their prices are usually rather vague, and bargaining is quite normal, the result of the deal depending a great deal on the mood of the shopkeeper. If the deal is not brought off there is no ill-feeling, and the customer will often be asked to come in and drink a cup of tea.

The very poor people, and there are a great many, live on charity and the wages of odd jobs, but it is amazing to see how body and soul hang together with practically no clothes or substantial nourishment.

Their occupations and pastimes are varied. They are either landowners in the northern districts, or sheep-farmers and date-growers in the south—all very profitable occupations and the source of great fortunes quite unsuspected by the visitor. In their leisure they ride and hunt with falcons, and shoot; they enjoy horse-racing and everything to do with riding, and though a great many of them have motor-cars they consider them merely as conveniences, and the greatest ambition of a young Arab is to own a horse.

As in all Oriental countries, European vices become exaggerated, and once a native starts gambling or drinking he does little else.

Otherwise their existence is very simple, and the way they spend their days is adapted to nature and very healthy. An Arab gets up early and also quickly. This is due to two reasons. The first is that he does not usually sleep in a bed, but on a rug on the floor with another rug over him; the second is that he does not wash on rising, and he very often goes to sleep in his clothes. How many times have I been away in out-of-the-way places with Arab friends, either shooting or attending sheep-markets; coffee has been ordered for five A. M. They have somehow vaguely wakened me at four-forty-five, and at four-fifty-five my companions have appeared, all dressed, to ask why I wasn't ready! And my reply has always been the same:

"Because I have a strange and curious habit of undressing when I go to bed and of shaving when I rise." And it *is* considered a strange and curious habit. But that does not mean that these Arabs are dirty in their persons—far from it. Before and after meals they wash their hands and faces, before their prayers they do the same; sometimes they take a bath. Regularly once a week they go to the *hammam*, or steam bath, where there is an unlimited quantity of hot water, and where they wash from head to foot, and there is nothing cleaner than washing in a Turkish bath. Moreover, there are first-rate masseurs who for a moderate fee take pounds of fat off the patient in an hour.

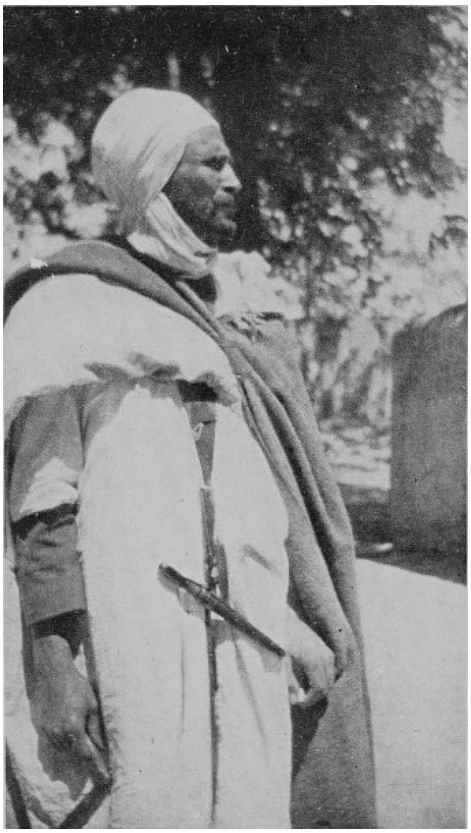
What I have never been able to discover is how often the average Arab changes his underclothing. The exterior dress is often sent to the laundry and I have an idea that in many cases the change is made four times a year, at the various seasons. Speaking of clothes, it may perhaps interest the reader to know of what an Arab's garments consist:

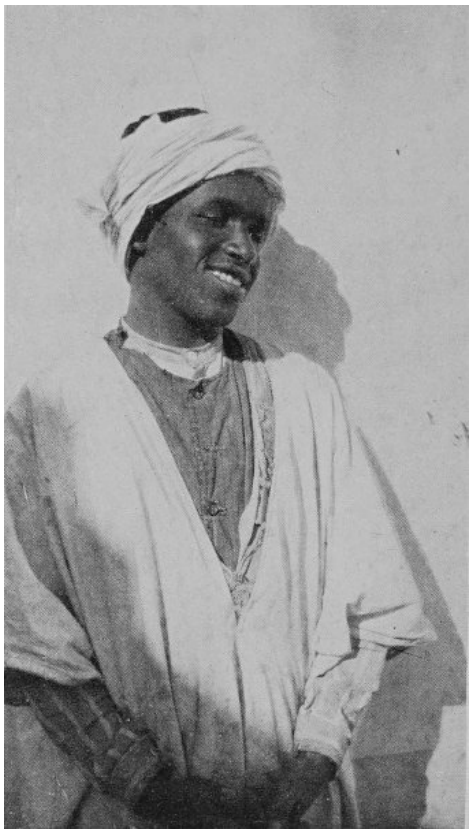
Next to the skin there is a shirt; there are socks, there are sometimes drawers, a pair of baggy trousers and leather slippers, rather like unfinished pumps and not embroidered as may be supposed. Embroidery on shoes is considered effeminate and can only be worn on the long red boots used for riding. Over the shirt is usually a sweater and over that a jacket; it may be a smart embroidered affair with many buttons, or it may be a simple tunic, or it may be a European coat, but it does not matter much as it is entirely covered by the *gandourah*, which is like a long white nightgown with a low neck, made of wool or silk or cotton.

On the head is a turban which consists of three separate pieces—the *gannoure*, which is the high framework made of felt on which is placed the *chech*, which entirely covers it, surrounds the face, covers the neck, and is tucked away inside the coat. Round the *chech* is wound either a band of silk or else the camel's hair cords, known as *khiete*. The origin of the wearing of cords was for the purpose of always having a rope handy to attach to any receptacle to draw water from the wells in the Sahara.

Over the whole thing the Arab wears one or two burnouses. These are long cloaks with a hood and are made of wool, camel's hair, silk or cloth. The poor shepherd possesses only a woolen or camel's hair cloak, but the well-to-do chief has in addition to his rough burnous for country wear one made of silk over which he wears one of blue or green or maroon cloth embroidered with silver or gold. It is a most convenient garment, as in winter it keeps the wearer warm and the hood pulled over the turban protects him from rain. Moreover, when it gets hot one or both burnouses can be removed. At night they take the place of rugs or blankets.

During the morning the Arab will go about his business either in the town or out on the plain. If he is at home he will eat a light lunch at eleven-thirty, but this is not an important meal, and out on the Sahara he will content himself with a piece of bread and some milk. Time to an Arab is a very vague convention once he has got up. At first it exasperates the European who has been brought up to regular habits, but one realizes little by little that one's exasperation is a complete mystery to them, and one gives up worrying about punctuality. It is very annoying sometimes when one has made all one's plans to begin a long excursion early in the morning to find the start fixed for noon, or to invite a lot of men for dinner at seven-thirty and find some arrive at six-thirty, some at eight-thirty, and some not at all!

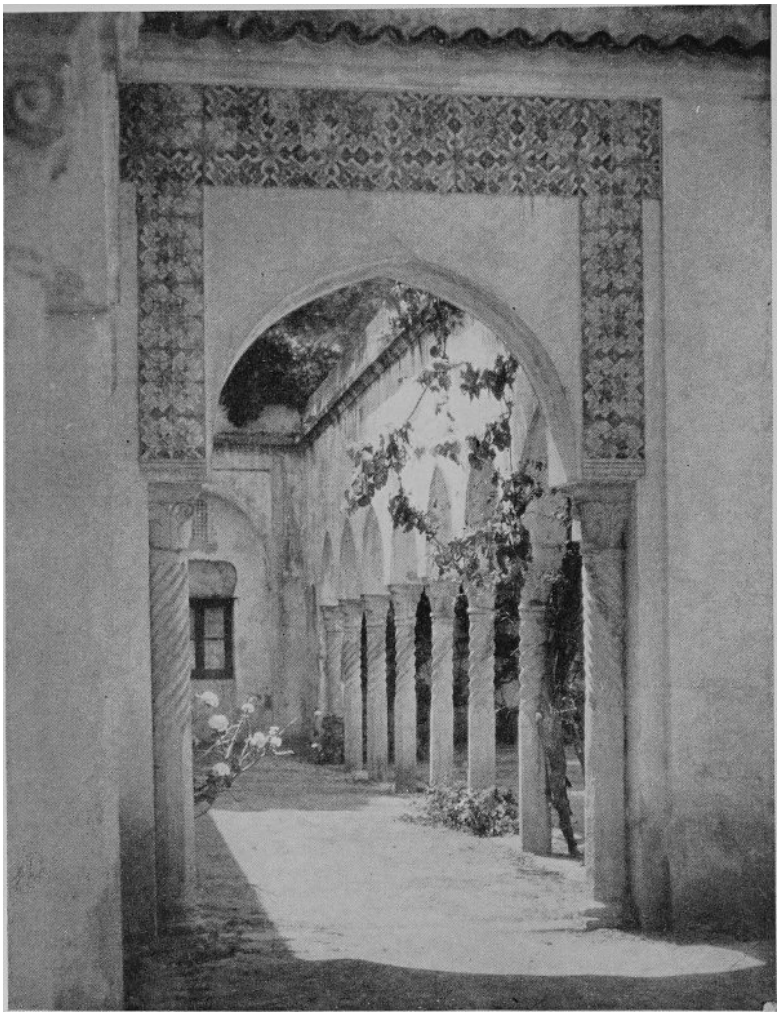




Photographs by Mr. Julian Sampson

A "Propriétaire"

Numidian Type: Musician of a Marabout



A Moorish Villa

That is another custom which it takes a long time to understand, and one is left hurt that people invited do not arrive, and often do not even make an excuse or consider that one is necessary. It comes from the fact that in all their houses dinner is always going for a dozen or so of people, and one more or less does not count. Every one sits down when the meal is ready, and no one troubles to count the guests. Of course this does not apply to a regular invitation to dinner made with the definite purpose of meeting some one or listening to music; in cases like that no one would dream of being discourteous. At the same time it is very rare for an Arab definitely to accept or refuse an invitation. To your request that he will take a meal with you to-morrow he will reply, *"Inch Allah"*—"If God wills it"!

Against this, if you are on friendly terms with the Arabs, you can arrive about meal time—no surprise will be shown, and you will squat down and share the meal as if it were your daily habit.

In the same way, if some man came in to see one about six-thirty in the evening he would expect to be asked to dine, which is often awkward in a European household.

If the Arab has eaten a midday meal he will probably sleep for an hour after, and then continue doing what he has to. About six-thirty comes the dinner, and this meal is important. There is always the highly spiced soup with pieces of meat floating about, usually another dish of meat and vegetables, and always the *kous-kous*, with more meat. They drink water or milk, for even those who are in the habit of taking wine and spirits rarely do so in their own houses if Europeans are not there. After dinner they drink their mint tea or coffee, and friends come in to see them, or they go out themselves and sit in the shops or cafés and drink more tea, and talk and laugh until it is time to go to bed.

Their meals are eaten on the floor. They keep a kind of narrow mattress on which they sit, and the dishes are placed on a small table about a foot high known as a *maïda*. A common napkin some eight feet long is placed on their knees all round the circle. All the food, except the soup and sometimes the *kous-kous*, is eaten with the hand, and before the meal and after, soap and warm water are carried round and every person washes his hands and face. It is said that these ablutions bring prosperity. There are usually no glasses, and a common mug is handed round from which sips are taken.

Of course, when receiving guests of note, or Europeans, the meal is much more sumptuous, and among the Europeanized chiefs there is a gaudy dining-room kept for the friends from over the seas. Crockery of all kinds is produced, knives and forks, a jumble of wines and a general atmosphere of inconsequent confusion. But the meal is excellent, though sometimes a trifle long.

This is an average menu for a short dinner:

> *Chorba*. Soup with vermicelli, highly spiced.
> *Bourak*. Mutton minced with mint and sage, rolled up in a light pastry—this is a kind of sausage roll.
> *Leham Lalou*. A kind of mutton stew in a dark sauce, cooked with prunes and sweet almonds. The words mean sweetmeat.
> *Mechoui*. The lamb roasted and served whole. Even to Europeans no knives or forks are issued, and it must be torn to pieces with the hands.
> *Kous-kous*. Looks like semolina and is made of hard wheat kneaded into tiny round balls and steamed. With it is served a kind of vegetable soup called *marga*, a highly spiced sauce, and often mutton or chicken. There are countless varieties of *kous-kous* varying according to localities.
> *Heloua*. Sweets and cakes made of flour and honey and almond paste and orange water.

There are many other alternative dishes; game often appears, but as a general rule the *chorba*, the *mechoui*, and the *kous-kous* are *de rigueur* for the set dinner. In the place of the sheep there may occasionally appear a gazelle, and if an Arab wants to show his deepest respect for you he will serve a baby camel roasted whole. But this is very rare.

Generally speaking, therefore, the Arab's life is very simple and peaceful. He is courteous and hospitable, a rather lazy country gentleman, not very intelligent, but wiser and more philosophical than many Europeans on problems of daily life. Men who lay tremendous stress on points of honor, and who rarely forgive an injustice or an insult, disliking any sort of encroachment by non-Mohammedans, they have drifted into inertia behind the precepts of the Koran.

“What Allah has destined will occur, so why worry?”

CHAPTER XI

ARAB WOMEN

HAVING now cast a cursory glance over the life of the Arab man, let us look into the inner life of the homestead—that is to say, the life of the women, of the children, and of the servants. Placing them in the same category does not in the least suggest that the Arab woman is in any way a slave. Far from it. This is quite a fallacy, which must be added to the list of legends to be dispelled in this book.

With the exception of the Kabyles, the women in Algeria have almost as many rights as the men. They are, of course, not nearly so free as European women, and they are often obliged to share the home with other wives, but, as they have been brought up to know no other mode of living, they do not wish for anything else.

We will take as an example the life of an Arab girl belonging to a respectable family of moderate means. The daughters of the family when little girls will help their mother in the household duties, accompany her when she goes out, learn to cook and to weave and all the duties of a good housewife. Sometimes they are sent to the convent of the White Sisters, where they earn a little money and are taught to make carpets on regular lines. The Sisters will give them a rudimentary education, but it will only take the form of lectures on morality and hygiene. It is very, very rare to find an Arab girl who can read or write. As soon as she reaches a marriageable age offers will be made to her father by the fathers of eligible young men, and if any union seems opportune terms will be discussed.

Apart from guaranteeing the bride a home, with enough to live on, it is usual for the bridegroom's parents to pay a sum down and for the bridegroom to give his bride a trousseau, while she in return will bring a dowry of a few household goods and golden jewelry—family heirlooms, which may be of great value. When all is arranged the date of the marriage is fixed, and up to the actual first contact bride and bridegroom will not see each other. The young man however often sends his female relatives to inspect the young woman and to report on her appearance. The wedding lasts for seven days and is conducted at the girl's home and at the man's. For a week the bride's mother will entertain all her friends and the friends of her daughter, while the bridegroom is giving parties to his companions. After the formality of going to the *kadi* the husband has access to the bride. She is brought to his house and let into a room where he is hiding behind the curtains or under the bed. When she is alone he suddenly leaps out and seizes her. This is the first time they meet face to face.

After a quarter of an hour or so an old woman comes in, makes an examination, and informs the assembled guests that the marriage has been consummated, and cries of joy are uttered and the newly married couple separate. It is not until the end of the feast that the husband and wife live entirely together. Once she is with her husband she sets about making his home comfortable. If they are well off she will keep a female servant to do all the rough work such as sweeping and polishing, but the preparing of the meal is always done by her. The food is carried by her to her husband, and he eats alone. She has her meals apart or with the other wives.

In the case where a man is already married the new wife, though she may be the husband's favorite, will take a secondary place with the other wives, who will give her all the odd jobs to do.

If she is tactful she will be nice to them, and if she is clever she will get her husband into her hands and make him dispose of the other wives. As a matter of fact, this sort of intrigue is getting rare. In the first place, polygamy is on the decline; this is due partly to the contact of soldiers with the European method of living during the war, and partly from reasons of economy. In cases where the first wife is getting old—and Arab women get old very quickly—she is often glad to have a young wife as a help.

In the homes of well-to-do Arabs the women are kept under lock and key, and they practically never go out for a walk. They will be taken for drives in closed carriages or motors, and occasionally they will pay visits at nights to their women friends, but they go heavily veiled and accompanied by many attendants. Once a week they go to the Turkish bath, and once a week to the cemetery. Sometimes among the poorer class the women are forced to go out to do their shopping, but they are veiled from head to foot, and even this is rare, as the husband usually does the marketing on his way to and from work.

All this caution, however, does not prevent intrigue and infidelity, which is facilitated by old women and friends. A visit to another girl is arranged, the visit is made, but there is another exit, and the woman goes to see her lover. Unfortunately this is also becoming common among unmarried girls who escape the supervision of their parents.

However, in really good families the women are usually straight, and they know, moreover, how to keep their husbands. In fact, the wife is very much the mistress in her own home, and she lets her man have just enough liberty and no more.

The laws of divorce are very broad, and are on an equality for men and for women. The first case for separation is that of the couple who, after three days of marriage, go before the *kadi* and ask for their release, because they realize that they can't stand the sight of each other. In this case they each take back what they gave and return to their respective homes free, and shortly marry again.

The other main bases for divorce are the same as in Europe, but there are also excuses which make things much easier than with us. For instance, if a woman complains that her husband is out every night and does not come home till midnight or so, the *kadi* will pronounce the necessary decree. In this case the wife keeps all the man has given her, and he also pays the eleven francs which is the fee for dissolution of marriage. A man gets his divorce at once if he finds that his bride is not the *pure jeune fille* he supposed her to be. This entails many complications and family feuds, but, as it is hard to prove, it is usually allowed to go by. There are cases of divorce after long years of marriage, and there are cases of the reunion of divorced parties who have lived separated for long.

The main point to realize is the facility of getting judicially separated, and the fact that the woman has just as many rights as the man.

Of course the life the wife leads if she is humble and docile is not very amusing. In addition to cooking she must weave burnouses and carpets, either for the home or, if they are poor, for sale, and the man, having the position of lord and master before the world, takes advantage of his wife's docility if he can. But then this happens in Europe!

As a matter of fact, the Arab man is not a bully, and one notices that whenever he goes to the sheep and cattle markets he always buys something for his wife, and with his children he is very kind and thoughtful.

The wives of the nomads lead very much the same life as their sisters in the towns, the only difference being that they do not veil themselves when out in the plain.

It is not permitted for a woman to go to the mosque, and it is unusual for them to say their prayers—in fact, their ignorance of anything outside the homestead is complete. It is perhaps because of this that they make good wives and do not hanker after the supposed joys of the great world.

There is one flaw in all this peaceful life, and that is the state of widowhood. When the husband dies the woman has nothing, unless she has been allowed to put money aside herself or has property of her own. She may be the wife of a *marabout* or of an *agha*—the moment she is a widow she loses all her status. There are three alternatives open to her. The first is to go on living with her sons, if they are big enough to keep her; the second to return to her family or to that of her husband, if they are alive and willing; or thirdly, to marry again. In well-to-do families the first two alternatives are the most followed, but the third is not common, as, though, curiously enough, a man will marry a divorced girl, he rarely mates himself with a widow.

Of course, if the woman has independent means it is a different story; but this is rare, and if none of the above openings are possible her fate is very sad. A lone woman is regarded as having no position, and she must at once make one for herself. Here again she has three further alternatives: to enter the local *zaouia*, where she practically becomes the slave of the *marabout* and lives the rest of her life weaving and working in this kind of convent; or, if she prefers it, she can become a servant; or, as a last resource, enter the ranks of the dancing-girls in the reserved quarter. In fact, if she has no occupation and no house of her own, the French authorities force her to take up her residence in that special part of the town.

But, except in these particular cases, the Arab woman is not the bond-slave of the man, and I have no doubt that the majority are much happier than many European wives. It is, of course, very difficult to get any definite information about all this, as it is against the laws of etiquette to mention Arab women to their men. The above facts have been gathered by little bits of talk here and there with intimate friends, who have now and then voluntarily unburdened their hearts, by talks to some of the rare few of the older generation who have traveled a great deal and who don't mind airing their views, and by actual contact with respectable married women. Of this the less said the better, as such meetings were strictly against all the laws of propriety, and were contrived by friendly intrigues.

Secrecy about the womenfolk is so great that the stranger is not even allowed to hear the sound of their voices, and I have stayed with an Arab chief for a week, where we were eighteen to dinner every night, and where there must have been twenty women and as many children in the same house, and I never heard a sound which suggested female presence. Even in the Sahara, where the women are only divided from the men by a rug hung across the center of the tent, I have passed the night, and only realized that women were present when a child cried and its mother hushed it.

Some Arab chiefs allow European women to visit their wives, but it is not very interesting. They can't speak a word of French, and they sit staring at the visitor with curious eyes, and touch her clothes to see how they are woven and put on. Occasionally one meets with women who have been to Europe, but, with few exceptions, they regret their ventures and are glad to return.

There is one famous case of an Arab girl who drifted away from the South, crossed the sea, and eventually found herself in Paris, where she started dancing. She had an instantaneous success, and in a short time had visited London and New York, acclaimed wherever she went. It would be too long to go into all her adventures—suffice it to say that she was courted by all, that she met all

kinds of interesting people; dressed in the smartest frocks, and lived on a lavish scale. One day she returned to Laghouat and she remained six months; during those six months she lived again as an Arab, then she went back to Paris, but it was too late. The South had seized her, her people had clutched her heart again, and she could no longer keep away.

She returned to her home in the oasis. Nothing will now make her return to Europe, and she says that the only possible life for a woman is to be married to a nice Arab and shut up. The last time I saw her she was sitting on the floor of a roughly furnished room, barefooted, eating *kous-kous* with her hands out of the same bowl with her servants!

CHAPTER XII

ARAB LOVE AND THE WOMEN OF THE RESERVED QUARTER

By bracketing these two subjects together I do not wish it to be supposed that in Algeria the two are synonymous, though curiously enough there is none of that sordid atmosphere which is associated with women of easy morals in Europe. It is generally believed that the Arab man is a brute who uses women only for his pleasure, and that the Arab woman is a piece of furniture and accepts the situation. It is another legend.

There are few men in the world who are such ardent lovers as the Arabs, and few women who know as well the art of holding a man and making him dance to her tune. The Arab goes quite mad when he is in love, and forsakes his home and his people to lead the life of a lone savage. In the meanwhile the object of his adoration is laughing at him coldly, without the smallest emotion and without any encouragement. The lover can continue performing the utmost follies—the woman won't flinch if she doesn't love him.

The moment she does it is quite a different matter. Her love dominates all, and she becomes the adorer of her man. And yet in the midst of all this adoration her woman's instinct never leaves her, and if she feels that the man is taking her as a habit she just slips off and leaves him to wonder if he is standing on his head or on his heels. Many succeed by this method in keeping their husbands for ever. If a man has a mistress she will in no way mix up in his family life, but at the same time she will be respected by him and by his friends as if she were his wife, provided she remains shut up. Generally speaking, however, this is rare, and a man's mistress either lives in the reserved quarter or keeps open house at her lover's expense. Under these circumstances, though she may have a few women friends, they are not of the best class, and even the men who visit her house will only do so under cover of darkness.

The reader will at once ask:

"With polygamy, why is there any necessity for mistresses?"

I suppose it is the spirit of adventure, the desire for forbidden fruit, which characterizes all intrigues of this kind, but it is also the attitude of the woman who does not want to bind herself and prefers her free life until the day she is too old to enjoy it. Arab women are very capricious, and they love to have the man dancing attendance on them, bringing them presents, and never really the master of his own reason.

This atmosphere can only be created in an irregular situation, for once she is his wife she has certain obligations and his authority counts. Arab women are more than capricious, they are heartless as long as they do not love. Certain European women are too, but never to the extent of the Arabs. They will keep some infatuated man hanging about them with just the hope of favors for months, even for years. If they see that he is taking a pull at himself they will give him just sufficient encouragement to haul him back, and then drop him again into the depths of despair. And if the poor chap goes mad or ruins himself it is treated as a triumph—another conquest.

But once in love the Arab woman is quite a different being, and her devotion is without end. I have known a woman who had riches, houses, position, adulation by men of note, everything a lovely woman could desire, give up everything she had for a man she loved and live with him in a

state of complete poverty, with just enough but no more. Before that man came into her life all were fair play to her, and her moral scruples did not exist. After she had met that man all the millions in the world would not take her from his side.

Women all the world through are capricious, and swayed by their whims, and it is by these traits that the skilful ones cause men to make fools of themselves. The art is dying out in England, and is on the wane in France, but in Algeria it is at its height, and sorry is the lot of the unwary one who inadvertently falls in love with an Arab girl who does not return his love.

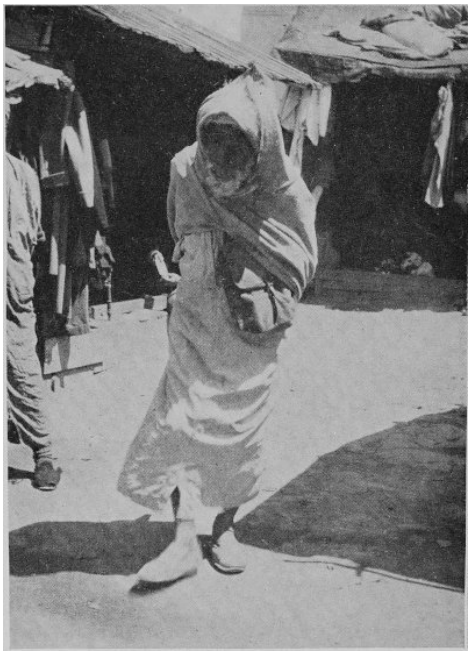
Though the same characteristics apply to the women of the reserved quarter, it is not quite the same thing.

First of all, a few words about this part of the Arab town. It is, of course, a creation of the French, as it is against all the laws of the Koran for a man to live with any woman who is not married to him legally or who is not a recognized concubine. In fact, it is to avoid this that polygamy was instituted. However, with the French conquest French civilization had to come too, and the *Quartier* was created, primarily for the troops.

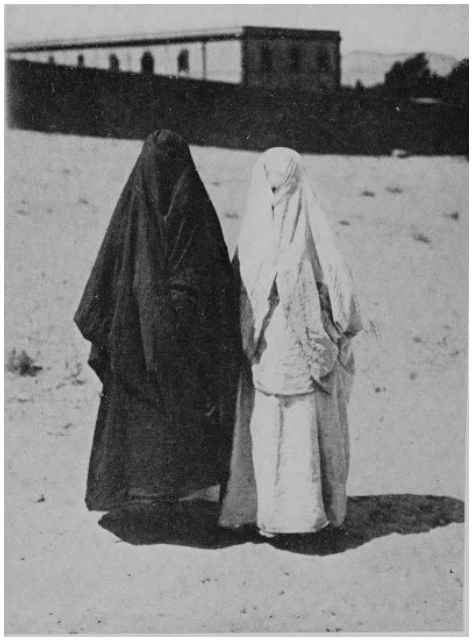
It is usually walled in, and entered by a single door which is guarded by a sentry. Inside there is quite a little city—shops, cafés, miniature squares, where the dancing takes place in the summer. The women have their little apartments, where they receive their friends to drink tea and give little dinner-parties. It is an atmosphere of frank gaiety quite impossible to realize without seeing it. Some of them have their babies with them, others live with their mothers. The majority of the inmates are of the tribe of the Ouled Naïl, but there are, of course, many girls from the local tribes too, the great difference being that those who come from the Ouled Naïl are not in any way lowering their prestige by living this life. They have come with the full consent of their parents, and one day they may leave and honorably marry. It depends a great deal on the dowry. In the old days the girls always tried to collect gold pieces, which they strung into necklaces, and one saw a woman all dressed up and her neck weighed down with hundred-franc and twenty-franc pieces. Now that gold is no longer current in France the women convert all the notes they have into bits of gold, which they have beaten into bracelets and ear-rings and tiaras. Some of them manage to buy hoarded collections of gold pieces to make into necklaces, while others have inherited them from their mothers.

However, the main point is to have the dowry in gold actually on the person, so that there is no danger of its depreciating in value, and when the girls leave the quarter to go to some private party in order to dance, they are accompanied by a constable and by a soldier with a rifle. The result of this system of buying gold has, of course, made the girls very rich. Paper currency has depreciated, so that a hundred-franc piece sells for a high price, and the money, though not fructifying in actual interest, is a capital ever increasing in value.

Of course these jewels are not common only to the girls of the Quarter; all Arab women strive to have as much jewelry as possible, but naturally they have other expenses to consider, whereas a girl of the Quarter invests all she has in jewels, and keeps only a small proportion of her earnings to buy her frocks.



An Arab Type



Arab Women Veiled

Girl of the Quarter

The frocks of the Arab women of all classes are the same, and they are disappointing. In fact, they are almost grotesque, and do not in the least show off the wearer to her advantage. For daily use they employ calico or print, tied round the waist with a ribbon, while on the head there is a colored scarf. When they are all dressed up for a party their outer garment is of silk or of taffeta, sometimes of velvet, sewed about with ribbons and embroidery, and of all shades of brilliant colors. The hair is long and smeared in unguents, and plaited round the head, about which they wear two scarfs bound one above the other, also of very striking hues. Those who have golden tiaras fix them in front of the scarf head-dress, with golden chains hanging down from the sides, passing under the chin and up the other side. Round the neck are the necklaces of gold pieces, in the center of the breast a round golden brooch, and about the waist a silver or golden belt. Their arms are covered with bracelets, which are rarely beautiful because they are too heavy; the same applies to the anklets. What strikes one first as a jarring contrast are the feet.

In the first place, Arab women's ankles are rather thick, but, instead of wearing attractive Arab slippers associated with the illustrations of the *Arabian Nights*, they buy themselves cheap French shoes and encase their fat legs in cotton or woolen stockings, which have no connection at all with the color-scheme of the dress. They also spoil their figures by wearing layers of coarse underclothing. A group of Arab girls a few yards away, about to dance, is a picturesque spectacle, but their individual appearance in those gaudy clothes is not attractive. And yet some of the girls when young are lovely, their big black eyes especially, and their mouths full of fun and inconsequent gaiety. With the exception of the hair they keep themselves clean, and they attend the Turkish bath regularly.

It is most amusing to stroll into the cafés of the Quarter at night and sit down on one of the benches among the Arabs under the flickering light of the oil-lamp or the hiss of the acetylene, and watch the girls in their semi-party dresses dancing slowly up and down the center. The *raïta* squeals and the *tam-tam* beats in regular cadence while the dance proceeds.

There are all kinds of different steps and figures, and though the *danse du ventre*, which is a hideous muscular distortion of the abdomen, is always carried through, there are many other dances which are pleasing to the eye, and the movements of the hands remind one of the wings of a butterfly. Moreover, simple as these dances may seem, there is a tremendous amount of technique about them, and the poise of the body, and the movements of the feet, quite apart from the hands, take long years to learn. A little girl will begin her apprenticeship at the age of twelve, and at seventeen she will be proficient. Some of the dancers become famous, and are as well known among the Arabs as European stars.

There are also some Arab women who sing and play the mandolin. Their voices are, on the whole, rather harsh, except in the sad ballads of the South, which drone out into the plaintive notes so hard to copy.

Since the introduction of the gramophone into Arab life the girls who are known to be appreciated are paid large sums to make records, and the result is deplorable, as the harshness of the voice is only accentuated by the needle.

The saddest part about Arab women is the rapidity with which they grow old, or, rather, mature. They attain the status of womanhood between the ages of twelve and fourteen, and between fifteen and twenty they are at their best. After that they suddenly seem to fade, and all at once look near to thirty-five. But there it stops, and they don't get any older for ten or fifteen years; then another sudden leap forward and a woman of fifty is a wrinkled old lady.

Such is the Arab woman of to-day, and such she will remain until civilization finds its way in and destroys all the good traditions of the past. The task will be a hard one, but the action of Mustapha Kemal in Turkey, though it has probably shocked the Arabs, has given them much to think about. However, for the time being the life goes on as it has done for the past twelve hundred years, and long may it do so.

CHAPTER XIII

ARAB MUSIC AND DANCING

I HAVE talked a great deal about music and dancing in Algeria without describing their characteristics. There are three very distinct classes of music: that for dancing, that for ballads about war or love, and that for religious chants.

These various forms of music have their respective instruments, which, though few in number, differ considerably one from the other. The first is the *raïta*: in shape it resembles a short trumpet bored with holes, on which rest the fingers, and with a bell-shaped mouth. The sound is created by vast quantities of air being blown through a reed mouthpiece, producing a sound not unlike the bagpipes, only much louder. In fact, I have rarely heard one man produce such an ear-piercing and strident squeal as the *raïta*-player, and sitting close up to the music is pain and grief. This instrument is used exclusively for dancing, and it is accompanied by a man with a *tam-tam* or a *derbouca*.

The *tam-tam* resembles in shape a very large tambourine, and is played with both hands, producing a rather dry, rhythmical cadence. The *derbouca* looks like a large flower-vase with a round body and a long neck. Over the farther end is stretched a piece of skin, and the playing is the same as the *tam-tam*, but with a much deeper sound.

In addition to the above, one often sees a tambourinist; but the usual orchestra for dancing consists of two men—the *raïta*-player and the drummer, with his *tam-tam* or *derbouca*.

The second type of wind instrument is the flute. This is either the ordinary penny whistle made out of a reed and producing the same sort of music, only softer, or the long flute, chiefly found in the southern areas. The flute is the most interesting of all the Arab instruments and the hardest to play. It consists of a long reed hollowed out, about half an inch in diameter and from two to three feet long. It has eight stops, but there is no sort of mouthpiece.

The sound is produced by the player blowing across the top of the flute at some particular angle which I have never been able to discover, and producing the softest, saddest, deepest note one can possibly imagine.

To the most unmusical the sound of the long flute must appeal, and when accompanying one of those love ballads of the far South it is enchanting.

These two flutes are used to accompany all kinds of songs, but chiefly those concerning the exploits of heroes and the love lays which hold such a big place in all Arab melodies. Occasionally it is used to follow religious chants, but not always.

The flute is usually accompanied by the *tam-tam* or the *derbouca*, which is played very softly. Moreover, the accompaniment to the song is more often only heard between each verse, while during the singing it is just a faint drone with a distinct time-beating, and sometimes no music at all.

The religious chants, which are not, as might be supposed, sung in the mosques but at the shrines of saints or in private houses, have usually no accompaniment except the *tam-tam*. These chants consist of either hymns in praise of some saint or *marabout*, or else in long passages of the

Koran telling one of our well-known Bible stories. At first sight it would seem that such music without any sort of instrument would be singularly dull, but when one hears the singer bending over his *tam-tam*, pouring out a volume of sound, keeping a wonderful time with his hands, one is carried away by the rhythm.

At the end of each verse or group of verses there is usually a chorus in praise of Allah or of Mohammed, which is taken up by the audience.

The performers in the cases of the dance-music and the ballad-singing are professionals who either earn their living by playing nightly in the local cafés or by wandering about the country earning their supper as they go. Some of them are poets, and will extemporize songs about the host or about his mistress.

There are also mandolinists and violinists, but these are usually found among private individuals who perform for their own amusement or for that of their friends. They play the same sort of music, both religious and otherwise, and if one has a friend who owns a mandolin a very pleasant evening may be passed with delightful music. It is much gayer, and there are some airs which could almost be used for modern dancing.

The violinists are disappointing from the European standpoint. The player does not place the instrument to his shoulder, but holds it upright on his knee and draws the bow across the strings rather after the fashion of a man with a double bass, emitting a somewhat corresponding sound.

At first Arab music seems all the same, and the unaccustomed listener can not differentiate between the melodies, but little by little the ear becoming accustomed, he can tell at once if the air is from Oran or from Algiers, from the mountains of the Tell or from the far South; and the beat of the religious chant is unmistakable.

There are occasionally companies of musicians who travel around with a variety of instruments and singers, male and female, and dancers. There are also those who sing only the Koran, and serious *marabouts* almost always have their private musicians. One also sees troupes of actors, usually Tunisians, who give small plays interspersed with music and dancing. The performance goes on for hours and hours, and the audience sits spellbound without uttering a sound of approval or disapproval. Occasionally a comic scene provokes laughter, but generally speaking a dramatic performance is carried through in absolute silence.

The dancing is as varied as the music. It is usually carried out by women, who start learning at a very youthful age. The *danse du ventre*, which is essentially of the North, or of Turkish origin, is decidedly ugly. It is, however, much appreciated and takes endless practise to learn.

The dance of the Ouled Naïls, on which is based most of the other dances, is very picturesque, and the movements of the hands, like the wings of a hunting hawk, and the feet, are a delight to watch.

Occasionally men dance too; sometimes in the cafés with a woman executing strange figures, but usually alone or with other men. One of the finest exhibitions of this kind I ever saw was at Ghardaia one warm evening in April.

A great fire of alfa grass had been lighted in the market-square illuminating the unsymmetrical arches; masses of men in white squatted all round, while above, on the flat roofs of the houses, could be discerned rows and rows of veiled women peering down on the scene below like ghostly gargoyles. The music was the *raïta* and the *tam-tam*, and even in the open air the volume of sound produced by the musicians was sufficient to fill the whole square.

Suddenly a dozen or so men rose, formed themselves into two lines facing one another, and then majestically, with slow steps, they advanced toward each other; when they met they hesitated and then retreated. It was like the opening of a quadrille. At first it was all very solemn, and the figures consisted mostly of slow rhythmical steps, then as the music inspired them, their bodies seemed to stiffen and their feet to move more rapidly. Suddenly and simultaneously, as the *raïta* broke into a wilder air, the two groups stopped for a second and then, raising their arms, brandished their sticks in the air.

Again they advanced, but this time much more quickly, and as they met struck the sticks of the opposing group; back they retreated to the original post, again they advanced, and, passing through the other group, took up a place at the other end of the square. The fire blazed up and lit up the faces shining in the flickering light as they looked forward with bright, excited eyes.

A group of men detached themselves and started dancing alone; they moved slowly round the group of spectators, then as the music rose they went faster and faster until they were spinning in a mad whirl round the fire. Faster, faster, faster, until, with a gasp, a dancer fell in a state of exhaustion and another took his place.

And so the dancing went on; the few Europeans who were present gradually slipped away, but long after I was in bed I could hear away in the distance the skirl of the *raïta*, and I could imagine those wild men whirling madly round and round the market-square.

Another form of music and dancing seen in Algeria, but much less common than that which I have described above, is that carried out by negroes. The fact that a man is black does not confer any lowering mark on him in Algeria. He is not the common coarse nigger, but of the Senegalese and Sudanese type, and probably a blood descendant of the Numidians who ruled parts of the country before the Arab invasions.

The dances these men, and sometimes the women, perform are remarkable chiefly for the fact that the dancers and the orchestra are one and the same thing. Six or eight persons will get up, among whom one carries a drum and others two or three heavy cymbals and an instrument like an enormous iron castanet. The dancers form a compact circle and begin slowly chanting, accompanying their voices with the drum and the cymbals. Then gradually the voices rise, and with them the clashing of the instruments, until the whole develops into a wild war-song which increases in speed at every bar. The black men dance round and round, first on one foot and then on the other, perspiration pouring off their dark foreheads, their eyes starting out of their heads; nothing stops them; in fact, once they begin it is impossible to quell the dance until exhaustion has done its work.

I remember once going to a party at a private house where eight of these dancers, six men and two women, had come to perform. They started, and it was a wonderful sight to see them gyrating round the pillared court, with the setting of Arabs all round and the stars shining down from above. But after an hour or so of this, the audience got rather bored, and an attempt was made to get them to stop; this was, however, impossible, and on, on they went. Finally the host got angry, and with difficulty the performers were pushed into the street, still dancing and quite oblivious of all about them.

Our party continued, and some hours later, when I was walking home, I suddenly came upon the negroes still dancing. It is true that only a few remained, but these went on and on with their terrible chant, and on and on they whirled, unable to stop, unable to think, until their bodies gave out and they fell upon the ground.

Yes, dancing and music in Algeria is varied, and its charm, though an acquired taste, is something quite unlike anything else, and takes hold of the senses in a most extraordinary way.

CHAPTER XIV

RELIGION

WITH sudden contrast, we turn our attention to the most important problem in the daily life of the Arab— religion. Now, it is a curious thing that in practically all European countries religion has not much sway over the general masses, and that frequently it is subject-matter for controversy and discord. Even among those members of the community who are still faithful believers, the church is not really interwoven in the hum of daily life. Not so in Algeria. Every Arab who has not been degenerated by Europe into atheism— and it must be admitted that there are very few of these—believes in Allah, believes in Mohammed, in the world to come, with eternal damnation or salvation. But not only does he believe it to the extent of practising the religion in the mosque as European believers do in the church, but he continues following the precepts of the Faith in every moment of his life.

After living a while with the Arabs it comes as a revelation quite unexpected, and it makes one wonder whether Mohammed, thirteen hundred years ago, had any idea what effect his preaching would have on his followers; probably not. He always strikes one as a man who was almost forced into the path which he followed by circumstances about him. However, these pages are not the place to raise this question. What is certain is the immense change which swept over North Africa when the Arab invasions began in the seventh century, bringing with them all the doctrines of the new faith into a land full of rival beliefs.

There is less difference in Algeria between that period and the present than there was between the sixth century and the days of Carthage in all its splendor, and whether we are discussing the Arabs of the north or of the Sahara, or whether the Berbers of the Kabyle Mountains or those of the Mzab, there is one expression which covers them all:

"They are Mohammedans."

Not all Mohammedans are of the same denomination, but they are much less divided than the different sects in England, and all with the same fervent belief:

La ilahah ill Allah, Mohammed Rasoul Allah.

There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet.

Mohammedanism is, moreover, in itself a complete solution to all the problems of life, both temporal and spiritual. It is not only a teaching of religious principles, but also the framework of all social laws, and a person who follows its precepts will have not only a clean soul, but also a clean body.

The ablutions, the forbidden meats and wines, the many postures taken during the prayer five times a day, were all invented with a purpose. The Arab was dirty by nature; he was told to wash before saying his prayers; in cases where water lacked, to clean himself with sand. It was known that pork was bad for people living in hot countries; it was forbidden. The laziness of the Oriental is proverbial; physical exercises were devised for him in his daily prayers before Mr. Sandow and his disciples thought of the present-day training.

He was told not to frequent women of easy morals; knowing his nature, the task was made less difficult by allowing him more than one wife, while at the same time, realizing the inconsistency of human nature, laws were provided which enabled him to free himself easily from the bonds of marriage if he felt that it was necessary.

To make him rise early in the morning the first hour of prayer was ordained before sunrise; in the middle of the day there are prayers, which prevent a too-long siesta. Realizing that women in religion are the cause of much trouble, they were excluded from the mosque and from anything to do with its rites. Furthermore, remembering that two great religions had passed before, there could be no question of ignoring them. One therefore finds practically the whole of the Old Testament in the Koran, as well as the coming of Jesus (Aïssa). Here the belief stops and states that God substituted another man for the Christ to be crucified, while Jesus went straight up to heaven like Elijah. The Koran further states that Jesus will come again at the day of judgment, but that Mohammed will not.

These doctrines completed what Judaism and Christianity had begun, and made them stronger by the precept of "Equality of all men in the fold and fierce hatred for all outside it."

Talking casually to Arabs, it is hard to realize this hatred, but it is there at all times. We are not merely Englishmen, or Frenchmen, or Italians—we are infidels, we are unbelievers, we are not chosen to go to Paradise. We shall not sit by the river under the shade of the trees and be fed on delicious meat and drink wonderful wines which do not intoxicate, while women go about unveiled and we are married spiritually to those we love.

That is the great barrier between Mohammedans and all other creeds, and, being one of the great principles of the religion, is unsurmountable. The reward, the great reward of the Faithful is paradise— for all others it is hell.

As a matter of fact, the picture drawn of the life to come for a good Arab is very attractive, much more so than our rather vague golden city we read of. All that has been forbidden on earth will be permitted above, and the faith in this is absolute.

The number of Arabs who do not follow all the principles of the religion is few. Even those who drink wine when guests are present rarely do so when alone, while those who do carry it to excess are usually very low characters. The origin of the interdiction of intoxicants is said to be because once at Mecca the *imam* leading the prayer was drunk and he went through the ceremony all wrong, with the result that all the followers did the same as he did. Hence a sacrilege owing to wine-drinking, hence the forbidding of its use among the Faithful. As evidence of the evil caused by drinking the following story is told with much solemnity.

A Mohammedan was once caught by two unscrupulous scoundrels who said they would kill him unless he agreed to do one of three things: drink a bottle of wine, rob his father, or murder the *marabout*. The poor man chose what he thought was the least of these evils and drank the bottle of wine, with the result that he also robbed his father and killed the *marabout*!

Prayers are said either collectively in the mosque before sunrise, at noon, at three, at sunset, and at eight at night, when the *muezzin* comes out and calls the Faithful in that high-pitched voice which is almost a chant, or else they are said individually. If they are said in the mosque they are led by the *imam*, who afterwards reads the Koran, and sometimes a kind of sermon based on the Holy Book is given by the *mufti*.

The individual prayer can be said anywhere—in the house, on the roof, in the street. It is done without any sort of self-consciousness or ostentation. The man just turns away from his daily task,

faces Mecca, and goes through all the forms of prayer. It is extraordinary to take an Arab on a starless night in the desert and see him always turn instinctively to the East. At first it is a little disconcerting for a European suddenly to see a member of the party get up and start this performance; he feels that there ought to be some awkward silence; but not at all—the chatter goes on and the prayer returns and continues talking as if he had never left his place.

Some people maintain that many Arabs say their prayers publicly just in the same way as did the Pharisees of the Old Testament, and that if they had to commune with God in private they would not do so. I consider this quite a fallacy, and from the age of fifteen, when a boy is supposed to know the Koran and therefore be able to learn his prayers, they pray before the world without the smallest thought of who is looking and who is not. The actual prayer is a fixed formula, and when it is over the supplicant turns his head first to the right and then to the left saying "The blessing of God and His mercy be on thee." These words are addressed to the two guardian angels who accompany all Mohammedans on earth, the angel on the right noting all good actions, the angel on the left recording all the bad.

After the prayer, which refers only to the greatness and goodness of God, private blessings may be asked for, but it is not usual to bring temporal matters into this private communion with the Almighty. If the supplicant is to be recompensed on this earth it is not necessary to remind God of what He has already ordained.

What seems so simple and right in this religion is the absence of any sort of intermediary in the shape of priest or minister. The good Mohammedan can observe the whole of his religion from the age of fifteen until he dies without ever setting foot inside a mosque or speaking to an *imam*. The mosques are all very simple indeed, with very little decoration, as pictures and statues are forbidden.

The pilgrim who has been to Mecca and Medina is much respected, and has the prefix *hadj* (pilgrim) attached to his name. Yearly ships from Algiers transport bands of Arabs who have saved up to do this journey. There have been cases of men who have walked all the way across Tripoli and Egypt to perform the rites at the Kaaba and to see the tomb of the Prophet.

It would take too long in this book to go into the various divisions or sects which have created themselves in the Mohammedan religion, as in all other faiths. It will suffice to mention some of the main groups:

The Sunnites are orthodox;

The Shiahs, followers of Ali;

The Ibadites, followers of Abd Allah ben Ibad;

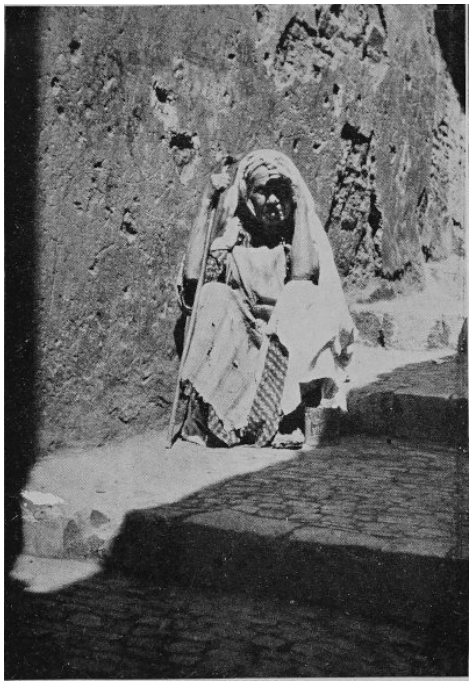
The Sofrites, followers of Abd Allah ben Sofar;

The Kharedjites are dissenters.

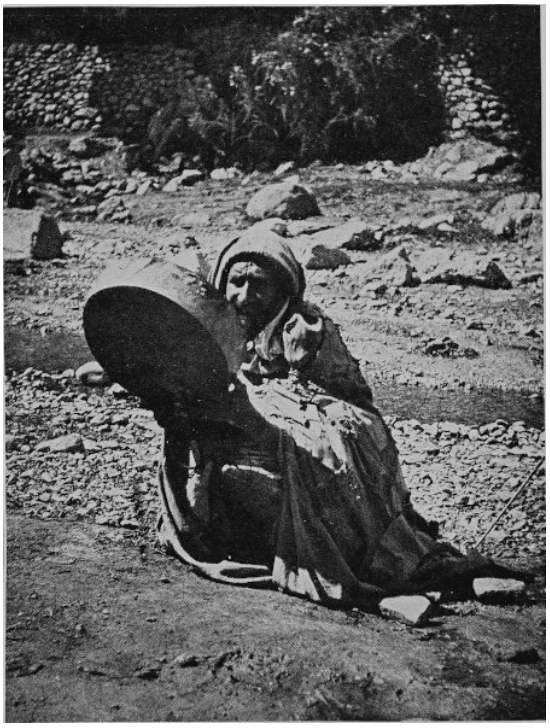
It was this last form of religion which the Berbers accepted and which is practised to this day in all their centers in Algeria. These groups are divided and subdivided into some seventy sects which it would require years of study to examine, and, unless one is a specialist in this matter, are of little interest to the average traveler.

What is interesting, however, is to read a well translated edition of the Koran, with a short life of Mohammed. This will give more insight into the religious side of Arab life than endless treatises on the matter. And it would be a good thing if more of our soldiers who come into contact with the Moslems all over the British Empire were more acquainted with these details.

Women in the Cemetery, Algiers



A Beggar Woman



An Arab Tam-Tam Player

At first the French did not grasp the significance of Islam in their North African territories; now that they have, they use it to advantage, and they give absolute liberty on these questions to their subjects. Even the orders of the White Fathers and the White Sisters do nothing to try to convert the Arab. They realize the little good it would do and the general hostility it would create. They therefore set a good example, teach the boys and girls how to work and lead a clean life, and, if one or two lean toward Christianity, they help them; but it is rare, very rare to find converts.

The Arab dislikes domination, but he realizes the advantages brought by a civilized race who give him roads, laws, railways, commerce; yet he will not tolerate his private life or religion being encroached upon, and if this liberty is granted him he will accept all the rest.

Unfortunately there are missionaries, I hastily add well-meaning missionaries, chiefly from England, who have settled in North Africa, as they have in other Moslem countries, in order to convert the natives. They are too few to do any real harm, but they are wasting their time and their money on people who consider that their own religion is far superior to any other and who see no necessity to change it—a religion which preaches charity and which carries it out, for it is by the rich that the poor live.

"After all," said an Arab chief one day, "our religion is six hundred years younger than yours, and therefore based on later experience, but, even if it wasn't, what would you say if a band of Arabs, chiefly women, landed in England and tried to interfere with your faith?"

There is no answer. It is folly of the well meaning, who would do better to turn their attention to their own people, who as a whole do not believe, or, at any rate, do not practise their beliefs in the same conscientious manner as do the followers of Mohammed in Algeria.

CHAPTER XV

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

APART from the daily prayers there are various feasts which are celebrated regularly by all good Mohammedans. They do not come at regular dates as, owing to the fact that the Moslem year is lunar, all the months begin ten days earlier each year.

In order of rotation these feasts are as follows: Race el Ame, new year; Aschana, the tenth day of the first month, sometimes known as the Feast of Moses; those who observe it are promised ten times of all they have; Makante, or Mouloud, the birth of Mohammed; Aïd Serrir, which is celebrated at the end of Ramadan or Mohammedan Lent, and the Aïd el Kebir. The most important are the Aïd Serrir, or Lesser Feast, in opposition to Aïd el Kebir, the Greater Feast or Feast of the Sheep. As a matter of fact the Aïd Serrir causes more rejoicing and lasts three days, probably because it succeeds the Ramadan.

The austerity of this Ramadan fast has given cause to much controversy; it is not for us to discuss its merits, but until one has seen the people actually observing the rites it is difficult to realize how strictly they are kept. The Ramadan starts the day after the *mufti* or *kadi* in some definite center has seen the new moon of the season with the naked eye, or, in the event of a cloudy evening, on the report of some trustworthy person in some other place. Far away in the South the local *muftis* or *kadis* are permitted to judge the moment for themselves, but generally speaking the fast starts at the same time all over Algeria.

It ends as soon as the next new moon is visible, and sometimes, owing to bad weather, the inhabitants of a town may fast one or two days longer than people who live where the night has been clear. From the moment the decree is sent abroad that the Ramadan has begun all believers must observe the fast for thirty consecutive days. During this period they must neither eat nor drink nor smoke from two hours before the dawn until after sunset.

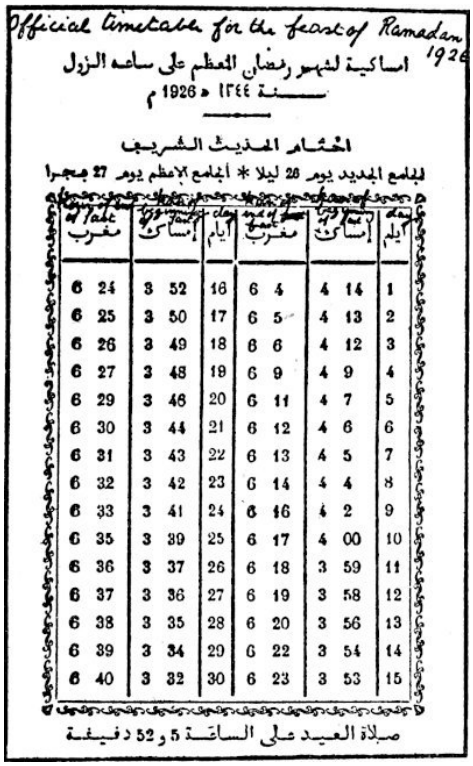
The time-table on the opposite page published for the Ramadan of 1926, which took place in April, gives some idea of the length of time passed without nourishment or water:

The decisive moment of the evening is that at which the *imam* can no longer distinguish a white hair from a black, held at arm's length. A gun is then fired, cries of joy rise from the populace, and the first meal is hungrily attacked. Those who are out on the plain pull out a few dates which they munch until they get home. From the firing of the gun they can eat and drink as much water or milk as they like until two hours before dawn. As a general rule they begin with a big dinner. Then they rest, after which they go out and visit their friends or walk about the streets till midnight, when they return home and have a second big meal followed by bed. At first sight this penitence may not seem rigorous. Perhaps not for those rich men who can convert the night into the day; but to the average worker it is a terrible ordeal.

Fifteen hours or so with nothing to eat and nothing to drink! This last privation is especially trying when the Ramadan falls in the summer months and when consequently the period of fasting is longer.

What is most astonishing is to see how strictly the rules are observed, and even those who in ordinary times take wines and spirits are not only completely sober for thirty days, but do not

touch any intoxicant for some weeks before the fast begins. Some men suffer physically a good deal and their faces become pinched; others who are heavy smokers develop jumpy nerves. Almost all become bad tempered and easily offended and they work as little as possible, their only incentive to do anything being the necessity to have liquid cash to purchase their new clothes for the feast of the last day. Even this does not rouse them much, and they usually end by selling some of their household goods or their wives' jewels to supply the necessary funds. It is a great time for the Jews and rich Arab merchants, who buy up all they can at low prices to resell to the tourists.



Official timetable for the feast of Ramadan 1926

امساكية لشهر رمضان المعظم على ساعه الزول

سنة ١٣٤٤ = 1926 م

اخشام المذيث الشريف

الجامع الجديد يوم 28 ليلا * الجامع الاعظم يوم 27 بجرا

Date ايام	Imsak إمساك	Maghrib مغرب	Date ايام	Imsak إمساك	Maghrib مغرب
1	4 14	6 4	16	3 52	6 24
2	4 13	6 5	17	3 50	6 25
3	4 12	6 6	18	3 49	6 26
4	4 9	6 9	19	3 48	6 27
5	4 7	6 11	20	3 46	6 29
6	4 6	6 12	21	3 44	6 30
7	4 5	6 13	22	3 43	6 31
8	4 4	6 14	23	3 42	6 32
9	4 2	6 16	24	3 41	6 33
10	4 00	6 17	25	3 39	6 35
11	3 59	6 18	26	3 37	6 36
12	3 58	6 19	27	3 36	6 37
13	3 56	6 20	28	3 35	6 38
14	3 54	6 22	29	3 34	6 39
15	3 53	6 23	30	3 32	6 40

صلاة العيد على الساعة 5 و 52 دقيقة

If by any chance the fast is not observed according to letter it does not count, and it must be caught up after the Ramadan. For instance, during this period a man may not touch his wife; if he sees a woman and she creates in his mind any sort of emotion, it is sufficient for the day's fast to be considered as unaccomplished. If he touches the palm of a woman's hand, he can not go to the mosque until he has washed all over. All is a matter of conscience, and it would be quite easy for any one to retire to the privacy of his room and eat a piece of bread or drink some water; no one would be any the wiser, but it is a certain fact that it is not done. Those few who do not observe the fast are thoroughly despised.

When the next new moon has been observed a final gun is fired and the people rise early in the morning dressed in their new clothes to go to the mosque. The Grande Prière takes place in all its solemnity, and for an hour robed figures bow and prostrate themselves in regular cadence. When it is over every one streams into the street and hand in hand marches leisurely up and down the main ways. As friends or relations meet the brotherly kiss is exchanged; jokes are passed and gaiety reigns supreme.

The girls from the Quarter come out in all the gaudiness of their multi-colored clothes; their jewels glint in the sunlight contrasting with the white burnouses of the men.

At eleven the *muezzin* calls to prayer from the minaret; the more conscientious return to the mosque before the first midday meal since the Ramadan moon.

The poorest household has scraped together enough to have something extra to eat, and among the rich the meal is interminable. In the afternoon every one is out again wandering hand in hand through gardens and alleys, or sitting under the palm trees chatting and smoking—chiefly smoking. Toward dusk the city takes on another aspect. In the reserved quarter the streets are thronged with soldiers and nomads; the strident skirl of the *raïta* with the beat of the *tam-tam*, and the dances, which have practically ceased during the fast, rebegin. It is a gay spectacle, and it makes one realize the joys of forbidden fruits.

In the European quarter too the younger renegades are flocking, consuming excessive quantities of forbidden wine and beer. As the night draws on, voices are raised, some in laughter, some in song, others in anger, and it is rare for the feast to pass without several nasty knife wounds, while broken heads are numerous. After all, the fast has lasted long enough, the Ramadan must be celebrated, and he who can not contain his emotions must suffer the quick flash of the dagger or the clenched fist of the followers of the Prophet liberated from the fast.

The Aïd el Kebir, which is the great feast of the year, falls two months later. On this day every one who can afford it is supposed to kill a sheep and divide it among the family. Those who are very rich kill several sheep and give them to those who can not afford it. The belief is that when the soul goes to enter paradise it will have to follow a narrow path which consists of a razor-like blade. The soul whose mortal self has killed many sheep will be met by the slaughtered ones, who apparently have no thought of reprisals, and will be carried across the knives. The gratitude of the sheep seems a little unexpected.

The other feasts, such as the Birth of the Prophet, New Year's Day, the Aschana, are not observed with any great feasting. Candles are lit in the mosques, the Grande Prière is said collectively, and a little more food than usual is eaten.

Quite apart from the orthodox or dissenting religious observances associated with the mosque, there are other rites, which are really private affairs, observed by independent groups of men who venerate some particular saint. They are really little clubs, and though all its members are strict Mohammedans belonging to one of the sects, believing in all the prophets, they are very proud of the particular saint whom they venerate.

There are the followers of Sidi Abd-el-Kader, the great *marabout*, second only to the Prophet; of Sidi-el-Hadj-Aïssa, who founded Laghouat; of Sidi Abd er Rahmane, patron of Algiers, and many others. Twice a week these members of the clubs meet, either in the private mosque dedicated to the *marabout*, or, if it is fine, before the edifice erected in his name out-of-doors. Here they drink tea, which is either provided by themselves or is often sent by people of the town who wish to find grace in the eyes of the saint.

The men sit round in a circle and sing religious songs in unison while the time is kept by a man with a tambourine. On a clear moonlight night it is a most impressive sight to see the earnest faces of the singers as they sit rigidly intoning the long verses of the chant, which is repeated in a chorus, rising finally into a wild rhythm until it stops suddenly and unexpectedly. Visitors are rare on these evenings, and they sit apart with their shoes off; women occasionally come, but they are heavily veiled and are hidden away in a corner.

The actual tombs of *marabouts* are much venerated, as are also the little domes erected at places where some holy man has rested; candles are lit and offerings made in their names. Though actual sacrificing of beasts does not take place in the way in which we associate it in the Old Testament, there are many who vow that if they are granted some favor they will kill a sheep in the name of the *marabout* invoked. When the sheep is killed it is cooked and eaten by the supplicant and by any poor friends who like to come in. Occasionally a bullock is slaughtered to bring rain.

There are other beliefs which would be considered by Europeans to be mere superstitions, but they so form part of the religion that practically every one admits them,—the power of spells, the evil eye, the charms against disease. A woman with a headache will wear a piece of paper with words written by a *marabout* upon it, and believe that it will remove the pain. In fact, into all the daily life religion is woven until it becomes part of the people's existence, and from the prayer said in public to the abstinence from wine one can not keep away from it. Its simplicity, its absence of all unnecessary intermediaries in communion with the Almighty, make it very easy to follow. Its laws which, with all their sternness, are yet adapted to the frailty of mankind, seem to give one an assurance of its sincerity. Its recognition of all the prophets we know of gives it a feeling of broad-mindedness, and the picture of its future is easy to grasp.

There is one God and He is alone. God is all-powerful. "What He has destined will take place," and in their belief of the *mektoub* the secret of the Arabs' peace of mind is found. Nothing can alter fate. And if things go wrong it is no good saying, "If I had done this, or done that, I should have avoided this." No; "Allah willed it, and the puny human can do nothing against *mektoub*."

CHAPTER XVI

"MEKTOUB" AND OTHER SUPERSTITIONS

HAVING now seen the principles of the faith as set out by the Koran, we must turn our attention to the more superstitious side, which, as in all faiths, has grown up with the course of time.

As stated before, the first great fundamental point which dominates the whole of Islam and makes it unlike other beliefs is summed up in that word *mektoub*—"It is written." Generally speaking, every Mohammedan is a fatalist, and believes that nothing can occur which is not ordained; there is no free will and all is in the hands of Allah. There are, however, certain philosophers who discuss this point and who say that it is wrong to lay every evil action on the back of the *mektoub*.

For instance, they say that a man who deliberately buys a bottle of wine and drinks it has no right to say that God predestined this. These philosophers are, however, in the minority, and ninety per cent of the Arabs believe that they are powerless to avoid what is fated.

The Arabs say, "When God created the world he took a handful of dust in either hand, cast it to right and to the left. The dust to the right was destined to be people who would always be happy and inherit paradise; the dust to the left only contained woes and eternal damnation." "God created you, you and all your actions," Koran Sourate, XXXVII. That is to say that all, good and bad, are decided and determined by the Almighty. Sins are predestined and are divided into two categories, the greater and the lesser. The greater comprise theft, adultery, usury, wine-drinking, false witness. The smaller are the weaknesses of human nature, but, whatever they may be, man is destined to commit them, and nothing can prevent him from so doing.

That is why Arabs take life so calmly, never hurry, or get into unnecessary tempers when things go wrong. They firmly believe that what is written is written, and that no power but God can alter it. Taking them as a whole, it makes them seem very happy, and it would appear to be the only solution to the worries of modern life.

From this point of view are developed many other beliefs, and it is the basis of the strength of the Moslem faith. Mohammed, though a great religious genius and a reformer, was not a theologist, and it is even curious to note the lack of dogma in the Koran. His great merit was the way in which he created a great and living organization. His successors developed the theological side of the matter, but, if one examines the Koran itself, one is struck by the absence of mysticism. It is, in itself, more a book of laws, such as the Old Testament. The whole of the theology is really compressed into two passages occurring in Sourates II. and IV., which, summed up, convey that the true Mohammedan who wishes to be saved must believe in God; the prophets or envoys of God, with Mohammed as the greatest; the angels, the inspired books—that is to say the Bible, with the Koran as the most important; and the Day of Judgment.

They further believe in heaven and hell, which are depicted very roughly as places of happiness and torment. Above hell is a bridge as narrow as a hair and as sharp as a knife-blade, across which the souls of the dead departed must pass to enter heaven. The sinners slip and fall into hell, while the righteous cross safely with the aid of the sheep into heaven. Mankind is divided into three categories—those who deny Mohammedanism are destined to eternal fire; those who

believe in one God, but who, being sinners, pass through a state of purgatory before going into Paradise; those few strict Mohammedans who go direct to heaven.

Hell is very hot; there is nothing to eat but *dari*, the bitter fruit of a thorny desert bush, and only boiling water to drink. Heaven is a glorious garden where youth always remains and where the blessed lie on carpets beside ever-flowing streams beneath the shade of fruit-trees, drinking a delicious wine which does not intoxicate, while young girls, ever virgins, sit beside the water and live in a state of contemplative happiness. In other words, hell is an accentuation of all the hardships of life in the desert, while heaven promises all those things which an Arab has never seen on earth.

Quite apart from the Koran, and apparently contrary to its principles, is the belief in saints. The origin of this cult is difficult to find, as the whole basis of the faith is that there is only one God. It is, however, generally supposed that it is a relic of other religions which existed prior to the spread of Islam. This theory is rather confirmed by the fact that more saints and *marabouts* exist in North Africa, where the Carthaginians and the Romans held such long sway, than in any other Mohammedan country. Other people will say that the worship of saints is necessary owing to the inexpressible greatness of God—his distance from all things human, which necessitates some kind of intermediary; but this has little foundation to stand on, for even among the most superstitious Mohammedans, who are always invoking some holy man, you will always hear them murmur during their prayer, “There is no God but Allah.”

The veneration of saints is in reality a respect for the life of the person concerned. It may be that his asceticism and his charity have raised him above others; it may be that his exploits in the name of Islam have made him famous; it may merely be the fact that he is easier to visualize than God—the fact remains that he is venerated and that his aid is invoked in times of trouble. But whether he be merely respected as an example of what a true believer should be or whether he be actually called upon as a protector, he is not considered as divine, nor in any way approaching the one and only God.

Apart, however, from what we call superstitions of the actual faith, there are countless others which do not come into the religion, and which, while all have the same origin, differ according to countries.

A few words have already been said on this subject, but it is felt that, in order really to understand the Arab, the question must be further developed.

The belief in spells and witchcraft seems a contradiction in a people wrapped up in religion, but it will never enter their heads that bringing supernatural powers to bear on the matters of this world, be it for good or for bad, is placing oneself on the same footing with the Almighty.

They maintain that, as angels exist, djinns and other creatures of the underworld are just as comprehensible, and can be invoked in the same way to carry out requests. Again and again one will meet people who will tell you that dragons live, and that there are people who have seen them and have spoken to them! All sorts of animals are supposed to bring good or evil luck, and amulets with the feet of lizards, the feathers of the hoopoe, the tooth of a jackal, can be seen attached round the necks of babies.

The Koran is always placed in the cradle of the newly born, and there are people who keep pages of the Holy Book to hire out to those who can not afford to buy one.

It would take far too long to go into all the details of these superstitions which are held in reverence all over North Africa, and, though at first sight they may seem to be much the same as

those told in more civilized countries, they are not really believed elsewhere to the same extent as in North Africa. I will give an example of a case of witchcraft which occurred only the other day in a family which I knew intimately, a family educated and acquainted with the way of the modern world.

A man tiring of his wife and wishing to marry some one else who refused to share the home, divorced his first wife, who was devoted to him. She made no protest, but, with the aid of certain learned *talebs*, set about weaving spells about her ex-husband. The night of his wedding the *taleb* said to the woman:

"Prepare a great feast for all your friends, with music and dancing, and at midnight your husband will return to you."

She complied with his instructions, and at the midnight hour there was a banging on the door, and the husband in a dazed state appeared, imploring his wife's forgiveness. She at first refused to see him, and it was not until he had returned a third time that she allowed him in.

I made an investigation of the case, and I talked to those involved, who all corroborated the story. The husband told me that, just as he was about to see his new bride, he felt himself impelled toward his first wife. He struggled against the feeling, but in vain, and before he knew where he was he had left his wedding and was before the door of his late parents-in-law's house. All this was explained, of course, by the working of the spell, and any contradiction of this was considered as the disbelief of an infidel; the facts were there, and there was nothing further to be said.

I have known cases where some one has desired to spread discord in a household, and in a short space of time the discord has arisen without the mischief-maker speaking a word to the parties concerned. I have seen men commit the greatest follies and trace them to the intention of some other person who has invoked the aid of a djinn.

To my mind the explanation is hypnotism—the effect of strong will on the mind of some weaker person; perhaps auto-suggestion, but certainly mesmerism carried out secretly.

This, combined with the absolute belief in fate, assures that thorough absence of any sort of free will which makes the weaving of spells easy, and it is difficult to make even the better educated Arabs scoff at its possibilities. All is predestined, and the casting of spells therefore can not be avoided.

What is the good of going into the matter further? It would only lead to unnecessary controversy and a disbelief in God's power. *Mektoub!*

CHAPTER XVII

ABD-EL-KADER

IT WOULD take too long to cast even a cursory glance over the many holy men venerated in Algeria, and it will suffice merely to touch on the two most important. Some confusion appears to exist in the minds of many as to who Abd-el-Kader really is. The name is spoken of all over North Africa, and is often discussed at cross-purposes. The fact is that there are two Abd-el-Kaders, both of great importance to the Arabs, but as different one from the other as possible.

The first, whose *kouba*, or shrine, can be seen in practically every town all over North Africa, and whose full name is Abd-el-Kader-el-Djelali, was born in the twelfth century A. D. at Djel near Bagdad. God said of him:

"If I had not sent Mohammed before thee to earth, I should have chosen thee as my prophet."

He is, therefore, venerated as only second to the founder of the Faith. He was apparently a man of proverbial goodness, who spent his life in protecting the poor and the oppressed, whose broadness of mind extended to listening to the prayers of Jews, as well as to Christians, and who was the most merciful of all saints. The miracles attributed to him are innumerable, and the legends would fill volumes, but to the practical mind the greatest miracle seems to have been the range of his travels. Quite apart from the places he visited in other countries, he seems to have sojourned in every center of importance in Algeria.

With his roan horse he stopped in the cities of the coast, in the villages of the mountains, in the oases of the Sahara, doing good to those about him, helping those in distress who invoked him at great distance. Space seems to have meant nothing to him, and in every place where he rested a *kouba* was erected in his honor, and thither the faithful flock regularly and light candles in the shrine and pray for his blessings, while on fine nights they congregate and sing his deeds.

It is said that his death was caused by God selecting him to suffer three-quarters of the diseases which fall yearly on the earth, and that, when suffering and near to death, the angels came and placed him between the third and fourth heavens, for the Koran says:

"God created the seven heavens, and placed them one above the other."

From this point of vantage Abd-el-Kader remains, and watches over the sufferings of the Faithful.

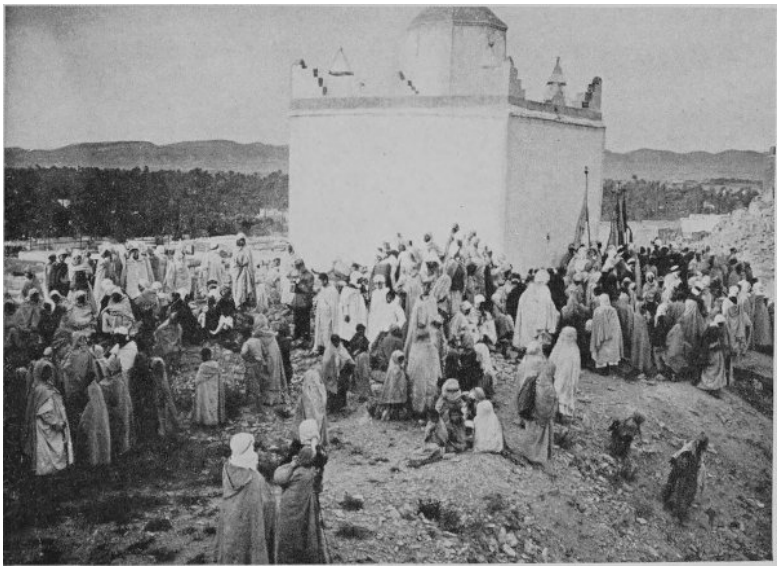
The other Abd-el-Kader, already mentioned earlier in this book, was a no less famous character than his predecessor, the *marabout* after whom he was named. The son of Mai-ed-Din, who claimed direct descent from the Prophet, he was born in the year 1808, and when quite a boy made a pilgrimage to Mecca. During this pilgrimage it is recounted that an angel in the form of a Numidian appeared to Mai-ed-Din and prophesied that one day his son would reign over all North Africa. The boy was intelligent, and spent much of his time studying and interpreting the Koran; and when, therefore, the French landed at Sidi Ferruch in 1830, he felt that his day was at hand. His father had been appointed leader of the Holy War, but it was felt that he had not sufficient personality nor prestige to carry the Faithful to victory, and, remembering the prophecy of the

dusky angel, Abd-el-Kader was elected *emir*, and made his solemn entry into Mascara on November 25, 1832.

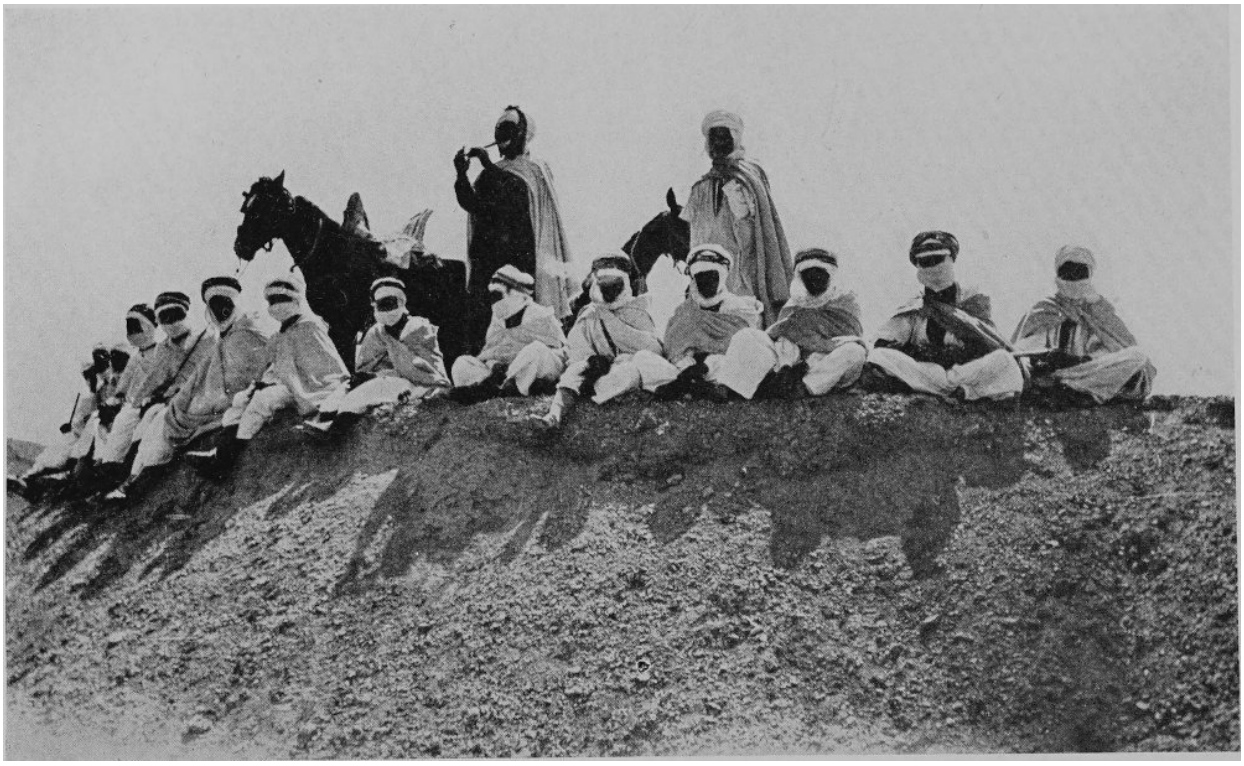
For the next fifteen years his military career is one of the most remarkable in history. His successes were no doubt slightly due to the ever-changing principles of the government in Paris, but a man of smaller personality would not have succeeded in not only holding at bay, but in defeating an army containing veterans of the Napoleonic campaigns and equipped with all the modern implements of war. Furthermore, he was an able diplomatist, and employed all kinds of intrigue to compromise with the French when he felt that he could not meet them successfully with the sword.

His renowned piety and his descent from Mohammed raised him in the eyes of the Faithful to a position above all his followers, and one of his greatest achievements was the uniting of all the tribes of Algeria in a common cause. Even when reverses lost him some of his adherents, he was always able to gather them together again at the most critical moment and turn upon his astonished enemy, who thought that his end had come. General after general was sent in his pursuit, but returned with the same tale to tell: an elusive enemy, all mounted, which retreated before an advancing column until it was exhausted or on ground suitable for their maneuvering, then a rapid encircling movement, wild attacks on horseback, and the destruction of the expedition. The French would then try pacific measures and make a truce. Abd-el-Kader accepted these overtures, and employed wise emissaries, which allowed him time to reconstruct for further victories. Now and then he was badly beaten, and, evading capture, would flee with a few faithful followers to the mountains or across the Moroccan border. The tribes which fought for him would disappear, disowning their leader, and for a time there would be peace. Then the French would make some blunder, expose some lonely garrison to attack, and the *emir* would be up and at them. One small victory would be sufficient to bring all the diffident tribes flocking about his standard again, and the wearying war would recommence.

Arab Band and Dancer about to Perform in a Southern Town



Pilgrimage to One of the Shrines of Abd-el-kader



Arabs with Flutist Waiting to See the Caravans Going North

What strikes one most in all his career of victories, of reverses, of days of triumph, of moments of desertion, is the perseverance and the faith of the man. At no time was he sure of his people, at all times he was certain of the fate that awaited him at the hands of his enemies, and yet he continued fearlessly to the end. His mobility is almost unbelievable. In a country where roads were unheard of, where the land was overgrown with thick brush, among towering mountains and

flooded rivers, he moved with the utmost rapidity. His victories at Mascara in the far west, at Constantine in the east, in the plain of the Metidja, and at Aïn Mahdi in the south give a slight idea of the enormous area covered.

Moreover, it was not merely an army of lightly armed horsemen who swept over the land behind the youthful general. His *smala* consisted of thousands of camels, with tents and jewelry and armories, and the families of all the great chiefs, who, though they were kept well in the rear, were always present to celebrate the victories.

It was finally Bugeaud, the veteran of Soult's army in the Peninsular War, who succeeded in conquering Abd-el-Kader. The old Marshal realized that it was useless to employ the methods of orthodox war against this elusive enemy, and he therefore decided to create mobile columns to pursue the rebels. In the year 1843 a terrible blow was dealt to the *emir's* prestige. His great *smala*, which had now become a sort of perambulating capital, with schools to teach the children and *kadis* to administer justice, was surprised by the Duc d'Aumale near Taguine and completely destroyed.

In spite of this, however, the struggle was kept up, and, after taking refuge in Morocco for a short time, Abd-el-Kader reappeared again. But, though he won a few more victories, his end was near, and in December, 1847, he asked for peace, specifying, however, that the French, in return for his surrender, should allow him to retire to some other Mohammedan country. His terms were accepted, but unfortunately were not kept by the Government of Louis Philippe. He was taken to France, and imprisoned first of all at Toulon and then at Pau, and finally at the Château d'Amboise. Finally, in 1852, Louis Napoleon, then Prince President, visited the exiled *emir* and granted his wishes. He was transported to Damascus, where he lived in peaceful retirement until his death in 1883.

These pages are too short to go into all the detail of the astonishing career of one who wished to be the hero of Arab independence in Algeria, and to those whom the subject interests let me recommend the excellent work of Colonel Paul Azan.

Some people have wished to compare Abd-el-Kader to Abd-el-Krim of the present day. It would take too long to discuss these points here, but it can be safely said that there is no comparison possible. In the first place, the caliber of the two men is very different; the intelligence of the hero of a hundred years ago was far superior to that of his Moroccan cousin, and, though possibly Abd-el-Krim may have had the same dreams as those which inspired Abd-el-Kader, he never held the same prestige in North Africa. Abd-el-Kader was alone, with ill-armed followers fighting against a trained army, and beating them in the open over an area as large as France, while Abd-el-Krim, supported by all kinds of European adventurers, merely held at bay the armies of two European nations where the conformation of the ground made his task comparatively easy.

Abd-el-Kader will always remain a great figure, not only in the history of North Africa but also in that of Islam, as one who defended the Faith against the invasion of the infidel and who died a friend of his former enemies.

This work is not a history nor a political treatise, but merely a handbook for tourists and students of the country, and the name of Abd-el-Kader has only been used to clear up any misunderstanding which may arise when the name is raised: the one Abd-el-Kader, saint and reformer; the other warrior and defender of Islam.

CHAPTER XVIII

ARAB EDUCATION

GENERALLY speaking the Arab of Algeria is uneducated, and though he is lazy, this lack of education is not fundamentally his fault. In the first place, the instruction he obtains from his own people is singularly primitive. The Koran decrees that all children shall be taught their religion; at the time of its compilation this involved reading and writing of Arabic, but as in Algeria the original pure language has disappeared, and its place has been taken by this mixture of Berber and other tongues which have crept into it during the course of the various invasions, its object as a channel of education has disappeared.

The language of the Koran has, however, not changed in the least, with the result that to read the Holy Book an Arab must learn a completely new language, richer perhaps than any other in the world and full of grammatical rules which take time to fix in the mind.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the number of people who can talk this language are in the great minority, but the order of the Koran must be obeyed. What, therefore, is the result?

A little boy is sent to the local *taleb* or Arab teacher at the age of seven, and he is supposed to remain there until he is fifteen or sixteen. Here he learns the Koran in the old tongue by heart, reciting in chorus with the other pupils the verses and chapters without the smallest idea what he is saying. Occasionally he finds a teacher who will take the trouble to explain the scripture and give a few comments on what he is learning, but usually the lad leaves his school with the Koran engraved on his mind like some incomprehensible poem. Naturally he forgets all this very quickly, and though his family teach him his prayers, which are extracted from the Book and are translated, this is all he knows of Arabic. The rest of the sense of his religion is picked up by hearsay, and it may seem astonishing to a stranger to note how much he does know about the laws of the Prophet. It is not, however, as astonishing as might be supposed if one realizes what I have said before, that the whole of his daily life is interwoven with religion, and that if he did not know all this it would be just as if a European remained all his life ignorant of the simplest laws of his country.

The girls are not taught anything by the *taleb*, as, though the Koran implies that all children should attend the school, the Arabs consider that if their daughters were thus educated they might get to know too much, and as an old *kadi* once said to me, “A woman who could read and write would find it too easy to communicate with her lovers.”

At home a few have to say the various prayers, but usually their only instruction consists in weaving burnouses and carpets. They also are instructed in the art of cooking; their apprenticeship on these lines is very thorough, and they would beat any professional in a carpet-making competition. Their cooking is, of course, entirely Arab, and is often excellent, especially the pastry and the cakes. The rolling of the *kous-kous* is their speciality, and though in European households only men act as cooks, they have to hand over the preparation of the *kous-kous* to women.

It will be seen, therefore, that as far as the Arab teaching goes, little boys and girls of an Arab family are practically ignorant of anything except the Koran by heart and household duties. There is, however, a French law which orders all parents to send their male children to the local school. This law is enforced more or less according to its locality. Generally speaking, in the north the

children are sent to school as the parents realize the benefit gained by a knowledge of the Roumis' affairs; the Kabyles are an exception, and they do all they can to escape from this foreign imposition.

In the south, too, education is avoided by the nomads, for no natural dislike, but merely because the parents of the children consider that they are more useful at home helping them with their work than in learning to read and write. As, however, there is a law about school-attending, it would seem difficult to evade it, and whereas in the case of the nomads it is quite an easy matter, the people of the oases have to try to get round the schoolmaster. This seems incredible at first unless one knows the mentality of the French *fonctionnaire* far away in the desert. Isolated from his kith and kin and living on small pay, he does not feel really bound to educate all the little wanderers who, he knows, will not profit by his labor.

Those who do attend school are taught to read and write, geography, French history, and a little arithmetic. They usually leave their studies at fourteen and remember nothing a few years after, except the reading and writing. Those who stay on can develop their studies until they reach a standard which permits them to go up for the local examination enabling them to get small scholarships in secondary schools or at Lycées. Those who do very well are educated free at the École Normale, and on leaving are posted as teachers in the French schools. For others there is the Medersa and all the legal situations mentioned in a previous chapter.

These pupils have to learn literary Arabic at the local school, and on this one subject they are, generally speaking, very thoroughly educated.

Quite apart from the official masters, there are the White Fathers and White Sisters. These good people have posts in all the far-flung posts of the French colonies, and their devotion to duty is an example to all. Founded by Cardinal Lavigerie about 1865, their work in North Africa is beyond all praise, and they have done more to pacify the country than any soldiers or politicians. They do not try to convert their pupils, but teach them some trade or occupation, at the same time instilling into their minds principles of good living and moral obligations. The White Fathers produce some wonderful leather work from their workshops, and the Sisters' carpets are the best examples of Arab workmanship one can find. They also run a small school where they teach all elementary matters, including religion. The Arab children do not usually attend these classes but the Jews do. I have talked to Jewish parents on this apparent contradiction of their principles, but they have replied that the teaching of the Sisters is so much superior to that of the lay schools that they prefer their children to receive it, and the parents can always counteract at home any of the Christian doctrines.

The Lycées in Algiers, and for that matter in France, are open to all Arabs who like to pay to send their sons there. Some Arab chiefs make a point of doing so, but it is noticed that the boys do not really reap the benefits of this education but return to their homes without much more knowledge than their brothers who have studied in the local schools, and with all the vices of the Europeans with whom they have come in contact.

What does strike an Englishman is the enormous proportion of Arabs who talk fluent French. In India it is the officer and the official who have to learn Urdu to make themselves understood among the natives; in Algeria it is the native who must learn French. This is carried to such an extent that in some of the *communes mixtes* of the north the little Arab boys are not learning their own language as a channel of conversation.

The south is different, as only a few nomads can say a word of French, but in time the language of the conqueror will impose itself into the farthest recesses of the Sahara. It is another

example of the results obtained by an administration which at first sight seems a contradiction to all sense, and which yet produces wonderful results.

CHAPTER XIX

SPORT AMONG THE ARABS

THE Arab who has not become softened by life in European towns thinks more of sport than of anything else. His greatest ambition is to own a horse, and the possession of a breech-loading gun is a dream he rarely realizes. With his old muzzle-loading blunderbuss, however, he does wonderful shooting, and rams down the charge with amazing rapidity.

Game of all kinds abounds in Algeria—partridge, hares, woodcock, bustard, pigeons, quail, wild boar, gazelle, moufflon, and occasional panthers in the mountains. I will discuss the various methods of shooting the animals as employed by the Arabs, as, with rare exceptions, sport in the country is organized by them. Small game is either walked up or driven; usually driven, as the areas are so wide and open that it is difficult to approach within range of the birds. Hares can be walked, and they make very pretty shots as they dart round the tufts of alfa; the bustard seems to be a bulky target and does not appear to fly very fast, but is not too easy to hit. Dogs are taken out, but they are badly trained, and it is preferable to leave them at home and rely on native boys to pick up the game.

The most interesting way of hunting the small game in the south is mounted, with hawks. The breed is a kind of small falcon, and unlike those trained in India and other countries, which once captured are kept as long as they can fly, these hawks of North Africa are caught in the autumn and are released again in the spring as soon as the molting season begins. What is still more curious is that the same birds are found again the following year by the falconers, with their young, to be trained for the first time. A hawk is an expensive luxury, and costs four or five hundred francs to buy, while a falconer must be mounted, clothed, fed, and paid a salary. But it is a noble sport, and perhaps one of the most picturesque in the world.

A meeting-place is fixed, and the party rides out in twos and threes, or, in the case of the rich, send on their horses, and motor there in comfort. When every one is assembled a long line is made, converging at the two extremities so as almost to make three sides of a square; the falconers, with the birds, capped, perching on their turbans or shoulders, ride in the center. The horsemen slowly advance. Suddenly there is a shout—a hare has got up; the line steadies its pace, for it is against all rules in any way to hunt the hare until the falcon has got to work. This does not take long, however, for in a second a bird is uncapped and is soaring rapidly up into the air, a second bird has followed it, perhaps a third.

Up they go, flying swiftly above the hunted beast. Suddenly the first falcon swoops down toward the earth, then up again. He has missed, but before the hare has got over this first escape the second falcon comes down; if he misses, the third is there; and, with cries of delight, the Arabs ride up to see the prey held firmly in the falcon’s talons as he pecks savagely at the head.

All this may take five minutes or half an hour. If the hare gets a good start or if the falcon does not see it, at once there is gallop across country, driving the hare in as straight a line as possible by hemming him in on either flank. It is advised in this case not to try to guide the horse, but to let it pick its way among the tufts and holes in the mad pursuit across the rough ground. Many hawks are often loosed, and one may see eight in the air at the same time.

The prettiest sight, I think, is to see a hawk tackling a bustard. The bird gets up heavily, and at first flies low, apparently slowly, but not too slowly for the hawk, whose wings twinkle high up in the sky. After a minute or two the bustard decides to rise; in doing so it loses distance, and the hawk, at the critical moment, stoops and with a graceful upward movement seems just to skim over the large bird's back, turning on itself again like an aeroplane looping. There is a little shower of gray feathers, the bustard seems to stagger, and then spins down to earth, while the falcon remains high above, marking the place where lies the body.

More often than not, the quarry gets away, and it is then a little difficult to gather in the hawks. The falconers, with loud cries, wave the carcass of a dead hare round their heads until the birds, one by one, return and are capped till the next hunt.

The shooting of bigger game is contrary to all British ideas of sport. The art of stalking is practically unknown.

The wild boar which infests the Atlas range, and especially the mountains of the coast, is driven through the thick undergrowth and killed with a shotgun at short range.

The gazelle of the Sahara is hunted in different ways. The most common method is on horseback. A party of five or six will ride out on to the plain where gazelles are known to be pasturing. As soon as the animals are sighted the horsemen approach cautiously, endeavoring to place themselves on the flank of the herd. The moment the hunters are seen, up go the heads of the gazelles, and in a second there is a wild stampede. At the same time the horses leap forward and the pursuit begins.

If the preliminary maneuvering has been well carried out the line of horsemen will be galloping one behind the other parallel to the gazelles, and little by little the distance separating the hunters from their quarry is lessened.

Suddenly as the leading horseman comes within range he drops the reins on his horse's neck, raises his gun and fires. His companions follow suit and an intermittent broadside continues until the herd breaks up into terrified groups fleeing in all directions.

The party halts, retainers who have been following hurry up and cut the throats of the dead gazelles, as even in sport the laws of the Prophet must be observed.

It is an exhilarating sport but it needs a little practise to hit anything when both hunters and hunted are at full gallop. It is moreover recommended to use a high-backed Arab saddle and also to ride at the rear of the line, as excitement often makes the Arabs shoot carelessly.

There are others, merely hunting for food, who go out before dawn when the herds are all lying down, approach as near as possible, and then blaze away as soon as it is light enough to see. Some sportsmen hunt them with the native greyhound, but, as this entails much leisure with often no results, the sport is dying out. I have seen gazelles hunted from a motor-car. The vehicle goes bumping across the desert until a herd is seen, and approaches as near as possible. As soon as the animals get the wind they are off, and the car is off after them. As in the case of the hunting on horseback, the gazelles at first go much faster, but they are soon overtaken and the car rushes along beside them while the occupants discharge their guns into the terrified herd. It is a massacre, but the shooting is not so easy as it sounds and the driver of the car must have courage and judgment. Sometimes it is impossible to get level with the gazelles. In these cases the object may be achieved by the mere tooting of the horn! Nine times out of ten this will cause the gazelles to stop, the car then stops too, and the tooting continues at intervals until—marvelous to relate— the

animals begin approaching to see what the noise is. At this moment the heathen kills just as many head as he wants.

There are few dishes more delicate than a roast haunch of gazelle, and the cutlets melt in one's mouth.

The moufflon—which is not really a moufflon at all, but a sort of goat resembling very closely the animal which is known as the sharpu in Kashmir—is very little hunted. In the first place, he lives in very inaccessible mountains, chiefly in the Aures above Biskra and in the Djebel Amour near Laghouat; secondly, he is getting scarce, and thirdly, his meat not being very tender, is not sought after. If the Arabs see one they shoot it with a shotgun regardless of sex or age; and the European who wants to stalk must understand the game thoroughly himself, be a good mountaineer, and merely employ natives to guide him to the likely spots. It is one of the most astonishing things to see how completely ignorant the Arabs are of all questions of wind or light; their only idea seems to be to rush up to the beasts as quickly as possible and kill in quantity.

But, if the sportsman will take trouble and get into touch with some of the rare Arabs who enjoy this kind of shooting, he will have some excellent sport and get quite good heads.

Panthers are very rare nowadays, and keep away in the highest peaks where there are forests or thick undergrowth. Only when it is very cold do they come down to lower levels and kill a few sheep. The moment their presence is known all the neighboring villages are up in arms, and the wretched beasts have not many days to live.

Jackals and foxes are also shot, as they do a great deal of damage to flocks, and their skins are tanned and sold. Hyenas frequent the plains of the Northern Sahara.

On the whole, however, the Arab who is at heart a good sportsman considers that any form of hunting not connected with a horse is more a means to obtain food than anything else. There are, of course, the great chiefs who will organize regular shoots for their friends as is done in Europe, but it is not very general.

Horse-racing is encouraged, and, though it is carried out in rather a wild method, with little attention to handicapping, it is very highly thought of. Every Arab knows how to ride, be he a soldier, a merchant, or a cook, and the smallest boy will mount his steed without fear or hesitation at the first opportunity.

What strikes one, however, is the little care the average man takes of his horse. He very rarely grooms him, he feeds him on any sort of fodder available, and when in camp he hobbles him in a way which is almost cruel. He uses a heavy saddle based on a wooden framework, and the bit, though light, is often rusty. It is nothing for a nomad to do thirty miles a day on an animal which has never smelled a handful of oats in its life. In spite of this, however, the horses seem to thrive, and those who are properly cared for answer to the treatment in an incredibly short space of time.

All along the coast, sea-fishing abounds, but it differs in no way from the same sort of fishing all over the world. The river-fishing inland is not worth speaking about, but it exists, and the rather bony fish which is caught often makes a pleasant contrast to the eternal meals of mutton and game.

This, roughly speaking, is the sport of Algeria. There are, of course, private individuals—European farmers—who do a certain amount of preserving, but they are in the minority, and rarely ask others than their neighbors to share in their shoots.

Game exists everywhere, and, if the sportsman will take trouble, he can have as good fun with gun and rifle as in any country, but he must do it all himself.

CHAPTER XX

THE NOMADS

THE nomads are the descendants of the original Arabs who invaded North Africa in the seventh and twelfth centuries. Here and there they have been slightly Berberized, but generally speaking they are quite a separate type from the inhabitants of the rest of Algeria. Tall, and tanned by the sun, they look fearlessly before them as they move with that easy gait of men born and bred in the open plain. Their feet and hands are shapely, and though not actually good-looking they have very fine faces, with an expression of great calm.

Their clothes are much scantier than those of their brethren of the towns. Usually there is just a *gandourah* tied about the waist with a leather girdle, bare legs, the feet encased in untanned leather boots, a very rough turban on the head, and a threadbare burnous. Over the shoulder is slung an antique muzzle-loading gun, while in their hands is always a long staff.

Their womenfolk go about unveiled and have little pretention to beauty, which is probably due to the hard life which they lead. They wear simple frocks, sandals and a kind of turbaned head-dress made of many scarfs wound one above the other. Their hair is thick and plaited round the head, leaving two coils to hang out on either side.

The accent of a nomad is quite different from that of the other Arabs; it is deep and guttural, much softer than the tongues of the mountains and of the north.

The hardest thing to realize when one meets these people is the fact that none of them ever possessed a permanent home or actually resided in a house. They were born under the tent, they were brought up there, married there, and they will die and be buried under a little heap of stones. Their whole outlook on life has been the open plain, the sky, the storm, the rain, the fierce sun of the Sahara; even the visits to the market towns have been fleeting. The family, which means everything, has been centered round the group of tents.

These tents are not, as might be supposed, gorgeously decked residences or even the tents we associate with shooting expeditions in India. They consist of a kind of very large blanket made of coarse camel's and goat's hair. This blanket is placed on posts and pegged down on three sides leaving the fourth open. On the floor are placed rugs and carpets, and in the case of a rich nomad one may sometimes see colored hangings on the walls, but this is rare, as simplicity is preferred.

When the man is married the tent is divided into two by another blanket and the man lives on one side and his wife and children on the other. When the camp is struck the posts are removed, the blanket is rolled up with the carpets and the whole is placed on the back of a camel or donkey.

On some of the camels one may occasionally see what are known as *bassours*. They are a kind of palanquin consisting of a framework of wicker hoops covered over with drapery, and inside which travel the women and children. The men either walk or ride horses or donkeys.

In the old days, before motor-cars had come into being, the caravan of some southern chief moving to his summer quarters in the north was a very noble sight. It consisted of some hundred camels bearing all his family and his household goods. The *bassour* of the important ladies was draped about with the brilliant trappings of his tribe and was surmounted by a banner above which

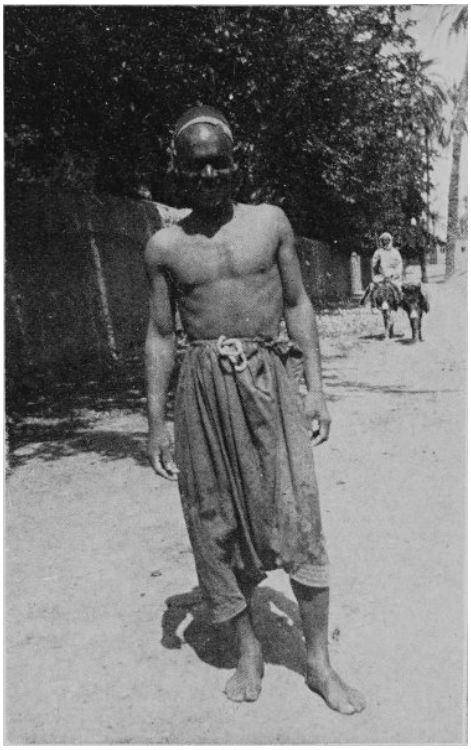
shone a brass crescent. All the men rode beautiful horses richly saddled, and the flocks spread themselves about the caravan as far as the eye could reach.

Occasionally one sees this sight nowadays, but very rarely, and only in the far south where roads have not penetrated. To-day the Arab chief sends his family by rail or by car, and it is left to the shepherds to travel in their old-fashioned and picturesque style.

There are, however, real nomads of great wealth who own hundreds of flocks and whose caravans are necessarily very large, but they do not go in for any kind of pomp. It is a most astonishing thing to meet one of the old heads of families, dressed so simply that he might be a humble workman, and realize that he is the owner of thousands of sheep which represent a fortune not to be sneered at in Europe. Here he lives, however, all his life on the desert with his fifty tents or so, his family and retainers growing up about him, but without the least desire to better himself or live in a house.

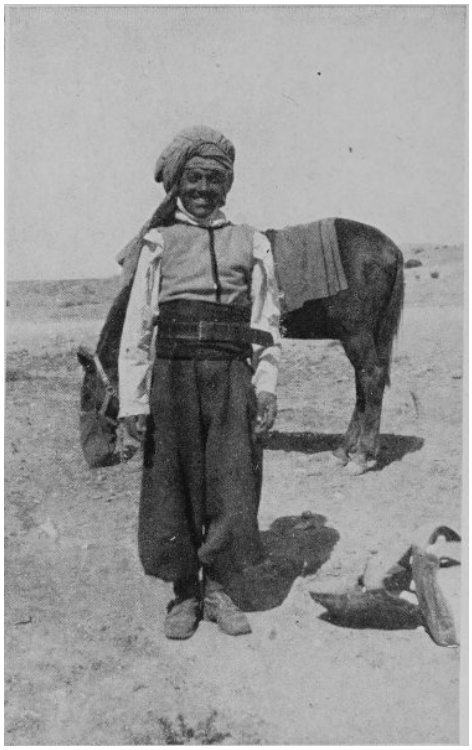
Most of the *caïds* of the south live this way, and those who inhabit the towns are exceptions, and are merely there for business reasons or because contact with Europe has made them soft.

The camp of my shepherds, which consists of eight tents, comprising some fifty persons, is a very typical example of the average group of nomads. It moves according to the pastures; that is to say, it remains in a place as long as there is enough grazing in that area and then it moves on to the next feeding ground. The camp forms the center or headquarters, and in it dwell all the women and children. At dawn the shepherds get up, count the sheep and disperse into the Sahara, where they remain with the flocks until the evening, when they return to the camp. The sheep are again counted, and the evening meal is taken in each separate home.



Photographs by Mr. Julian Sampson

A Water Carrier in Laghouat



Algerian Cavalryman

Photographs by Mr. Julian Sampson

Head Shepherd, the Author, the Kaïd Madam and the Calipha

Caravan Moving North

When I am there the head shepherd, and perhaps the head man of some neighboring camp, dine with me, and then all the other shepherds come and sit round my fire to smoke or tell stories till bed-time. The women, though unveiled, rarely appear and they are so silent that one hardly realizes they are there, but they prepare a very excellent meal and with apparently no materials weave all the tents and clothes for their menfolk.

In the winter we move only a few miles at a time, from pasture to pasture, but when it begins to get hot and the grazing scarce the whole camp is packed up and we set out for a long journey to the mountains in the north. It takes a fortnight or so to cover the two or three hundred miles to our summer quarters. Here the area is much more restricted, and the camp remains much longer in the same place until the time to move south comes round again in the autumn.

Market-day in the villages of the Tell during the summer months is a most interesting sight. All the tribes are there—Larbas, Chambas, Ouled Naïls—outnumbering the regular inhabitants, and

one hears the deep voices of these people from the Sahara, and in the evening the southern pipe is played in all the cafés.

The rich chiefs who live in the oases usually have their country homes in the mountains, and those who have not are usually related to the local magnates and spend the summer with them.

There are, of course, a great many nomads who never leave the south at all, but wander about all the year in the Sahara. The pasture is very scarce, but there is just enough for the sheep and they get all the benefit of the first autumn rains. Nomads have prejudices about moving out of their own areas and prefer to remain in a country they know.

It is unfortunately difficult to get to know these people well. They are timid of strangers, and as they can not speak one word of French the visitor must have a very fluent knowledge of Arabic to make himself understood. They are suspicious of being exploited, very quick of temper, and where honor is concerned do not hesitate to use the knife or the gun. They are very childish in their jokes, and if they see that one means no ill they soon become attracted and friendly. Their women are, generally speaking, chaste, and though there are intrigues, which usually end in some one getting murdered, they are the exception.

A little story of an incident which occurred in a neighboring camp to mine will perhaps illustrate the mentality of these people.

A rich nomad possessed a good-looking wife who was much admired by a *sheik* who, owing to business reasons, lived in an oasis. The *sheik* owned flocks himself, and he often had to pass the night near the camp where dwelt the object of his affections. He courted her on the sly, and though the lady regularly rebuffed him he was in no way deterred. One night it so happened that he had to sleep in the camp of the rich nomad, and he lost not a moment to press the lady to grant him his requests. At first she refused, but after a while she seemed to relent, and told him to wait till she made a signal and then to creep under the blanket which divided the men's section from the woman's, and come to her. The young man was in his seventh heaven, and when all was quiet he was duly called, and crept toward his lady-love. When he was quite close she whispered to him to take off all his clothes. He complied with alacrity, and when he was in nature's garments the woman turned to him and said:

"So this is how thou repayest the nomad's hospitality!"

The young man gazed at her speechless.

"I am now going to wake up my husband," she continued, turning to where the old man slept.

In a moment the young *sheik* was on his knees imploring mercy, begging forgiveness, swearing fidelity, trembling at the thought of the fate which would surely await him if the threat were carried out. The woman watched him disdainfully for a moment.

"Coward!" she said at last. "Had I seen that thou wast prepared to meet thy fate like a man I should have respected thee and perhaps accorded thee a favor; as it is thou art not even worthy of the knife of my man; thou canst go!"

The lover made as if to take his clothes.

"Nay, nay," she said, smiling, as she laid her hand on the bundle, "a craven needs no garments. Go; quick, quick, or I shall rouse the whole camp!"

The youth looked at her, and seeing the look of determination, slunk out on to the plain, found his horse, and was obliged to ride naked to the oasis; and there is no humiliation greater for an

Arab than to be seen without any clothes on.

CHAPTER XXI

SHEEP-BREEDING

HAVING talked about the nomads we must now cast a glance at their occupation. Of all the many industries in Algeria, sheep-breeding is the oldest, as perhaps it is in all countries where pastures are unlimited and where lack of communication makes it difficult to set up big commercial towns. Moreover, the Arab is essentially a shepherd by instinct, and living a wandering life with no fixed abode but his camel's hair tent, it is immaterial to him where his sheep pasture, and it is amazing to note the vast tracts of country crossed by a flock during the course of the year.

Messieurs Bernard and Redon say in the *Histoire, Colonisation, Géographie et Administration de l'Algérie*:

"The Moghreb (original name of Algeria before the Phœnician settlements) is especially suited for the cultivation of cereals, vines and olive-trees, and for sheep-breeding. . . . the Numidians were excellent horsemen who lived by pillage and by the produce of their great flocks."

Further, speaking of the invasion of the Hillals in the twelfth century, they say:

"The newcomers were fierce nomads who did not invade as did the first Arabs, in small groups, but in hordes, millions of men followed by equally vast flocks."

The greatest sheep-breeding centers are in the southern part of the department of Algiers, some two hundred miles from Algiers, and right away to the south as far as Ghardaïa.

There is also a certain amount of breeding in the southern tracts of Oranie and in Constantine, but the inhabitants of these areas are more interested in cereals, and the Arabs of Biskra are specialists in dates.

The district known as the Sersou, on the high level above the Sahara, must not be forgotten as one of the finest pasture-lands of Algeria, but the majority of the flocks there have come up from Laghouat and Ghardaïa to escape the intense heat of the summer.

Many people who have only visited the country in a superficial or tourist manner, are filled with incredulous surprise when they are told of sheep-farming in the Sahara.

"But what do the sheep eat and drink?" they exclaim.

It is difficult to explain this to those not versed in the constitution of a sheep, but when one realizes that in winter a sheep can go for three months without drinking, and finds nourishment and water in the rough scrub which grows all over the Sahara, it is not surprising that these great flocks thrive and that the sheep grow as fat as their cousins in Europe.

Presumably if an animal is brought up to live on scrub and do without green grass it has no taste for other nourishment, and there is little doubt that if a camel was let loose on the Scottish moors it would be unable to assimilate the rich food owing to the formation of its digestive organs.

However, whatever the best diet for a sheep may be, the result is enormous flocks all along the northern belt of the Sahara, which are a source of great revenue to the Arabs. Few Europeans have ventured into this business, in the first place, because the Frenchman has not that adventurous spirit which characterizes the British colonist, and in the second because unless one knows the country and its people well it is difficult to enter on a venture of this kind alone. But those who have had the courage to start are delighted and amazed at the results.

First of all the original capital required is comparatively small, three hundred to five hundred pounds being sufficient to buy the first flock; and second, the return is large and very rapid. Given an average year, the investor can count on a regular annual thirty to sixty per cent. net for himself on his money after paying all expenses, including the remuneration of his Arab partner.

The expenses are negligible; they need hardly be taken into consideration. They consist of market fees (only at the big markets where there are tens of thousands of sheep for sale), shearing fees, and a small pasturage tax when the flocks are in the north. The shepherd of each flock is paid in kind. That is to say, he is given an old burnous (Arab cloak), a few measures of barley and twelve to fourteen lambs each year. No further expenditure is required, and though losses occur occasionally from drought, there is never a hundred per cent. mortality.

Since 1900 there have been only two of what are known as famine years. During those two years sheep died at a rate of from fifty to sixty per cent., but this is a very exceptional occurrence. Curiously enough years like this which are disasters to some are windfalls to others. The people who suffer are those who have not sufficient reserve funds to be able to hold out during the bad period and who are obliged to sell out. Those, therefore, who are not entirely dependent on the sale of their sheep to live, buy up from the poorer breeders at negligible cost. When there is a mortality of thirty per cent. it is considered very bad, but this happens perhaps once in seven years, and even then one has the remaining seventy per cent. from which to continue breeding. The average mortality does not exceed ten per cent. and it has been known as low as three.

The system of working the flock is for the European capitalist to enter into an agreement with an Arab: a chief of some tribe or some native of good reputation owning flocks of his own. Through him all the purchases are made at the various markets, or direct from the nomad tribes as they pass through the district. He is responsible for all dealings with the Arabs for the pastures, for the selection of shepherds, in fact for all the technical work to do with the natives, which no European could possibly cope with.

At the end of each year the profits are estimated and after sharing expenses, half goes to the Arab partner. This may sound excessive, but when one considers that he is responsible for the whole of the breeding, and that without him it would be impossible to do the business without being robbed of eighty per cent. of the profits, it is not too much. Moreover, in the unlikely case of dead loss the Arab partner bears half. There have been one or two rare examples where Frenchmen who know the country well, and who can speak the language, have launched forth on their own; they have found that after a year’s work the flock has been mysteriously stolen by some migrating tribe and that it can not be found. What redress has the Frenchman? He can have the shepherd imprisoned if he can find him, but this won’t return him his sheep or his money. On the other hand, when an Arab loses a few sheep he has every redress possible from his colleagues and friends, the chiefs of the district, who will set all the tribes in such a hum that it is not worth while for the robbers to conceal the spoil long.

The way these nomads track a lost flock across hundreds of miles of stony areas baffles all comprehension. I have seen a man track thirty-five strayed sheep from Chellala to Ghardaïa, over

two hundred miles of the most desolate country, and never make a mistake until he reached the sheep. During the tracking he crossed the spoor of some thousand other flocks, but he hardly hesitated in his relentless march, whereas I could not see as much as a mark on the stony ground. I remember at one moment I expressed my amazement at this apparent witchcraft. The Arab chief, my partner, laughed.

"Look," said he, "what do you see on the ground?"

I peered down and, after a long scrutiny, I said doubtfully. "It is something like the print of a man's foot, but I am not sure."

The Arab smiled.

"It is the print of an unmarried girl of the tribe of the Chambas," he replied without hesitation.

In amazement I looked at him.

"But how?" I asked.

"I can not describe to you the difference between the print of an unmarried girl and a woman without having the two prints before me," he replied, "but I know."

"But the tribe?" I exclaimed incredulously.

"There is a date-stone beside the foot-mark," continued the Arab, "which only comes from the palms which grow in the land of the Chambas."

I said no more. That night we came to a group of nomad tents.

"Ask them who they are," said the chief, smiling.

I hailed them and a voice from the dark said, "Chambas!"

No, I do not think that half the profit is too large a remuneration for the Arab partner. . . .

At the end of each working year, that is October till September, the final settlement of accounts takes place. If so wished the entire flock can then be sold. Moreover, this can be done at any moment, and it is a point to be noted that the money invested is never immobilized, as there is always a market for sheep, and like other commodities the price follows the rate of the dominating currency on the money-market. If the wisest course is followed, merely selling the produce (lambs, wool and butter), leaving the original flock intact, it will be found that in a good year the capital will be reimbursed at the end of the first season, while the flock remains as profit to go on breeding from. If from this moment one contents oneself with the sale of butter and wool only, which bring in ten per cent., and one keeps the lambs, one will see the original flock multiply itself into many flocks in an incredibly short space of time.

The Arabs among themselves never keep any regular accounts, but gage their fortunes by flocks and keep as little ready money as possible. When they want to buy a horse or a motor-car or a wife, they send so many flocks or portions of flocks to the nearest market and pay their bill with the proceeds. If some of them ever realized their livestock, they would find themselves on a footing with some of the big fortunes of Europe with every luxury at their disposal. But they prefer to remain living quietly in their Arab centers, content with the mercies of Allah, opposed to all thoughts of the future, for after all, Allah is almighty, Allah will provide, and if he does not, *mektoub!*

CHAPTER XXII

OTHER PRODUCTS

APART from the breeding of sheep on the Hauts Plateaux and in the Sahara, we also find cattle-raising in the Tell and in the coast hills of the department of Oran, while horse-breeding is carried on all along the southern slopes of the Atlas. The cattle are not very big, and would compare sadly with any European breed, but they bring in a comfortable little revenue to the breeder and suffice for the needs of the country.

Horses are more in the hands of the Europeans, who have created some quite good centers for improving the strain, but generally speaking, the fiery steed associated with pictures of Arab life is conspicuous by its absence, and, though one can get an average mount for the asking, a really fine horse is hard to buy.

The breeding of camels, mules and donkeys is entirely in the hands of the Arabs and is of little interest financially.

Algeria is, however, essentially an agricultural country and has been so ever since the days of the Romans. Unfortunately the richness of its soil and the abundance of sunshine is handicapped by the lack of regular rain, and the farmers live always in fear of drought.

Dams have been made across some of the big river-beds which are full of water in winter, but they are not so complete as in the days of the Romans. Two thousand years ago Algeria was the granary of a great empire; now in good years it exports a vast proportion of its cereals, but in a bad year it has to import. Wheat, barley, oats are grown all over the department of Oran, and in the center and the south of Constantine. There is also some grain in the department of Algiers, and little by little the sowing is extending. This is due a great deal to the energy of the manager of an American firm, the International Harvester Company, which has proved to the Algerian farmer the amount that can be done to improve production by using modern methods and perfected machinery.

The vine, though it does not cover nearly so large an area as the cereals, is considered as of almost greater importance.

It is some fifty years since the first Frenchman came to Algeria in search of soil not infested by phylloxera and attempted planting vineyards. The results were so amazing that more and more people hurried over the Mediterranean, and in twenty years the land was producing ten times the amount of wine as at the start. This, however, nearly led to disaster, as there was suddenly a glut of wine on the market and the prices dropped to nothing. However, the system was soon reorganized, and Algiers now exports a seventh of its production to the mother country. This wine, being stronger in alcohol and in color than French wine, is used for blending purposes. Many of the Burgundies and Bordeaux which do not come from some specific vineyard are half Algerian, and practically three parts of the *vins ordinaires* served in French cafés come from over the Mediterranean.

In Algiers itself there are certain well-known *crus*, such as La Trappe de Staoueli, a plain wine, Medea, and Miliana from the hills.

In Oranie, too, there are one or two small wine-producing districts, such as Mascara; but practically all the vineyards are in the department of Algiers, and center round the plain of the Mitidja and the adjacent hills. All modern improvements for pressing and fermenting have been brought in, for as the picking takes place in the heat of summer, the fermenting is a very delicate operation.

Phylloxera has been practically stamped out and though drought is feared, it has not the same disastrous effects as on the cereals, owing to a certain amount of irrigation.

The great danger is a sirocco just before the *vendange*. It seems unbelievable, but I have seen entire vineyards withered up in six hours under the blast of this terrible hot wind from the south. One can actually see the leaves turning brown and the bunches of grapes shriveling, just as if a fire had been lighted beneath the vines. Luckily this only happens once in a while, and the average years are good.

The wine is strong and rather heady, coarse in comparison to the French wines, but very well suited to the rather special food of the country.

In the same district as the vine we find the mandarin, orange, and lemon plantations. Protected by cypress-trees, the golden fruit is grown in large quantities, and exported daily during the winter months.

A curious herb known as geranium is also grown on this fertile plain. It is made into perfume, and supplies the base for cheap scent. A great deal of it goes to England, and, curiously enough, the only other country where it is cultivated in quantity is Mauritius.

All along the coast east and west of Algiers we find the market-gardens for early vegetables. The expert labor is chiefly supplied by Majorcans and Sicilians, and during a good year it is a most profitable occupation, as the markets of Paris and other big centers are supplied from these tiny seacoast gardens.

Next in importance comes the tobacco industry. The best plantations are along the coast east of Algiers, in the lower levels of the Kabyle country, and, again, in that wonderfully fertile plain of the Mitidja. Provided one can obtain the suitable soil, it is one of the most profitable products to exploit—little cost, and none of the worry or expense incurred by the Regie, as in France. Moreover, it is quite a high-class tobacco, and some of the cigars are really quite good smoking, while the pipe tobacco and the cigarettes can be offered to the most *difficile*. It is much healthier smoking as there are no foreign matters or mixtures, but just the pure leaf, which differs according to district.

Figs are grown in great quantity in the Kabyle Mountains, and are exported. In the prolongation of the same mountains and all along the coast to Tunisia the cork forests abound. This industry is much developed, and English and American firms vie with the Algerians to obtain concessions and export the cork to their own countries.

The olive-tree is indigenous to Algeria, and grows wild on all the mountains. In certain centers the trees are grafted, and the olives are plucked and oil extracted from them.

Apart from the fruit-bearing trees, however, the forests of Algeria are few and far between. Here and there one comes upon magnificent cedars and pines, but it is not a wooded country, and a great deal of the timber is imported.

There are people who maintain that Algeria was once covered with forests, and that the same state of things could be reproduced. I am not of this opinion; in the first place, because of the

absence of practically any coal, and second, by the fact that the country is, and always has been, essentially agricultural.

There are minerals of many kinds in Algeria, but never in great quantity. Iron, zinc, lead and copper have been found, but they are not worked, merely taken out of the ground and sent to Europe.

A little oil has been tapped in Oranie, but up to the present not in sufficient quantity to make its development interesting from a commercial point of view. The same can be said of the small coal-field discovered near Colomb Bechar, in the south of the same department.

The most interesting product of the soil is phosphates, which are found in great quantity in the department of Constantine, whence they are exported daily from the ports of Bougie and Bône.

Hot springs abound in Algeria, and, with the exception of Hammam Rhira and Hammam Meskoutine, are not developed. It is a pity, as they have excellent healing qualities, and those people with rheumatism who have frequented the baths at Hammam Rhira are delighted with the results.

Before leaving this subject we must once more turn our eyes to the Southern Territories, in order not to forget two of the most important industries of the country: the date-palms and the alfa grass.

Unexpectedly the date worthy of exportation thrives only in certain restricted areas where the temperature and rainfall are exactly suited. However, when this occurs the owner of a palmery can count on a very substantial income.

The alfa grass, which grows wild all over the Sersou and Hauts Plateaux, is divided up into concessions, owned chiefly by British firms, and it is exported to be made into paper.

This is already a very dull chapter, and I will not weary the reader with any further dissertation on commerce, but I hope that, after reading this *résumé* of the products of Algeria, he will realize what a rich country it is, and what a future of prosperity lies before it. The Phœnicians guessed its value; the Romans realized it; the Arabs forgot it all; and the French are beginning to complete what the Romans began. Well may they prosper!

CHAPTER XXIII

ALGIERS

Now that we have before us an outline of the history, geography, administration and customs of the country under examination, it seems opportune to say a few words about Algeria from the point of view of the tourist.

The traveler visiting this country will either journey direct by sea to Algiers or else will take the overland route via Paris and Marseilles, which is the more rapid. In either case he will arrive by sea.

His first impressions of Algiers, rising out of the Mediterranean like a white bubble in a sea of sapphire, will be the best he will have of this once Turkish city, now a vast commercial town and only a little less noisy than Marseilles. The sight of the Arab quarter, piling itself up in a pyramid of white and blue roofs above the European houses, with the fresh gardens of Mustapha away to the left and the Turkish forts in the foreground, is a vision of delight. And though, once landed, the smell of Oriental people and the red-fezzed porters may rouse for a moment a sense of the East, this atmosphere will not last long.

Algiers of to-day is essentially a big commercial town of over two hundred thousand inhabitants. Owing to the configuration of the ground it has spread east and west, giving it a sea-front of some ten miles. Inland the houses have crept up the hills as far as possible, but in many places it is too steep to attempt building, and one- or two-storied villas are the general rule. Most of these villas are lamentable modern constructions, but there are a few which date from the old Arab days, and in which there are a multitude of lovely marbles and tiles of the period. These villas were occupied after the French conquest by followers of the victorious army, and later, when Algiers was discovered as a winter resort, they passed into the hands of English hibernators.

In those days the life on the Mustapha Hill was brilliant and amusing. The English colony was composed of well-to-do people who spent half the year in these Arab villas, while those who had not permanent residences settled in the few local hotels. An English club flourished, and a real society existed. But all this is gone. The facilities of transit, the mechanical age in which we live, and newly acquired wealth have dispelled all this pleasant life.

The English hibernators who inhabited the picturesque villas have in many cases been supplanted by foreigners, and those who remain are not much given to entertaining, so that it is rare for the outsider to get more than a glimpse of the multi-colored tiles. Great hotels have sprung up, rivaling one another in a second-rate atmosphere of the Riviera; Swiss waiters do their utmost to keep up the illusion, but the lack of elegance handicaps them.

If, therefore, the visitor is not seeking gossip and bridge in overheated drawing-rooms, or the company of summer boarders from Bexhill and the relics of our great Indian Empire, he will do well to stay just long enough in Algiers to collect his breath, and then penetrate into the interior and see the real life of the country. If, however, he is not of an active nature, he can find excursions round about Algiers, but it will be at the cost of submitting to the gala nights of the Mustapha hotels, of the unsyncopated music of lamentable orchestras, while the middle-aged ladies of

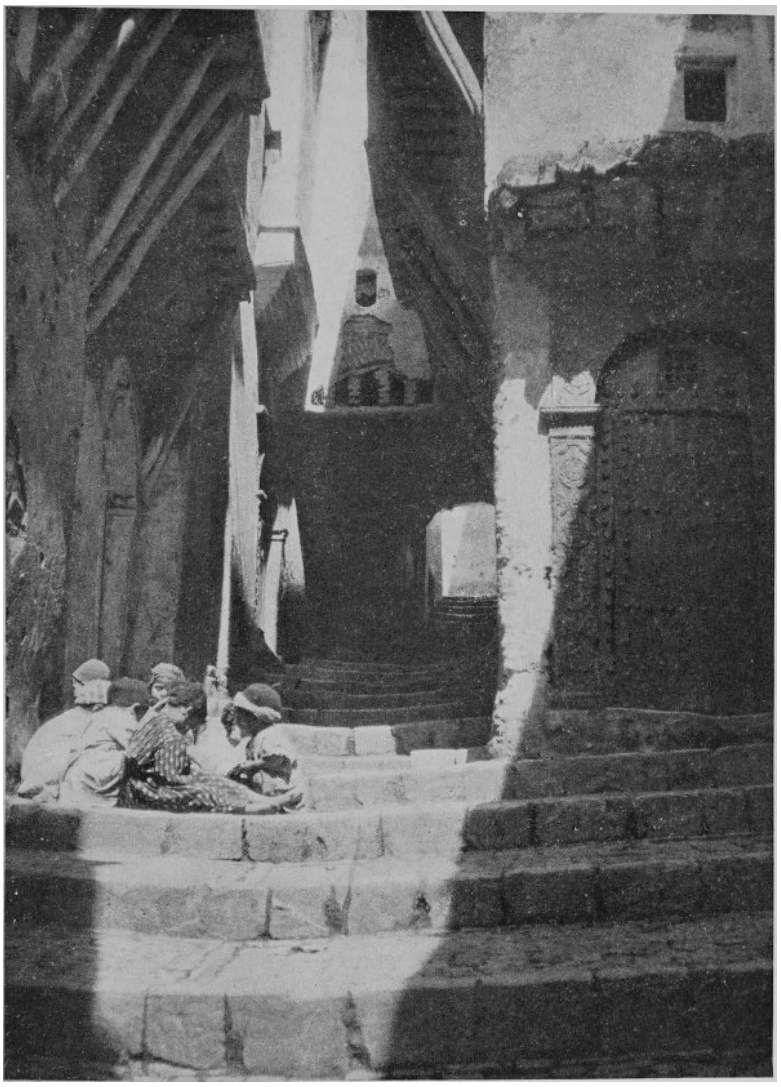
fashion sit round criticizing the few youthful or well-dressed creatures who have strayed by accident into this mediocre society.

Algiers is not Algeria, and its people are wisely called “Algerois,” as against “Algeriens.”

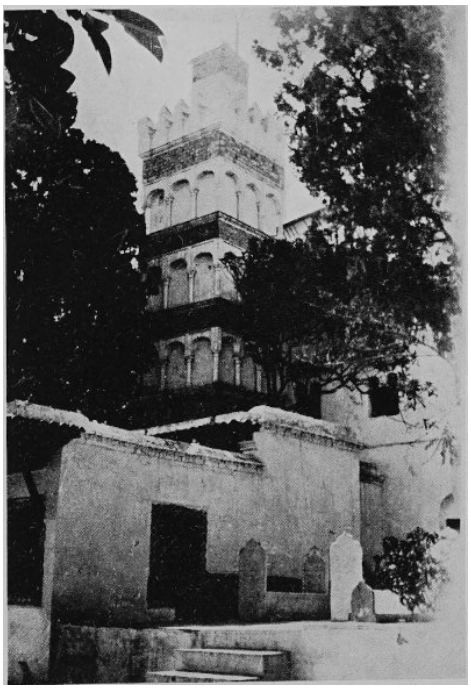
The commercial city about the port is interesting from the point of view of any one desirous of examining the development of a growing city. Eight great banks do a brisk business, which alone speaks for the trade passing through Algiers. The harbor, which is now being more than doubled in size, will, when completed, rival the largest ports of the Mediterranean. The biggest battleships and liners of the world can berth comfortably in its shelter, and there is rarely an hour in the day when merchantmen are not approaching or leaving its quays. Everywhere there is an atmosphere of booming trade, and it is undoubtedly a fact that, if Algiers had an independent government with an independent exchequer, the franc would be a good deal nearer par with the pound sterling than it is at present.

The visitor has, however, probably not come to this sunny country to go into statistics and business opportunities, and it will be sufficient, therefore, if he drives through the town with the knowledge that he is in the midst of a trading-center which in a few years will stand on a level with Lyons and Bordeaux.

The “sights” of Algiers can be done easily in one day, as they are all concentrated about the Kasba (literally fort, but here the name given to the Arab city). The most interesting building to see is the Governor’s winter palace, formerly the residence of the dey, and until a few years ago occupied by the Governor-General. It is now used for official receptions, as government offices, and for exhibitions. A great deal of the original building has been spoiled by the improvement put in by the military engineers, but there remain some lovely tiles and woodwork which, apart from their many historical associations, make the visit worth while.



A Street in the Kasbah, Algiers



Mosque of Sidi Abd-er-Rahmane

Café Outside Grande Mosque, Algiers

The Archbishop's palace opposite is a typical Arab house with some fine tiles, while the Public Library, once the house of Mustapha Pasha, is one of the finest examples of Moorish architecture and contains more beautiful tiles. While speaking of these tiles it would perhaps be well to say a few words about their origin. During the period of Turkish rule in Algeria, when the corsairs roamed the Mediterranean, it was the custom to bring the prisoners back to Algiers. Some of them were held for ransom, and the ransom imposed either took the form of money or of tiles from the countries whence came the prisoners. If among the prisoners who were captured there were found artisans who understood building or the creation of these tiles, they were employed in constructing and beautifying the houses of their captors. Hence in all these Arab villas one finds Florentine, Milanese, Dutch and Persian tiles. In one of the villas of Mustapha there is even a record of the capturing of an English sailor who was kept by the Turks for some years.

The Grande Mosquée, built in the tenth century A. D., differs little from other mosques. The Mosque of Sidi-Abd-er-Rahmane is worth a visit as the resting-place of the patron of Algiers.

The actual Kasba is a picturesque series of narrow streets climbing up the hill from the Winter Palace to the Fort l'Empereur: so-called because it was here that Charles Quint for a brief moment made his headquarters. It is very dirty and smelly.

If one can obtain access to a private house one will have an interesting peep at a simple interior contrasting vividly with the riches of the palaces, and from the roof one will obtain a marvelous view of the Arab city. A visit at night is also recommended, when the dirt will be invisible and the flickering lights in the dark streets and the Moorish cafés, with their musicians, carry one away from the modernisms of the great commercial town which throbs so close. In both visits it is recommended to start from the top and walk down toward the sea.

The Admiralty or headquarters of the French Navy in Algeria lies to the north of the harbor. It used to be the headquarters of the pirate chiefs, and it was in its lofty chambers that the raids and

expeditions were planned, while below, in the shelter of the tall breakwaters, the fleet waited for its orders. There are some very fine tiles and rather massive architecture, also a series of powder magazines, dungeons, and a remarkable torture-chamber, outside which is an inscription telling it is the site where Christian hostages were blown to pieces at the mouth of the cannon.

In one of the cells Cervantes was imprisoned. The visit to the Admiralty is, however, impossible unless one knows a naval officer on duty in Algiers or has a pass from one of the government officials.

The Jardin d'Essai, a little to the east of the main city, is interesting if one has not seen Kew, and the Arab cemetery above the Kasba discloses a pretty view of the hills behind Algiers; but, generally speaking, Arab Algeria will not be found in Algiers. And, though some of the buildings are very lovely, they are all relics of the barbarous rule of the Turkish conqueror, and they do not represent anything appertaining to the country.

With the inrush of commerce Algiers has lost its charm, and there are no other compensations. Even the climate is disappointing. The winter is wet, and, though there are glorious days of sunshine, the atmosphere is relaxing. December is a good month, as are also March, April, and May; the others are either too wet or too hot.

Let the tourist, therefore, make up his mind to spend his holiday traveling, or even in repose in one of the Sahara oases, and he will return to his home with an impression of light and freshness and with a sensation that he has thrown off all the cares of the modern world. If he will take the humble advice of one who knows the country, he will follow in the tracks of the journey described in the next chapters, and, if color and contrasts appeal to him, he will probably return in the succeeding year to these entrancing scenes which never weary the eye.

CHAPTER XXIV

TWO EXCURSIONS

BEFORE setting out on the long journey through Algeria, two short excursions from Algiers seem worthy of mention. The first is an afternoon drive to the easterly point of the bay of Algiers. The distance is barely twenty miles, and though there is nothing in particular to see there, the drive along the coast from Maison Carrée is delightful, and the view from Cape Matifou of Algiers, shimmering white in the distance, is enchanting. Practically no tourists ever go there, and though in the summer the little fishing-village of Laperouse is inhabited by Algerian families who can not holiday in France, in the winter it is deserted.

It is recommended to drive out via Maison Carrée, Fort de l'Eau (the Algerian ape of Deauville in the summer) and the village of Cape Matifou. A mile farther on a sharp turn is taken to the left, and in a few minutes one reaches Laperouse. Passing through the village a rough road leads one to the point on which stands the lazaret used for the quarantine confinement of pilgrims returning from Mecca.

If there is a storm in the Mediterranean, the sea dashing itself against the cliffs is a magnificent sight, and the view of the spray bursting over the rocks to the east makes one realize how restless is this inland sea. From the cape one should return to Laperouse, take a look at the little fishing-port, very quiet during the winter months, and then, asking the way to the ruins, picnic in the old Roman bath which overlooks the miniature bay, so blue and calm even when the breakers are roaring against the point.

The ruins are those of Rusgunium, originally a Phœnician center, and later converted by the Romans into a summer watering-place. Unfortunately, with the exception of the baths, practically all vestige of the houses has disappeared; this is not modern neglect, as the stones and mosaics were taken by the Turks to build Algiers of that day.

If the weather is fine it is strongly recommended that one stay until the sunset, as the spectacle of the sun disappearing behind the hills of Algiers, making of it a great brazier of flame, compensates one for the drive back in the dusk. But really to appreciate Laperouse it must be visited on a summer day. The heavy atmosphere of Algiers is left behind, and one finds oneself in a sea of light and freshness. The water lazily laps the cliffs and ripples up on the golden sand. It is never too hot, as the breeze comes from over the sea and, bathing on the hottest day, one can not stay in the water for more than half an hour. The nights are cool, and the twinkling lights of Algiers across the bay, while the summer moon flashes in the tranquil sea, equal a vision from the *Arabian Nights*.

The second excursion is to the west of Algiers to Tipaza and, if time permits, as far as Cherchell. It is advised to do it in two days, as there is much to be seen and little time to appreciate all in a short winter's day. If, however, time is pressing, Cherchell can be omitted and Tipaza alone visited.

The actual distance is some fifty miles, and the road runs delightfully along the coast all the time. The way is bordered by endless vegetable gardens, for it is along this part of the coast that all the *primeurs* are grown for the Paris markets.

Castiglione is a pretty little village on the sea coast, as is also Berard, but as in the case of Laperouse they must be imagined in the summer full of holiday-making Algerians. A little beyond Berard can be seen a strange-looking object on the top of the hill, resembling a very large beehive. It is in reality a mausoleum known as the *Tombeau de la Chrétienne*. To visit this it will be necessary to leave the car and climb up a steep path some six hundred feet above the sea. On reaching the pyramid one is struck with a certain similarity with its cousins in Egypt and, in fact, there is reason in this resemblance. One hundred and twenty feet high, with a diameter of one hundred and eighty feet, it is composed of great blocks of stone rising in tiers, and is said to have been built by Juba II. Juba II, it will be remembered, was the son of Juba I, defeated by Cæsar at Thapsus in 46 B. C. The boy was taken to Rome and brought up most carefully by Octavia, Cæsar's sister, and was ultimately married to Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra. In 43 B. C., when the Roman Empire was finally established and the second triumvirate had divided the territory among its members, Octavius restored the old kingdom of Numidia, and in 30 B. C. appointed Juba II as its king.

Cæsarea, now Cherchell, became his capital, and for fifty years was the most magnificent city of North Africa. The *Tombeau de la Chrétienne* was constructed as the mausoleum for his wife.

There is no real evidence for this story, and many will say that the tomb is much before the time of the Romans. However, the fact remains that this edifice is quite close to the capital of Juba's kingdom, and that there is another monument practically identical in construction near Batna, in the department of Constantine, which is known as the tomb of Syphax, another Numidian king, and that they both have a certain resemblance to the Pyramid of Cheops.

The road continues along the seacoast, delighting the eye by the contrast of the sapphire blue of the Mediterranean lapping the deep red rocks fringed with brilliant green scrub. Eucalyptus woods are passed until the road runs down to the little fishing-village of Tipaza. The Hotel du Rivage is an excellent inn nestling against the red cliffs, while the garden runs down to the miniature port, little changed since the days of the Phœnician traders.

If time is not of importance, a few days spent here in peace and quiet will not be regretted. Originally a Phœnician settlement, Tipaza became in the first century of our era a Roman summer resort for the rich settlers in Cæsarea (Cherchell). All that could be done to make it a center of luxury and pleasure was carried out with infinite care. The temples, the forum, the villas were designed to harmonize with the beauties of nature.

Thanks to private enterprise much of the ruins has been unearthed and one is able to reconstruct this town as it was. Sarcophagi of great beauty have been found, and mosaics in a very good state of preservation have been placed in a small museum by the hotel.

The joy of the place is not so much the actual finds, but being able to realize again the pleasant atmosphere which must have reigned among the wealthy Romans as they walked up and down the forum, which dominates the bay, or dined merrily in the villas looking down on the rippling sea.

Later, when Christianity appeared, there must have been a very fine church to the west of the original town, whence one gets a delightful view of the sandy shore which runs along toward the towering heights of the Chenoua Mountains. Here, too, the heat-oppressed Algerians come in summer to escape from the damp atmosphere of the white city, and the bathing is wonderful.

Cherchell is some twenty miles farther along the coast. The drive itself is not very interesting, and the town, after Tipaza, is disappointing. There is, however, a very excellent museum, and to those interested in the statues of Rome of that period the visit is worth while. Otherwise the return

journey from Tipaza can either be made by the same way in the golden glory of the African sunset, or else inland through the vine-clad hills via Marengo and Kolea.

These are the two excursions, but this chapter can not be closed without reference to the Trappist monastery at Staoueli. This is only twenty minutes in a car from Algiers and is worthy of a visit. The Trappist monks have been expelled, but their monastery, with the great vats in which they made the still famous wine, remains. The monastery is in the hands of Monsieur Lucien Borgeaud, a gentleman of Swiss origin who has continued pressing the grapes as did his holy predecessors, only on a much larger scale.

A visit is welcomed, and in addition to seeing the old building founded by the Trappists at the time of the French conquest, it will be interesting to see how wine is made and the modern improvements put in by this enterprising Algerian.

There are, of course, many pretty drives involving part of the day, such as the Gorges of Palestro and the entrance to the Kabyle country, the Ruisseau des Singes, beyond Blida, Dellys, and the Phœnician city of Tigzirt, on the coast, but as they form part of the greater journey to be dealt with in the next chapters their description is purposely omitted. Suffice it to say that all the neighborhood of Algiers is enchanting, and that life in Algiers itself, lived in one of its old Moorish villas surrounded by a lovely garden, would be as delightful if it were not for the relaxing climate.

But if we are to appreciate the real charm of the country do not let us tarry too long near the white city.

CHAPTER XXV

A VOYAGE

THOUGH perhaps the journey described in these pages is longer than many tourists would wish to undertake, it is rather set out with the idea of giving a notion of the amount that can be seen in a comparatively short space of time and under the easiest conditions.

The trip can, moreover, be divided into separate excursions as indicated in the table of distances at the end of the chapter. It is better to do this journey in a private motor-car, which enables one to rest at will, eat by the roadside, and take photographs. But if the traveler has not the means to progress in this luxury he will find public conveyances at moderate prices on practically every route mentioned. Sometimes it will be the train, sometimes the motor-bus, and though in some cases he will be obliged to travel by rather a roundabout way or occasionally wait a few days for the bus, his journey will always be assured in comfort.

Generally speaking, there is a daily or even bi-daily motor service on all the main roads of North Africa; and it is only in the far south that the bus does not have a regular time-table. Otherwise the times of departure and arrival are as fixed as for a train. The motor-busses are covered and very comfortable, and to the individual who is entertained by strange faces and gay chatter about all that is going on in the country through which he is traveling, the motor *diligence* is a delightful entertainment. In fact, if the traveler is bent on studying the country and its people, he will do so much more advantageously in the public conveyance than in the isolation of the private car. However, if he is only on holiday or a pleasure trip the motor is recommended, and it is with the idea of traveling thus that this imaginary journey will be taken.

It is presumed that the period chosen for the tour will be between December and April—January, February or March—and let it be borne well in mind that North Africa in winter, even on the edge of the Sahara, is not a warm country. The thermometer does not actually drop very low, but the biting air of the mountains and the sharp dry winds of the rolling plain or the Hauts Plateaux and the Sahara make heavy coats and rugs essential.

Once south of Laghouat and at Touggourt the temperature is definitely warmer than in the north, but hot days can not be depended on before this latitude is reached. It is true that on the edge of the Sahara the sun heat in the middle of the day makes it impossible to go out bareheaded, but the nights are very sharp. Once into the Sahara the nights are also cold, but in the day it is pleasantly warm, and the overcoats and rugs can be put away; but the return journey across the Kabyle Mountains may be done in a snowstorm. The great thing to remember about Algeria is that it is a country of extremes. The morning may dawn in a downpour of rain and at noon one may lunch in the garden dressed in white. Crossing the mountains during the winter one is practically certain to find rain, but once on the Sersou it is almost always fine.

The Hauts Plateaux are bitterly cold, but as soon as one has come down on to the Sahara the temperature is very pleasant, and it rarely rains; when it does, it pours for a few hours and then clears up.

Therefore, the warmest wraps for the journey in the north, English summer clothes (not Indian or tropical) for the south. All evening dresses, etc., can be left in Algiers, as there is never any

occasion to dress up, even when invited by an Arab chief. It is advised to travel light, and linen can usually be washed by the Transatlantic hotels in forty-eight hours. The question of hotels brings me to another point.

The hotels of Algeria can be divided into two categories—those which belong to the Transatlantic Company and those which do not. The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique has opened up the whole of North Africa by their circular and inclusive tours which run into the wildest parts of the Sahara. In order to accommodate their customers they have built hotels in all these remote spots, and these are certainly very well organized. In all the more frequented places there are other hotels for the accommodation of commercial travelers and Arabs, and though they are usually quite clean and the food eatable, that is about all that can be said for them. There are usually no bathrooms and there is nowhere to sit except in the public café. Here again let it be said that for the traveler in search of copy the hotel with its Arabs and people of the country is a source of perpetual entertainment, but with few exceptions it is rough—very rough, and sometimes dirty.

The prices, of course, correspond to what one gets, but to the holiday-maker the Transatlantic hotels can not be too highly recommended. Good food, clean beds, running water, hot baths, perfect service, reliable information on all that can be done and not done, seem to warrant the fairly high charge, and yet not high when one realizes the difficulties which confront the hotel manager in getting all this modern comfort in the wildest districts.

It is, however, recommended that one see the Transatlantic Company in Algiers to make certain that there will be accommodation as, if they are booked up with heavy tours, their own travelers will naturally have preference over independent tourists.

The cost of the trip, quite roughly, will work out as follows:

1. For the private car owner staying at the Transatlantic hotels, one hundred to one hundred and fifty francs per person per day. Petrol, etc., in addition. If a car is hired it works out at about two to three francs a kilometer plus the board and lodging of the driver, which is about thirty-five francs a day.

2. For the traveler by public conveyance staying at the local hotel fifty francs a day will amply cover his living and expenses.

Train fares are not dear, and the bus fares, though they vary, do not exceed ten centimes a kilometer.

Equipped now with knowledge for the journey, it only remains to trace the itinerary, which will be quite easy to follow on the accompanying map. This information can be supplemented by the guide-book, and in referring to the guide-book I always speak of the *Guide Bleu* which, with the exception of a few slips, is really very reliable.

Itinerary of Proposed Journey

1. *By private car*

		Kilometers
1st day	Algiers/Bou Saada	250
2nd day	Stay Bou Saada	—
3rd day	Bou Saada/Laghouat	222
4th day	Stay Laghouat	—
5th day	Laghouat/Ghardaïa	200

6th day	Stay Ghardaïa	—
7th day	Ghardaïa/Touggourt[1]	200
8th day	Stay Touggourt	—
9th day	Touggourt/Biskra	216
10th day	Stay Biskra	—
11th day	Biskra/Timgad	190
(It is advisable to sleep at Batna.[2])		
12th day	Timgad/Constantine	190
(If Djemila, described in Chapter XXXIV, is to be visited it can be done from Timgad via Sétif or from Constantine.)		
13th day	Constantine/Bougie	259
14th day	Bougie to Algiers by 4 alternative routes:	
	a. Bougie to Michelet	147
	and thence to Algiers via Tizi Ouzou	154
	b. Bougie direct to Algiers via.	
	Bouira and Palestro	300
	c. Bougie direct to Algiers via.	
	Azazga and Tizi Ouzou	300
	d. Bougie/Tigzirt	250
	and thence to Algiers via Dellys	155

2. *By public conveyance*

Algiers/Bou Saada	250
(Motor-bus takes some 10 hours.)[3]	
Stay Bou Saada	—
Bou Saada/Djelfa (bus)	112
(Stay the night at Djelfa, leave at six o'clock next morning in bus.)	
Reach Laghouat at nine-thirty a. m.	110
Stay Laghouat	—
Laghouat/Ghardaïa (bus)	200
Stay Ghardaïa	—
Ghardaïa/Touggourt	200
(The bus runs once a week [Nov. 1926]. Verify this.)	
Stay Touggourt	—

Touggourt/Biskra (train)	216
Stay Biskra	—
Biskra/Batna (train)	120
(If Timgad is to be visited a car must be hired at Batna for the 70 kilometers run to the ruins and back. One can sleep at Timgad or at Batna.)	
Timgad/Constantine (car and train)	190
Constantine/Bougie (bus service not regular)	259
Bougie/Michelet	
(No bus service direct. If Michelet is to be visited the train must be taken to El Kseur and thence to Tizi-Ouzou by bus; from Tizi-Ouzou bus to Michelet and from Michelet bus to Tizi-Ouzou and train to Algiers. If Michelet is to be omitted there is the train direct from Bougie to Algiers.)[4]	

Various alternative trips will be set out in the succeeding chapters where they seem opportune. The distances have been marked in kilometers as the guide-books and maps are all scaled in this way. For the information of those who are interested in miles, however, one hundred kilometers equals sixty-two miles.

For all details regarding routes and motors the traveler is recommended to apply to Captain de Malglaive, at the Anglo-American Automobile Company at Mustapha Supérieur, who is always informed as to the state of the roads, accommodation, etc.

FOOTNOTES

[1] It is advisable to ascertain the state of the road between Guerrera and Touggourt, as there is much sand in this part. On principle it is wiser to start just ahead of the motor-bus as the route is very desolate and there is no possible means of repairing serious breakdowns.

[2] If time is short, Constantine, Bougie and the Kabyle can be omitted. From Timgad one can get to Sétif via Corneille. By leaving Biskra early one can do Biskra/Batna, see Timgad, and be at Sétif in one day—210 kilometers. From Sétif to Algiers the road is good and straight—300 kilometers.

[3] If this bus journey is thought too excessive, there is no necessity to go to Bou Saada. The train can be taken direct to Djelfa in one day, and then next morning the bus lands one at Laghouat at nine thirty.

[4] I have not marked the number of days for the journey by public conveyance as, being much slower, it is correspondingly more tiring, and the traveler will probably wish to linger longer in the different centers he visits.

CHAPTER XXVI

BOU SAADA

LEAVING the ugly suburbs of Algiers, the car turns on to a broad, straight road bordered with plane-trees. On either side stretch interminable vineyards, while ahead the blue slopes of the Atlas rise up from this great plain of the Mitidja. Little French villages are passed and long, white buildings, now closed and silent, which will be in a whirl of activity in August and September when the grapes are being pressed.

In an hour or so l'Arba has been reached and the steep slopes covered with rough scrub and cork-trees. Up, up the road climbs toward the bare crests of the range. Algiers and the Mitidja are lost to view, and the eye wanders over a great expanse of mountain, cultivated here and there with patches of cereals, and now and then a vineyard.

The air is fresh, and the clouds seem ominously close. At Sakamody the watershed is reached, three thousand feet above sea-level, and a wonderful panorama of hills and rivers and forests spreads itself before us.

The road is now running steeply down toward the silvery stream at the bottom, and, reaching Tablat, an iron bridge is crossed and away speeds the car through a fertile valley. If lunch has been carried in the car there are some delightful fields near Bir Rabalou—at the one hundred and third kilometer—where one can picnic in peace. For some reason there is an abundance of tortoises in these fields.

If one is depending on the hotel one must push on to Aumale, where a rather second-rate inn will provide a correspondingly second-rate lunch. Aumale is well over two thousand feet above the sea; it is a modern garrison town and quite uninteresting.

Shortly after Aumale the road starts sloping down toward the flat country parallel to and east of the Sersou, and after thirty kilometers the village of Sidi Aïssa is reached.

At this point two vast errors are made by guides, tourists, and even by many Algerians; and, as stated in a previous chapter, it is the duty of the author to destroy legends invented for the ears of the credulous.

The first of these stories is that Sidi Aïssa means "Our Lord." Translated literally this word signifies "the Lord Jesus," but, though the Mohammedans venerate all the prophets from Moses down to Christ, this Sidi Aïssa is not the founder of the Christian faith. The person after whom this village and many others are named is Sidi-el-Hadj-Aïssa, the great *marabout* who founded Laghouat in the eighteenth century. Of this later.

The second story, which is perhaps served up more frequently, is that at Sidi Aïssa the desert begins. It is an excusable legend, and let it be said at once that the author himself has fallen into the trap. It is an absolute fallacy, but Bou Saada and its neighborhood is one of the most amazingly natural fakes in the world.

Sidi Aïssa is at one thousand eight hundred feet above the sea and is on the same latitude as Boghar, which is perched on the southerly slopes of the Atlas of the Tell. Bou Saada is actually north of Djelfa, which the traveler will visit in two days and which is at over three thousand feet.

“But what of this?” exclaims the reader.

Well, this—that the approach to Bou Saada is as desertic as any scenery he will see, and that many oases of the south have that same first aspect of the Sahara created by Bou Saada; and yet to reach the beginning of the great wastes which run away to the Soudan and the Niger, ranges of mountains and forests south of Bou Saada must be crossed, which in winter are often covered with snow.

Bou Saada is an oasis, of that there is no doubt, but why it springs up in a country which is only a few miles from forests and vegetation is not to be explained. Perhaps it is one of the great jokes created by Allah for the benefit of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique—and a very profitable joke too! However, the important point is that the traveler, on leaving Sidi Aïssa, can, if he wishes, feel that he is entering the desert, but he must not believe it. It is an impression which can not be forgotten, just as if a boat had been exchanged for the car and one had put out to sea. The hills and trees to the north seem to be the land, and the great expanse of stone and scrub spread out before one is the sea. To the west barren mountains rise up with almost flat tops, reminding one of billiard tables built by some dead race of giants. The world has suddenly changed as the car rushes on along the straight, even road.

No one is in sight, no habitation—just the wide plain. If the Sahara proper is to attract one the attraction will come now. There is no question about this: the expanse of desert either takes hold of one’s mind or else it merely bores.

However, bored or enthralled, the first aspect of Bou Saada must seize one and make a thrill pass through the brain. The road suddenly bends to the right, the sand-dunes appear all golden in the evening light, a city of rosy mud houses nestles against a russet hill, fifteen thousand palm-trees bow ever to the lilt of the wind.

Such is the first glimpse of Bou Saada, “the father or place of happiness,” and indeed so it must have been before the days when motors made a week-end visit possible. The Transatlantic hotel is comfortable, and constructed in harmony with the place, and though the rest of the life is as great a fake as nature has made it, it has great charm.

On arrival let the visitor hurry to the bastion below the military hospital to see the glory of the sunset— those amazing lights which he will see again in the south, but of which his first impressions here will never be forgotten. A mantle of gold-dust, the palm-trees in the breeze, herds of sheep and goats returning from their pasture, stately camels plodding along into the city accompanied by solemn Arabs: a vision of enchantment.

The return to the hotel, through the quiet streets in the rapidly increasing dusk, while the *muezzin* calls the Faithful to prayer from the mosque, is such a complete contrast to the scenes of twenty-four hours before that one wonders if one has only traveled a hundred and fifty miles.

Yet it is not the Sahara, and at night, after dinner, when one is obliged to fall into the hands of the clamoring guides to be taken to see the dancing girls of the Ouled Naïls perform their weird steps, it is not the real thing. Not the real thing inasmuch as the dances are organized for the tourist and do not go on continuously for the native population, but as real as possible as far as it concerns the actual dances and the fact that the girls all belong to the tribe of the Ouled Naïls, in the center of whose area Bou Saada lies.

Another disillusion to the veteran guide is impending, but in a merciful spirit the truth about the Ouled Naïls will be kept till the next chapter. As, however, the traveler has not yet been to the far south, he will appreciate this evening in a quaint little room hung about with gaudy carpets, or,

if it is fine, perhaps on the roof, watching the girls dance slowly up and down before him to the squeal of the *raïta*, or to the deep notes of the reed flute, while the time is kept by a rhythmical beat on the *tam-tam*.

The stars are flashing overhead in a black sky and peace seems to have settled on the world, a peace which will gradually increase as the journey progresses into the Sahara.

Next morning it is advisable to take one of the small boys outside the hotel (not a regular guide) and, descending into the river-bed, walk along between the tall palm-trees until the end of the oasis is reached, and then, crossing a belt of rough scrub, climb up on to the golden sand-dunes. A great expanse spreads out before one till, away in the distance, can be seen the beginning of the Aurès Mountains. It is a land of strange mirage effects, and, if the sun is hot, visions of palm-trees and green lakes will appear and shimmer away again before the eye has grasped the picture. If the country has taken hold of one, an hour's contemplation in these golden dunes will pass quickly.

After lunch there is an interesting little excursion to be made some eight kilometers up the Djelfa road to El Hamel. The car should not be overloaded, as there are three or four kilometers to do off the main road up to the gates of the town. Built on the side of a barren hill, it has a wild look, and its tall walls give it an imposing aspect as the car climbs up the steep road to its gates. El Hamel is interesting because of its *zaouïa* and Mohammedan college for those studying the Koran with a view to becoming *muftis* or *imams*. Up to 1904 it had the peculiarity of being under the patronage of a female *marabout*, Lalla Zineb, and her tomb, much venerated, can be seen in a very lovely mosque. At present there is a charming *marabout* who is always glad to see visitors. He will show one round and offer coffee in his rather gaudy reception-room. Though it is not usually known, *marabouts* accept, and often expect, gifts of money, ostensibly given for the *zaouïa*; it must be presented with a speech explaining that it is a charitable donation.

There are many other pleasant excursions round Bou Saada if time warrants a long stay but, if not, there are more interesting things to see in the south which will entirely eclipse this false little oasis.

I say false and at the same time it is an almost unjust epithet, as, though the place is infested by conducted tours, they have not yet succeeded in removing its original charm, or making of it a middle-class fashionable resort like Biskra.

N. B.—Should it be impossible for the traveler to carry the journey on to Laghouat and the far south, there is a track across country to Biskra, some two hundred and fifty kilometers. Thence the journey can be carried on as laid down in the itinerary.

The track starts on the way to El Hamel, and it is well to have some one who knows it in the car, as there are no signposts and it is very desolate. Moreover, it must not be attempted in wet weather or after a storm, as there are many dried-up river-beds which rapidly become torrents, and there are no bridges.

Otherwise it is an interesting journey, and the first sight of the Sahara near Tolga is arresting.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE SAHARA

LEAVING Bou Saada by the same road taken the day before to visit El Hamel, though without turning off down the track which passes the holy city, the car climbs up into a rolling country of alfa—that tall alfa or esparto grass which grows so abundantly all over the Sersou and the Hauts Plateaux, and which is used extensively by British firms to make paper.

Large concessions are leased for lengthy periods, the grass is cut and collected by Arabs between November and March, and brought to convenient centers on camels. Here it is pressed into bales and despatched by motor transport or by rail to the sea, where it is shipped to Europe: a profitable business, but somewhat lonely for the European superintendent who lives at the pressing depot on the plain.

The country traversed during the first part of the journey is very wild. Hills limit the broad horizon, bare of all vegetation; they are the Mountains of the Ouled Naïls, and this time it is impossible to refrain from speaking the truth about these people. Now, it is generally believed that the women of the tribe of the Ouled Naïl (which, incidentally, means *children of him who has succeeded*) are all ladies of easy virtue, and that in every dancing-place in North Africa this tribe supplies the performers. It is, moreover, stated by many that prostitution among them is a form of religion. Both these ideas are false.

In the first place, this occupation or trade did not exist as such before the French conquered the country. The real facts are these: the confederation of Ouled Naïls is the largest in Algeria; it comprises twenty-one tribes and occupies a very wide area, running all the way from Djelfa to Sétif in length, and almost as broad in depth. It stands to reason, therefore, that in a great many of the towns visited by travelers the Ouled Naïl women are found in their own homes, or in the towns just bordering thereon. Outside their own lairs, however, dancers of this tribe will be found exercising the same profession among their cousins of other confederations. The first reason for this is, again, the fact that they are so numerous that they have migrated outside their own haunts, and even outnumber the other women. The second reason is that prostitution among the Ouled Naïl tribe is not considered a dishonor. This is greatly due to the astonishing laziness of the tribesmen, who are quite prepared to live on the earnings of their women. In any other tribe a mother will bring up her daughter with the idea of marrying well, having a home, and settling down to rear children herself. A mother among the Ouled Naïl people will not discourage her daughter from going as early as possible to the nearest town to earn her living in order to provide a large enough dowry to make a good marriage, or retire into prosperous inertia. Most astonishing of all is the fact that bridegrooms are forthcoming, and that the method employed to raise the money is not considered dishonorable. Among the tribesmen of the Ouled Naïl, moreover, these girls are so weary of the life they have led that they make excellent wives.

There are naturally many families of great respectability, whose daughters are as closely kept as those of other tribes, but they are not in the majority.

All this may sound very crude, but, as I have previously endeavored to show, whatever may be the rights and wrongs of the question, there is none of that sordid atmosphere associated with the same thing in Europe.

About half-way between Bou Saada and Djelfa the mountains are left, and a broad expanse of plain, sparsely cultivated, takes the place of the alfa. In the distance a group of poplars appears, behind which lies a walled village. The car passes through a menacing gate and turns into a long, uninteresting street planted with sad trees. Of all the cities in North Africa Djelfa is the most lamentable. There is nothing to redeem its dull squalor, not even a possible climate. In winter it freezes; in summer the heat is unbearable; in the spring an icy blast blows from the mountains; in autumn it rains and snows.

It would be the test of affection between a man and a woman to pass six months in this place and remain on speaking terms. If the traveler is wise he has lunched on the broad plain before reaching this wretched town, as, if not, he must suffer a meal in the very tumble-down hotel, which does its best, but which fails from want of support. Djelfa must be left as soon as possible.

The car turns to the south, passes through another fortified gateway, and is soon speeding away on the straight white road which leads to the Sahara.

More alfa, more bare hills, more broad horizons. At the fifteenth kilometer the *col des caravanes*, the highest point on the road, is reached, and, away, away, the road can be seen like a long ribbon unrolling itself toward the blue skies of the great south.

The caravanserai of Aïn el Ibel, the Spring of the Camels, is the next landmark; once the nightly lodging in the days of the diligence, it is now only used as a place to drink coffee if one is frequenting the public car. The country is very lonely and desolate. It is a land of sheep-breeding, and, though the traveler coming straight from the green fields of Europe looks doubtfully at the gray scrub about him, he will have his doubts removed when he sees the great flocks feeding peacefully on either side of the road.

Calm-faced nomads, tall of stature, watch over them, and in the distance a few black patches indicate where the camp has been temporarily pitched. Camels too are everywhere, and have replaced all forms of more modern transport. Caravans of these ungainly beasts, bearing bales of wool and alfa, with here and there the *bassours* in which the women travel, plod slowly along.

There is a sensation of something new in the atmosphere—the people of the north have been left far behind, and at every revolution of the wheels one seems to be speeding into the past. The flocks, the camels, the tents, the tall shepherds are the same as they were twelve hundred years ago, and even the rumbling motor-lorry which keeps the south supplied with sugar and coffee does not affect them.

A few palm-trees appear, growing about a white caravanserai, while mud houses cluster in a dip. It is the miniature oasis of Sidi Maklouf. The road turns sharply to the right, runs down into a dried-up river-bed, and then stretches straight away to the south. The barren hill on the right looks like the edge of a saw; ahead there is a distant horizon in a haze of blue; the eyes would like to be there and see what is beyond.

Again the road bends, this time to the left, a dark mass appears, which, gradually getting more distinct, reveals itself as trees—palm-trees in thousands. Rosy rocks break the horizon, a white column leaps to the sky; it is the minaret of Laghouat. The car passes through the sandy bed of a broad river, usually a trickling stream, but sometimes in the autumn a roaring torrent, making access to the oasis impossible. The road slips through plantations of tamarisk, and in a few moments an avenue of plane-trees is entered.

Gardens and quiet little villas are on either side, until, reaching the fortified walls, the car draws up before the Transatlantic Hotel, nestling picturesquely amid the tall palms. There is an

atmosphere of peace and quiet, and a welcome which is pleasant after the long journey.

The interior of the hotel does not belie the exterior, and, when one realizes that it was once the *bash agha's* Turkish bath, the charm of the surroundings is complete.

An English tea awaits one, and when it has been consumed let the traveler climb to the rosy rock near by and get his first glimpse of the Sahara. If it is a clear evening the sunset effect will be a vision never to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE OASIS OF LAGHOUAT

THE first view of the Sahara is perhaps one of the most amazing things in the world. The northern part of the oasis is divided from the southern by a barrier of rocks, and, as one tops the cliff, a sense of awe fills one as one contemplates the immensity of the vision spread out. The mind, unaccustomed to such spectacles, rushes back and tries to compare the scene with anything it has ever seen before, but it fails hopelessly, and remains in wonderment before this wide panorama. And yet, as one gazes at the plain—which seems to roll out from the sand in the foreground to an endless expanse of stones, until it merges into the sky and is lost in an infinite horizon—one can not help being reminded of the sea on a calm evening: the oasis is some tropical island, with its palm-trees growing almost down to the water's edge; the golden sand lapped by this tideless ocean, and then the sea—away, away, far away—until the next island.

"Island" is really the only descriptive word for an oasis in its ocean of desolation. It suddenly springs up and suddenly disappears. Unless the water changes its course, nothing human can cause a tree to grow outside its perimeter, any more than anything could be raised out of the sea.

Laghouat is a very typical oasis of the south. From the rocky eminence can be seen the town, clustering on either side of the rocky barrier; the mosque on an eminence in the center, modern and rather gaudy, but not unpleasant to look at; the very unprepossessing Catholic church, rather like a wedding cake; and the two oases, north and south. The town itself is comparatively modern, having been rebuilt on the site of the old city which was utterly destroyed by the French in 1852 to punish its heroic defenders for having held out so long against them.

There are two versions as to the origin of the name Laghouat. The first suggestion is from the Arab word *"gaouth,"* or more exactly *"rouat,"* meaning a house in a dip with a garden, and which has been contracted into "El aghouat." The second is "El-aghouat," of which the derivation is *a mountain the ridge of which resembles the teeth of a saw*. Both are plausible suggestions, as all the houses have gardens, and the mountains in the neighborhood give one very much the impression of saws.

Prior to the eighteenth century there is very little information to be had concerning Laghouat. It was evidently an oasis frequented by nomads, but there does not appear to have been any definite settlement. In 1700, however, Sidi-El-Hadj-Aïssa, a very saintly *marabout*, collected the tribes of the district about him and made it clear that it would be in their interest to group themselves in one body, and it must have been at this time that the present Confederation of the Larbas came into existence.

Sidi-El-Hadj-Aïssa, who is the patron of the oasis, is a figure of great importance in the Moslem history of Algeria, and he is venerated throughout the country, more especially as a prophet. Concerning the truth of his foresight it is not for us to criticize, but the facts are worth noting. It appears that after creating this center and making of the divided nomads one people, they did not show the desired gratitude, and as punishment the *marabout* laid a terrible curse on his followers. In the curse he prophesied the downfall of the city, internal war, and the French invasion. And, though it is too long to go into, it is curious to note that all the details of the prophecy occurred.

He made a further prophecy which is kept a great secret, to the effect that Algeria would be delivered by a great chief who would rise in Morocco and finally become Khalifat of North Africa.

I leave it to the reader to draw his own conclusions, but the fact remains that the French did invade Algeria, and that events in Morocco seemed at one time to indicate a fulfilment of his words.

The town reconstructed on the site of the old city may be more solid, but it could not be less beautiful. Straight streets running at right-angles, plain and drab—it is the typical architecture of the modern southern town. There is a certain picturesque atmosphere in the quarter bordering on the southern oasis, but it is very poor and dirty.

The people live in small houses, and ply their business quite humbly. Modernisms have not crept in, and the shopkeepers do not worry the visitor to buy. When the day's work is over they repair to their gardens—the gardens which have made Laghouat famous. Every man who can afford it has his own piece of land in the oasis. It may be an acre, it may be three, but, all the same, it is his garden and he is proud of it. Surrounded by high walls, it is planted with palm-trees, peach-trees, vines, apricots, figs, oranges, pomegranates, pears, medlars, and, in fact, all kinds of fruit.

The oasis being at a comparatively high level, the date-palms do not produce a very marketable fruit, such as is found at Biskra in the south, and in Laghouat a palm-tree only brings in fifty francs. All the other fruit-trees, however, bear abundantly, too abundantly, for, there being no railway, there is no outlet, and in early summer peaches can be had for one franc the dozen, and apricots are given away. Some people even find it too much trouble to carry the fruit to market, and they merely eat what they can and use the rest for manure.

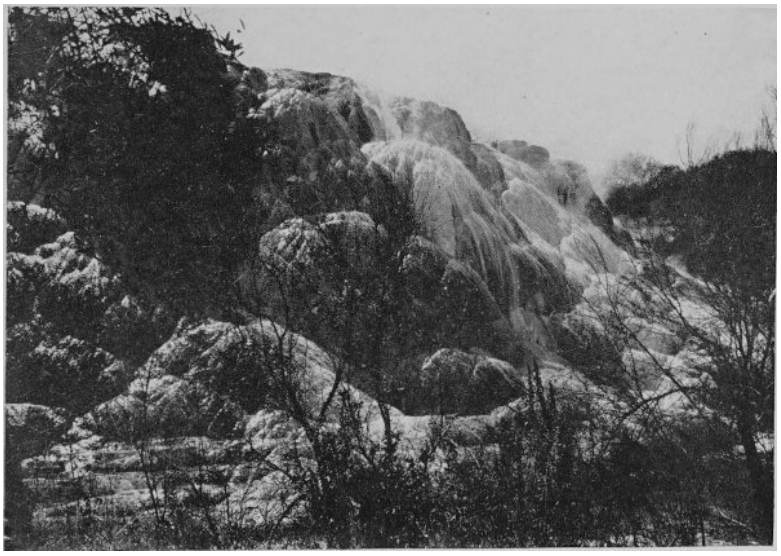
Vegetables are in almost the same position, and are sold for negligible sums. It is astonishing to realize that such fertility exists so close to the wastes of the desert. There is a wonderful opportunity for an enterprising man with capital who comes to Laghouat with a fleet of lorries and bears away the fruit and vegetables to Algiers. The purchase of the raw material will cost him next to nothing; it is merely a question of transport. A jam factory in Laghouat would pay a hundred per cent., but let it be hoped, for the sake of the peace and beauty of the surroundings, that no enterprising capitalist will come and spoil a land of pure delight, where living is so easy and so cheap.

To produce all this vegetation, however, there must be water, and, its absence being conspicuous in the south, it may interest the reader to hear how an oasis is watered.

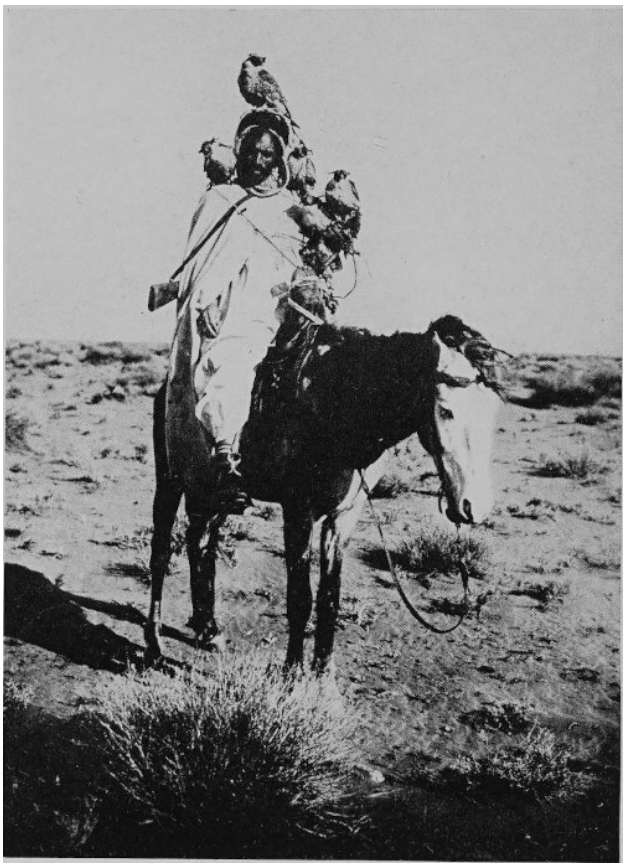
The whole of southern Algeria is crossed by rivers, which in the winter have a certain amount of water, but which in the summer are dry, and are in reality only drains to carry off the rain which comes down from the hills after storms.

The real rivers of the south follow the water-courses, but they flow underground, and it is only when they rise to the surface that they form an oasis, and, as the Arabs say, the palm-trees spring up with their feet in the water and their heads in the flames. Anywhere along these courses wells can be sunk and the water tapped at a depth varying from one hundred and twenty to twelve hundred feet, and in some cases there are broad underground lakes, known to the natives as Behar Tahtani—*the sea of the underworld*.

Sand Storm Getting up on the Sahara



Waterfall of Boiling Water, Hammon, Meskoutine



Arab Falconer Setting Out to Hunt

Wherever, therefore, the river rises to the surface and forms an oasis the land becomes very rich, and all vegetation is of the most luxuriant. Sand mixed with irrigated earth is excessively fertile, and produces everything from roses and strawberries to jasmine and lemons. Cereals would thrive and cover endless acres if there was enough water. Water—that is the question of daily life in the great south. You may cross endless wastes of desertic plain with only a few tufts of alfa grass here and there, and suddenly come upon a great oasis, green and fresh in the watered land. But it ends as abruptly as it began, and, although you may find yourself standing in a garden of flowers and fruits and green grass, two hundred yards away is the blasted desolation of the Sahara.

The distribution of water, therefore, is done very methodically. There is, of course, the underground layer, in which rest the roots of the palms, but the surface water for the lesser vegetables is another matter. There is always a point where the water actually comes to the surface in the form of springs, and, of course, the river-bed which, during the winter rains, is running with water, sometimes after big storms is a raging torrent overflowing the land.

The water is, therefore, captured at these points and carried into the oasis by means of channels called *seguias*, so inclined that the water is always flowing round the gardens. The oasis is, moreover, divided into areas, and the areas receive the water at regular intervals. A garden has so many minutes, according to its size, and it is calculated that the whole surface under cultivation is flooded for its appointed period once every seven days. The system is ingeniously worked by sluices, padlocked by the water controller of the area, who, when the appointed day occurs, lets in the water, while the owner of the domain diverts it into the necessary quarters on his own land,

according to its need. At the end of the appointed time the controller closes the sluice-gates and floods the next garden. Rain is considered as an extra, and whatever the weather the water-day is continued.

Apart from gardening, which is the hobby of all good Laghouatis, there are other industries. Carpet-making and weaving, the occupation of the women of the south, is very important here, and some of the best burnouses and other woolen goods originate in Laghouat; and, of course, there is sheep-breeding; this is the great occupation in the northern Sahara, and a source of substantial revenue.

Some of the Jews are goldsmiths; they are also cobblers, and they embroider leather to make into bags and saddles.

A walk in the evening in the dancing-girls' quarter will remove all the theatrical atmosphere which the same thing in Bou Saada has created. The streets and coffee-houses are thronged nightly summer and winter alike; the squeal of the *raïta* and the beat of the *tam-tam* never cease, and if one strolls in and sits down on a bench the performance will not change because of the entrance of the tourist. The women continue dancing slowly up and down the middle of the room, while the men sit in serried ranks and stare, sipping their coffee or mint tea. There is no charge except for the cup of harmless beverage which costs five sous. Sometimes a dancing-girl will hold out her hand, and will be delighted with a packet of cigarettes or a franc, and occasionally the band makes a collection, but there is none of that grasping rush to exploit tourists associated with those more popular centers.

There is little else to describe in the oasis, as the atmosphere of the past is impossible to realize for those who live in great cities. The lack of traffic, the blueness of the sky, the tall, feathery palms, the dignity of the Arabs, the silence—especially the silence—are things which must be seen and felt to be appreciated.

It is a setting of peace, an atmosphere of calm—a solution to the worries of modern life.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE MZAB

THE journey south to Ghardaïa is very desolate; even the tufts of alfa have practically disappeared. The road runs straight across the flat plain, with nothing to relieve the eye except occasional groups of dreary trees known as *pistachiers*. Flocks of sheep graze by the roadside. The nomads' tents stand out like black patches on the stony ground. Sometimes a herd of gazelles will be seen in the distance, bustards rise and flap languidly away, hares abound. It is a great country for hawking.

If the day is hot, mirages will spring up and disappear as quickly. It is not a picturesque journey to the land of the Mzab. Half-way, the caravanserai of Tilrempt is reached; it is a long white building standing in a dip surrounded by *pistachiers*. A very worthy "mine host" will greet the traveler and regale him in this desert home with one of the best meals he will taste in Algeria.

A visitors' book will be presented to him, with which he can regale himself joyously for half an hour before committing himself to the pages as a further joy to those who follow. After Tilrempt the country becomes more and more desertic, even the alfa has completely vanished—only rough scrub, and little of that. Then suddenly, at the one hundred and fiftieth kilometer, the oasis of Berriane appears, a splash of vivid green in the middle of the wilderness. The sensation of the verdure, after miles of desert, is most refreshing. Berriane is the first city of the Mzab, and one is at once struck by the originality of the architecture, quite unlike anything that has been seen up till now. The minaret of the mosque reminds one of an obelisk.

But this haven of green is soon left behind, and more desolation begins. Not even the scrub, only stones and rocks and strips of sand. It is a merciless, arid desert, the kind of scene which must have inspired Doré to illustrate the Inferno of Dante: nothing to relieve the eye for miles around.

Ghardaïa is reached unexpectedly. One appears to be in the middle of the desert, when all of a sudden the road turns sharply to the right and dips down a steep hill. It is as if one were descending into the crater of a volcano. As the car reaches the flat there suddenly appears the cone-like minaret of Ghardaïa, as it piles itself into a kind of heap of houses on a little hill. To the left is the equally heap-like city of Melika. It is an impression never to be forgotten, a new world quite unlike anything seen before. But then the people of the Mzab are a race of their own, and the confederation of cities is quite unique. The Mzab is the Mzab, and it can be compared to nothing—it is the most original place in North Africa.

The first question to decide, however, before penetrating into its desolation and studying the inhabitants, is, *Who are these people?* And, curiously enough, the question is not easy to answer. It is obvious to the simplest minded, on seeing these small, squat men—with their smooth, round, white faces, fringed with dark beards—that they are unlike any one else seen in Algeria.

They are as different as the Spaniards from the Germans, as the British from the Italians. There are various theories put forward, of which the most picturesque can not really be said to be founded on any sound basis: it is that these strange people are the lost tribe of Israel. In support of this theory we have the mystery of their origin, and their very Semitic appearance; but, though it

would be pleasant to write a romance on the subject, it would certainly have little merit outside fiction.

The second suggestion is that they are the direct descendants of the old Phœnicians. People who oppose this idea bring forward the fact that when Scipio destroyed Carthage he killed or deported all the inhabitants. Against this, however, it must be evident that there were Carthaginians in other parts of North Africa who escaped this fate, and that Phœnician influence is found at a much later date.

In the Mzab itself there are certainly things very closely connected with Carthage. The triangular decoration of the houses, the pictures of fish, of the crescent moon, of the sun and the stars are not Arab. The door-knockers represent the sun, and there are many of phallic shape. But, in spite of these rather conclusive evidences, the general idea is that the people of the Mzab are pure Berbers. In support of this theory we have the fact that they are Abhadites—that is to say, the last group of people created by the great Kharedjite schism. What is certain is that the known groups of Abhadites at Oman, Zanzibar, Djebel Nefarsa and the island of Djerba have the same customs and language as the people of Ghardaïa.

The question then arises, why are these people in this desolation of the Sahara, on no natural highway, and in no trade center, where all the water comes from wells dug by the inhabitants, where it rains about once every ten years? Why have these men voluntarily condemned themselves to this life of trial and struggle? Those learned on the subject maintain that this exile was conceived in a moment of despair and as an act of faith, that in settling themselves in this merciless desert they wished once and for all to flee from the persecution which was always meted out to them by the orthodox Mohammedans, and keep their form of religion and race intact.

It seems difficult to contradict this theory, all the more so when we have evidence that they were driven from the Atlantic coast and Tiaret in Oranie to Ouargla, an oasis some two hundred kilometers south of Ghardaïa, and that, after barely two hundred years in this oasis, they were again driven out by the Arabs. Weary, therefore, of suffering, they determined to settle where no one would come and molest them, and, as the only solution was to find a place naturally hostile to invaders, they chose the Mzab. This took place about A. D. 1070, but already in the year 1000 a reconnaissance had been made in the direction of the Mzab and had founded a kind of refuge at El Ateuf. When, therefore, the general emigration north took place, the remaining six cities which form the confederation of the Mzab soon sprang up—Bou, Noura, Melika, and Beni Sgen about A. D. 1048; Ghardaïa 1053; and some hundred years later Guerrera and Berriane, thirty miles outside the group adjacent to Ghardaïa.

Unlike most oases of the south, where water comes gushing out of the ground and is directed by artificial channels to irrigate the gardens, there was no surface water at all on the site chosen by these people to found their cities. Every palm-tree planted, every seed sown had to be watered artificially from wells, and if one looks at the broad oasis, with its thousands of palm-trees, and when one realizes that when the Mzabites first came the land was as barren as that seen from the road, the feat performed leaves one amazed.

The system of drawing water has, moreover, not changed since those days. The well is sunk and a kind of tank is built beside it, with channels leading out to the parts of the land to be irrigated. A sloping path is constructed, down which walks a camel with a rope tied to its neck, while at the other end of the rope is a skin resting at the water-level. When the camel gets to the end of his walk the skin reaches the surface and by an ingenious contrivance pours its contents into the tank; the camel returns to the well, thus lowering the skin to the water again, and the process

recommences. The creaking sound of the pulley drawing up the skin has a certain curious charm reminding one of Egypt.

Occasionally, but very occasionally, the rain comes, and to meet this possibility barrages have been made across every little valley in order to form small lakes. Beside every path or rock, gutters have been constructed leading to one center where the water can be stored. A rain-storm in the Mzab is worth untold millions to its inhabitants.

And yet the Mzabite is not a farmer in any sense of the word, and unless he is himself forced through poverty to work in the garden he will avoid all contact with the soil and employ Arabs to look after the land. He is essentially a merchant, living in his shop and opposed to all outdoor life, all sport or anything military. This antipathy to war again raises the question as to whether he is really pure Berber. His cousins the Touaregs, the men of the Aurès and the Kabyle Mountains, the people of the Riff, are all born warriors. Why, then, has the Mzabite never been able to defend himself?

To my mind it confirms the theory that originally he was a Carthaginian who became Berberized. Moreover, his round, squat appearance is much more that which one would associate with the prosperous trader of Carthage than with the wild men of the Riff. All their instincts are for business. One sees these fat little men plying their trade in Algiers, in the towns of the Tell, living humbly and simply until the day is ripe to return to the Mzab. For return they must, and this because no woman is ever allowed to leave the confederation of the seven towns, and, as no Mzabite may marry an Arab or vice versa, he is obliged to go back to his home to continue the family. The family to him is of the highest importance, and though they are, generally speaking, a democratic race, they are very proud of their lineage, and their aristocracy holds an important position.

Their habits are decidedly conservative, and are very noticeable in the strictness with which their women are kept. They do not go to market, and it is very rare to see one in the street. The children are terribly shy, and at the approach of a stranger they flee and at once hide in the houses.

They observe their religion most conscientiously; as it is the Abhadite dissension it is very strict, and it is carried out to the last letter, and, whereas one finds a good many Arabs breaking the laws of the Prophet as it concerns wines and spirits, it is excessively rare to see a Mzabite drink.

Their mosques are much more respected than those of the orthodox Mohammedan; no one can be buried in them, and they are sanctuary to all criminals. Their cemeteries are venerated, and one sees on the tombs pots and plates, offerings to the dead, which again carries one back to a more subtle origin than that of the ordinary Berber. They sacrifice camels and oxen and sheep at appointed times, chiefly for the purpose of bringing down rain, but also for more daily occurrences, such as the laying of a foundation-stone.

As stated above, their commercial instincts are extraordinary, and it is said that Ghardaïa and the adjacent towns conceal millions of gold pieces. It is certain that in 1921, the year of the great famine, these people had enough money to buy all they needed, and they did not suffer half as much as the other tribes of the south.

They keep themselves very much apart from all other people, and they consider the Mzab as a holy corner of the earth. The Arabs who live in this wilderness are kept quite separate, with a quarter and a mosque of their own, and, while mutually despising one another, are usually the servants of the Mzabites. The Jews likewise who are found in Ghardaïa itself, not only have a reserved quarter of the town but they also wear a peculiar dress, and are treated with the utmost contempt. In fact, in all ways the people of the Mzab are quite different from any other race in

North Africa, and the study of their history and customs would give material for a lengthy book. It is hoped, however, that these few pages will enable the traveler to realize that he is no longer among the simple Arabs of the great plain, but in the midst of a strange people whose origin will always remain a mystery.

CHAPTER XXX

GHARDAIA AND ADJOINING TOWNS

DURING the journey south we have passed Berriane, the outpost of the Mzab, and of later foundation than the other towns. Guerrera is on the journey to Touggourt; the remaining five towns of the confederation are before us in this kind of desolate rock crater. The most important and the largest of them is Ghardaïa, lying at the foot of the military *bordj*, where it is necessary to pass the night. On a rocky eminence to the east is Melika, further on, the holy city of Beni Sgen, and out of sight, but only a few miles distant, are Bou Noura and El Ateuf.

To the south again there is another oasis called Metlili, which some people erroneously comprise in the confederation of the Mzab, but though in many ways it has Mzabite characteristics it is in reality a town of the tribe of the Chambas, nomads who inhabit a vast area of the Sahara beyond Ghardaïa.

The first thing that strikes one as one looks at Ghardaïa is the way the houses pile themselves up into a heap, rather like a giant ant-hill which is, in its turn, surmounted by the minaret made of mud, resembling an obelisk with little holes in the top. Moreover, if we turn and look at Melika and Beni Sgen we are struck by the same similarity of construction which we saw at Berriane and which we shall see in all the towns of the Mzab.

The origin of these cones is easy to find. As each town was founded, the group of elders whose duty it was to carry out this rite first of all built the mosque on a hilltop; this mosque was at the same time a store for food and arms as well as a fortress. Consequently the people grouped themselves on the slopes beneath. This again is evidence of the great antiquity of the race, for is it not known that all early religious orders frequented heights and that nowadays theosophists refer a great deal to the influence of high places on their mysticism? The effect is very curious, and even if the aspect of the people does not create an impression, their architecture surely will. Descending from the eminence on which is situated the *bordj*, a narrow street will be followed, which suddenly leads out into a broad square, surrounded by unsymmetrical arcades. If the *caïd* is at home he will probably permit the visitor to mount to his roof and look down on this animated center and up toward the tall minaret. In the middle of the square is a kind of stone stage where, on certain days, justice is administered, while close by will be seen a curious group of stones set out in a horseshoe formation. This strange circle marks the site where the elders of the city first sat down in the open plain a thousand years ago to found Ghardaïa.

Leaving the square, the route to take is up a narrow street leading direct to the mosque. The houses almost meet, and in certain places the alley is tunneled through the habitations. A narrow passage leads up to the mosque, and if one has a competent guide a dark chamber can be visited which is a place of ablution, but which, in days gone by, was the scene of political conspiracies. The mosque itself is quite unlike anything one has seen before. The pillars are neither Turkish nor Roman, the architecture has no sort of connection with any known style. In the wall are holes to place shoes before going into the sanctuary to pray; hanging from the roof is a skin full of water, the greatest sign of charity in this country where water is more valuable than gold.

Above, a kind of cage covered in with wire netting, reminding one of a chicken-run or rabbit-hutch, leaves one wondering. A hundred guesses will not elucidate the mystery—it is the lost-

property office!

Climbing on to the roof, a panoramic view of the town spreads itself below. To the east the Jewish quarter, with a curious pyramid-like synagogue; to the west the Arab quarter, with an insignificant mosque; to the south the more modern buildings, with the house of the White Fathers, while away in the distance can be seen the beginning of the great oasis, brilliant green against the barren hills.

If one is lucky one may see from here the strange sight of a man selling his house. There he stands on the roof while the would-be purchasers squat round making bids.

The walk can be continued through the narrow streets past wells three hundred feet deep with the eternal skin dangling at the end of a long rope. A visit is recommended to the Convent of the White Sisters, who teach the little girls to weave carpets in the patterns peculiar to the country, and if souvenirs are wanted it is advised to buy them here. Likewise at the house of the White Fathers leather goods of the country can also be had at moderate prices.

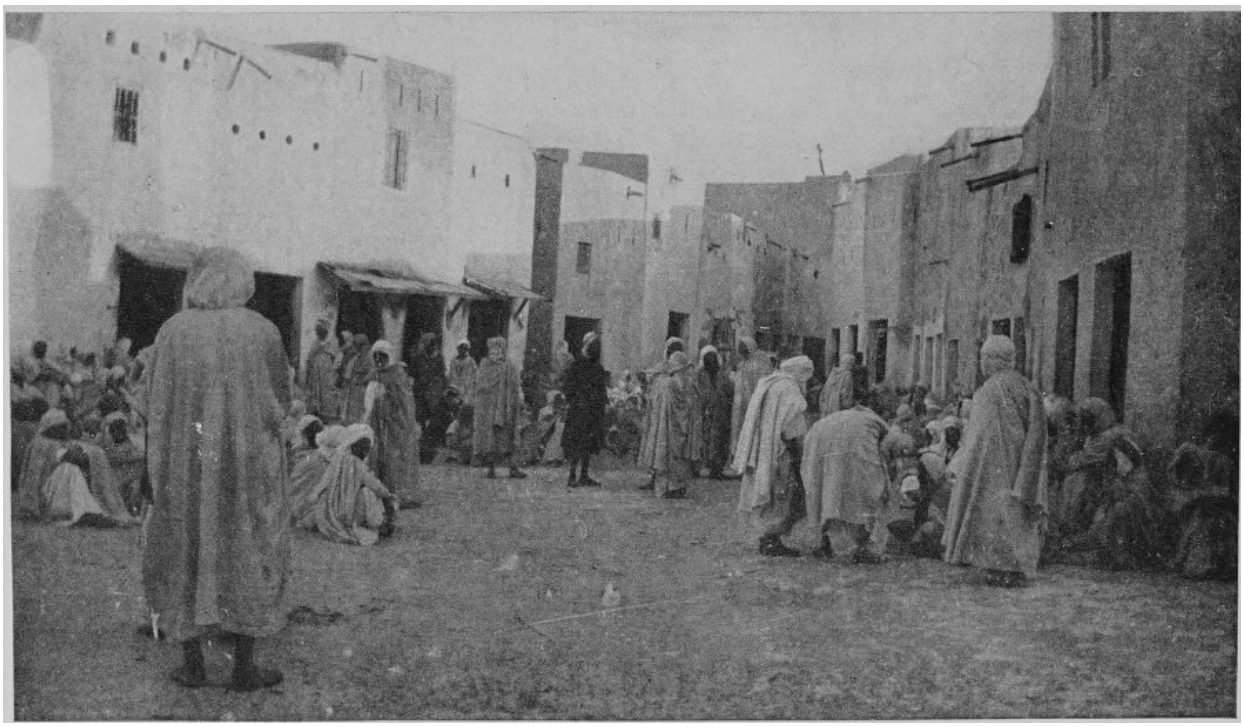
Returning toward the fort a series of cemeteries will be passed, as well as a broad open space, where on special occasions the public prayer takes place. A morning will suffice for Ghardaïa, and the afternoon can be devoted to the other cities.

The most interesting place to see is the holy city of Beni Sgen and its oasis, but as this will not take the whole afternoon part of the time can be devoted to Melika, Bou Noura or El Ateuf. I would suggest Bou Noura. Melika involves a very steep climb up a cliff and El Ateuf a motor drive over a very bad road. Moreover, all these cities are much alike. What strikes one most is their poverty in comparison with Ghardaïa; all the rich merchants are there, and even the inhabitants of the other towns come to the capital to do business.

After visiting Bou Noura, therefore, a walk can be taken in the oasis behind Beni Sgen. A wide area of verdure relieves the eye, and though the palm-trees are squat like the inhabitants, it is a very refreshing place. There is a barrage of brick drawn right across the oasis to catch any stray water which some unforeseen storm may bring. Here the wells and the method of working them may be seen at close quarters.

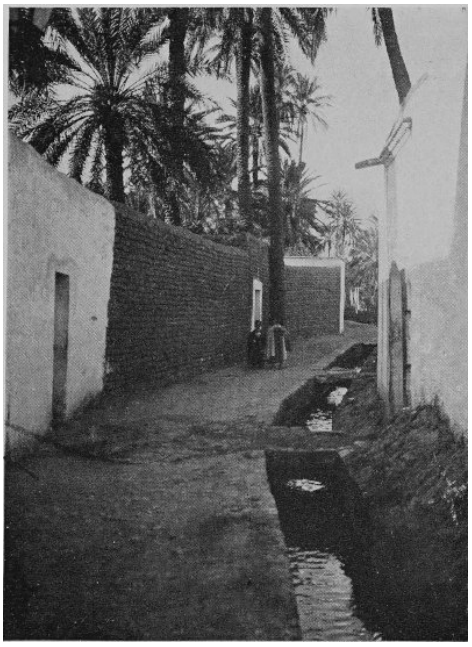
Beni Sgen should be reached about the middle of the afternoon, and this for a reason to be explained later. Of all the curious towns in this strange country the holy city is the most curious. It is entirely walled in, with three gates piercing the walls at the north, the east, and the west. No Arab, Christian or Jew is permitted to linger within its keep after sunset; no smoking is allowed in the houses nor in the streets; even the French school is built outside the wall. At the entrance of the northern gate the skin of water hangs in sign of charity.

Climbing up a steep alley one comes to a tower; the key is usually available, and, entering, one can ascend the winding steps which lead one successively to three stories which at one time were guardrooms. From the summit one obtains a magnificent view of the town itself as well as of the oases of Ghardaïa, Melika and Bou Noura. Immediately below the tower is a little cemetery where one will note the offerings to the dead in the shape of plates and jars. To the east are two broad platforms for the public prayer.

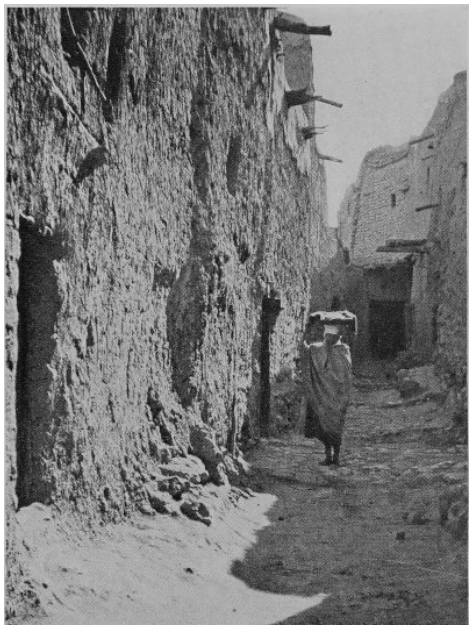


Photograph by Mr. Julian Sampson

The Market-Place of Beni-Sgen



Channel for Watering the Garden of an Oasis



Street in Bou Saada

As the afternoon draws on, flocks of goats can be seen wandering slowly in from the barren hills. They have a public shepherd, paid for by the town, who is responsible for the animals up to the gate of the city; at this point he leaves them and the goats, separating themselves, go

independently up the narrow streets to their respective homes. When they reach the door they butt it with their heads or tap with their hoofs until they are let in.

The doors of the houses in the Mzab, and especially the locks, are very curious. The door itself is usually made of heavy planks studded with nails and closed with a lock usually associated with a prison gate. This, however, is a modern institution, for the native key is unique in the world. It consists of a piece of wood about a foot long, at the end of which is arranged a pattern of nails. This piece of wood is pushed into a kind of deep slot running from the doorpost diagonally toward the door. From the wall and running into the door is a wooden bar or bolt on which is a pattern of nails corresponding to those on the wooden key. The proprietor slips in his piece of wood until its nails coincide with those inside and then he pulls, the bar gives and it is possible to open the door. It is, I suppose, the origin of the latch-key, as no two combinations of nails are the same, and it means absolute safety to the designer of the piece of wood.

At each turn the traveler is experiencing something new, and though he has seen a series of strange customs common to all the cities of the Mzab, the most curious, which is peculiar only to Beni Sgen, has been left to the last. For some reason, which at present it has been impossible to fathom, there are practically no shops in the holy city, and everything is sold by auction. This sounds quite incredible until, climbing down the steep streets, one comes suddenly into a triangular "square" about fifty yards long. At one end on a raised platform sits the *caïd*, surrounded by his counselors, while all around squat men of venerable countenance dressed in white robes.

In the middle of the square are a few goats, some camels, a mule, a heap of charcoal, while the auctioneers solemnly carry round the goods to be disposed of, stopping before each person to hear his bid, which is said in a whisper. So he proceeds round and round until the required price is attained. He may be selling a costly carpet or a bottle of pickles, a piece of firewood or some embroidered shoes—it is all the same. The goods can pass only to the highest bidder. Moreover, as the price can only be raised half a franc at a time it often takes days to acquire the object required. Sometimes one sees a man riding round the square on a mule or a donkey which he wishes to dispose of, but it is all the same, and the richest Mzabite can not alter the procedure for untold cash. The spectacle of this auction market is one of the most impressive sights in all North Africa. An atmosphere of an old world, long past and forgotten, is before us, and as one looks at the faces of the men one can not help being reminded of scenes from the Bible, and the legend of the lost tribe springs up unconsciously.

The colored burnous of the Arab has vanished, the bustling merchant of Ghardaïa is no longer before us, there is calmness of demeanor, a whiteness of clothing which speaks of ages and ages in the dim realm of history when Europe was a land of wild beasts and the Britons painted themselves blue.

At times one is almost inclined to cry out:

"But this can't be real, this is got up for me, it is part of Wembley; in an hour all these men will be settling down to chops and beer in the nearest pub!"

But it is not so. Every day, except on great feasts, year in and year out, for two hours before sunset these silent old gentlemen assemble before the *caïd* and purchase what they can by auction, and when it is over they repair to the mosque before retiring to their homes to eat a silent meal prior to returning to bed. The Mzabite is not a gay personality, and he takes life very seriously. Unfortunately some of their more ancient characteristics have disappeared by the appointment of civil *caïds*. In the early days of the French conquest of Algeria these people surrendered to the invader before they had even thought of pushing as far as the Mzab, and they still have a separate

treaty with France, making of the country a sort of independent little republic exempt from all obligations to the main Government. They kept all their religious dignitaries who ruled the whole confederation as they had done for centuries before, and the *caïd*-ship was not imposed on the tribe till after the whole of Algeria had been pacified. Lately the French seem to have rather forgotten their old friends and have voted conscription. This caused great consternation until it was discovered that there was a subparagraph permitting a Mzabite to send an Arab in his place to serve. The authority to spend a thousand francs to find some poor loon to shoulder the rifle brought back the smiles to the smooth, round, white faces, and the placid atmosphere returned to the busy shops of Ghardaïa and to the silent streets of the holy city.

Generally speaking nothing has changed since the foundation of the cities, and even if in some far-off day the railway reaches the Mzab it will probably only have the effect of stimulating trade. The haunt of the children of Carthage will remain as it was when their forefathers imposed their commerce on the whole of the Mediterranean basin as they are now beginning to impose it on the easy-going Arabs of North Africa.

CHAPTER XXXI

GUERRERA AND THE SAND DESERT

To cross over from the rock desert of the Mzab to the sand of Touggourt it is advisable to be very certain of the reliability of the car, and, if possible, to go accompanied by another vehicle. The country to be traversed is terribly desolate, and, except when the mail bus runs, once a week, it is very seldom that one meets any traffic; if one has a serious breakdown one must wait in the desert for the passage of the *diligence*, which may be some days.

Water—plenty of water—and some food should be carried, a rope and a spade to help one out of the sand, and all necessary spare parts.

The road on leaving Ghardaïa is the same by which one arrives, but, after following it for ten kilometers, one turns sharply to the right along the desert track. There is at once an impression of desolation and loneliness—no more telegraph poles, no more milestones, little to mark the sides of the road. At first the flat-topped hills are on either side, then gradually they give way to great rolling expanses stretching away, away on all sides; even the scrub has disappeared; it is the first real impression of the Sahara, and, though the noisy rush of the car makes one forget the solitude, the silence and loneliness appal one at any stop one makes.

Some twenty kilometers along the track another track branches off to the right. It must not be taken, as it leads to Ouargla, to the Hoggar, to the far south until it reaches Timbuctou. A little farther on, as if nature wished to fool the traveler, one suddenly sees a splash of green winding about among the stony plain. It looks like some lovely river shaded by trees, and, though there is no water running between its banks, it is a river making its way below the surface of the ground, to spring up later at some oasis. But it is soon left behind, and the country becomes more and more desertic, though, curiously enough, it has not such a cruel aspect as the land about Ghardaïa. The hills are of a delicate rose color and the lines less hard; it is the prelude to the sand.

The road starts climbing, then all of a sudden, as it tops the rise, the oasis of Guerrera appears, solitary in the middle of these pink hills. It is the most impressive sight of the whole journey. Battlemented walls surround the town, as it piles itself into a pinnacle surmounted by the cone-like minaret. At its feet lies the oasis, with its thirty thousand palm-trees bowing in the breeze. It is one of the most amazing spectacles any traveler can wish to see—an impression of desolation, of solitude, of green vegetation, of a town of a past age.

There is quite comfortable accommodation in the *bordj*, and, though the food is almost entirely Arab, it is cleanly cooked. In the itinerary set out at the end of Chapter XXV it has been suggested that Guerrera should be passed through on the way to Touggourt, without stopping, but, though it differs little from the other six towns of the Mzab, its oasis, its remoteness from civilization, make it well worth a longer break in the journey.

On entering the town by one of the turreted gates, one is first of all struck by the business and bustle of the people. Arriving here out of the desolation of the Sahara, one almost expects to see savages or, at any rate, dark people living in a primitive state, but not at all; the houses are solidly built and are clean and well-kept; the people are gracefully robed in white, shops abound, and practically every one speaks a little French. It is the civilization, the business instinct of the

Mzabite, the inherited perseverance of the Carthaginian which permits these squat little people to thrive in this lost city of the Sahara.

But the most beautiful place is the oasis. Unlike those we have seen before, there are none of those high walls which screen the gardens and which prevent our seeing anything behind them. Here there are no walls, the palm-trees grow all about, with vegetables and grass at their feet; vines are trained from stem to stem, and give an impression of virgin forest. Little paths and sun-baked alleys lead one past wells and fruit-trees until, coming suddenly out of the shade, one finds oneself on the desert again. A small group of palm-trees cuts the horizon, and then, away, away, the Sahara as far as the eye can reach. The sun sets in an orange radiance, wrapping the palm-trees in a mantle of gold-dust; the breeze springs up and rustles through the oasis; peace and silence are everywhere, and one is tempted to remain in this quiet for a few days. It is free to the traveler to do as he pleases, but our journey must be accomplished, and sooner or later we must push on toward the east.

After Guerrera the road continues across this rose-colored landscape. It is impossible to describe it adequately, photographs do not give the impression of delicate color or of the limitless horizon, neither can the mind of him who has not been in the real Sahara visualize the vast expanse of sky which seems to cover the world.

Some fifty kilometers before reaching Touggourt one comes into the sand. It is an impression as different as possible from anything which has been passed up to the present. Soft white dunes rise up before one, curling back and looking like great waves of the Atlantic about to break into foam. In all directions this sea extends without any sort of break, and one realizes a little what it must be to lose one's way in a desert where there is nothing to guide one, nothing to differentiate one dune from another.

If the wind is not blowing, it is a pleasant drive through this area of sand, but if it is, the drifting grit blinds, gets into the engine, and covers the track, and it is practically certain that sooner or later the car will stick and that it will take infinite trouble to free it.

Touggourt itself is a typical southern town, of little interest beyond its situation in the sand; moreover, it has lost a good deal of its charm by the presence of the railway and the consequent invasion of tourists. Hotels have sprung up, and the streets are infested by guides. It is one of the great date centers of Algeria, and the sweet luscious fruit eaten in England at Christmas-time comes from the one hundred and seventy thousand palm-trees which form its lovely oasis. If one is here in November one can see the Arabs swarming up the trees in a miraculous fashion and cutting off the bunches of golden dates, which are let down to earth by means of a rope slung over one of the branches.

In March and April one will see a still more curious sight, the fertilization of the palm. The flower of the male tree is carried to the top of the female by an Arab who places it in a cleft in the head of the tree while he chants religious airs. A date-palm does not bear fruit for twelve years, but when it does it goes on for over a hundred, and those who own palmeries in the areas which produce the right kind of fruit are excessively rich.

One night will suffice to see Touggourt, and the sunset over the sand-dunes is a spectacle never to be forgotten, while if a caravan from the south arrives it affords a wonderful impression of a period of the past. It is hard to realize that in this sandy country the only really adequate mode of transport is the camel. Some men ride horses, but even then they have a hard time, whereas the ship of the desert, with its spongy padded feet, its nostrils and eyelids hermetically closed to the dust, and its endurance without food or water, prove that it was created for this purpose, and that

traveling by any other means is hazardous. It is not a very rapid conveyance, but one can average a good twenty-five miles a day and be certain of reaching one's destination.

Further south one finds the *mehari*, or trotting white camel, which moves along at a great pace, but it is reserved almost entirely for the Meharistes, or French African camel corps, who guard the lonely caravan tracks of the Sahara.

On leaving Touggourt the road follows the railway through a country of sandy patches which gradually get stonier as it progresses north. Pleasant little oases are passed, as well as salt lakes which are usually practically dry but which give excellent mirage effects.

We are now in the confederation of the Zibans, one of the most famous tribes of the south, and to-night we shall be at their headquarters, the world-famed city of Biskra.

CHAPTER XXXII

BISKRA

WITH the aid of a railway an English novelist inadvertently made of Biskra what it is to-day. I say inadvertently because there is not the least reference to Biskra in the whole book, and I am sure that Mr. Hichens was the last person to wish to create of a Sahara oasis a kind of Dieppe-on-sand. Neither would this town have been so thronged with trippers had it been miles away in the desert without a railway, but it is so easy to get into the train at Algiers one night and detrain the next day in time for lunch in the Sahara that more people come here than to any other place in the south.

Of course, from the point of view of the country, the change has brought in a great deal of money and the town has an air of fat prosperity unknown in the other places we have visited. Arab guides are paid the wages of colonels and the hiring of camels is as expensive as a motor-car. The cafés of the Quarter charge what they please and the numerous Palace hotels have corresponding prices.

It is a curious place and well worth a visit. It is difficult to decide which arrival is the most attractive—possibly that from the south, because the oasis is the first thing seen. It is an impression of palm-trees, three times as many as at Laghouat, and as one approaches in the evening, the golden light seems to envelop their feathery heads in a mysterious radiance as the wind rustles through them.

From the northern approach the coloring on the rocks and hills will perhaps be as wonderful, but there is not that same feeling of the Sahara because the town masks the oasis.

The largest hotel is the Royal, and from its tower a wonderful panorama of the desert is spread before one. Unfortunately it is difficult to keep up this atmosphere long, as it is impossible to close one's eyes to the Anglo-Saxon hibernators who have brought with them their knitting and their bridge and their crossword puzzles, while the foreign waiters in their starched dickeys jar horribly after the silence of the Great South. Moreover, if one steps into the street superb guides in sky-blue robes assail one—flight north seems the easiest course only to find a gallery of curiosity shops stocked with gaudy merchandise from Syria. Again fleeing from the oily merchants toward the sounds of a deep flute, one finds oneself in a coffee-house, as dirty as in the other cities, with the only difference that the mint tea costs five francs. Again in a wretched state of persecution mania one turns south again and, seeing a brilliantly lighted building of Moorish architecture, one hurries in; lights dazzle one, the sounds of bad dance-music strike the ear mingled with monotonous cries of *"Rien ne va plus!"* It is the casino, but, just as one is about to depart again into the night in search of a haven of refuge, the curious scene arrests one's steps.

Of all the *habitués* of casinos in the world I think that those collected in that of Biskra are the most remarkable. The Biskra casino has no kind of pattern or atmosphere; it is just an amazing jumble like the background of one of Mr. Piccasso's pictures. The hall is full of cheery French inhabitants of Biskra sitting at little tables drinking beer, laughing, and occasionally dancing gaily to the noisy band. A few solemn Britons join in the fun, while Arabs of serene countenance sit and watch without showing the smallest trace of emotion. At the gaming-tables a party of travel-stained tourists belonging to a Transatlantic tour are learning the mysteries of the play under the

supervision of the company's guide in his khaki uniform plastered with medal ribbons. Two or three Anglo-Saxons in dinner-jackets, with their consorts in smart evening gowns, contrast vividly with the robes of the Arab chief whose turban, unlike those we have seen up to the present, is bound about with much thicker strands of camel's hair and crossed and interwoven in a fashion peculiar to the district.

In a kind of theater, a music-hall show is taking place, partly composed of the usual French turns, partly of Arab music and dancing. If one is lucky one may hear the great tenor Mahi-ed-Din sing the ballads of the Tell. The audience is as mixed as in the other room, but it is gay, and in spite of oneself one is drawn back to this scene each night. It has the great advantage over the native quarter in having no pretensions. It is as genuine as possible and is certainly unique.

The only peaceful spot in the whole of Biskra is the famous Jardin Landon, erroneously supposed to be the Garden of Allah. It is unknown who first spread this story, and it was certainly not the fault of the author that the legend arose. The Garden of Allah is, of course, the desert; the land from which Allah has removed all vegetation and life in order that man may not come and interfere with his solitude, and where He can walk in peace. The restful garden in question is a wonderful plantation of tropical trees and flowers. It was created by the Count Landon de Longueville, and it gives the impression of a conservatory in the open air. Paths run about through passages of trees; green grass grows in abundance, and the ceaseless noise of water ever running through the *seguias* is as soothing as soft music.

It is a question as to whether the impression of sunset lights is best seen from its wall or from the tower of the hotel. Both views are enchanting, but perhaps that of the garden is more vivid, as it is closer to the desert and to the herds of camels and goats passing slowly across the dried-up river bed which is the continuation of the Mzi we saw at Laghouat.

This long, long river which bursts up here and there to create oases is said by the natives to rise in the Djebel Amour Mountains above Laghouat and, flowing right across the desert to Southern Tunisia and Tripoli, finally to disappear in the Nile.

If one has not come up from Touggourt and one is anxious to get an impression of the sand desert, there is a tract of land to the southwest, the other side of the oases, which is really worth seeing. It is a natural fake, like Bou Saada, and a photograph of the proud traveler sitting on a hired camel can safely be labeled as having been taken in any part of the "Grand Erg."

The Village Nègre is worth a visit, and if a horrible curiosity appeals to one, the dervishes who eat scorpions and glass and pierce their faces with nails can be seen without difficulty.

Not far away is the oasis of Sidi Okba, which is a good example of a southern town for those who have cut across from Bou Saada. It is famous for its mosque, where lies buried Sidi Okba, who was killed here in his last battle against Koceila, the Berber chief, in the year A. D. 682.

As far as sightseeing, this is about all Biskra can produce. If, however, one is in this cosmopolitan oasis in the early spring when the races are taking place, an entertainment is provided which will not be forgotten. The Arab chiefs in this district are wealthier than most of their colleagues, due to the richness of the date-palms; and owing to the proximity of Europeans, they are given a great deal more to entertaining than others. The *bash agha* of the confederation of the Zibans keeps open house, and even in the deadest season never dines alone, but calls in his friends from the street to share his repast. At the races he outdoes himself in hospitality, and it is entirely owing to him and to his relations that the meeting is such a success.

The races consist of three quite separate performances. The first are so-called flat races, which consist of a wild gallop round the course for Arab horses of all ages and sizes, mounted by turbaned bandits who just go “all out” for the first place. No pulling here.

The second are the officers’ steeplechases, where one sees some nice horses and some quite good racing.

But the third event, which in reality embraces the whole affair, is the *fantasia*. The Arab chiefs from all the surrounding land muster their tribesmen, who all come mounted, armed to the teeth, and as wild as children at a birthday party. This kind of irregular cavalry is known as the *goums*, and in time of war it is levied to fight for France. During 1915 a contingent was fitted out and sent to Flanders, where it behaved heroically. At the Biskra races the *goums* make a very brave show, too, in their flowing burnouses, sitting bolt upright in their high-backed saddles, their guns across the bow and the curved scimitar beneath the left saddle-flap. There is a mounted band consisting of two men with *raïtas* and one with a *tam-tam*, while at the head of the column rides the *caïd*, clothed from head to foot in scarlet and purple, his feet in embroidered red leather boots resting on massive silver stirrups, while beside him rides a retainer bearing the banner of the tribe.

It is a splendid and majestic sight to see these wild men of the south passing slowly before the improvised grandstands. After the orthodox racing is over, and after the *bash agha* has entertained endless guests at lunch and tea, it is the turn of these nomads to show what they are worth. There is a stir in their ranks, then suddenly two men dash down the course at a furious speed. As they approach the stand they rise in their stirrups and fire their guns and fly on. The women, in gaudy taffetas, raise high tremulous cries. Two more men follow, and then another two; then one man alone who carries two long guns which he fires together, tossing them in the air as he disappears in a cloud of dust. A larger group of horsemen flash past, the air resounds to the crack of the guns and the cries of the women, but they are gone before one has realized that they have passed.

A pause. Then all of a sudden a tall figure in scarlet and gold is seen detaching himself from the other *goumiers*; he sets his horse in motion and comes whirling down the course; behind him rides his standard-bearer, so close that he seems to touch. Behind him again four retainers in blue burnouses gallop in hot pursuit. As the *caïd* approaches the stand he turns sharply and, aiming at the center of the crowd, fires. The color-bearer dips the standard, while the retainers, bending forward, draw the curved scimitars which flash in the setting sun as they wave them above their heads and sweep on in a whirlwind of dust, while the cries of the women rend the air.

Oh, it is a brave spectacle, the *fantasia*, and makes one realize how far separated are we in Europe from these wanderers of the south.

There is an Arab proverb which says that “Love lasts three seconds, the *fantasia* three minutes, and misery lasts for ever!”

CHAPTER XXXIII

TIMGAD

THE road, on leaving Biskra, runs due north over a land which usually looks barren, but which in periods of rain produces a plentiful crop of cereals. Very soon a ridge is topped, and Biskra and the Sahara are lost to sight. Some people will heave a sigh of relief at leaving for the last time these desolate expanses; others will look back longingly, and these will return sooner or later. Once the Sahara has gripped the heart there is nothing in the world which will free it from its hold.

Just over fifty kilometers from Biskra the oasis of El Kantara is reached, and of all the beauty-spots in North Africa it is one of the most attractive. It is really better to approach it from the north, descending from a high level toward an apparently unbroken barrier of rock. Some trees proclaim the few houses which cluster about the little Hotel Bertrand, nestling under the towering cliffs while the river gurgles at its feet.

Then suddenly a cleft appears in the rocks, and the road and the railway creep out side by side into the plain beyond. It is the complete contrast of the north and south—of winter and summer. On one side of the mountain the soil is dark and fertile, and on the other it is rosy and desertic. The Arabs say that all rain stops north of the Gorge of El Kantara.

Arriving from the south the first thing we shall see will be the oasis: a long array of palm-trees shading a river which is more than often full of water. If time permits, it is well worth the trouble to cross over an iron bridge and visit the curious little villages. There are some interesting Roman remains and a series of views of the palmery, which, even if one is not an artist, furnish material for beautiful photographs.

Proceeding through the Gorge of El Kantara, which incidentally means the bridge, we come to *the* bridge, built by the famous Third Legion which garrisoned this part of North Africa. Unfortunately it has been badly restored, but the stones used by the Romans are still there.

The Hotel Bertrand is a restful place, a paradise for painters, and, if one is interested in climbing or shooting the elusive moufflon, there is plenty of this sport in the district.

The road climbs on, winding up the steep gradient on to the cereal plains of Batna. The tall peaks of the Aurès Mountains rise up, covered with pines and cedars, and in winter often deep in snow. It is a great contrast after the Sahara. The rest of the road is uninteresting, as is also the modern town of Batna, where one will find all comforts as usual at the Transatlantic Hotel.

The traveler will, of course, make his plans before starting, but it seems opportune to put in some suggestion for the visit to Timgad. If time presses it is advised to leave Biskra early, lunch at Batna, or, better still, picnic at Lambèse, go to Timgad, and return to sleep at Batna. If time is not of importance it would be far pleasanter to leave Biskra later, spend some time at El Kantara, lunch there, sleep at Batna, and spend the whole day at Timgad, and sleep again at Batna.

Or, if Roman ruins do not attract one, go to Timgad in the morning, lunch there, leaving about three in the afternoon, and arrive at Constantine for dinner.

As stated in the note at the end of Chapter XXV, it is possible to do Biskra, Batna, and sleep at Sétif in one burst, which permits one to be in Algiers the following day.

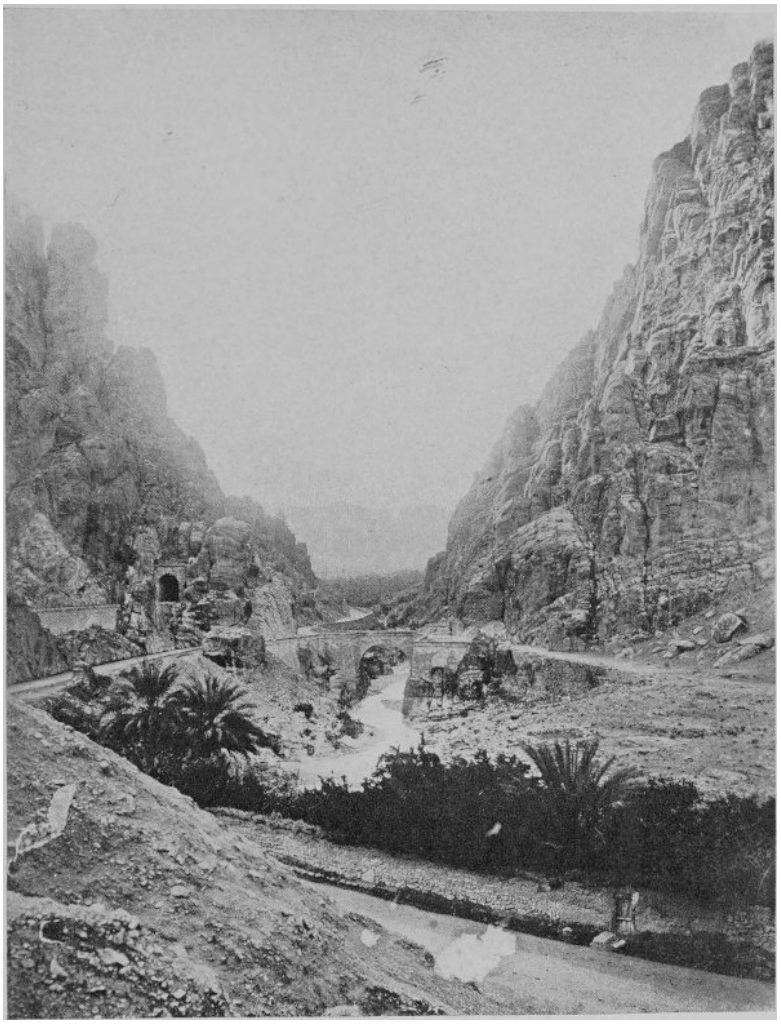
The road from Batna to Timgad runs over a rolling, inhospitable country dominated on the right by the frowning Aurès Mountains. The first place of interest is Lambèse, the Roman Lambæsis. It was founded at the end of the first century as the headquarters of that amazing Third Legion which garrisoned North Africa at that period. It is one of the best existing examples of a military camp, with its magazines, parade ground, officers' quarters and military church. It has also an amphitheater and a few temples, but their remains are not so interesting as in many other Roman cities. The prætorium, or rather its entrance, built of massive blocks of stone, is in a very good state of preservation; through the middle passed the main roads which ran straight across North Africa—north, south, east and west. Traces of this masterpiece of engineering are continually being unearthed.

Leaving Lambèse, the same scenery continues, a triumphal arch is passed, a few relics of Roman houses, then at the thirtieth kilometer there appear in the distance two tall pillars, which seem to leap up out of the plain to a great height and stand pointing to the sky in solitary grandeur. Straining the eyes, one soon discerns buildings and more pillars. A great arch defines itself—we are arriving at the dead city of Timgad. Two thousand years ago the Emperor Trajan decided to found a settlement for the Roman soldiers who had fought in the Parthian campaigns, and he commanded that Thamugadi should be built by the men of the Third Legion.

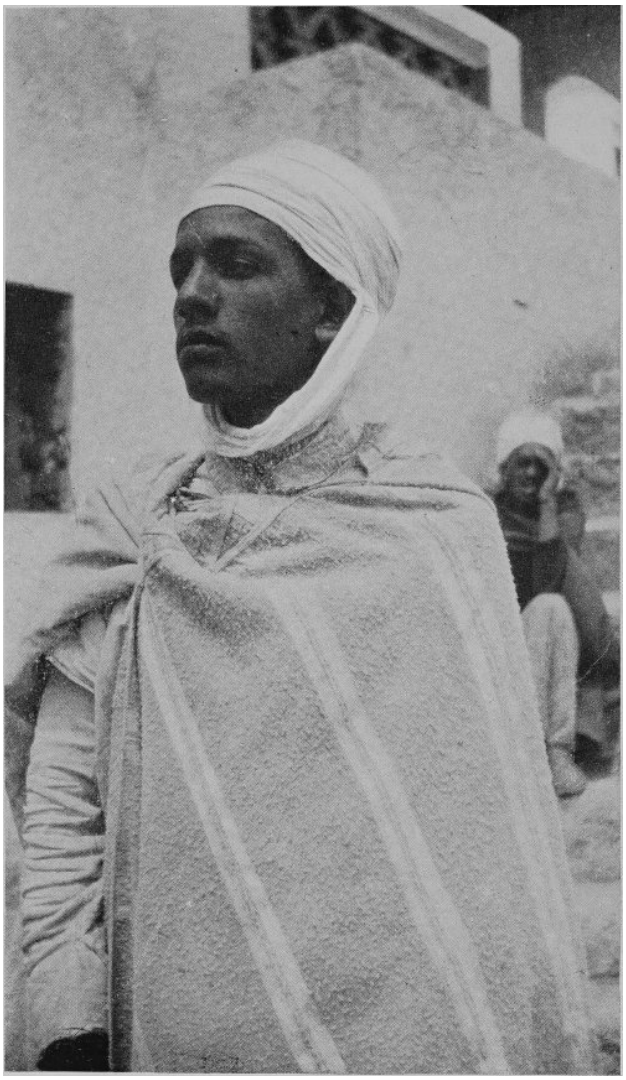
Thus Timgad did not grow up according to the needs of the settlers, but was conceived and born in its entirety. For this reason it is one of the most perfect examples of a Roman town of the period. Some writers have called it the African Pompeii, but, though the drifting sand preserved it as did the ashes Pompeii, this is the only thing analogous about the two places. Pompeii was a seaside resort, a town of pleasure and luxury; Timgad was an outpost of a mighty empire. Everything was done to make it resemble as much as possible the settlers' homes in the mother country, and it must have been a strange sensation for the Berbers of the Aurès who ventured down from their mountain homes to see all the civilized organization going on in the middle of this desolate land. Timgad was, however, never an important nor even a large city. Its area did not exceed one hundred and fifty acres and, though it is interesting to us because it escaped the total destruction meted out by the Vandals and Arabs to most of the other Roman cities, it never created anything in particular.

Entering by the northern gate, we find on our right the big baths. Built with the utmost care and paved with marble brought from Italy, they contained every improvement of the day, and were practically identical with the baths of Caracalla at Rome. They are in a high state of preservation, and it is most interesting to examine the various devices for bringing in water and for heating the many chambers.

Walking up the street from the baths, one passes what must have been shops; only the lower parts of the walls remain. The first building of interest discloses itself on the left. There is a pillared portico and a kind of altar with shelves around; the inscription suggests that it was the public library, but this is not certain. It may have been the shrine of the Lares—household gods.



The Bridge of the Third Legion at El Kantara



Photograph by Mr. Julian Sampson

An Arab of Tadjmout

The street now leads into the Decumanus Maximus, the main thoroughfare. Graceful columns line either side, leading into what must have been large houses. The paving-stones, placed diagonally to prevent their being worn away by the chariots, are nevertheless deeply rutted. Between the chinks can be seen the drain which ran beneath the middle of the way. Immediately opposite this intersection are the steps leading up to the forum: a white-paved court with many pillars, some fifty yards long, with at one end a tribunal where sat the judge. There must have been many statues, but they are no more.

Just below the forum, on the north side, are the public latrines which, with their carved hand-rests, are interesting and worth examining.

On the south side of the forum there is a charming inscription: *"Veneri, lavari, ludere, ridere—occe est vita!"* "Hunting, bathing, gambling, laughing—this is life!"

Climbing out on an eminence above the forum, we come to the theater. The auditorium is hollowed out of the hill and is in a fine state of preservation. The seating accommodation makes

the modern play-goer think, as from every stall the stage is fully visible and the acoustic properties are faultless. Looking across from the theater can be seen the tall pillars we first espied from the road; they are the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter on the capitol. The pillars are immense, fifty feet high, with each capitol three feet, making a total of fifty-six feet. In the middle was a gigantic statue of Jupiter, now in the Louvre in Paris. There is nothing so drearily desolate, so terribly silent, as the two pillars of this temple. It seems as if they stood there to warn the people who pass of the vanity of human things.

Near by are some interesting villas of a more luxurious conception than those we saw before. The rooms are more numerous and spacious, and there is a reservoir for keeping fish.

On the hill behind the capitol, stand the remains of a Christian church, with a baptistery of which the mosaics are in a perfect state of preservation. Leaving this Christian church, we now retrace our steps, leaving the capitol on the right, and make for the triumphal arch of which we have already caught a glimpse from the Decumanus Maximus. Before reaching it there is an interesting market-place. The large court is surrounded by a colonnade, and the stone counters of the shops are just as they were at the time. Opposite the market-place is a small temple, but what strikes the attention at once is the triumphal arch of Trajan. It has three openings, and niches for statues, and is certainly the most imposing monument of Algeria.

Hence we can wander back through narrow streets to the gate by which we entered, and near which stands the museum which is well worth a visit. In addition to all sorts of curiosities such as hair-pins, needles and implements for dentistry of the time, it contains some of the fine mosaics which have been unearthed from the houses and pieced together. If we look at them for a moment and imagine what they looked like up there near the capitol, we can get a small idea of how charming the residences must have been. There are also drawings of what it is supposed Timgad was like in the days of its glory, and certainly, if the artist was not carried away by his imagination — and there is no reason to suppose this—it must have been indeed a noble city. And yet its aspect now leaves the traveler with a feeling of sorrow. The silence is, first of all, appalling; the atmosphere of desolation is impossible to convey in words, and, as one sits in the forum or on the stone steps of the theater and tries to conjure up the gay figures who once frequented these now silent spaces, one is filled with an unspeakable awe. All this luxury, all this amusement, all these habitations—for what? For the future planned by Imperial Rome, since it is evident that no nation would have built the great town, with all in it, as a mere pastime. They intended to stay; they believed in their unshakable greatness; they believed in the power of the sword.

But Rome fell, as had fallen other empires, and as others will also fall. And Timgad is left to the jackals and to the hyenas, to a few intelligent excavators, and to the host of chattering tourists who rush through these ruins of a glorious past without a thought for the cultured race who once lived there.

“Vanity, vanity—all is vanity!”

For this reason I have said as little as possible on this city of the dead, and I leave it to the traveler to go himself and feel the atmosphere which no painter or writer can reproduce.

CHAPTER XXXIV

DJEMILA THE DESOLATE

If Roman ruins are of interest to the traveler there is a second edition of Timgad, to my mind finer and more complete than the subject of the last chapter, but unfortunately not on any main road.

I refer to the town of Cuicul, now called Djemila, situated on the barren hills to the northeast of Sétif. There are two means of access: from Algiers via Sétif, or from Constantine via the road to Djidjelli, described in the next chapter.

From Sétif the main road to Constantine is followed for thirty kilometers to Saint Arnaud, where one turns sharp left and begins climbing into a rolling country of cereals sparsely cultivated until, after some thirty more kilometers of winding roads, one reaches Djemila. The other route branches out of the Constantine-Djidjelli road at Zeraîa, sixty-five kilometers from Constantine, and soon begins climbing up into the rolling country described above, rejoining the Sétif approach some fifty kilometers farther on, and ten from Djemila.

The first aspect of the ruins is certainly more impressive than that of Timgad. The road has been winding along the side of a steep hill, high up through a country so harsh and desolate that one looks about apprehensively as if the dead themselves guarded the bare slopes, watching over the scenes of their great triumphs.

Then suddenly at a bend in this sad road the eye suddenly distinguishes, on a kind of promontory far below, something which at first looks like a great graveyard. Then gradually, as one watches, the stones detach themselves from the gray surroundings, graceful pillars rise up, triumphal arches, the massive walls of a temple. . . .

We are looking down on what was once one of the most prosperous cities of that dead empire which ruled Algeria as no one since has ruled it. The road winds down toward the miniature village outside the site of the ancient city. The Compagnie Transatlantique has, as usual, a comfortable hotel, in fact it is the only hotel, and if the traveler ventures to this lonely spot out of the tourist season he will have to carry his own food and sleep out-of-doors. This is, as a matter of fact, quite feasible, as during the summer months the heat of Djemila is intense.

The excavation of Djemila has been carried out with much more care and system than that of the other Roman cities in Algeria; this is chiefly due to the intelligent interest taken in the place by its curator, the Comtesse de Crésolles. This charming lady lives in a comfortable house overlooking the ruins, and if the visitor has the good fortune to make her acquaintance he will find in her a fund of information about the excavations, and an untiring guide.

Djemila can be seen in a morning, but a week would seem more like the period required really to study the ruins properly. The first thing that strikes one on entering the precincts of the ruins is why this town was built on a spur so far below the mountains which tower menacingly above. The reason is quite clear. At the end of the first century, when the city was founded, the main roads ran along the bottom of the valleys, and it was therefore necessary to plan the military centers at some point where they not only formed a guard over the long arteries of civilization, but also a stage for the caravans as they passed up and down from Constantine and from the coast. But quite apart

from the military side of the question, Djemila under the Romans was one of the great cereal centers of the empire and within its walls the grain was brought to be despatched to the far-flung limits of the mighty empire.

The first portion of the town to be visited is the Christian quarter. Begun in the third century it rapidly grew in importance and was undoubtedly the see of a bishop. The great basilica of Cresconius was built by this Christian bishop as a mausoleum for his predecessors. There are two other churches excavated near this cathedral, and there are no doubt other important buildings still under the earth.

The most interesting edifice, perhaps the most interesting in all the Roman remains on account of its state of preservation, is the baptistery. To the reader used to well-preserved churches and art museums in Europe it is difficult to convey the real impression created on the mind on entering the low doorway of this first evidence of Christianity in this part of the world: outside, the desolation of the barren hills and the sadness of the gray ruins; inside, the fresh color of mosaics, stuccoed niches, graceful pillars. A gallery runs round the actual place of immersion, lined with hollowed-out seats, reminding one of the stalls in some university chapel in England. Rich gold mosaics stud the walls; on the floor all kinds of intricate designs in rich colors, which make one realize the trouble taken by that dead race to beautify all that was their work.

At each end of the baptistery, two doors lead into the center portion where the converts were christened. The floor is carpeted with delicately colored pictures of fishes and seashells; above, a canopy carved out of one block of solid stone rests on four pillars; on the floor of the primitive font a mosaic inscription in Latin reads:

"A day will come when all people will have been baptized."

It is with a feeling of reverence that one quits this jewel in the midst of the ruins.

It seems useless to describe the other edifices in detail; they are like all Roman ruins, and require the atmosphere of loneliness to produce their effect. A few words will suffice:

The theater is in about the same state of preservation as at Timgad. It is, however, being gradually restored, and will soon be in its original state. Only the other day (1926) a company of the Comedie Française gave a performance of *Œdipus Rex* on its stage.

Leaving the theater it is advised to take the path leading to the northwestern extremity of the ruins, passing the baths of the capitol and various private houses. Turning to the left, one enters the capitol which formed the northern extremity of the old forum. The temple of Jupiter, with its six columns forty-two feet high, rose majestically above the other buildings; a colossal statue was in the center. Now only two bases of columns can be seen in place, the remains of others lie about the steps and before the altar of sacrifice.

The ruts of the chariot wheels are less distinct in the Cardo Maximus here than at Timgad. The drain down the center is clearly visible.

The new forum is very impressive. On the right a triumphal arch seems to leap from the earth almost intact in the middle of the ruins. An inscription dated 216 tells that it was raised in honor of Caracalla, conqueror of many nations. On the other side of the open space stands a great temple. Broad steps lead up to the lofty pillars supporting the remains of a roof; the walls, though shorn of their marble facings, are almost intact. Another inscription states that the temple is in honor of the

family of the Emperor Septimus Severus and was erected in the year 229 by the Republic of Cuicul. From the entrance a fine view can be had of the original city.

The visit has been rapidly accomplished, and only the great baths remain to be seen on our way to the hotel. As usual they are magnificent in all their luxury; nothing seems to have been omitted by these Romans in their far-away exile to make their homes as like as possible what they had left in the northern country.

It rather reminds one of the Briton who, in all his arrogance, carries his clubs, and his drinks, and his games into whatever distant corner of the Empire he settles himself. To the Roman nothing was good which was not from Rome. It is rather the same with us, and I suppose it will always be so. Machinery makes life more complicated, but it does not change the mentality of mankind.

There is a good museum near the hotel where the excavators have collected the best things found in the ruins. Apart from the usual implements of daily life, seen in greater profusion at Timgad, there are some very fine mosaics. It would take too long to describe them, but to those interested the museum is well worth a visit, and when one looks upon those lovely designs, so intricate, so artistic, one wonders why the Arab and the Algerian of to-day does not copy his floors from these pictures in stone instead of plastering everything with hideous modern flags of impossible colors. And yet even the beauties of those Roman cities of the past do not bear comparison with the monuments of the mother country.

There is something coarse, unoriginal in them, which at first leaves one wondering, until one suddenly realizes that one is in the presence of the Roman colonists, the expatriated wanderer who set out to seek his fortune overseas, the retired soldier or the rich grain merchant. He tried to copy what he had at home; he did better than would a present-day colonist from England or France, but it was not the real thing.

Still, the dead cities of that great empire are of vast interest and, to those who like to live in the past, it is a joy to wander through the silent streets and realize how great and civilized this colony once was, and how still greater the desolation and misery caused by the advent of the Arab.

From Djemila the traveler can either return to Algiers direct or continue the voyage through Constantine, or, if time presses, he can leave out Constantine and make direct for Djidjelli.

For the moment we must turn our attention to the third city of Algeria, the first city of Christianity under the Emperor Constantine.

CHAPTER XXXV

CONSTANTINE TO THE COAST

THE scenery along the road to Constantine by either route differs little from that just passed. It is a land of cereals, once upon a time properly irrigated by the people of a great empire, now sadly dependent on the rainfall.

The approach to the city is impressive. It seems to stand out on a rocky pinnacle, and as one crosses the bridge and looks down into the depths of the Gorges of the Rhummel, one suddenly wonders if it is not all a stage setting: chasms, perpendicular cliffs, natural rock bridges and tunnels, the houses clinging dizzily to the rock wall, and, far beneath, the silver streak of the river. Constantine was originally the capital of the Numidian kings, and was known as Cirta. Syphax, Massinissa, and Micipsa ruled here, but it was not until the fourth century and after it had been destroyed during one of the many conflicts which raged round its walls, that it was rebuilt by the Emperor Constantine.

Its history during the rest of time is a series of revolts and conspiracies, and, though a few of the beys during the Turkish rule built some lovely houses, its record is not elevating. There are only three interesting things to visit, and they can all be done in the day. First is the Gorges of the Rhummel, a most amazing spectacle of natural arches and passages hundreds of feet below the level of the town. When finally the river bursts out of this chasm into the open plain at the foot of a perpendicular rock towering up to dizzy heights it is like the entrance of a giant church. To the top of this rock, which watches over the whole plain of historic interest, tiresome or unfaithful wives of the bey were taken, placed in a sack with a cat, and hurled to their doom below. No one has yet been able to explain the cat, but I suppose it added to the fun of the thing.

Standing once on the summit of this pinnacle with a Scotch friend who was traveling without his better half, I recounted this story. He was a man of few words, and for a moment he made no reply; then, peering cautiously over the precipitous edge, he exclaimed, “Oh, for the good old days!”

The next place to visit is the palace of the bey of Constantine. It is now used as the divisional headquarters, and, though it is not properly kept up, one can get an impression of something very lovely: a series of courts open to the sky with marble floors and delicate pillars, enclosing miniature gardens, in the middle of which fountains splash gaily. The walls are covered with multi-colored tiles, while the ceilings and doors of rare wood are adorned with intricate carvings. On a sunny day it is a vision of blue and white and green and orange, and, though the drab clothes of the modern inmates and the click of the typewriting machine jar on the senses, one can imagine the enchanting atmosphere of these quiet courts when men in splendid robes passed in and out, followed by their dark-skinned slaves.

Communicating with the palace is the present-day cathedral, in the old time the mosque of the bey, who could pass unseen from his residence to his devotions. The French have enlarged it, but it is quite easy to see what was the original building. Here again there are some very lovely blue tiles.

There are other mosques, also Jewish and Arab quarters, which are worth a visit if the traveler has not been anywhere else, but after the long journey with all its scenes of Arab life, it will suffice to visit the above-mentioned places and return to rest, prior to the journey to the coast.

By starting early one will be able to lunch at Djidjelli, and the afternoon run along the *corniche* to Bougie can then be taken leisurely. The first impression on starting is that of hills. Up to the present all traveling has been done across rolling plains, but serious gradients have been unknown. The descent from the crag on which Constantine is perched again makes one wonder how it was captured by force. The cereal lands continue to give to the country a very desertic appearance, and, though it is not the desert of stones and rock, the rolling fields, with lonely farms, do not attract one to stay. One gets good examples of the desertion of villages by the French colonists, always yearning to get to the big towns near the coast.

Mila, at the fifty-fourth kilometer, was once a Roman city of importance; it is the last village of any size we shall pass. Thence onward the country is very wild. At Zeraïa (junction of the road from Djemila mentioned in the last chapter) we traverse forbidding gorges, after which the road runs for a few kilometers across a small plain of olive-yards, crosses a river, and then starts the long climb to the Col de Fdoules.

The road is a masterpiece of engineering as it climbs dizzily along the steep cliff of the mountain. At the hundred and fourth kilometer the Col, three thousand feet above the sea, is reached; from the watershed there is one of the finest mountain views in North Africa. To the north and to the south the hills rise up sheer and the valleys are lost in deep shade. The road then runs down into the Gorges of Taberkroutz and for the first time after the long travel, trees appear quite close. The road climbs up again and the woods approach, until soon we are in a thick forest. At the Col de Texenna a splendid panorama of forests and mountains is spread out before one. It is a wonderful sensation to return to luxuriant vegetation after the perpetual desert, and the sound of water with the smell of the damp earth revives the mind, weary with staring over limitless expanses. Another sensation of delight seizes one as the sea comes in view and, rapidly approaching the shore, the road follows it to Djidjelli.

One can either lunch at the hotel or picnic in pleasant surroundings, but whatever plan is adopted the new atmosphere and the fresh air will give one the appetite of the proverbial hunter. Djidjelli was originally a Phœnician settlement, and later, under the Romans, was an important harbor. It is most famous as being the first capital of Barbarossa the elder, who came here after his first failure to dislodge the Spaniards from Algiers, and when his original Tunisian lair at the island of Djerba had become too inhospitable for him to return. His greatness began with his election as Sultan of this little seaside city. His conquests and raids are world famous, and though it was his younger brother who eventually ruled Algiers and became the scourge of the Mediterranean, it was the temporary Sultan of Djidjelli who in reality was responsible for the pirate fleet which was to terrorize the sea from its headquarters in Algiers for three hundred years.

At the present day Djidjelli is the center of the cork trade. The forests cover an area of one hundred and fifty thousand acres, and cork is exported from the harbor to ports all over the world.

The road along the seacoast from Djidjelli to Bougie is one of the loveliest in North Africa. Deep red cliffs look down on to the sapphire blue of the Mediterranean, while the green of the forests above contrasts again with the azure of the sky. Natural tunnels are traversed, and here and there the road clings dizzily to the perpendicular rocks. This road, like many others in North Africa, is a wonderful piece of engineering.

At the thirty-sixth kilometer stone there are some marvelous caves well worth a visit. An Arab looks after them, who will illuminate the multitude of stalactites and stalagmites which adorn its fairylike halls, creating a vision of enchantment.

Pretty little villages succeed pretty little villages, where one would like to spend the day lazily watching the tranquil sea. In the hills there are masses of game and wild boar abounds; occasionally one sees monkeys—the famous Barbary ape.

Bougie has a Spanish aspect, but is in itself not particularly interesting. In Roman times it was a colony for veteran soldiers, and later it became like most Algerian ports, a harbor for pirates. Charles Quint spent a few days here after his disastrous attempt to capture Algiers. If time permits there are some delightful excursions round about, but the traveler by this time is probably so weary of motoring and contemplating scenery that he will want to return to his trunks and his comforts in Algiers.

As stated in the plan of the journey there are now four alternatives before us—the direct run to Algiers via Bouira and Palestro, or via Azazga and Tizi Ouzou—or else, if time permits it, by Michelet and the Massif Kabyle or by Tigzirt, the coast, and Dellys.

By Bouira and Palestro the road runs through a smiling valley and the return to Algiers can either be made via the gorges and Menerville or by the Bouzigza Pass. By Azazga and Tizi Ouzou or by Tigzirt the same routes will be followed as far as Azazga; the road rises rapidly up through woodlands to the Col de Tigdint, whence a superb panoramic view of the Kabyle Mountains can be seen on one side, while all about appear those quaint stone villages perched on the summits of every peak. Running down again, the forest of Yakouren is entered, and the road wanders through delightful glades, restful to the eyes, until the little village of Azazga is reached. It is recommended to picnic in the forest.

If Algiers is the goal it is straight ahead.

Tizi Ouzou, apart from its name, has nothing curious; silversmiths make massive jewelry here, but there is no need to stop. The road runs through orchards and tobacco plantations rather monotonously after all the gorgeous scenery of the rest of the journey, and the arrival in Algiers will be welcomed.

If the road via Tigzirt has been selected one must turn off to the right some six kilometers after Azazga. The road continues bearing to the right and climbs steeply up to a Col whence one gets a magnificent view to the south of the Djujura range, deep in snow in winter. The road now runs down to the coast and then follows it for twenty-six kilometers to the little seaside resort of Tigzirt.

Here, if time does not press, and if one does not mind primitive, though clean, comforts, one can pass the night in the hotel and thus have an opportunity of visiting the delightful ruins of an old Phœnician settlement, later Romanized.

Thence the run to Algiers is via the seacoast to Dellys, and after that the dull Tizi Ouzou road —one hundred and fifty kilometers in all.

It is, however, hoped that the season of the year will have permitted the traveler to visit the Great Kabyle country, and in the next chapter I will endeavor to describe the scenery and the people of this district, which is almost as unique as the Mzab.

CHAPTER XXXVI

KABYLIE

THE Kabyle country lies to the northeastern extremity of the department of Algiers, with a small portion lapping over into the department of Constantine as far as Bougie. It begins at Palestro, runs down to the sea, and is bounded on the south by the road from El Kseur to Bouira. It seems curious to speak of a country in the middle of a French department, and yet its physical boundaries are as defined as its people. Like the wild men of the Aurès, the Kabyles are hardy mountaineers of the same race—the Berbers. Perhaps a little purer than the people of the Aurès, who undoubtedly intermarried with Roman soldiers when the Empire fell, whereas their cousins of the north have remained intact since the days when the foreigner had not set foot in Africa.

The actual area of the country is about thirty-eight hundred square miles, and is composed of great mountains running up at some points to an altitude of six thousand feet, and deep in snow from December to March.

Unlike the people of the Mzab, the Kabyle types vary considerably, and though the majority are tall, blond men, one notices many who are small and dark. They have the same spirit of independence as the Berbers of Ghardaïa, with the great difference that they are all warriors and brook no interference. There is no area in Algeria which has caused so much trouble to the French, and even now the inhabitants consider themselves superior to all other races, and only accept the foreign rule because they have to. In spite of this these people never seem to have had any sort of main state, and though the word *zouaoua*, from which is derived the appellation of the French regiment *Zouaves*, is the name given to this group of Berbers, they have always been a divided nation; and it is only since the French fully pacified them that they have ceased to be in a perpetual state of internal war. These wars usually originated as vendettas, it being admitted that a man killed required another man killed and that all disputes about land must be settled by the sword.

Before this period each village was a kind of little republic of its own with the principle of government of the people by the people, that is to say that the *Djemma*, or local council, was supposed to be composed of all the men who had attained their majority. As a matter of fact this was rarely put into practise, and the government of the village lay in the hands of the heads of families, the elders and a few young men of note. These men elected an Amine, who presided over the assembly, which decided every detail concerning the daily life of the community. The Amine had, however, little real power, as his position depended on the good-will of the other members over whom he presided, and who could by a simple ballot dismiss him. It was a state of absolute socialism, and the man of good family or the richest farmer had no more authority than the poorest laborer.

Moreover, to this day there is no distinction of class; there are no fine houses for the prosperous; the beggar and the rich man wear the same rags and live in the same squalor. The *Djemma* still exists and the simple stone seat on which the worthies sit can be seen in any village. The wars or vendettas also continue, but in a somewhat more discreet manner, and though they still speak of the *Cof Oufella*, the clan of the higher levels, and the *Cof Bouadda*, the clan of those below, the French do all they can to keep order.

They are all naturally industrious farmers, and though the difficulty of cultivating this steep land, combined with the density of the population, makes farming no easy matter, the results are amazing. The growing of cereals holds a minor place in their agriculture, and their attention is chiefly directed to trees, especially the fig and the olive, of which the fruits are regularly exported. Owing to the overcrowded population, however, one finds few large landed proprietors, and the ownership of property is carried to the most ludicrous extremes. For instance, a whole family may own a fig-tree without owning the land on which it grows, and cases have been known of a man who owned an olive-tree hiring out the branches to the olive exporters.

The family ideals are the same as among all Berber groups: absolute respect for the head of the family, precedence for the males, but unlike the modern Arab family, no position at all for the women. It is true that polygamy is much rarer here than in the rest of North Africa, but this is largely due to economy rather than to anything else. Otherwise the wife is an absolute slave, and one is at once struck on the roads by the sight of Monsieur riding his mule while Madame trudges behind. As soon as a girl is of marriageable age, and often before, she is bought, and from that moment she must do all her husband's work, bear and bring up his children and, if he wishes, be divorced. Even if he dies she is not allowed to keep her children, who are taken over by the man's family as soon as weaned. Moreover, no woman can inherit from a man. When she has passed the period of bearing children she is relegated to the status of a beast of burden. Against this she has much more liberty to go about unattended, and she is not veiled. Small compensation!

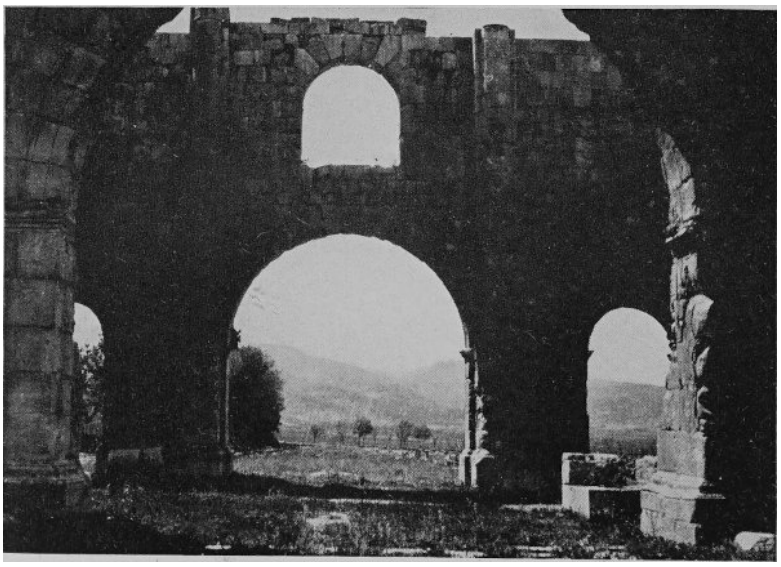
It is hard to instil different principles into these wild people, as they are very hostile to all forms of European interference, and it is with the utmost difficulty that the children are made to go to the French school.

What is still more extraordinary to note is the fact that men who have been educated and who have actually been to Europe will return to their villages and, without the smallest hesitation, rebegin their old life, sleeping on the floor near their donkeys or their horses, while the women chop wood and do the rough work. Neither are these isolated cases as, since the war, many an old soldier, realizing the unequal struggle in his own country, has gone to France as a workman in a factory, and during that period has made money which has been regularly sent back to the family in the mountains, but once weary of Europe he has returned to his people to lead the same life as before. Berbers they were two thousand years ago, Berbers they are still, and, like the men of the Mzab and of the Hoggar, of the Aurès and of the Riff, they remain unaltered, and there seems little prospect of anything changing them.

As in the Mzab, the villages differ considerably from those of the Arabs of the plain. Here again we find the town built on a pinnacle. Practically every peak in the Kabyle Mountains is dominated by a group of houses which cling dizzily above steep precipices. The houses themselves are small, low and squalid; the better ones consist of three rooms very slightly separated from one another. One room for the men, one for the women and children, and one for the animals, but there are many cases where men and beasts all dwell together.

The Departure of a Caravan in the Far South

Market Looking toward Trajan's Arch, Timgad



Praetorium. Lambèse

The men are poorly dressed, and one never sees the prosperous white robes of the Mzabite nor the costly burnous of the Arab chief, but in spite of their rags they stalk along the road, stick in hand, the head high, and a look of defiance in their clear eyes. The women, on the other hand, wear brilliant colors—red and yellow and green; their heads are wrapped in high turban-like head-dresses consisting of many scarfs wound one above the other. Their faces, unveiled, are handsome and, contradictorily to their status, have usually an expression of great gaiety. Like most people who have never known anything better, their lot seems to them normal, and they have no other ambition.

They are all very superstitious—childishly so, and they carry countless antidotes against spells and the Evil Eye. Their courage is proverbial, and they callously bear pain. A man who had been stabbed in the abdomen was seen to push back his intestines into the gaping wound, mount his mule and ride off to the nearest French authorities to make his complaint. A doctor once said that if he saw a Kabyle cut in half he would not give a death certificate until he was sure that the heart had stopped beating!

Unfortunately space forbids my recounting countless anecdotes and stories about them. Like the Mzab, this is a country where one can linger quietly for some weeks and never have a dull day.

The road from Bougie to Michelet runs first of all along the foot of the Kabyle Mountains, giving one an excellent idea of the isolation of this district from the rest of Algeria. Great barren peaks rise up and the red earth of the slopes contrasts brilliantly with the olive-yards and fig plantations.

Shortly after Akbou we meet the road from Sétif to Algiers via Boaria, which can be taken if the suggestion to run straight through to Algiers from Timgad has been followed, or if one is making straight from Bougie to Algiers via Palestro. Our own course is to the north and, turning sharply to the right, the road begins to climb steeply up into the mountains. It is a magnificent drive, and the panorama from the Col de Tirourda is one of the most superb in North Africa. The whole of this great system of mountains is around us, chain succeeds chain, with the quaint little villages perched on the top of every point of vantage. It is as new a scenery as the Mzab, and one

is hardly able to realize that barely a week ago one was staring across those desolate plains of stone and rock. The road winds on along the edge of precipitous slopes to Michelet.

Here there is an excellent Transatlantic hotel which, unlike most of its sisters, is open summer and winter, Michelet being a holiday resort for the overheated business men of Constantine and Algiers.

If one has time, there are many delightful excursions to be made from here, but to carry out the program we must leave the following morning. The road continues circling along the side of the mountain; little villages appear on the hilltops and give place to other villages until the fortified town of Fort National is reached. From here the gradient is very steep down to Tizi Ouzou, where lunch can be taken if the more preferable picnic has not been consumed under a group of fig-trees.

From Tizi Ouzou the road runs dully back to Algiers through tobacco plantations.

And so the journey is over, and though at first the mind will be unable to grasp all that has been seen and that feeling of a long evening at the cinema will hold it for some time, little by little the ever-changing scenes will detach themselves in order and remain photographed on the brain as an undying memory.

The vine-clad Mitidja, the Atlas, the rolling plain of the Sersou and the Hauts Plateaux, the rocky desolation of the Mzab, the golden sands of Touggourt contrasting suddenly with the cosmopolitan crowd at Biskra, the silent ruins of Timgad and the business town of Constantine, the first view of the hills and the sea, the blue and scarlet of the *corniche* road to Bougie, and the towering peaks of the Kabyle peopled by a strange race of the past, until the white city of Algiers is reached, with its palaces and its gardens and its damp atmosphere.

All these things will gradually unwind themselves from the recesses of the brain, to form one vast panorama, and as one sits at home a few weeks later one will say to one’s self incredulously:

“Did I really see all this in a fortnight, and all in the same country?”

CHAPTER XXXVII

TRAVELING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

HAVING now followed in the paths of the tourist and the official tours of the Compagnie Transatlantique, it will perhaps be interesting to cast a glance at the less-frequented routes. There is no doubt that once one leaves the beaten track in Algeria one travels in comparative discomfort, and that the accommodation is, to say the least of it, primitive. Neither is it necessary to go far from the main center to find these discomforts.

On the other hand, unless one has these experiences one does not get to know the real people of the country whether they be Arabs or Frenchmen. The true Algerian colonist is there in all his roughness, talking vaguely about France as a paradise, which he may never have seen, in spite of the little distance which separates Europe from North Africa; treating the natives with a curious mixture of comradeship and harshness, little interested in affairs not affecting his actual district, and as unlike an Englishman in the same situation as it is possible to imagine.

The common Arab, poor, ill-fed, lazy, working just as long as it is necessary, dishonest when it is worth while, and quite unscrupulous in matters of life and death, exists there with little ambition, while the Arab chiefs whom one has perhaps met in magnificent clothes at some official function live in these lost districts without any ostentation. The only method of communication between the villages, and they are usually some sixty or eighty miles apart, is by road. Some of the richer cultivators and *caïds* have motor-cars; the well-to-do Arab rides, but it is usual to travel by the motor *diligence* which carries the mails. The *diligence* usually starts early in the morning, as, though it travels a good twenty miles an hour, there is always the danger of a breakdown with no question of outside help, and as they are under government contract it is essential that they should have plenty of time to spare.

The bus is almost full at the start, but it expands its accommodation in a most astonishing way as it picks up travelers who sit by the roadside, and when it arrives at its destination the roof and the running-boards are crowded with Arabs. People who have correspondence for the post also wait at appointed places with their letters, which are collected by the driver and taken along. And in the same way the mail for the districts where there are no roads is picked up by the postman as the *diligence* dashes by.

Occasionally in years of famine there are holdups, and though the driver is always armed, it is of little avail. The road is barred at some convenient spot where there is cover, the *diligence* stops, and before any one realizes what has occurred the track is seething with Arabs armed with blunder-busses and bludgeons, who take all there is, puncture the tires and disappear as mysteriously as they came.

Another form of delay is often created in summer by locusts, which drift in great clouds across the road and in an inconceivably short space of time clog up all the wheels with the fat of their crushed bodies. And it is extremely difficult to clear them out and go on if they are in any numbers.

The arrival of the *diligence* in a small center is a great event. The postmaster, who is also the telegrapher and postman and bookkeeper, comes out with much dignity to receive the mail; Arabs

crowd round and gossip with the occupants of the second-class compartment or with those on the roof; the tall gendarme walks up and down with a look of imminent arrest on his mustached countenance. At the terminus there is the same sensation while the European traveler, stiff and dusty, wends his way to the only inn. It is always a “Grand” Hotel “Something” with from twelve to twenty rooms. There are many which are simply comfortable, where one gets a good *cuisine bourgeoise*; these are among the smaller and more remote and kept by a family of French people, the father looking after the café, the mother cooking, the children doing all the rest of the work. Meals are served at a common table with the family. The rooms are sparsely furnished, but they are clean. But there are many hotels where hygiene is unknown, where the food is cooked by an Arab and is foully oily, and the rooms! . . . Too much or too little can not be said about them, and the traveler is advised to cast the well-used sheets into the farthest corner of the chamber, place the mattress on the floor, put on his longest pair of trousers and his stoutest boots and wrap himself up in his cloak. If he is fortunate he will rise next morning immune from the night attack of the denizens of the bedstead, but that is all.

Market-day is the time to see these little towns at their best. It usually takes place on a Friday, the Mohammedan Sunday, and from midday Thursday long caravans of Arabs with their flocks begin appearing on the horizon and move slowly across the wide plain toward the market town. Camels pad disdainfully along while the humble donkey trots beside, great flocks of white sheep with their advance guard of goats throwing up clouds of dust. The roads too have their complement of travelers, and carriages and carts jolt along bearing Arabs and French farmers; there are also horsemen and pedestrians, while the motor-car and the *diligence* bring buyers from Algiers.

It is a marvelous sight to see the streets of the little town thronged with every type of Arab. Clear-eyed men from the nomad tribes of the Larbas, and the Chambas in the far south; tall men with haughty looks from the mountains, thin, wiry men from the rolling plains of the Sersou, stout little Mzabites, pale and bearded, selling their wares to the credulous Arabs as their Phœnician ancestors did in the same land two thousand years ago. Here and there an Arab chief— an *agha* or a *caïd*—in a brilliant cloth burnous, moves in stately manner, greeting friends with the brotherly embrace and receiving the kiss of submission on the shoulder from the members of his tribe with as much dignity as a king of old accepting homage from his vassals.

When night falls the little hotel is full of bronzed-faced colonists and wool merchants and sheep breeders, discussing the prospects of the harvest and the probable price of wool and livestock over glasses of anisette and water. The scene in the café is really a most entertaining spectacle of all classes and races mingling in friendly chat.

Sometimes there is an Arab flutist from the far south earning his dinner, sometimes there is a Spanish sheep-farmer with his guitar, sometimes there is a row among Arabs and one sees the glint of the steel dagger, which alone the children of the Faithful know how to wield with dexterous rapidity.

In the Arab coffee-houses too the animation is great, and the guests flow out into the streets and squat by the wall holding their cups of coffee or mint tea in their hands. Inside some one is singing a ballad, accompanied by a flute or a mandolin, while up the road one can hear the rhythmical beat of the *tam-tam* and strident squeal of the *raïta* of some rival establishment. Away in the dancing girls’ quarter the gaiety continues until the Arab policeman, blowing on his trumpet, sends all the Faithful to bed, for the most part under the bright stars.

At dawn the city is astir, the coffee-houses are again open, and the shepherds are gathering about the *fondouks*, where they have lodged their animals for the night. The more thrifty, who have preferred to sleep out on the plains with their flocks rather than pay lodging to the *fondouk* keeper, are already on the market-place, a broad open area clear of the city.

There are twenty thousand ewes and as many lambs to be sold to-day. It is an amazing sight to see hundreds of flocks herded together, with here and there a black patch where stand the goats. A little apart from the sheep is the donkey market—poor little beasts blinking patiently in the sun, while a little farther on the camels groan and gurgle as if they resented being vulgarly disposed of in a sheep-market.

All the Arab chiefs and the Frenchmen from the hotel are there moving about the flocks, looking at teeth, examining fleeces, feeling backs. Prices which during the early hours have been unstable, settle down toward seven, and the serious buying begins. The sun rises up in the heavens and blazes down on the great concourse of white-robed shepherds. Then gradually as the purchases are completed, the various buyers separate their lots from the general herd and drive them into different groups away from the main market.

And now there is a flow of people in the opposite direction, the sellers are being paid, the cafés are filling up again, the more thrifty are investing their money in barley or clothes, the generous are purchasing scarfs for their women. As the afternoon draws on, the caravans begin reforming and moving off across the great plain, little groups of sheep and camels can be seen following the long straight tracks. By sunset the town has once more dwindled to its normal population, the coffee-sellers and the Mzabite grocers are counting their profits, and flute players and dancing girls have retired to rest, and quiet reigns till the next market-day.

But though all this is picturesque and interesting and unusual, the European used to average comfort is glad to see the last of the gray *diligence* as he is deposited at the nearest railway station, and he sinks back with a sigh of relief on the soft cushions of the first-class railway carriage.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A FEW SKETCHES OF ARAB LIFE

1. *Summer in the Sahara*

HAVING now endeavored to give the reader a general idea of Algeria from all points of view, I propose to close this book with a few sketches of my life among the Arabs.

There is nothing particularly striking about these experiences, but I feel they will lift a further veil on the inner life of these people whose privacy it is so difficult to penetrate. Only years of contact have opened the innermost doors of their homes, only the word of some intimate friend telling of the fellowship between the lone Englishman and the people of Algeria has removed all suspicious constraint, only the reputation of simplicity and the instinct of caste has brought them to me with all their ideas laid bare.

However, before describing these scenes I would like the reader to catch a glimpse of the country in a clothing different from that thrown on the screen by the Circuits Transatlantiques. The average traveler will have fled the shores of North Africa before the first months of summer, when the big hotels in Algiers have closed their shutters and the syncopated saxophonists have packed up their greasy dinner-jackets and crossed to cooler climes. The hot weather in Algiers itself is singularly unpleasant, not so much from the point of view of temperature, which never rises very high, but because of the damp. It is like living in a steam bath all day, and correspondingly tiring.

Once in the plains of the Mitidja, however, or up in the hills, the heat is greater but the air is dry, and provided one keeps quiet in the middle of the day one can quite well bear the summer months. The temperature of the Sahara is high, but the heat, being very dry, is not too unpleasant, and though it is not recommended to pass July and August in an oasis it is no real hardship for the young and healthy once in a while.

In the first place houses are built to protect one from the sun; very thick mud walls plastered over, which do not attract the heat, outside verandahs or inner courts open to the sky, and heavy shutters, make it possible to keep the house comparatively cool during the middle hours of the day. Life too is organized to meet the requirements of the weather. All business is contracted between six and ten. At eleven everything closes, including the post-office, and remains shut until three. During these hours lunch is eaten, followed by the siesta, and it is not until four that those who are not forced to, appear. By five the main street presents an animated aspect of Arabs strolling up and down in their white robes, while the cafés begin to fill up. Those who have gardens in the oasis repair to them and work until friends arrive to pay calls and discuss the produce of the rich soil over cups of mint tea, while in a secluded corner the women squat with the children and gossip in whispers.

Sometimes an Arab of importance will give a dinner in his garden. A carpet is spread out on the ground, a brass tray is placed in the middle, while near-by the sheep is being roasted whole on a brushwood fire. A flutist or a guitarist will play under the orange-trees by the light of the summer moon. The diners will often remain on the carpet the whole night and return direct to their business in the morning.

These gardens are worthy of note. They are not usually anywhere near the residence of the owner, who lives in the town; they vary in size from three acres to half an acre, and are planted with fruit-trees and vegetables, which grow in astonishing abundance. In fact, with the exception of the dates, the oranges and the apricots, all the fruit can not be disposed of. It is a wonderful sight to see gardens full of pears and apricots and figs and strawberries and pomegranates, while vines heavy with grapes climb up the walls and the tall date-palms nod in the warm breeze, protecting the garden from the fiercest rays of the midday sun.

In the terrible months of July and August one wonders why the leaves of the trees do not shrivel up under the fiery rays of the summer sun. But on the other hand it must be remembered that all is a matter of contrast and that during the midwinter months, when the temperature is that of April in England, it is cold for the Sahara vegetation, and trees are as leafless as those at home in the same period. In fact, vegetation on the Riviera in winter is infinitely more abundant than on the edge of the Sahara at the same season.

The desert too, like the gardens of the oasis, presents a totally different aspect in summer from that which might be supposed. Whereas this heat transferred to England would burn up every blade of grass, here it brings to the surface all kinds of scrub vegetation, and standing on an eminence looking over the northern tracts of the Sahara, the view presents a greener impression than to the tourist in winter. The nights too are comparatively cool, and a blanket is sometimes required after midnight when the stony land has cooled and when the house is storing up all the fresh air before the hermetic closing of all windows at sunrise.

If, therefore, those who stay all the summer will mind the precepts of all hot countries, a reverential respect for the sun, a light diet and abstinence from alcohol, they will not suffer too much, provided the experience is not repeated too often.

The flies are tiresome, but there is little disease, and except during famine years the typhus does not appear. The sun is a marvelous disinfectant, and the mortality in these southern cities is very low.

But when the sirocco starts blowing it is a very different story. It always comes in series of three, six, nine days, and it usually rises at dawn. There is no mistaking it. Peacefully asleep, one suddenly awakes to the rattle of shutters and a sensation that one's hair is being scorched on one's head. Every one is up immediately, closing every window to keep in a little freshness. The day is terrible; standing in front of a furnace in a glass factory is the only comparison possible, intensified by great clouds of whirling sand which come sweeping across the desert and which drive on for miles, shrouding the sun in a kind of yellow cloak and creeping even into one's innermost chamber as one tries in vain to keep out of the heat.

But apart from the ordeal of sirocco days a man sensibly dressed and living a reasonable life in an oasis of the Sahara, with an average shade temperature of one hundred degrees is better off than the tall-hatted Londoner devouring his copious British lunch and not resting in the middle of the day, and the tourist who will venture south in June will return home with a marvelous impression of real summer.

2. *Staying in a Country House in the Tell*

Staying in an Arab country house is as different from staying in a country house in Europe as it is possible to imagine. (I am speaking, of course, from the point of view of intimate friends who are treated as the Arabs.)

In the first place there is no specific invitation; one is asked to come and stay, say in the summer, and when one feels inclined, one arrives. If one is polite one wires beforehand, but it is not expected. Secondly, one goes always with some specific object—to shoot, to visit flocks, to contract some business in the neighborhood, but rarely just to stay.

When one arrives the host may or may not be there; if he is not he will have delegated some near relation to do the honors in his place, and he may appear during the course of the visit. In the same way he may suddenly go away when one has only been there a few days, but it does not in the least suggest a hint for the guest to leave; a deputy host will take his place and things will go on in exactly the same way.

Another thing in an Arab home, which is quite peculiar to the country, is the fact that the guests not of the actual family neither eat nor sleep in the house in which the people live, that is to say that there is a kind of guest annex which is only opened on these occasions. This custom is chiefly due to the presence of the women, who might be difficult to conceal from strangers if they had access to the main building.

The particular country house I am going to describe belongs to a *bash agha* and is situated in the Tellian Atlas near to the village of Bourbaki. The country is mountainous and produces cereals.

I arrived two days late for my visit, but not at all through my fault, as I had arranged to go by train to Boghari, where my host would send me a car. I arrived at the specified time, but the conveyance did not come for forty-eight hours. I naturally expressed astonishment and some annoyance, but it seemed to surprise the driver, to whom a day or so before or after meant so little.

When I arrived, dinner awaited me, and I was pleased to see that I was being treated really as one of the family, and that there were no tables or chairs, no knives and forks. The party was assembled in a pillared courtyard open to the sky, with jasmine and rose bushes growing around. Two lemon-trees stood at either end, and above us a July moon shed a gentle radiance.

We sat down in three circles. In the first group was the *bash agha*, myself, my *caïd* partner of the sheep farm, an old schoolmaster and a very aged *imam*. In the second group were the *bash agha's* sons, his nephews, and his chief clerk. In the third group were my head shepherd, the chauffeur, and the rest of the retainers.

The food was first of all placed in the center of our circle, and we all dipped into the common bowl: when we had had enough it was passed to the second circle, who did likewise, until it was finished by the third party. While the third group was eating we began our next course, and the servant was able to join the last group.

"Servant" is not exactly the right word, as *"khedime,"* which is literally translated by "servant," is almost a term of insult. The people who wait and look after the house of an Arab chief are not considered in the same way as those who minister to us. In the first place they are not paid, but are merely clothed and lodged—they and their families, and when they get too old they are kept on and their sons take their places for the actual work.

When dinner was over and we had washed our faces and hands and tea and coffee had been brought, we stretched out our legs on the carpet. While we in our little circle began to smoke, the other groups broke up and moved silently out of the court, for in the presence of their elders they could not light a cigarette; in fact, during the whole of the meal they had conducted their conversation in respectful whispers.

For an hour or so we sat and conversed on all kinds of subjects, then one by one the Arabs dropped off into a doze, no constraint, no endeavoring to keep awake when sleep dominated. For a

while they slumbered, then, coming to again, said good night and went off to the other part of the house to rest, while I settled myself in the vast guest-chamber in a large brass bed.

In the middle of the night there was an earthquake. It did not last very long, but for a moment the house shook violently. The household rose in commotion, and the *bash agha* came rushing into my room fully dressed, which proved to me again that these men sleep in their clothes. He looked at me in surprise.

"How is this," he cried, "an earthquake and you remain in bed without moving?"

I laughed.

"It is I who should be surprised," I replied, "for with your belief in the *mektoub* you shouldn't worry about such trifles as earthquakes."

His eyes twinkled in spite of his emotion.

"You are right," he said, "what is written is written, and none but Allah can interfere. Good rest!"

He left me and I heard him outside admonishing the others for making such a noise.

The next day we motored up to see some of the *bash agha's* cattle in the cedar forest near Teniet el Haad. This is one of the finest excursions in Algeria, but it is unfortunately off the tourist track, and practically no one goes there.

It is, however, quite a simple journey, and if the traveler wishes to see real forest he has but to motor from Algiers, either via Tipaza and Miliana, which is in itself a gorgeous drive, and continue to the south by Boghari, or else he can return to Algiers by Goghari and Medea. If he does not have a car he can take the train to Affreville, where an excellent motor-bus will land him at Teniet el Haad. Here there is quite a good hotel of the unluxurious type.

The cedar forest is in the mountains some fourteen kilometers along a quite passable mountain road. It winds steeply up through pine-trees, then little by little the cedars begin to appear standing erect, their long arms stretched out forming roofs of that delicate blue-green. As one progresses the cedar alone remains, increasing in size until one comes upon giant trees a hundred feet high and with a circumference of seven or eight yards. The view over the valleys below is superb.

We stopped at a clearing where the *bash agha* kept a small house, and we went in search of the cows. It took some time to find them, but during our walk we passed some really magnificent trees —giants, centuries old. On our return to the house I was surprised to find, instead of the cold chicken and beef associated with picnics in the mountains, a five-course hot lunch with the best wine of Algeria.

The *bash agha* explained that he always kept all material ready in his chalet, and that it only needed the bringing of the food to have it prepared. As a matter of fact I have always noticed with Arabs that in the question of meals there are no half-measures. One either spends the whole day out with nothing except perhaps a piece of bread, or else one sits down to a feast in the most out-of-the-way place.

The meal was excellent, too excellent, with the result that we all went to sleep after. When we woke up it was late afternoon and the sun was glinting through the blue branches of the cedars and lighting up the forest in a fairy fashion. One expected to see gnomes and elves appear from out of the vast trunks. We drove back in the sunset, the softest light imaginable, but quite unlike the golden radiance of the Sahara.

The following day was market-day at Burdeau, some thirty kilometers away, so that every one was astir at dawn, and before sunrise every male member of the household had piled into the cars and we were speeding across the cereal plain which overlooks the Sersou. All the *aghas* and *caïds* of the district as well as those from the south were there, and there was much kissing and shaking of hands.

I saw here another curious example of the respect of the younger generation for the older. I wanted my breakfast, so I went into a café with the *caïd*; my partner and I ordered our coffee. It was just being brought when up jumped the *caïd* and went off into the street. I followed anxiously, and to my surprise he went into the café opposite, where he ordered the same collation. This time it was actually brought and set on the table, when like a flash my companion was up again and outside before I could speak.

I caught him up and saw that he was making for the original café.

"Hi!" I cried, "what's all this about? Is it a game? Why can't we eat in peace? I'm hungry."

"Didn't you notice?" he asked calmly.

"Notice what?" I asked.

"My uncle, the *bash agha* of the Larbas."

"No, I can't say I did," I replied, "but what of it?"

"He came into the first café when I was sitting there, and I couldn't remain; and then just as I had settled in the next, he came in there too."

"And I suppose we shall go on chasing round Burdeau till the old gentleman settles or until we die of hunger," I laughed back. "No, *mon vieux*, I'm hungry, and I won't starve for any one."

So saying I took my coffee and roll and carried it across to the *bash agha's* table, where I sat down and explained my action. He smiled, but I realized that he was smiling to please me, and that he saw nothing in the inconvenience caused to his nephew, who might wait all day for his coffee if necessary.

On the way back we called on various *caïds* and rich farmers, who gave us quantities of sweet mint tea. At one house the old *bash agha*, who had accompanied us, found an aged *kadi* who played chess, so he insisted on having a game while we all had to wait, regardless of the fact that it was getting near dinner-time.

How different from the customs of Europe, where age is, if anything, jeered at. Fancy giving a lift to some one's grandfather after a day in the country and having to wait while he played a silly game with a local judge whom he met in some one else's house!

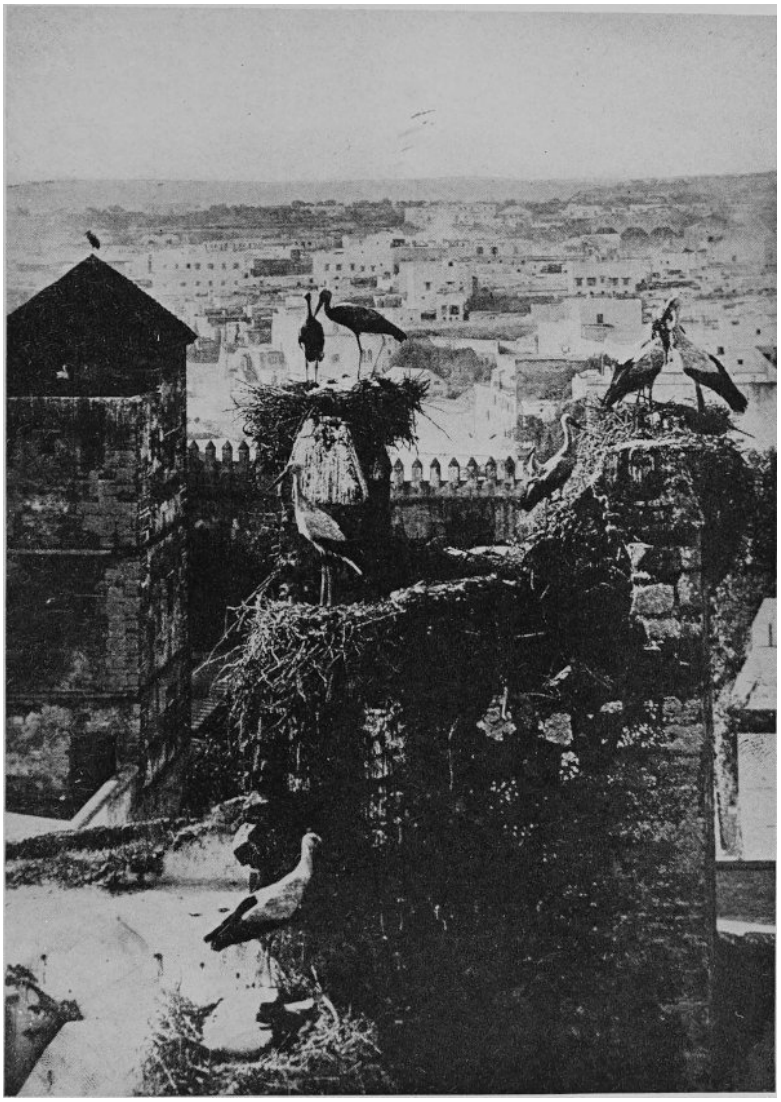
And so the pleasant visit wore on. Each day we did something different, each day we had enormous meals until finally I was obliged to leave. Looking back on the visit the thing which strikes me the most is the complete lack of fuss during the whole of my stay. Everything was done quite haphazardly and yet without a hitch. I suppose it is the effect of centuries of such existence which remains as a background and which is carried on generation after generation. A few modern inventions have appeared which facilitate things a bit, but otherwise the same life is led with exactly the same ideas as it was twelve hundred years ago, and it seems difficult to see any radical change ever taking place. In this mode life runs smoothly for the Arabs; complications do not trouble them, so why change?

3. *A Week-end with a Marabout*

The Marabout of Kourdane asked me to spend a week-end with him to discuss the possibilities of organizing a moufflon shoot in the Djbel Amour. I was interested in the prospects of getting a moufflon, but still more interested to see Kourdane.

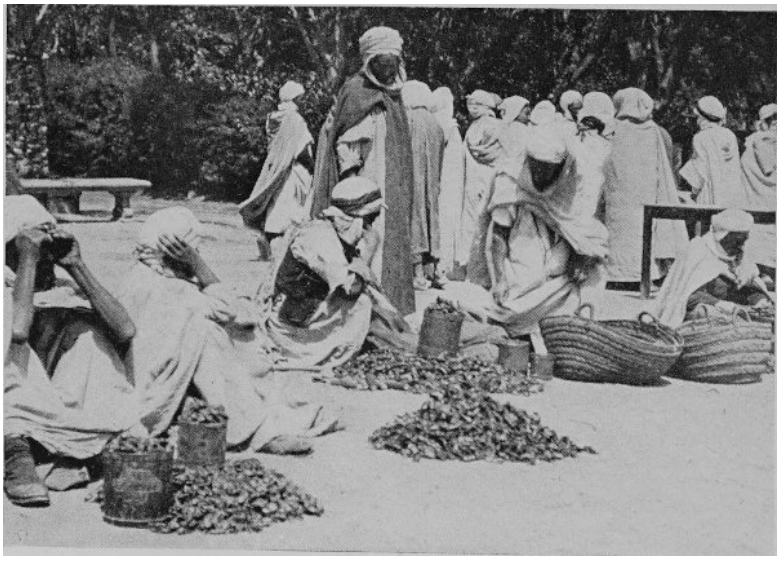
Situated in the Sahara some fifty kilometers from Laghouat, at the foot of the Djebel Amour Range, this country home of *marabouts* was created by a Frenchwoman known as Madame Aurélie, whose maiden name was Aurélie Picard, the daughter of a gendarme. She had met the Marabout of Aïn Mahdi at Bordeaux when he had been exiled during the insurrection of 1870. She married him in France, and when he was allowed to return to Algeria she came too, and became a great personage in the country. At his death she married his brother, and continued as lady of this desolate area, loved and respected by all. Finally the second husband died too, and she remained on alone for a while in the wonderful house she had built. She is still alive, but she rarely returns to the scenes of her greatness for two reasons; in the first place, the present *marabouts* are not quite the saints they should be, and secondly, they are all a little jealous of her reputation.

As I had never seen this desert castle I accepted with alacrity, and left with a friend one Saturday morning in a car. The road on leaving Laghouat is to the north, but soon it turns southwest across a desolate land of sand and rocks. I had decided to lunch with an old friend of mine, the Caïd of Tadgemout. I reached the *ksar* at noon: a sad, desolate little village partly in ruins, perched on the top of a rocky eminence overlooking a small oasis, very green in the midst of the desert. The road climbed up behind the rock and emerged before the *caïd's* house, which dominates the oasis. The view from his terrace is one of the most impressive in these parts. In the immediate foreground, the oasis, then a silver thread of water running down the river-bed and away, away, the desert. But unlike most of the Saharan views the horizon is cut all of a sudden by a group of rugged hills standing up grim and bare. Again, looking to the northwest the scene is not at all expected, as one's eyes rest on the great range of the Djebel Amour, deep blue against the brilliant sky.



Storks Nesting on the Roofs at Constantine

Bonfarik, Religious Print Seller



Vegetable Market

Tadgemout is said to mean the “Crown of Death,” and was the capital of a desert queen whose every punishment even for the smallest crime was death. It is a place which grows upon one, and one is loath to leave its lonely site.

The *caïd* himself is a charming person, far superior to most of his kind, both in intelligence and manners. This is partly due to his own efforts and also to the fact that during the war he was made prisoner and, being eventually exchanged as an invalid, spent a long time in Switzerland, where he attended lectures at Geneva University and came in contact with all kinds of people. He received us before his door and led us into the guest-house where one of those interminable repasts was prepared. We discussed all manners of extraordinary subjects, or rather I was subjected to a series of endless questions, as the *caïd* is of an inquisitive turn of mind. One remark is worthy of note as showing the curious working of an Oriental brain.

He suddenly said:

"Why don't Protestant clergymen wear vestments like the Catholics?"

I began with a dissertation on the Reformation, but he knew all about that.

After lunch he accompanied us on our journey. The road dipped down into a dried river-bed, where the car stuck; we all had to climb out and push; no comment was made, as this is one of the most usual occurrences when motoring across the Sahara. The road continued desolate as we drew near to the blue mountains.

Suddenly a great block of buildings stood out of the wasted land; a garden covering at least a square mile surrounded it, making a wonderful contrast of green.

"Kourdane," replied my companion to my inquiry; "the house built by Madame Aurélie; the garden created by her with water from many wells; everything done on the most lavish scale and now hardly appreciated by her descendants."

Indeed, as we approached the wide portal of the outer wall, I noticed that the building had not been whitewashed for years and that the plaster was peeling off. Fissures had appeared, and though the mass of the edifice struck one forcibly after the usual one-storied Arab houses, I realized that we were in a splendor of the past.

The *marabout* hurried out to greet us. Small of stature, with decidedly negro features, his general appearance on first contact was not impressive. And yet as one watched him one realized a kind of superiority engrained by many generations of domination. My *caïd* kissed his hand, the chauffeur kissed his hand and his head; the young man took it all as calmly as the hand-shake I gave him. He led us along the side of the house to the front and here, of a sudden, one was transported out of any sort of Arab setting. Instead of the usual small doorway leading to some dim ante-chamber or narrow staircase, we came upon a great flagged space interspersed with flower-beds and fountains and rivulets, while tall cypresses grew about, protecting the garden from the desert winds.

A broad staircase built of rosy stone led up to a terrace pillared and tiled in delicate shades, giving an impression of majesty, of far-away power, of magnificence. We mounted the stairway and were led into a dining-room quite simple in spite of its size, and then into a drawing-room. An array of superb Arab furniture filled the room, not the tawdry tables and chairs bought in Algiers, but the real work of the country: chests of drawers, cupboards, brackets inlaid with mother-of-pearl, priceless carpets on the floor, and lovely hangings over the doors; swords and daggers of all periods festooned the walls. We passed out of the drawing-room on to a gallery running all the length of the building, and on to which opened the guestrooms. As we entered the first, I was struck by the richness of the setting, by the real Arab bed hung about with brocaded curtains, then I realized that I was not in one room but in a series. I turned in surprise to the *caïd*. He smiled at my astonishment and explained that at Kourdane every guest had his private suite—bedroom, sitting-room, dining-room—and that in the old days of the Great Marabout meals were sent separately to each person who spent the night there. The importance of the repast varied according to the standing of the guest, but great or small, he was waited on in his own apartment. Afterward every one met in the drawing-room for coffee.

"Even now," he added, "we shall dine in the dining-room without our host, who will be served apart."

I could find nothing to say; the old baronial hall of the Middle Ages with the high table seemed eclipsed.

We returned to the garden and were led with reverence to the tomb of the *marabout*. It was built round an ancient tree under which he was wont to take his afternoon sleep. A light burned perpetually there.

We visited the domain, and the richness of the vast garden in the middle of the desolate land was almost as impressive as the pomp of the house.

At seven-thirty we dined, and as the *caïd* had predicted, our meal was partaken without the host. There was a sheep roasted whole, with one of the best Bordeaux wines I had tasted for a long time. Afterward the little *marabout* came in and took his coffee with us in the gorgeous drawing-room. We talked for a while about shooting and then, turning toward a battered piano, contrasting sadly with the rest of the furnishings, he asked if any one could play. My English companion was persuaded to approach the keyboard. The holy atmosphere inspired him to play Nazareth, but the sounds evoked from the yellow notes were so unexpected that he swiftly changed into a Waldteufel waltz, though it did not sound at all like the tune I knew. However, this did not in the least matter, and the Arabs sat spellbound as the unspeakable discords burst from the instrument which had not been tuned for fifty years.

Finally the party broke up and we retired to our respective apartments in an atmosphere of decadent grandeur. During the night I was awakened by the casements rattling, and though I tried to turn over and sleep again, I knew instinctively what it meant. As soon as I was called I walked out on to the terrace and at once realized that my intuition was right. A fierce wind was blowing up from the southeast and clouds of sand and dust were whirling across the desert. As the day increased the wind rose and the sand which had merely been coming in gusts became a cloud which swept across the land, enveloping all.

The sun tried to pierce the pall of dust, but little by little it was obliterated and the atmosphere became that of a sea mist mixed up with a London fog. Dust, sand, grit filtered its way in everywhere while the wind roared through the cypress trees and about the house. By lunch-time the sand-storm was at its height and the light of day was no brighter than at dusk. We had, however, promised to go over to Aïn Mahdi, a few miles farther on, and visit the head *marabout*. We rolled ourselves in burnouses, wrapped our heads in *chechs*, and started off in the car. The Djebel Amour was quite obscured, and the whirling sand stung our faces, while above, miles above it seemed, the great yellow cloud swept on.

Aïn Mahdi is a holy city, walled and fortified, which lies at the western end of the Djebel Amour. Built about the eleventh century it used to be a university town and a city of great learning, where some of the most valuable manuscripts were produced. During the middle of the last century the holy order of the Tidjanis was founded and took up its headquarters here. The Tidjanis have branches all over the Moslem world, which explains the riches of Kourdane, as well as the great fortune of the old gentleman we were going to see. All the members of these branches send their yearly offering to the seat of their order, and the annual revenue of the *marabout's* family probably exceeds any income in the world.

We passed in through a square archway and stopped in front of two fine old doors standing at right angles to one another in the corner of a small square. The first was the mosque, the second the *zaouia*. Taking off our shoes we entered the mosque. Built on old foundations, the present structure is only some hundred years old, but it is exceedingly picturesque. A courtyard with tall trees growing in the middle first meets the eye; at the foot of the opposite wall is an old bronze cannon captured from Abd-el-Kader, who besieged the holy city in 1838.

Turning to the left, we entered the shrine, small and dim, but which nevertheless disclosed some lovely green tiles lining the walls. On the floor were beautiful carpets, while banners of the saints hung from the graceful arches. On the far side a dark mass, suggesting a catafalque, with glints of gold and silver and precious stones, draped about with costly stuffs, could be seen, and under it the tomb of the Great Marabout, founder of the order.

On leaving the mosque we went to the *marabout's* house and were received by his son, a very strong negroid type, but always with that look of self-assurance, that almost regal presence. He could not have been more than twenty, but he held out his hand to be kissed as if he ruled the world.

His house was clean but modern, and after eating cakes and drinking sweet tea we took a walk through the town. Unlike most of the oasis villages it is built entirely of stone, and though the houses might be in a better state of repair, it gives a more solid impression than the usual mud streets. Another most striking thing is that the women not of *maraboutic* blood all go about unveiled, and the marriages are not arranged as in ordinary Mohammedan centers—by the parents — but the young men are allowed to court the ladies of their choice, who are at liberty to refuse their suitors. The female descendants of the *marabouts* are, on the contrary, veiled at the age of eight, and never unveil until they die.

My companion of Tadgemout took us to visit his uncle, the Caïd of Aïn Mahdi, who again plied us with tea; from there we progressed to the house of another *marabout*, and so on until we were so saturated in mint and tea and coffee that we could hardly walk, and we had practically no time to visit the looms where they weave the famous blue and red carpets of the Djebel Amour. However, the day was drawing on, and we had to think of returning to Kourdane, so, accompanied by a host of *marabouts* of all ages we reached our car, where the accolades and hugs rebegan. One felt as if one had stepped right back hundreds and hundreds of years into some scene of the past, and indeed it might have been so, for the life of these people has not changed in the least degree since the days of the foundation of the city, when King Harold sat on the throne of Britain and William the Conqueror cast longing glances across the channel.

Armor, trunk-hose, laces, curls, ruffles, knee-breeches, pantaloons, tall hats, have come into fashion and disappeared in England since those days, but to the children of Aïn Mahdi it has never occurred to dress otherwise than in a *gandourah* and burnous, and I don't suppose that it ever will.

When we left the gates of the city the wind had dropped, but the sand still hung like a great pall over the land, just as when a dust is raised in a room it hangs in the air for some time before settling. Our visit was almost over, and next morning we took leave of our hospitable little host, and returned to Laghouat, realizing that we had had an experience which would last long in our minds.

4. *A Day's Fishing in Southern Algeria*

Jelloul ben Lahkdar, *bash agha* of the Larba tribe about the oasis of Laghouat, is a man with the presence of an emperor, and when I meet him I feel that I ought to kneel down and kiss his hand.

I do not do this, however, partly because it would be misconstrued, and partly because the *bash agha* is a charming old gentleman with a sense of humor, and one whose soul is simplicity itself. He is rather a tyrant with the younger members of his family, and I know that they are very frightened of him, and that they are like young schoolboys when he is with them.

However, this does not prevent his being a very entertaining companion, and though he rarely maintains a lengthy conversation, what he says is wise and to the point. When I met him, therefore, in Chellala, a little market-town nestling among the hills some two hundred miles north of the Sahara, I was delighted.

"Why, what are you doing here, *bash agha*?" I exclaimed, after we had passed through the lengthy Arab greeting which is very poetical but rather tedious in the long run.

"I have taken up my summer quarters with the Caïd Ali, my cousin," he replied. "And you, my friend?"

"Oh, I've just come up for the sheep-market."

"You dine with us to-night," he went on, "you will taste some fish."

"Thank you," I replied, "it will be a pleasure to dine at your hospitable table and a luxury to eat fish from the sea."

"They do not come from the sea," he replied. "They are fish from the river at Taguine, forty kilometers from here."

"Freshwater fish," I exclaimed. "I have lived in this country long, but I did not know such things existed in Algeria!"

He smiled.

"Come and see," he went on, and, patting my arm, continued his stately promenade down the road.

I went and found a party of Arab chiefs I knew. More solemn greetings. At the beginning of the long meal the fish was served. There was no doubt about it, they were good-sized river-fish, a kind of carp or perch or gudgeon with little taste.

The *bash agha* smiled at my surprise.

"Would you care to fish them yourself?" he enquired.

"Most certainly," I replied, "but I have no rod or line with me."

"I am going to Taguine to-morrow," he went on, "and if you come here at eight I will give you a lift, and you can lunch there with me. I'll see that you are supplied with rods and lines."

I thanked him warmly, wondering in myself what the fishing could be like.

The next morning a *cavalier* or Arab retainer came round and, entering my room, roused me from my slumbers by telling me that the *bash agha* awaited me.

I bounded from my bed and looked out of the window at the clock on the Administrateur's office, but it said only seven. I pointed this out to the *cavalier* and explained that I had been warned for eight. He did not seem in the least impressed, and only repeated the information that the *bash agha* awaited me. I gathered that he expected me to run down in my pajamas. Arabs rarely undress, and wash only at the Turkish bath and at meals, and they can not understand that a European can't walk straight out of his bed to his daily duties.

I failed to convey any of this to the *cavalier*, and he left me, repeating that the *bash agha* awaited me.

At seven-thirty the Caïd Madani came into my room and, after passing through the ritual of early morning salutations, informed me that the *bash agha* awaited me.

I said, “But he warned me for eight, and it is only seven-thirty.”

He said, “But the *bash agha* is ready.”

I said, “Well, he ought to have told me to come earlier.”

The *caïd* did not seem to understand my point of view, and only replied, “Well, perhaps you will hurry; I will wait down-stairs.”

I hurried, and eventually dashed out, followed by my companion, to where the car waited. The *bash agha* sat in a chair and smoked a meerschaum pipe. He was surrounded by a group of Arab chiefs.

“What respect,” I said to myself. “The old man goes out for the day and all the chiefs come to see him off.”

The *bash agha* saluted me and made no reference to the hour of our departure. I felt relieved.

His chauffeur got into the car, the old gentleman got in beside him. The Caïd Madani motioned me to get in behind, the Caïd Madani got in after me, the Caïd Aïssa got in after the Caïd Madani, the Sheik Marhoun got in after the Caïd Aïssa, the *kadi* got in after the Sheik Marhoun. The Caïd Ali said, “I don’t think I shall come, there isn’t much room left.”

All the others protested, so he got in too.

The Caïd Mohamed categorically refused to make a ninth.

The *bash agha* turned round and said, “Well, I think we are all here. Let us start.”

The car moved off. At the entrance of the town the Sheik Marhoun said, “Do you think that we’ve got enough petrol to get there and back?”

“Inch Allah,” replied the chauffeur.

The *kadi*, who is a practical man, and who likes his comforts, interposed, “I think you had better make certain.”

The chauffeur made certain and found there was enough to do about one mile down hill.

We therefore returned to the town to get some. No one seemed to mind, though; my seven Arabs made no comment and remained as placid as if the filling of the petrol tank was merely a childish whim of the *kadi*. I felt certain that they were saying to themselves, “If the car lacks fuel, Allah will surely provide.”

I said to the *kadi*, “Lucky you thought of asking.”

He smiled benignly. I love the *kadi*. He is a charming person. He is the Mohammedan Judge of Chellala, and he looks like an early Victorian Englishman: fair beard, very white skin, a slightly rubicund nose, clear blue eyes, and long white hands. If he wore a pair of nankeen pantaloons and a choker instead of a burnous and a turban, he would be the image of what Alfred de Musset must have been in his prime. The *kadi* has, moreover, a great sense of humor.

When we had filled up, we rolled off first of all through the mountains of Chellala and then on to the great open plains which run down to the Sahara, forming some of the finest pasture-land of Algeria.

My companions all chatted away to each other about their sheep-raising, their crops, their horses, their falcons, their shooting—all those things so dear to these country gentlemen.

Occasionally they poked fun at the *kadi*, who is not a warrior nor a sportsman, but he always had a sharp retort which sent them into helpless laughter.

Finally we arrived at Taguine and stopped for a moment at the monument which marks the place where the Duc d'Aumale's flying column captured the whole of the Emir-el-Kader's *smala* in 1843 and thus broke his long resistance.

This was an occasion to rain more jokes on the *kadi's* head, as he is a direct descendant of the great *emir*, and it was the great-uncle of the Caïd Aïssa, the loyal General Yusuf, who was in command of the native cavalry on this occasion.

As soon as we alighted, the various chiefs had business to attend to, and I was despatched to fish. I was furnished with a long pole, on the end of which was a piece of thin rope to which was further riveted a hook. There was also a box of worms.

My guide was an ex-soldier dressed in a tattered burnous on which was proudly pinned the Croix de Guerre, and under which he wore a seedy frock coat with satin facings. He had no socks, but a pair of very battered slippers.

After trudging through the fields of standing barley for about half an hour we came to a kind of brown ditch with a rivulet one yard broad trickling sadly down the middle.

"Here is the river," said the guide proudly.

I said nothing, but looked anxiously into the trickle, but all I could see were five or six tortoises paddling about. Eton days when I kept these beasts in a biscuit box in the wash-stand, hidden from the eagle eyes of m'tutor, returned to me, but I somehow did not connect them with rods and hooks.

My companion seemed to read my thoughts. "The fish are further on," he said simply; "come!"

I followed him along the bank and eventually we came to a deep, muddy pool about twenty feet square. The Arab squatted down, knotted a cork into the middle of the rope, baited my hook and handed me the pole. I took it and felt inclined to laugh. It reminded me of that stupid Christmas game where one fishes for useless presents out of a tub. However, I lowered the worm into the opaque water and waited. Two minutes had hardly passed when down went the cork. Instinctively I struck. Memories of sudden thrills by tumbling streams, the hiss of a line running out, the bend of the rod, flashed before me. But they were only visions, for I had struck so violently, and the string or cable at the end of my pole was so strong, that I jerked the fish right out of the pool and on to the bank.

My fisherman instantly rescued it from the hook and I took it up to examine it. I expected to find the mud-fish which I had often come across in certain Indian rivers; but not at all. In shape it resembled a perch, but though the fins were red, there were none of the sharp points on the back, and the color was more that of a carp. Its weight was about two ounces.

I continued fishing. We visited some three or four pools, and in two hours I caught nearly one hundred of these fish. The majority were like the first, but there were a dozen or so of over a quarter of a pound, and two must have weighed a good twelve ounces.

Finally surfeited with this somewhat crane-like occupation, I trudged back.

Clouds were banking up over there toward the north, and the Arab watched them with interest.

"Two days, rain now, *sidi*," he exclaimed, "will double our crops and afford pasturage for the flocks for the rest of the summer."

I reached the house of the Caïd Aïssa to find my friends all sitting in a circle on a priceless Djebel Amour carpet, and looking hungrily out of the door where four Arabs turned a sheep spitted on a long pole before a brushwood fire. The sheep was becoming a glorious golden color as the chief turnspit poured fat on its roasting sides. After my long walk the smell of this cooking meat roused my appetite.

I slipped off my shoes and went and sat down on a cushion beside the *bash agha*. I told him all about my fishing exploits, but he didn't seem to take the least interest in my tale. He merely turned to me and said: "These foolish young men have brought you out to lunch here and they have forgotten to bring knives or forks or plates, so you will have to eat like us."

"Oh," I replied, rather nervously, "I consider that eating with one's hands is much more cleanly than using knives and forks which may not have been washed."

The *bash agha* grunted and the others looked anxiously about. I realized that the old man was in one of his tyrannical moods.

At last one of the cooks came in and demanded if he should serve.

"Of course," said the *bash agha*, "but where is the Caïd Madani?"

"He is saying his prayers," ventured the Sheik Marhoun.

The *bash agha* said, *"Alham dullah!"* ("May Allah be praised"), but his eyes expressed, "Why the deuce must this idiot say his prayers at lunchtime?"

I was seized with an uncontrollable desire to laugh, so I went to the door and I saw, out on the plain, the tall figure of Madani, his burnous spread out before him, bowing and prostrating himself with that complete lack of self-consciousness so remarkable in all Mohammedan devotions.

However, he finished and, after remaining for a moment in meditation gazing out toward Mecca, he took up his burnous and returned to us.

A low table and tray were brought and placed before the *bash agha*. He motioned me to seat myself beside him, he called the *kadi*, and he called an aged *agha* who seemed to have suddenly grown out of the earth at the smell of food. The others went and squatted at a respectful distance from the old man and spoke in whispers.

A man passed round with a brass basin and jug and we all washed our hands in silence.

A large bowl of *schorba*, highly spiced soup, was placed on the table, some loaves of barley bread and some wooden spoons. We all dipped into the bowl and commenced the meal. When the *bash agha* had finished we all put down our spoons, which were carried away with the bowl and placed before the others.

The long Arab midday meal began: the *bourak*, or sausage roll; the *mechoui*, which we clawed at with our fingers; the *leham lalou*, stewed mutton with prunes; the *kous-kous*; and finally the honey cakes.

As we finished each dish the remains were taken to the others, who by this time had been joined by the *bash agha's* chauffeur.

A large jug of skimmed milk was passed round and we all took a sip.

"Alham dullah," said the *bash agha*.

"Alham dullah," repeated the *kadi* with the aged *agha* and the young *caïds*.

The man passed round with the brass tray and jug and the water, and the *bash agha* went through a lengthy toilet which commenced with his beard and ended with his fingers.

Coffee appeared.

We all sighed contentedly, the tension of before lunch had disappeared. The *bash agha* lighted his pipe. I did the same, while the others looked at us with envy, as they themselves could not smoke in the old chief's presence. Gradually they slipped toward the door to get at their cigarettes.

"I wish to play cards," suddenly said the *bash agha*.

The *caïds* paused at the door.

"Go on, Madani," said the Caïd Aïssa.

"No, no, it's not my turn," he replied.

"And it isn't mine," said Marhoun.

"The *kadi* must play," said the Caïd Ali.

"Yes, send along the *kadi*," they all said.

"But I am always made to do this," protested the man of peace, "and I always lose."

"It's about all you're fit for," laughed Marhoun.

This was considered a great joke, and they hustled him back into the presence of the *bash agha*, smiling at his woebegone expression.

He squatted down opposite the old gentleman, the chauffeur brought in some stones and placed them between the two players for counters. That mysterious Hispano-Mauresque game began, a game which came from the Peninsula when the Christian kings retook the Alhambra and drove out the Arabs. The *kadi* looked more and more like an early Victorian dandy than ever.

I sat and watched while the others poked fun at the victim, discreetly, from the corner of the room.

But this time luck seemed to favor the judge and he began to win; the *bash agha* got cross again; then he got sleepy; his head began to nod, and finally he dropped off. The *kadi* turned to me and winked knowingly while he gathered up his winnings.

I dozed off too. Arab lunches are conducive to slumber, and I understand why the Orientals recline at their repasts. . . .

Suddenly I was roused by Madani. "We ought to be getting away," he said, "but the *bash agha* is still asleep."

"Well, wake him," I replied.

"Oh, I can't. None of us can; we'd never hear the end of it," broke in Madani. "But you can."

"But I certainly won't," I retorted. "I'm sleepy enough myself. Make the *kadi* do it!"

This seemed to amuse Madani, and he returned to the other chiefs and I saw that my suggestion was causing them joy. But not to the *kadi*, who, as usual, protested, and I realized that he was the sort of joke-man of the district. At last, however, he was bustled into the room.

He looked anxiously about and, finally, seeing the large brass tray on which the *mechoui* had been served, he took it up and dropped it with a crash on the part of the floor which was uncarpeted. Then he fled out on to the plain.

The *bash agha* opened one eye, then the other, then seemed about to sleep again. However, at that moment a diversion was caused by the entry of the aged *agha* with the statement that there was a man with a petition to make.

The *bash agha* came to and, sitting up, settled his turban and became at once the "Emperor."

The *caïds* became "princes," and squatted down in a semi-circle on the carpet; the chauffeur ventured back and started mending a tire. The petitioner marched in and, after kissing the old man's shoulder, went and sat at a distance. For ten minutes he said "How-do-you-do" in different poses and accents. For a moment there was a lull, and then all of a sudden the storm burst, as in a torrent of words he poured out his story.

He talked so rapidly that I only understood vaguely, but I gathered that his flock had been stolen by nomads of the *bash agha* who had come up from the south. The *bash agha* was silent for a time, then he too burst into a flood of verbiage.

It was a most extraordinary group. The *bash agha* at one end of the room, sitting on a heap of cushions, his whole attention riveted on the man before him who squatted, speaking rapidly, but with practically no gestures.

Occasionally one of the *caïds* would throw in a remark, but otherwise one would have supposed that the matter was quite indifferent to them. And yet it was a question which to these Arabs was one of the greatest importance.

The complaint was of the tribe of the district who accused one of the nomad tribes of the Larba, now pasturing near-by, of stealing sheep. The sheep had disappeared ten days ago and had been tracked with that mysterious instinct across those limitless wastes of desert to Ghardaia, three hundred miles to the south. The man wanted their return as well as the punishment of the thieves.

The *bash agha* turned to the *kadi*, who for the moment ceased being the joke-man, and spoke a few words to him.

The *kadi* nodded.

The *bash agha* addressed the Caïd Madani.

"This affects your tribe. You will send a mounted man to Ghardaïa forthwith. He will apprehend the robbers and have them drive the flocks back here. You will bring them before me at Chellala."

"Inch Allah," acquiesced Madani.

Justice was done. A horseman was to ride over the desert to Ghardaïa and back, and I pictured a Lord-Lieutenant of Sussex saying to the sheriff: "You will tell a constable to bicycle to Edinburgh and fetch back a couple of hundred sheep," just as one might say, "Go and post this letter." It was a marvelous example of the simplicity of primitive justice.

The *bash agha* rose. The complainant kissed his turban, and we all followed the old man out.

During lunch the sky had become gray and the wind was coming from the north in cold gusts, bringing clouds of sand and grit.

We all piled into the car again and started on our return journey.

The sky grew darker and in a few minutes the rain began. Rain in Algeria is quite common on the coast in winter or spring, but rain in the neighborhood of the desert rarely comes after March, and when it does it is good for the cultivator but it is not amusing for those who travel. The first dried river-bed we came to was far from dry, the second was running with water, the dry track before the third had become a morass, the third was gurgling gaily down, and the road was an inch or so under water.

At this point we punctured. We all got out and looked at the flat tire, but no one did anything.

I said, "Suppose we change the wheel."

The chauffeur said, "The spare wheel is punctured too. We must change the inner tube, but I don't think it will last long."

We got out the inner tube; it looked rather wretched, and a preliminary pump-up revealed that it held little air. Another one was found which appeared to be air-tight. The rain swept icily across the great plain. The kadi shivered and drew his burnous about him. Marhoun took off the wheel; the *bash agha* smoked his pipe as he sat on the running-board. The *caïds* talked and laughed at the miserable *kadi*. There was none of that fever and excitement and cursing of the chauffeur which one would have seen among Europeans on such an occasion. The chauffeur had forgotten to mend the spare wheel; it was the will of God and nothing could be done to remedy it.

At last we started again, but the next *oued* was a rushing torrent. The car floundered in water swirled about the axles, the engine roared, the chauffeur shouted something and every one, except the *bash agha*, tumbled out into the water. I followed and started pushing, while the water raced round us about up to our knees. The car began to move, and at last laboriously climbed out of the river.

"Only just in time," exclaimed Aïssa. "Look."

I did so, and I saw, to my amazement, a kind of swirling mass of water sweeping down the river, and before I could count two the *oued* had become a raging, overflowing torrent. A few minutes sooner and car and all would have been swept away.

"Luckily that is the last *oued*," said Ali.

We all got in and started off again. The chauffeur put on speed, and we bumped furiously over the holes in the road. Then the other tire went. We stopped and all got out and then all got in again.

"Ma kanch chambre à air," said the chauffeur. ("No more inner tubes.")

In a few minutes the original tire went again, and we all got out again and all got back. We crawled along on the rims. Suddenly I became aware that my feet were getting very cold and wet. I could not understand. I asked Madani, but he had reached a state when he no longer seemed to care. He was telling his beads.

I moved my legs about and suddenly, to my astonishment, discovered that my feet were hanging in space. I peered down and perceived water and mud splashing all round me, and realized that the bottom of the car had fallen out. Visions of the pantomime gentleman whose carriage loses its floor and who is obliged to run between the wheels, sprang before me. And I saw myself and Madani being precipitated on to the road and having to run wildly back to Chellala, unable to make the chauffeur hear our cries of distress.

However, this catastrophe did not take place, for the simple reason that the car suddenly stopped of its own accord. We all got out again. No one seemed to dare to ask what the matter was.

"Ma kanch petrol," said the chauffeur calmly.

"No more petrol!" exclaimed the *bash agha* nervously. It was the first time during the whole of the proceedings that he had shown any emotion.

"Ma kanch," repeated the driver.

No one spoke. I heard Madani murmuring *"Mektoub,"* but otherwise there was silence as we stood there in the driving rain watching the car. Then suddenly the *bash agha* said, as if to the skies, "I pray Allah that it is raining like this in the Tell; my brother's crops have sore need of rain."

"Inch Allah," they all said.

It filled me with amazement. I had before me the complete abstraction of immediate discomfort, the unaccountable Oriental mind, praying to Allah, miles from anywhere, soaked to the skin, and with no means of getting home. I thought of my English friends and their attitude and thoughts on such an occasion. However, it was no good standing in contemplation.

"Well, what do you propose doing?" I ventured at last. "I am getting cold."

"I don't know," replied the old man, brushing drops of rain off his beard. "What do you think, my friend?"

"To my mind the only possible thing to do is to walk back before it gets too dark," I said.

"But the rain," said the *kadi*, "and the mud, and the wind!"

"A little rain and wind more or less never did me any harm," I replied; "though perhaps I am more used to it than you."

"Of course, he is right," said Madani. "We will leave the chauffeur with the car and we'll be in Chellala before six."

"Come on," said the Caïd Ali. "I know a short cut across the hills which will reduce our journey by at least a third."

The *kadi* started murmuring again, but seeing that the *bash agha* agreed to this proposal, he felt that he could not let an old man of seventy do what he feared to do, so he reluctantly followed us. In single file we started across the waste of water and tufts of alfa.

Madani led, then came Ali, after him Aïssa, then the *bash agha*, then myself, and behind me the *kadi*, with Marhoun bringing up the rear. The wind blew fiercely across our path, bringing great sheets of soaking rain, but our camel's hair burnouses kept the wet out wonderfully. Only the *kadi*, who had a kind of black woven burnous, complained that he was getting soaked. I distinctly heard Marhoun laughing in the driving rain.

Gradually we approached the hills, all wrapped in mist, and descending into a habitually dry river-bed, splashed up the muddy bank.

Suddenly the *kadi* gave a yell.

"I've lost my shoes," he screamed.

"Where?" I exclaimed.

"In the mud! They got stuck and came off!"

The procession stopped. Aïssa started laughing. I became perfectly helpless as I watched the wretched judge making futile dives for his slippers in the muddy torrent.

At last Marhoun got the better of his mirth and managed to secure the lost property, but, as can be imagined, the elegant slippers looked like bits of old leather ready for the dust-heap. The *kadi* began wailing again, and said he would go back, but Marhoun pushed him up the bank and he plodded on.

We soon came to a goat-track and gradually began climbing the steep slopes of the hill. As we rose, the mist closed down upon us and wrapped us in its damp embrace. I could no longer see Madani, and the *bash agha* was only a dim form before me. The *kadi* I didn't need to see as his wail of malediction on motor-cars and excursions, and idiots who could live out in the desert, never ceased.

After an hour or so we reached the summit and gathered together in a ghostly group.

"Not very far now," said Ali gaily. "Reminds me of winter in the trenches. Eh, Aïssa?"

"Yes, the Vosges," he replied. "Not too tired, *bash agha*?"

The old man shook his head and he brushed the drops from his burnous.

"Well, let's proceed," said Madani. "We don't want to be caught by the night."

"My shoes are full of stones," moaned the *kadi*. "Well, take them out," exclaimed Marhoun.

Without further ado we started along the crest and soon began descending another path. The wind was less fierce on this side of the mountain, but the mist swirled like a great shroud about us. None of us spoke as we plodded on in our dripping burnouses. My mind became a sort of damp blank as I mechanically followed in the procession.

Suddenly the *bash agha* said to me over his shoulder, "What has become of Miss G., who was in Laghouat for two months this spring?"

"Eh?" I said.

He repeated his question.

"Oh, she has gone back to Scotland," I replied.

"Why did she go?" again asked the old man.

"Oh, I suppose she wanted to see her family and get back to this sort of weather," I answered vaguely.

"She was a very nice girl," said the *bash agha*. "She was full of gaiety. I liked her."

He lapsed into silence again. I followed on, wondering how the brain of Jelloul ben Lahkdar, *bash agha* of all the Larbas, reasoned, that he should suddenly ask me the whereabouts of an English friend of mine while descending the slopes of the mountains of Chellala in a Scotch mist. The working of an Oriental mind has always been and always will be a mystery to me.

However, the mist was beginning to clear and the rain was abating when suddenly, from nowhere, the sun, brilliant in its setting, burst through the clouds, and we looked out on to the smiling village of Chellala nestling among its green trees, and out on to the great plains of the Sersou, right away to the blue mountains of the Atlas in the distance. That wonderful Algerian climate, where there is never a day without a little sun to keep one's spirits alive to the glories of nature!

Every one seemed to cheer up.

I turned round and looked at the *kadi* and I mercifully restrained my laughter, as the picture of wretchedness he presented was too genuine to admit of more jests.

"You'll be in dry clothes soon, *kadi*," I exclaimed.

"I shall take great care never to leave my home again, *Inch Allah*," he groaned.

At the moment Marhoun started singing one of those strange, melodious songs of the great South with the deep, long note drawn out at the end. Aïssa picked it up and sent back the verse, trembling, high and melancholy. Marhoun returned with the refrain, so soft, so gentle, that I approached the *bash agha* and asked him the meaning of the words.

He smiled and said, "I can not give it exactly translated because it is too beautiful in Arabic, but it runs thus: 'My love is as great as the fire, and it consumes my heart.'"

And I repeated it to myself, wondering on the strange nature of the Arabs, as the sun, all orange and gold, dipped behind the hills, wrapping the land in golden radiance.

5. *The Turkish Bath in Algeria*

We have heard a great deal in this book about religion; let us turn our attention for a brief moment to its great adjunct, especially in the Moslem faith— cleanliness.

To the average Englishman the words "Turkish bath" suggest tiled chambers, whiteness, great heat, much water and complete exhaustion. This is what he has seen in Jermyn Street. In his imagination he may have conjured up a vision of the *hammam* of the East with its marble halls and multi-colored tiles, its splashing fountains and exhilarating hashish, while ebony-bodied negroes flit noiselessly about. Now, though this average Englishman will never be bathed in this *Arabian Nights* atmosphere in Algeria, let it be known that his imagination has not altogether run into the realms of fable.

In certain private houses of great chiefs this atmosphere, to a lesser degree, exists, and the owner of the bath insists on all the most luxurious rites being carried out. However, as this remains private property it can not be entered into, and it will suffice to describe the common Turkish bath known in Algeria as *le bain maure*, which resident or tourist, pedler or *caïd*, respectable maiden or *femme du Quartier*, must use if cleanliness is to be observed.

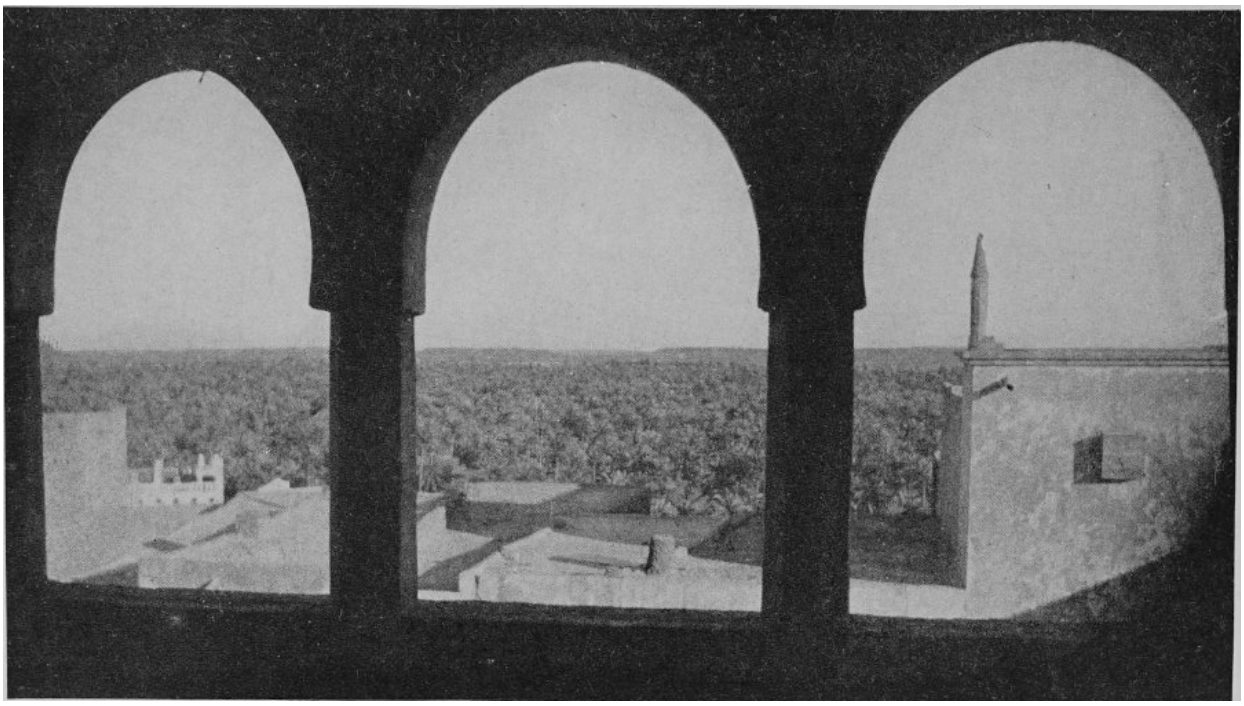
In this haunt of steam and strange odors there will be found neither the tiled chambers of Jermyn Street nor the splashing fountains of Haroun al-Raschid. The entrance to the bath is usually imposing; this is presumably to attract the passer-by. The entrance-hall is also roomy, and with a purpose, as it is here that many of the Faithful come to say their prayers after their ablutions. After this there is a series of primary disillusions. I purposely use the word "primary."

To undress, one is ushered into a small chamber, where probably a number of other persons of all ranks and ages are already undressing. One hastily confides one's purse to the owner or manager of the bath, who puts it in his pocket. This looks risky at first sight, but it is in reality quite safe. Having disrobed, an emaciated bandit appears and, placing a towel about one's body and one about one's head, proffers a pair of wooden clogs, which are flat pieces of wood the shape of the sole of a shoe with a strap to go across the foot. They appear to be harmless affairs at first sight; I emphasize "sight," for the moment one suggests that they should be modes of locomotion one is disillusioned. For some unknown reason these clogs have a distaste to progress in a forward

direction and seem bent on going either to the right or to the left, or in both directions at the same time—anyway, at right angles to the proposed progress of the wearer, which rationally should be toward the bath.

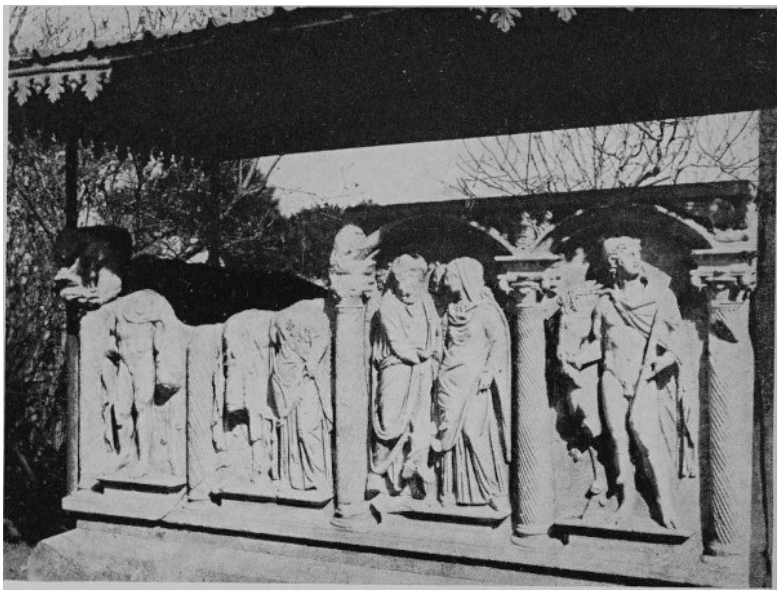
At first it needs the strength and will power of a great and persevering man to advance with the aid of the wall out of the lofty court to the heated chamber. The passage is usually narrow and full of stagnant water, the light is conspicuous by its absence, and as one gropes for the entrance one's mind rushes back to memories of the dungeons beneath the Ducal Palace in Venice. When at last the massive door has been pulled back, one's terror, if anything, increases. A cloud of damp, suffocating steam fills the chamber, the body becomes suddenly moist, and one instinctively turns to the exit. However, it is too late; the emaciated bandit is behind, and pushes one forward through pools of water to a large square slab.

The eyes are gradually getting used to the dim light thrown by a single sputtering candle, and one distinguishes little by little the forms of other people washing in various corners of the room. The heat is intense, the steam swirls about the ceiling, the grunts and murmurs of the bathers make one think of Doré's illustrations of Dante's *Inferno*. However, little time is allowed for reflection in this place of torment, as suddenly the skeleton which has done the undressing and the guiding pushes one on to the floor, where, lying on a kind of blue duster, one awaits the rack!



Photograph by Mr. Julian Sampson

The Oasis of Guerrera, from the Maison Arabe



Roman Sarcophagus at Tipaza

Pictures Done by Roman Children on Damp Bricks Drying in the Sun

And here the beauty, the glorious compensation for all the rest, begins. Of all the masseurs in the world, be they British, Latin, or Scandinavian, there are none I have met who can equal the Arab of the Algerian south. No training, no knowledge of anatomy—these men, by some curious instinct, understand the wants of the body, and as one lies in this steaming atmosphere one feels all the pains and poisons of the human frame being magically pressed out of one. It is a complete relaxation, a complete cure to all ills, and when the coarse glove is put on and the rolls of fat come out of the opened pores of the skin, it is done as gently as a mother powdering her baby. Soap follows, warm water after that, until the cold douche, poured out of a wooden bucket, brings one to one's feet and, transformed and light-hearted, one returns fearless along the dark passage to be massaged with towels till dry.

The result is magical; magical the swiftness with which it is all accomplished, magical when one realizes that the total fee for the bath is five francs.

The white-tiled chamber and the exhilarating hashish may add to the delight of the thing, but to feel a sensation of real fitness give me the common Arab masseur in the common Arab bath in the far south.

I am told that the negresses who look after the women who attend the bath on specific days of the week have also great merits. Of this I am ignorant, but of all things I miss most, when away in Europe, my emaciated bandit who "masses" out of my body all weariness—mental and physical—disease and cares, who sends me out into the street capable of sitting down to write a chapter of *Algeria from Within*.

6. *The Keef Smoker*

Before closing these sketches of Arab life a word must be said on a vice which is luckily not very prevalent, but which nevertheless exists in many centers.

I speak of keef-smoking.

Keef is the dried flower of the hemp-plant chopped up and smoked like tobacco, rolled in a cigarette, or in the bowl of a small pipe. In a different form it is the basis of the hashish sweets, rarely seen in Algeria, but very common in the Near East.

The effect of keef on the smoker is to make him practically independent of food and sleep as long as he is under its influence, and a habitual keef-taker is easy to detect. His eyes are very bright, his face is pale and drawn, his arms and hands are terribly thin, his movements are restless. At the same time he is not at all dazed like one under the influence of a drug, and though after a few days' smoking he will drift off into a kind of feverish sleep, during the early periods he is extraordinarily lucid. In fact, it is said that the first effects of keef are to make the brain work at three times its normal pace.

European tourists in the south occasionally get hold of some keef to smoke, and complain that it has had no effect at all beyond giving them a sore throat. This is quite normal, as the fact of smoking a little hemp in a pipe or cigarette will hurt no one if not continued. To feel the effect of keef one must smoke for at least one night through, and three days are necessary to get really poisoned. The danger of an experiment of this kind is that the desire to go on may seize one, and once keef has taken hold of a man it is rare to see it give him up. However, it is quite amusing to go to a keef-smoking den, all the more so as it has to be done in secret and with the connivance of a smoker, as no outsiders know where these little nocturnal *réunions* take place.

As a matter of fact I doubt whether there is much danger of the police interfering as, though it is against the law to smoke keef, the French are not going to try to stop something which must always go on, and unless the offense is deliberately open they will not peer into the dark streets to catch a few poor Arabs.

The town where keef-smoking is the most prevalent, I believe, is Ghardaïa—not of course among the puritan Mzabites, but in the Arab quarter. This is partly due to the fact that these Arabs are far away from their own people, and club together in small groups to do what they would not dare do before their relatives in their own oases.

I remember going to one of these places in the Mzab with some English friends who wanted to see the den for themselves. We were a curious party—an English girl, a short-story writer and another man connected with letters—none of whom knew the country well, while our Arab guide was the *khodja* of the Bureau Arabe, a man unbelievably fat, who rather sailed along the street than walked. We passed through interminable little streets, pitch black, fell up and down steps until we came to a tumble-down house, all dark save for a yellow light which flickered in an upper chamber. The tinkle of a mandolin floated out, a warm breeze sent little whirls of dust up the narrow way, the stars stood out bright in the sky.

Our immense companion tapped mysteriously at the door, the sound of the mandolin ceased, and we heard some one coming cautiously down-stairs. A few whispered words were exchanged, followed by the noise of heavy bolts being drawn, the door swung back, and we found ourselves in front of a rickety wooden staircase at the foot of which stood an Arab in tattered clothes, who held aloft a hissing acetylene lamp. He scrutinized us closely, and then, bidding us enter, drew aside as we filed slowly past and followed our fat friend up the stairs. The janitor waited till we were all inside, and then with a clash shot back the bolts, and we felt ourselves prisoners in this illicit haunt.

At the top of the stairs we came to a room dimly lighted, and the first thing which struck our attention was an enormous skin full of water. When I say that it struck our attention it is not quite exact, as in reality it was struck by the head of my friend S. A., who had not noticed it until a stream of icy water poured down his back. When we had recovered from this pleasing little incident we looked about us.

On the floor all round the little room squatted men of all ages and grades—some in rags, some in prosperous-looking *gandourahs*, some in very modern red fezzes—but all with the same hungry look on their drawn faces. At the far end the Arab who had opened the door attended to the little fireplace ornamented with colored tiles and on which he prepared coffee and mint tea; in the middle of the group sat the mandolinist playing with a far-away look in his shining eyes.

The air was heavy with a sweet, rather sickly smell, an odor not unlike new-mown hay, only stronger. A bench was mysteriously produced for us and for our stout companion, who explained that if he sat on the ground he would never be able to get up again. Tea was placed before us, and then rather diffidently one of the corpses on the floor rose and offered Miss G. a small pipe. Seeing she was prepared to smoke, he drew a wallet from the folds of his *gandourah* and filled the bowl with the strange grayish-green, tobacco-looking matter, and handed it back to her.

In the meanwhile we had also been supplied with similar pipes, and in a few moments we had lighted up. The taste was not pleasant to the regular pipe-smoker like myself, and at the same time it was not as nasty as my first attempts at smoking when in the depths of a wood my brother and I, aged nine and ten, filled a cast-off pipe of my father’s with brown paper in the belief that we were smoking!

Keef is better than brown paper. The taste and smell were rather like that of hay.

When the company saw that we were quite human and ready to join in the fun there was a general relaxation. All the pipes were lighted, the mandolinist tuned up, and soon the whole crowd was as merry as children at a birthday party. In fact, so great was the effect of the atmosphere that S. A. insisted on singing himself, and would have danced had not M. J., who has his interests at heart, held him forcibly on the bench.

I don’t know how long this would have gone on had not a discreet signal from the street warned us that the police were making their rounds. In a second the light was dimmed, the music

ceased, and we sat as still as mice until we heard the measured tramp of the Arab constables disappearing up the street. We felt it more discreet to depart ourselves, so we took leave of our fevered-eyed hosts and returned to our inn.

Though I spent a rather restless night, I don't know if it was the effect of the reef or not, and we all certainly felt quite fit the next day.

Still, I can never think of that night without smiling; it was all so mysterious, so much part of another world, and I often wonder if M. J., as he sits editorially in London, or S. A., scooping in royalties, or Miss G., in her English surroundings, realize how they peeped into the past for a few seconds and lived again the life which, if it had not been Algerian, would have probably been celebrated by another De Quincey.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A LAST GLANCE AT THE ARAB

THE preface of a book should always be written at the end; this insures it being read. In this particular work the first chapter rather takes the place of the preface, but at the same time there are certain things which rather need explaining.

In the first place, the necessity to compress the matter into a limited number of pages. On practically every subject mentioned, there is material in my mind to write a book, and it is difficult to realize where to stop. It is equally difficult to know where to begin as, to some, the information set out in these pages will not be new, and they may be looking for something deeper. Of these people I ask patience, for if the result of the book is encouraging, another one will follow, and perhaps another, dealing at length with the subjects only touched on now.

This work has been prepared more as something which any traveler can read during his journey to Algiers, and which will allow him to see the country through other eyes than those of the guides, be they books, chauffeurs, or the luxuriously uniformed gentlemen of the Transatlantic Company.

Let it, moreover, be understood that the history, the geography, the remarks on French administration are, more than anything else, a prelude to the rest of the book, "The Arabs."

The Arabs, whether they be those in the scarlet burnouses of the *caïd*-ship or in the rags of the beggar, are all the same: a people who have destroyed without creating, who have been divided when their unity would have made them great, who have lived on theory.

We have before us the relics of the Carthaginians, of the Numidians, of the stupendous work of the Roman Empire, and then centuries of nothing. War, devastation, intrigue, mark the period covered by the Arab domination.

Even those buildings which we see in Algiers, at Constantine and in the other ancient towns, are the work of Turkish or European architects. And yet, in spite of this apparent futility of existence, in spite of this atmosphere of strife, there is something very noble in the nature of the Arabs, something very engaging, something utterly aloof from all that is European; for in spite of dissension among themselves they are all held under the sway of Islam, that all-powerful principle which separates them entirely from all other persuasions.

Moreover, the longer one lives among the Arabs the more one realizes the insurmountable barrier which separates us from them. It is not a question of race, though this does count; it is a question of religion. One can establish the deepest intimacy in all matters of daily life and then suddenly come face to face with this blank wall.

Some Europeans contend that it is possible really to become as the Arabs—even to mate with them. The few who have tried this last experiment have met with utter disaster. I know a *caïd* who has been all over Europe, who occasionally wears European clothes, who has had affairs with women of all nationalities, but without ever legally marrying one. He told me that twice he had been on the point of doing so, but that reason had always prevailed.

“How could it be?” he exclaimed. “How could the gulf which separates us from you ever be spanned? How could a European woman admit being shut up, or, if she emancipated herself, being considered by us on the same level as a woman of the Quarter? How could she admit to her children being brought up in the principles of the Koran, with our habits and customs? Why, we don’t even sleep in beds or sit on chairs; we eat with our hands; we have no learning; we never read books. We don’t consider any belief but our own; and, even if such a mating began successfully, how could you expect one of your people to admit the husband taking other wives to live legally under the same roof if he felt so inclined?”

This is so obvious that it seems almost superfluous to speak of it, and yet there are Europeans who will not see the impossibility of such a step; there are some who have actually taken it; I know a few of them. I have never mentioned the subject to them; the look in their eyes has told me more than any words, and has made me shrink from further laying bare the wound.

I was talking to an educated Arab not so long ago about religions, and he expressed the opinion that only Mohammedans would go to heaven. I suggested that the question of after-life was not so much judged by religion as by the actions of men, and I quoted the example of a very worthy Christian we know, respected by all Arabs, and a hopeless, immoral, drinking *marabout*.

“Which of the two will be recompensed, the honest and sober unbeliever, or that scoundrel who calls himself a holy man of yours?”

“I can not say,” he replied, after a moment’s thought; “but probably neither of them will go to paradise.”

“What?” I exclaimed. “You mean to suggest that worthy Mr. X., who has spent the whole of his life doing good, will find himself in company with your drunken *marabout*?”

“I can not say,” repeated the Arab; “but if our friend believes that Jesus is the Son of God, he can not go to heaven. God is above all, and no one is like him.”

“That is all very well,” I said; “but our religion says that if you don’t believe in the divinity of Jesus you will also not go to paradise; that is why I am contending that people can not be judged by their respective faiths, but by their actions.”

“But your religion is wrong,” he said finally.

I was on the point of continuing the argument, but the look in his eyes made me desist. This belief, to him, was conclusive evidence.

And that is Islam, that is the Arab; his faith is absolute, and his opinion of other religions is quite simple—they don’t exist.

“Why,” they say, “we believe in Moses and Aaron and Jacob and Elijah and Jesus; they are all great prophets who preceded ours; what more do you want?”

A wall—a blank wall which no one can pierce without becoming a Mohammedan. *Et encore*. . . .

The more one lives with these people the more apparent this becomes, and if in this book the impressions given differ from those which have struck others, perhaps it is because only one side of the character has been seen, the character *allowed to be seen* by the Roumi.

I know the Arabs well, I know them intimately, but I have not the remotest idea what they think of me, and I never shall have.

There may be future developments of this book, with possible reversal of certain opinions, but as far as the working of the Arab brain is concerned, I know that I have penetrated as far as I ever shall. Let the reader, therefore, close this volume realizing the task which has been before the author—who, after spending over five years constantly studying these people, has arrived at this somewhat negative conclusion.

THE END

INDEX

[List of illustrations]

Transcriber's note:

- pg 45 Changed: upleasant to: unpleasant
- pg 74 Changed: horce-racing to: horse-racing
- pg 282 Changed: innner to: inner
- Spelling and formatting inconsistencies have been left unchanged
- Added a list of illustrations at the end of the document

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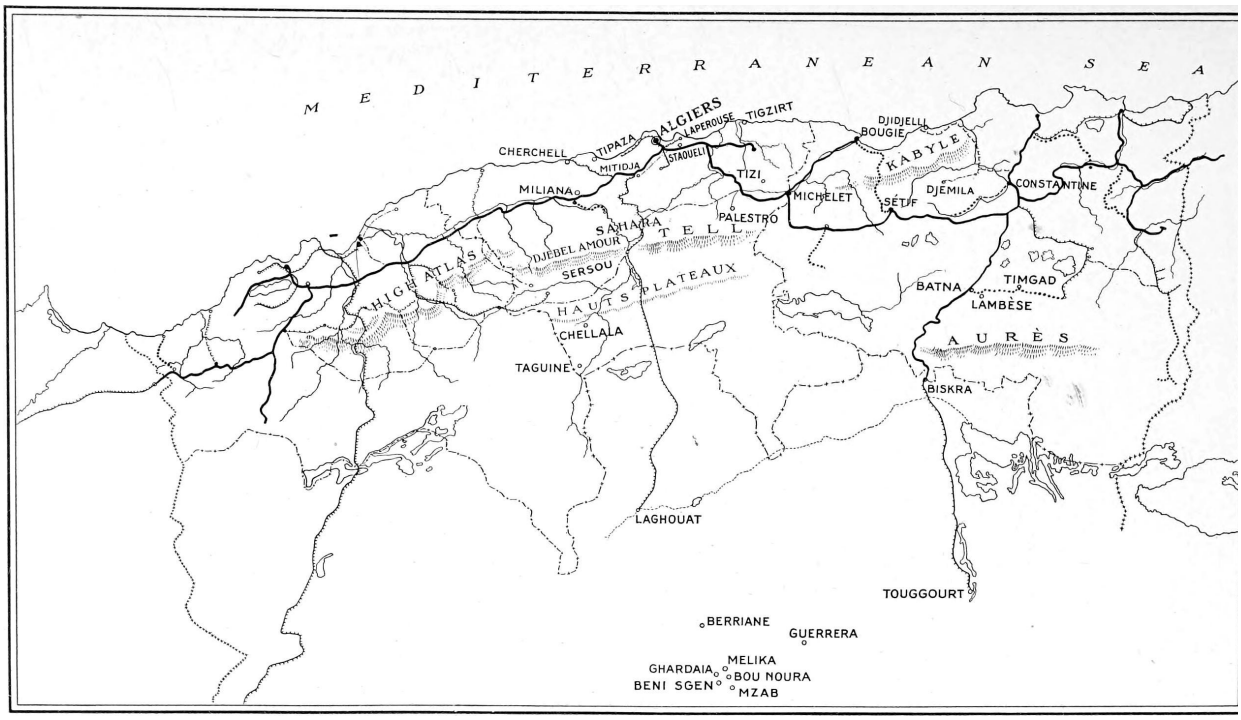
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