

Mansfield Milburg Francisco

# In the Land of Mosques & Minarets



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# Francis Miltoun

## In the Land of Mosques & Minarets

### CHAPTER I

#### GOING AND COMING

“Say, dear friend, wouldst thou go to the land where pass the caravans beneath the shadow of the palm trees of the Oasis; where even in mid-winter all is in flower as in spring-time elsewhere.”  
– Villiers de l’Isle Adam.

THE taste for travel is an acquired accomplishment. Not every one likes to rough it. Some demand home comforts; others luxurious appointments; but you don’t get either of these in North Africa, save in the palace hotels of Algiers, Biskra and Tunis, and even there these things are less complete than many would wish.

We knew all this when we started out. We had become habituated as it were, for we had been there before. The railways of North Africa are poor, uncomfortable things, and excruciatingly slow; the steamships between Marseilles or Genoa and the African littoral are either uncomfortably crowded, or wobbly, slow-going tubs; and there are many discomforts of travel – not forgetting fleas – which considerably mitigate the joys of the conventional traveller who affects floating hotels and Pullman car luxuries.

The wonderful African-Mediterranean setting is a patent attraction and is very lovely. Every one thinks that; but it is best always to take ways and means into consideration when journeying, and if the game is not worth the candle, let it alone.

This book is not written in commendation only of the good things of life which one meets with in North Africa, but is a personal record of things seen and heard by the artist and the author. As such it may be accepted as a faithful transcript of sights and scenes – and many correlative things that matter – which will prove to be the portion of others who follow after. These things have been seen by many who have gone before who, however, have not had the courage to paint or describe them as they found them.

Victor Hugo discovered the Rhine, Théophile Gautier Italy, De Nerval the Orient, and Merimée Spain; but they did not blush over the dark side and include only the more charming. For this reason the French descriptive writer has often given a more faithful picture of strange lands than that limned by Anglo-Saxon writers who have mostly praised them in an ignorant, sentimental fashion, or reviled them because they had left their own damp sheets and stogy food behind, and really did not enjoy travel – or even life – without them. There is a happy mean for the travellers’ mood which must be cultivated, if one is not born with it, else all hope of pleasurable travel is lost for ever.

The comparison holds good with regard to North Africa and its Arab population. Sir Richard Burton certainly wrote a masterful work in his “Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina,” and set forth the Arab character as no one else has done; but he said some things, and did some things, too, that his fellow countrymen did not like, and so they were loth to accept his great work at its face value.

The African Mediterranean littoral, the mountains and the desert beyond, and all that lies between, have found their only true exponents in Mme. Myriam Harry, MM. Louis Bertrand, Arnaud and Maryval, André Gide and Isabelle Eberhardt, and Victor Barrucaud. These and some others mentioned further on are the latter-day authorities on the Arab life of Africa, though the makers of English books on Algeria and Tunisia seem never to have heard of them, much less profited by their next-to-the-soil knowledge. Instead they have preferred to weave their romances and novels

on “home-country” lines, using a Mediterranean or Saharan setting for characters which are not of Africa and which have no place therein.

This book is a record of various journeyings in that domain of North Africa where French influence is paramount; and is confidently offered as the result of much absorption of first-hand experiences and observations, coupled with authenticated facts of history and romance. All the elements have been found *sur place* and have been woven into the pages which follow in order that nothing desirable of local colour should be lost by allowing too great an expanse of sea and land to intervene.

The story of Algeria and Tunisia has so often been told by the French, and its moods have so often been painted by *les “gens d’esprit et de talent,”* that a foreigner has a considerable task laid out for him in his effort to do the subject justice. Think of trying to catch the fire and spirit of Fromentin, of Loti, of the Maupassants or Masqueray, or the local colour of the canvases of Dinet, Armand Point, Potter, Besnard, Constant, Cabannes, Guillaumet, or Ziem! Then go and try to paint the picture as it looks to you. Yet why not? We live to learn; and, as all the phases of this subtropical land have not been exploited, why should we – the author and artist – not have a hand in it?

So we started out. The mistral had begun to blow at Martigues (la Venise Provençal known by artist folk of all nationalities, but unknown – as yet – to the world of tourists), where we had made our Mediterranean headquarters for some years, but the sirocco was still blowing contrariwise from the south on the African coast, and it was for that reason that the author, the artist and another – the agreeable travelling companion, a *rara avis* by the way – made a hurried start.

We were tired of the grime and grind of cities of convention; and were minded, after another round of travel, to repose a bit in some half-dormant, half-progressive little town of the Barbary coast, or some desert oasis where one might, if he would, still dream the dreams of the Arabian nights and days, regardless of a certain reflected glamour of vulgar modernity which filters through to the utmost Saharan outposts from the great ports of the coast.

By a fortunate chance weather and circumstances favoured this last journey, and thus the making of this book became a most enjoyable labour.

We left Marseilles for the land of the sun at six of an early autumn evening, the “*heure verte*” of the Marseillais, when the whole Cannebière smells of absinthe, alcohol, and anise, and all the world is at ease after a bustling, rustling day of busy affairs. These men of the Midi, though they seemingly take things easy are a very industrious race. There is no such virile movement in Paris, even on the boulevards, as one may witness on Marseilles’ famous Cannebière at the seducing hour of the Frenchman’s *apéritif*. Marseilles is a ceaseless turmoil of busy workaday affairs as well. From the ever-present gaiety of the Cannebière cafés it is but a step to the great *quais* and their creaking capstans and shouting longshoremen.

From the *quais* of La Joliette all the world and his wife come and go in an interminable and constant tide of travel, to Africa, to Corsica and Sardinia; to Jaffa and Constantinople; to Port Said and the East, India, Australia, China and Japan; and westward, through Gibraltar’s Strait to the Mexican Gulf and the Argentine. The like of Marseilles exists nowhere on earth; it is the most brilliant and lively of all the ports of the world. It is the principal seaport of the Mediterranean and the third city of France.

Our small, tubby steamer slipped slowly and silently out between the Joliette *quais* and past the towering Notre Dame de la Garde and the great Byzantine Cathedral of Sainte Marie Majeur, leaving the twinkling lights of the Vieux Port and the Pharo soon far behind. Past Château d’If, the Point des Catalans, Ratonneau and Pomègue we steamed, all reminiscent of Dumas and that masterpiece of his gallant portrait gallery, – “The Count of Monte Cristo.”

The great Planier light flashed its rays in our way for thirty odd miles seaward, keeping us company long after we had eaten a good dinner, a very good dinner indeed, with *café-cognac*– or *chartreuse*, real *chartreuse*, not the base imitation, mark you, *tout compris*, to top off with. The boat

was a poor, wallowing thing of eight hundred tons or so, but the dinner was much better than many an Atlantic liner gives. It had character, and was served in a tiny saloon on deck, with doors and ports all open, and a gentle, sighing Mediterranean *brise* wafting about our heads.

We were six passengers all told, and we were very, very comfortably installed on the *Isly* of the Compagnie Touache, in spite of the fact that the craft owned to twenty-seven years and made only ten knots. The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique has boats of the comparatively youthful age of twelve and seventeen, but they are so crowded that one is infinitely less comfortable, though they make the voyage at a gait of fifteen or sixteen knots. Then again the food is by no means so good or well served as that we had on the *Isly*. We have tried them both, and, as we asked no favours of price or accommodation in either case, the opinion may be set down as frank, truthful and personal. What others may think all depends on themselves and circumstance.

In Algeria, at any rate, one doesn't find trippers, and there are surprisingly few of what the French call "*Anglaises sans-gêne*" and "*Allemands grotesques*."

The traveller in Algeria should by all means eliminate his countrymen and study the native races and the French *colons*, if he wishes to know something of the country. Otherwise he will know nothing, and might as well have gone to a magic-lantern show at home.

It is a delightfully soft, exotic land which the geographers know as Mediterranean Africa, and which is fast becoming known to the world of modern travellers as the newest winter playground. The tide of pleasure-seeking travel has turned towards Algeria and Tunisia, but the plea is herein made to those who follow after for the better knowing of the places off the beaten track, Bou-Saada, Kairouan, the Oasis of Gabès, Oued-Souf or Tlemcen, for instance, something besides Mustapha, Biskra and Tunis.

Darkest Africa is no more darkest Africa. That idea was exploded when Stanley uttered his famous words: "Doctor Livingstone, I presume." And since that day the late Cecil Rhodes launched his Cape to Cairo scheme, and Africa has been given over to diamond-mine exploiters, rubber collectors and semi-invalids, who, hearing wonderful tales of the climatic conditions of Assouan and Biskra, have foregathered in these places, to the joy of the native and the profit of the hotel director – usually a Swiss.

Occasionally one has heard of an adventurous tourist who has hunted the wild gazelle in the Atlas or the mountains of Kabylie, the gentlest man-fearing creature God ever made, or who has "camped-out" in a tent furnished by Cook, and has come home and told of his exploits which in truth were more Tartarinesque than daring.

The trail of the traveller is over all to-day; but he follows as a rule only the well-worn *pistes*. In addition to those strangers who live in Algiers or Tunis and have made of those cities weak imitations of European capitals and their suburbs as characterless as those of Paris, London or Chicago, they have also imported such conventions as "bars" and "tea-rooms" to Biskra and Hammam-R'hira.

Tlemcen and its mosques, however; Figuig and its fortress-looking Grand Hôtel du Sahara at Beni-Ounif; Touggourt and its market and its military posts; and Bou-Saada and Tozeur with their oases are as yet comparatively unknown ground to all except artists who have the passion of going everywhere and anywhere in search of the unspoiled.

When it comes to Oued-Souf with its one "*Maison française*," which, by the way, is inhabited by the Frenchified Sheik of the Msaâba to whom a chapter is devoted in this book later on; or Ghardaïa, the Holy City of the Sud-Constantinois, the case were still more different. This is still virgin ground for the stranger, and can only be reached by diligence or caravan.

The railway with a fairly good equipment runs all the length of Algeria and Tunisia, from the Moroccan frontier at Tlemcen to Gabès and beyond, almost to the boundary of Tripoli in Barbary. An automobile would be much quicker, and in some parts even a donkey, but the railway serves as well as it ever does in a new-old country where it has recently been installed.

If one enters by Algiers or Oran and leaves by Tunis or even Sfax or Gabès he has done the round; but if opportunity offers, he should go south from Tlemcen into the real desert at Figuig; from Biskra to Touggourt; or from Gabès to Tozeur. Otherwise he will have so kept “in touch” with things that he can, for the asking, have oatmeal for breakfast and marmalade for tea, which is not what one comes, or should come, to Africa for. One takes his departure from French Mediterranean Africa from Tunis or Bizerte.

Leaving Tunis and its domes and minarets behind, his ship makes its way gingerly out through the straight-cut canal, a matter of six or eight miles to La Goulette, a veritable Italian fishing village in Africa which the Italian population themselves call La Goletta. Here the pilot is sent ashore, – he was a useless personage anyway, but he touches a hundred and fifty francs for standing on the bridge and doing nothing, – the ship turns a sharp right angle and sets its course northward for Marseilles, leaving Korbus and the great double-horned mountain far in the distance to starboard.

Carthage and its cathedral, and Sidi-bou-Saïd and its minarets are to port, the red soil forming a rich frame for the scintillating white walls scattered here and there over the landscape. La Marsa and the Bey’s summer palace loom next in view, Cap Carthage and Cap Bon, and then the open sea.

Midway between Tunis and Marseilles, one sees the red porphyry rocks of Sardinia. Offshore are the little isles which terminate the greater island, the “Taureau,” the “Vache” and the “Veau.” They are only interesting as landmarks, and look like the outcroppings of other Mediterranean islands. In bad weather the mariners give them a wide berth.

The sight of Sardinia makes no impression on the French passengers. They stare at it, and remark it not. The profound contempt of the Frenchman of the Midi for all things Italian is to be remarked. Corsica is left to starboard, still farther away, in fact not visible, but the Frenchman apparently does not regret this either, even though it has become a French Département. “*Peuh: la Corse,*” he says, “*un vilain pays,*” where men pass their existence killing each other off. Such is the outcome of traditional, racial rancour, and yet the most patriotic Frenchman the writer has ever known was a Corsican.

“*Voilà! le Cap Sicié!*” said the commandant the second morning at ten o’clock, as he stood on the bridge straining his eyes for a sight of land. We didn’t see it, but we took his word for it. A quarter of an hour later it came into view, the great landmark promontory, which juts out into the Mediterranean just west of Toulon.

Just then with a swish and a swirl, and with as icy a breath as ever blew south from the snow-clad Alps, down came the mistral upon us, and we all went below and passed the most uncomfortable five hours imaginable, anchored off the Estaque, in full view of Marseilles, and yet not able to enter harbour. The Gulf of Lyons and the mistral form an irresistible combination of forces once they get together.

At last in port; the *douanier* keeps a sharp lookout for cigars and cigarettes (which in Algeria and Tunisia sell for about a quarter of what they do in France), and in a quarter of an hour we are installed in that remarkably equipped “Touring Hotel” of Marseilles’ Cours Belzunce. *Art nouveau* furniture, no heavy rugs or draperies, metallic bedsteads, and hot and cold running water in every room. This is a good deal to find on this side of the Atlantic. The house should be made note of by all coming this way. Not in the palace hotels of Algiers, Biskra or Tunis can you find such a combination.

## CHAPTER II

### THE REAL NORTH AFRICA

“*Africque apporte tousjours quelque chose de nouveau.*”

– *Rabelais*

Algeria and Tunisia are already the vogue, and Biskra, Hammam-R'hira and Mustapha are already names as familiar as Cairo, Amalfi or Teneriffe, even though the throng of “*colis vivants expédiés par Cook,*” as the French call them, have not as yet overrun the land. For the most part the travellers in these delightful lands, be they Americans, English or Germans (and the Germans are almost as numerous as the others), are strictly unlabelled, and each goes about his own affairs, one to Tlemcen to paint the Moorish architecture of its mosques, another to Biskra for his health, and another to Tunis merely to while away his time amid exotic surroundings.

This describes well enough the majority of travellers here, but the other categories are increasing every day, and occasionally a “tourist-steamship” drops down three or four hundred at one fell swoop on the *quais* of Algiers or Tunis, and then those cities become as the Place de l'Opéra, or Piccadilly Circus. These tourists only skirt the fringe of this interesting land, and after thirty-six hours or so go their ways.

One does not become acquainted with the real North Africa in any such fashion.

The picturesque is everywhere in Algeria and Tunisia, and the incoming manners and customs of *outré-mer* only make the contrast more remarkable. It is not the extraordinary thing that astonishes us to-day, for there is no more virgin land to exploit as a touring-ground. It is the rubbing of shoulders with the dwellers in foreign lands who, after all, are human, and have relatively the same desires as ourselves, which they often satisfy in a different manner, that makes travel enjoyable.

What Nubian and Arab Africa will become later, when European races have still further blended the centuries-old tropical and subtropical blood in a gentle assimilated adaptation of men and things, no one can predict. The Arab has become a very good engineer, the Berber can be trained to become a respectable herder of cattle, as the Egyptian *fellah* has been made into a good farmer, or a motorman on the electric railway from Cairo to the Pyramids.

What the French call the “Empire Européen” is bound to envelop Africa some day, and France will be in for the chief part in the division without question. The French seem to understand the situation thoroughly; and, with the storehouse of food products (Algeria and Tunisia, and perhaps by the time these lines are printed, Morocco) at her very door, she is more than fortunately placed with regard to the development of this part of Africa. The individual German may come and do a little trading on his own account, but it is France as a nation that is going to prosper out of Africa. This is the one paramount aspect of the real North Africa of to-day as it has been for some generations past, a fact which the Foreign Offices of many powers have overlooked.

It is a pity that the whole gamut of the current affairs of North Africa is summed up in many minds by the memory of the palpably false sentiment of the school of fictionists which began with Ouida. Let us hope it has ended, for the picturing of the local colour of Mediterranean and Saharan Africa is really beyond the romancer who writes love-stories for the young ladies of the boarding-schools, and the new women of the *art nouveau* boudoirs. The lithe, dreamy young Arab of fiction, who falls in love with lonesome young women *en voyage* alone to some tourist centre, is purely a myth. There is not a real thing about him, not even his clothes, much less his sentiments; and he and his picturesque natural surroundings jar horribly against each other at best.

The Cigarette of “Under Two Flags” was not even a classically conventional figure, but simply a passionate, tumultuous creature, lovable only for her inconsistencies, which in reality were nothing African in act or sentiment, though that was her environment.

The English lord who became a “Chasseur d’Afrique” was even more unreal – he wasn’t a “Chasseur d’Afrique,” anyway, he was simply a member of the “Légion Étrangère;” but doubtless Ouida cared less for minutely precise detail than she did to exploit her unconventional convictions. The best novels of to-day are something our parents never dreamed of! Exclamations and exhortations of the characters of “Under Two Flags,” “Mon Amour,” “Ma Patrie,” “Les Enfants,” are not African. They belong to the parasite faubourgs of Paris’ fortifications. Let no one make the mistake, then, of taking this crop of North African novels for their guide and mentor. Much better go with Cook and be done with it, if one lacks the initiative to launch out for himself, and make the itinerary by railway, *diligence* and caravan. If he will, one can travel by *diligence* all over Mediterranean Africa, and by such a means of locomotion he will best see and know the country.

The *diligence* of the plain and mountain roads of Algeria and Tunisia is as remarkable a structure as still rolls on wheels. Its counterpart does not exist to-day in France, Switzerland or Italy. It is generally driven by a portly Arab, with three wheelers and four leaders, seven horses in all. It is made up of many compartments and stories. There is a *rez-de-chaussée*, a *mezzanine* floor and a roof garden, with prices varying accordingly as comfort increases or decreases. A fifty or a hundred kilometre journey therein, or thereon, is an experience one does not readily forget. To begin with, one usually starts at an hour varying from four to seven in the morning, an hour which, even in Algeria, in winter, is dark and chill.

The stage-driver of the “Far West” is a fearsome, capable individual, but the Arab conductor of a “*voiture publique*,” with a rope-wound turban on his head, a flowing, entangling burnous, and a five-yard whip, can take more chances in getting around corners or down a sharp incline than any other coach-driver that ever handled the ribbons. Sometimes he has an assistant who handles a shorter whip, and belabours it over the backs of the wheelers, when additional risks accrue. Sometimes, even, this is not enough and the man-at-the-wheel jumps down and runs alongside, slashing viciously at the flying heels of the seven horse power, after which he crawls up aloft and dozes awhile.

Under the hood of the *impériale* is stowed away as miscellaneous a lot of baggage as one can imagine, including perhaps a dozen fowls, a sheep or two, or even a calf. Amidst all this, three or four cross-legged natives wobble and lurch as the equipage makes its perilous way.

Down below everything is full, too; so that, with its human freight of fifteen or sixteen persons, and the unweighed kilos of merchandise on the roof, the journey may well be described as being fraught with possibilities of disaster. There is treasure aboard, too, – a strong-box bolted to the floor beneath the drivers’ feet; and at the rear a weather-proof cast-iron letter-box, padlocked tight and only opened at wayside post-offices. The sequestered colonist, living far from the rail or post, has his only communication with the outside world through the medium of this mobile *bureau de poste*.

The roads of Algeria and Tunisia are marvellously good – where they exist. The Arab roads and routes of old were simple trails, trod down in the herb-grown, sandy soil by the bare feet of men, or camels, or the hoofs of horses and mules. So narrow were these trails that two caravans could not pass each other, so there were two trails, like the steamship “lanes” of the Atlantic.

Tradition still prompts the Kabyles to march in single file on the sixteen meter wide high-roads, which now cross and recross their country, the results of a beneficent French administration. Morocco some day will come in line.

In Tunisia, the roads are as good as they are in Algeria, and they are many and being added to yearly.

There are still to be seen, in the interior, little pyramids of stones, perhaps made up of tens of thousands, or a hundred thousand even, of desert pebbles, each unit placed by some devoted traveller who has recalled that on that spot occurred the death, or perhaps murder, of some pioneer. The Arabs

call these monuments Nza, and would not think for a moment of passing one by without making their offering. It is a delicate, natural expression of sentiment, and one that might well be imitated.

There is no more danger to the tourist travelling through Algeria and Tunisia by road than there would be in France or Italy – and considerably less than might be met with in Spain. There are some brigands and robbers left hiding in the mountains, perhaps, but their raids are on flocks and herds, and not for the mere dross of the gold of tourists, or the gasoline of automobilists. The desert lion is a myth of Tartarinesque poets and artists, and one is not likely to meet anything more savage than a rabbit or a hedgehog all the fifteen hundred or two thousand kilometres from Tlemcen to Gabès.

The African lion is a dweller only in the forest-grown mountains; and the popular belief that it can track for weeks across the desert, drinking only air, and eating only sand, is pure folly of the romantic brand perpetuated by the painter Gérôme.

During the last ten years, in all Algeria there were killed only: —

Lions and lionesses and cubs	181
Panthers	988
Hyenas	1,485
Jackals	22,619

It may be taken for granted, then, that there are no great dangers to be experienced on the well-worn roads and *pistes* of Tunisia and Algeria. The hyenas and lions are hidden away in the great mountain fastnesses, and the jackals themselves are harmless enough so far as human beings are concerned. The *sanglier*, or wild boar, is savage enough if attacked when met with, otherwise it is he who flees, whilst the jack-rabbits and the gazelles make up the majority of the “savage life” seen contiguous to the main travelled roads away from the railways.

Scorpions and horned vipers are everywhere – if one looks for them, otherwise one scarcely ever sees one or the other. The greatest enemy of mankind hereabouts is the flea; and, as the remedy is an obvious and personal one, no more need be said. Another plague is the cricket, grasshopper or *sauterelle*. The *sauterelle*, says the Arab, is the wonder among nature’s living things. It has the face of a horse, the eyes of an elephant, the neck of a bull, the horns of a deer, the breast of a lion, the stomach of a scorpion, the legs of an ostrich, the tail of a snake, and is more to be feared than any of the before enumerated menagerie. It all but devastated the chief wheat-growing lands of the plateaux of the provinces of Alger and Constantine a generation or more ago, and brought great misery in its wake.

The scorpion and the gazelle are the two chief novelties among living things (after the camel) with which the stranger makes acquaintance here. The former is unlovely but not dangerous. “*Il pique, mais ne mord pas,*” say the French; but no one likes to find them in his shoes in the morning all the same. The gazelle is more likable, a gentle, endearing creature, with great liquid eyes, such as poets attribute to their most lovely feminine creations.

The gazelle is an attribute of all fountain courtyards. It lives and thrives in captivity, can be tamed to follow you like a dog, and is as affectionate as a caressing kitten. It will eat condensed milk, dates, cabbage and cigarettes; but it balks at Pear’s soap.

In the open country the nomad Arab or even the house-dweller that one meets by the roadside is an agreeable, willing person, and when he understands French (as he frequently does), he is quite as “useful” as would be his European prototype under similar conditions. The country Arab is courteous, for courtesy’s sake, moreover, and not for profit. This is not apt to be the case in the cities and towns.

The Arab speech of the ports and railway cities and towns is of the solicitous kind. One can’t learn anything here of phraseology that will be useful to him in the least and it’s bad French. “*Sidi mousi! Moi porter! Moi forse besef!*” is nothing at all, though it is eloquent, and probably means that the gamin, old or young, wants to carry your baggage or call a cab. And for this you pay in Algiers and Tunis as you pay in London or Paris, but you are not blackmailed as you are in Alexandria or Cairo.

One may not rest two minutes on the terrace of any café in a large Algerian town without having an Arab, a Kabyle, or a Jewish ragamuffin come up and bawl at one incessantly, “*Ciri, ciri, ciri!*” If you have just left your hotel, your boots brilliant as jet from the best Algerian substitute for “Day & Martin’s Best,” it doesn’t matter in the least; they still cry, “*Ciri, ciri, ciri, m’siou!*” Sometimes it is, “*Ciri bien, m’siou!*” and sometimes “*Ciri, kif, kif la glace de Paris!*” But the object of their plaint is always the same. Finally, if you won’t let them dull the polish of your *shine*, they will *cire* their faces and demand “*quat’ sous*” from you because you witnessed the operation. Very businesslike are the shoeblacks of Algiers; they don’t mind what they *cire* as long as they *cire* something.

The Café d’Apollon in Algiers is the rendezvous of the “high-life Arab.” Here Sheiks from the deserts’ great tents, Caïds from the settlements, and others of the vast army of great and small Arab officialdom assemble to take an afternoon *bock* or *apéritif*; for in spite of his religion the Mussulman will sometimes drink beer and white wine. Some, too, are “decorated,” and some wear even the *ruban* or *bouton* of the Legion of Honour on their chests where that otherwise useless buttonhole of the coat of civilization would be. Grim, taciturn figures are these, whose only exclamation is a mechanical clacking of the lips or a cynical, gurgling chuckle coming from deep down, expressive of much or little, according as much or little is meant.

The foreign population in Algeria and Tunisia is very mixed; and though all nationalities mingle in trade the foreigners will not become naturalized to any great extent. Out of forty-one naturalized foreigners in Tunis in 1891, 27 were Italians, 2 Alsatians, 2 Luxembourgeois, 2 Maltese, 1 German, 1 Belgian, 1 Moroccan, and 5 individuals of undetermined nationality.

Civilization and progress has marked North Africa for exploitation, but it will never overturn Mohammedanism. The trail of Islam is a long one and plainly marked. From the Moghreb to the Levant and beyond extends the memory and tradition of Moorish civilization of days long gone by. The field is unlimited, and ranges from the Giralda of Andalusia to the Ottoman mosques of the Dardanelles, though we may regret, with all the Arab poets and historians, the decadence of Granada more than all else. The Arab-Moorish overrunning of North Africa defined an epoch full of the incident of romance, whatever may have been the cruelties of the barbarians. This period endured until finally the sombre cities of the corsairs became the commercial capitals of to-day, just as glorious Carthage became a residential suburb of Tunis. The hand of time has left its mark plainly imprinted on all Mediterranean Africa, and not even the desire for up-to-dateness on the part of its exploiters will ever efface these memories, nor further desecrate the monuments which still remain.

The French African possessions include more than a third of the continent, an area considerably more extensive than the United States, Alaska, Porto Rico, and the Philippines combined. One hears a lot about the development of the British sphere of influence in Africa; but not much concerning that of the French which, since the unhappy affair of Fashoda, has been more active than ever. The French are not the garrulous nation one sometimes thinks them. They have a way of doing things, and saying nothing, which is often fraught with surprises for the outside world. Perhaps Morocco and Tripoli de Barbarie may come into the fold some day; and, then, with the French holding the railways of Egypt and the Suez Canal, as at present, they will certainly be the dominant Mediterranean and African power, if they may not be reckoned so already.

The Saharan desert is French down to its last grain of sand and the last oasis palm-tree, and it alone has an area half the size of the United States.

Of Mediterranean French Africa, Tunisia is a protectorate, but almost as absolutely governed by the French as if it were a part of the Ile de France. Algérie is a part of France, a Department across the seas like Corse. It holds its own elections and has three senators and six deputies at Paris. Its governor-general is a Frenchman (usually promoted from the Préfecture of some mainland Département) and most of the officialdom and bureaucracy are French.

Trade between Algeria and France, mostly in wines and food stuffs on one side, and manufactured products on the other, approximates three hundred millions of francs in each direction.

Algeria, “la belle Algérie” as the French fondly call it, is not a mere strip of mountain land and desert. It is one of the richest agricultural lands on earth, running eastward from the Moroccan frontier well over into Tunisia; and, for ages, it has been known as the granary of Europe. The Carthaginians and the Phoenicians built colonies and empires here, and Rome was nourished from its wheat-fields and olive-groves.

The wheat of Africa was revered by the Romans of the capital above all others. One of the pro-consuls sent Augustus a little packet of four hundred grains, all grown from one sole seed, whereupon great national granaries were built and the commerce in the wheat of Africa took on forthwith almost the complexion of a monopoly. The sowing and the harvest were most primitive. “I have seen,” wrote Pliny (H. N. XVIII, 21), “the sowing and the reaping accomplished here by the aid of a primitive plough, an old woman and a tiny donkey.” The visitor may see the same to-day!

At the moment of the first autumn rains the Arab or Berber cultivator works over his soil, or sets his wives on the job, and sows his winter wheat. The planting finished, the small Arab farmer seeks the sunny side of a wall and basks there, watching things grow, smoking much tobacco and drinking much coffee, each of these narcotics very black and strong. Four months later his ample, or meagre, crop comes by chance. Then he flays it, not by means of a flail swung by hand, but by borrowing a little donkey from some neighbour, – if he hasn’t one of his own, – and letting the donkey’s hoofs trample it out. Now he takes it – or most likely sends it – to market, and his year’s work is done. He rolls over to the shady side of his *gourbi* (the sunny side is getting too warm) and loaf along until another autumn. He might grow maize in the interval, but he doesn’t.

The Barbary fig, or prickly-pear cactus, is everywhere in Algeria and Tunisia. It grows wild by the roadside, in great fields, and as a barrier transplanted to the top of the universal mud walls. Frost is its only enemy. Everything and everybody else flees before it except the native who eats its spiny, juicy bulbs and finds them good. The rest of us only find the spines, and throw the fruit away in disgust when we attempt to taste it. The Barbary fig is the Arab’s sole food supply when crops fail, the only thing which stands between him and starvation – unless he steals dates or figs from some richer man’s plantation. The Arab’s wants are not great, and with fifty francs and some ingenuity he can live a year.

The palm-trees of Africa number scores of varieties, but those of the Mediterranean states and provinces, the date-bearing palm, come within three well-defined classes: the *Phœnix-dactylifera*, the *chamaerops-humilis* and the *cucifera-thebaica*.

Even the smallest Arab proprietor of land or sheep or goats pays taxes. The French leave its collection to the local Caïds or Sheiks, but it gets into the official coffers ultimately, – or most of it does.

In Algeria there are four principal taxes, or *impôts*:

The *Achour* on cereals; the *Zekai*, on sheep and cattle to-day, but originally a tax collected for the general good, as prescribed by the Koran; the *Hokar* (in Constantine), a tax on land; the *Lezma*, the generic term for various contributions, such as the right to carry firearms (the only tax levied in Kabylie), and the tax on date-palms in the Sud-Algérie and Sud-Oranais. The Arab carries a gun only after he gets a permit, which he must show every time he buys powder or shot.

In Tunisia the taxes are much the same; but there is a specific tax on olive-trees as well as date-palms, and on the markets and the products sold there.

The wines of Algeria and Tunisia are the product of foreign vines whose roots were transplanted here but little more than half a century ago. These vines came from all parts, from France, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Malta and America; and now the “*vin d’Algérie*” goes out to the ends of the earth, – usually under the name of a *cru* more famous. It is very good wine nevertheless, this rich, hybrid juice of the grape; and, though the Provençal of Chateaufort, the sons of the Aude, the Garde and the Hérault, or the men of Roussillon do not recognize Algerian wine as a worthy competitor of their own vintages, it is such all the same. And the Peroximen, supposed to be a product only of

Andalusia, and the Muscatel of Alexandria, are very nearly as good grown on Algerian soil as when gathered in the place of their birth.

The “*vin rosé*” of Kolea, the really superb wines of Médea, and the “*vin blanc de Carthage*,” should carry the fame of these North African vintages to all who are, or think they are, judges of good wine.

With such a rich larder at their very doors, the mediæval Mediterranean nations were in a constant quarrel over its possession. Vandals and Greeks fought for the right to populate it after the Romans, but the Moorish wave was too strong; the Arab crowded the Berber to the wall and made him a Mussulman instead of a Christian, a religious faith which the French have held inviolate so far as proselytizing goes. It is this one fundamental principle which has done much to make the French rule in Algeria the success that it is. Britain should leave religion out of her colonizing schemes if she would avoid the unrest which is continually cropping up in various parts of the empire; and the United States should leave the friars of the Philippines alone, and let them grow fat if they will, and develop the country on business lines. We are apt to think that the French are slow in business matters, but they get results sometimes in an astonishingly successful manner, and by methods which they copy from no one.

The ports of Algeria and Tunisia are of great antiquity. The Romans, not content with the natural advantages offered as harbours, frequently cut them out of the soft rock itself, or built out jetties or *quais*, as have all dock engineers since when occasion demanded. There are vestiges of these old Roman *quais* at Bougie, at Collo, at Chercshell, at Stora and at Bona. These Roman works, destroyed or abandoned at the Vandal invasion, were never rebuilt; and the great oversea traders of the Italian Republics, of France and of Spain, merely hung around offshore and transacted their business, as do the tourist steamers at Jaffa to-day, while their personally conducted hordes descend upon Jerusalem and the Jordan.

The Barbary pirates had little inlets and outlets which they alone knew, and flitted in and out of on their nefarious projects; but only at Algiers, until in comparatively recent times, were there any ports or harbours, legitimately so called, in either Algeria or Tunisia, though the Spaniards, when in occupation of Oran in the eighteenth century, made some inefficient attempts towards waterside improvements of a permanent character.

In thinking of North Africa it is well to recall that it is not a tropical belt, nor even a subtropical one. It is very like the climate of the latitude of Washington, though perhaps with less rain in winter. It is not for a moment to be compared with California or Bermuda.

The temperature on the Algerian coast is normally as follows: —

Winter, 11°-12° centigrade	Summer, 25° centigrade
Spring, 15°-16° centigrade	Autumn, 19°-20° centigrade
Average yearly, 17°-18° centigrade	

As compared with the temperature of the French Riviera, taking Nice as an example, the balance swings in favour of Algeria in winter, and a trifle against it for summer, as the following figures show: —

Winter, 9° centigrade	Summer, 23° centigrade
Spring, 17° centigrade	Autumn, 18° centigrade
Yearly average, 16° centigrade	

One pertinent observation on North Africa is that regarding the influx of outside civilizing influences. The American invasion of manufactured products is here something considerable; but as yet it has achieved nothing like its possibilities, save perhaps in electrical tramway installation,

sewing machines and five-gallon tins of kerosene. The French have *got* North Africa, mostly; the Germans the trade in cutlery; the English (or the Scotch) that in whiskey and marmalade; but the American shipments of “Singers” and “Standards” must in total figures swamp any of the other single “foreign imports” in value. One does not speak of course of imports from France. As the argument of the dealers, who push the sewing-machine into the desert *gourbis* of the nomads and the mountain dwellings of the Kabyles, has it, the civilizing influences of Algeria have been railways, public schools and “Singers.” What progressive Arab could be expected to resist such an argument for progress, with easy-payment terms of a franc a week as the chief inducement? The only objection seems to be that his delicately fashioned, creamy, woollen burnous of old is fast becoming a ready-made “lock-stitch” affair, which lacks the loving marks of the real hand-made article. Other things from America are agricultural machinery, ice-cream freezers, oil-stoves, corn meal, corned beef, salmon from Seattle, and pickles from Bunker Hill. As yet the trade in these “staples” is infinitesimal when compared with what it might be if “pushed,” which it is not because all these things come mostly through London warehouse men, who “push” something else when they can.

A few things America will not be able to sell in North Africa are boots and shoes, the Arab wears his neatly folded down at the heel, and ours are not that kind; nor socks, nor stockings, the Arab buys a gaudy “near-silk,” made in the Vosges, when he buys any, and the women don’t wear them; nor hats, though a Stetson, No. 7, would please them mightily, all but the price. There is no demand for folding-beds or elastic bookcases. The Arab sleeps on the floor, and the only book he possesses, if he can read, is a copy of the Koran, which he tucks away inside his burnous and carries about with him everywhere. Chairs he has no need for; when the Arab doesn’t lie or huddle on the ground, he sits dangle-legged or cross-legged on a bench, which is a home-made affair. The women mostly squat on their heels, which looks uncomfortable, but which they seem to enjoy.

Besides the American invasion, there is the German occupation to reckon with – in a trade sense.

“Those terrible Germans,” is a newspaper phrase of recent coinage which is applicable to almost any reference to the German trade invasion of every country under the sun, save perhaps the United States and Canada. In South America, in Russia, and in the African Mediterranean States and Provinces, the Teuton has pushed his trading instincts to the utmost. He may be no sort of a colonizer himself, but he knows how to sell goods. In North Africa, in the coast towns, over a thousand German firms have established themselves within the last ten years, all the way from Tangier to Port Saïd. This may mean little or nothing to the offhand thinker; but when one recalls that the blackamoor and the Arab have learned to use matches and folding pocket-knives, and have even been known to invest in talking machines, it is also well to recall that the German can produce these things, “machine-made,” and market them cheaper than any other nation. For this reason he floods the market, where the taste is not too critical, and the cry is here for cheapness above all things. This is the Arab’s point of view, hence the increasing hordes of German traders.

To show the German is indefatigable, and that he knows North Africa to its depths, the case of the late German consul at Cairo, Paul Gerhard, who wrote a monumental work on the butterflies of North Africa, is worth recalling.

## CHAPTER III

### ALGERIA OF TO-DAY

“Le coq Gaulois est le coq de la gloire.  
Il chante bien fort quand il gagne une victoire  
Et encore plus fort quand il est battu.”

Algeria is by no means savage Africa, even though its population is mostly *indigène*. It forms a “*circonscription académique*” of France. It has a national observatory, a branch of that at Paris, founded in 1858; a school of medicine and pharmacy; a school of law; a faculty of letters and sciences, and three endowed chairs of Arabic, at Algiers (founded in 1836); Oran (1850) and Constantine (1858).

Algeria has a great future in store, although it has cost France 8,593,000,000 francs since its occupation seventy years ago, and has only produced a revenue of 2,330,000,000 francs, which represents the loss of a sum greater than the war indemnity of 1870. The Algerian budget balanced for the first time in 1901 without subsidies from home.

The entire population of Algeria is 4,124,732, of which 3,524,000 are Arabs, Kabyles or Berbers, and the subdivided races hereafter mentioned, leaving in the neighbourhood of 600,000 Europeans, whose numbers are largely increasing each year.

The rate of increase of the European population, from 1836, when the French first occupied the country, has been notable. In 1836 there were 14,561 Europeans in the colony; in 1881, 423,881, of which 233,937 were French, 112,047 Spanish, and 31,865 Italians, and to-day the figure is over 600,000.

The Arab and Berber population, too, are notably increasing; they are not disappearing like the red man. From 2,320,000, in 1851, they have increased, in 1891, to 3,524,000.

In addition to the Arab and Berber population of Algeria, and the “foreigners” and Europeans, there are the following:

Moors – (90,500), the mixed issue of the Berbers and all the races inhabiting Algeria.

Koulouglis – (20,000), born of Turks and Moorish women.

Jews – (47,667), who by the decree of 1870 were made French. (This does not include unnaturalized Jews.)

Negroes – (5,000), the former slaves who were freed in 1848.

The French colonist in Algeria, the man on the spot, understands the Arab question better than the minister and officials of the Colonial Office of the Pavilion Sully, though the French have succeeded in making of Algeria what they have never accomplished with their other colonies – a paying proposition at last. Still France governs Algeria under a sort of “up-the-state,” “Raines-law” rule, and treats the *indigène* of Laghouat or Touggourt as they would a boatman of Pontoise or a farm labourer of Étampes. The French colonial howls against all the mistakes and indiscretions of a “Boulevard Government” for the Sahara, and even revile the Governor General, whom he calls a civilian dressed up in military garb and no governor at all. *Que diable!* This savours of partisanship and politics, but it is an echo of what one hears as “café talk” any time he opens his ears in Algiers.

All is peace and concord within, however, in spite of the small talk of the cafés; and the Arab and European live side by side, each enjoying practically the same rights and protection that they would if they lived in suburban Paris.

The Caïd or Sheik or head man of a tribe is the go-between in all that concerns the affairs of the native with the French government.

The name Caïd was formerly given to the governors of the provinces of the Barbary States, but to-day that individual has absolutely disappeared, though he still remains as an administrator of French law, under the surveillance of the military government. In reality the Caïd still remains the official head of his tribe, and in this position is sustained by the French authorities.

The Arab has adopted the new order of things very graciously, but he can't get over his ancient desire to hoard gold; and, for that reason, no Algerian gold coin exists, and there is no gold in circulation to speak of. The Arab, when he gets it, buries it, forgets where, or dies and forgets to tell any one where, which is the same thing, and thus a certain very considerable amount is lost to circulation.

Paper money, in values of twenty and fifty francs, takes the place of gold; the Arab thinks that it is something that is perishable, and accordingly spends it and keeps the country prosperous. The French understand the Arab and his foibles; there is no doubt about that. They solved the question of a circulating currency in Algeria. New York and Washington representatives of *haute finance* might take a few lessons here.

With regard to the money question, the stranger in Algeria must beware of false and non-current coin. Anything that's a coin looks good to an Arab, and for that reason a large amount of spurious stuff is in circulation. It was originally made by counterfeiters to gull the native, but to-day the stranger gets his share, or more than his share.

To replace the gold "*louis*" of France, the Banque d'Algérie issues "shin-plasters" of twenty francs. They are convenient, but one must get rid of them before leaving the country or else sell them to a money changer at a discount. These Algerian bank-notes now pass current in Tunisia, a branch of the parent bank having recently been opened there.

The commercial possibilities of Algeria have hardly, as yet, begun to be exploited, though the wine and wheat-growing lands are highly developed; and, since their opening, have suffered no lack of prosperity, save for a plague of *phylloxera* which set back the vines on one occasion, and a plague of locusts which one day devastated almost the entire region of the wheat-growing plateaux. It was then the Arabs became locust-eaters, though indeed they are not become a cult as in Japan. With the Arab it was a case of eating locusts or nothing, for there was no grain.

This plague of locusts fell upon the province of Constantine in 1885, and from Laghouat to Bou-Saada, and from Kenchela to Aumale they were brought in myriads by the sirocco of the desert from no one knows where.

For two years these great cereal-growing areas were cleared of their crops as though a wild-fire had passed over them, until finally the government by strenuous efforts, and the employment of many thousands of labourers, was able to control and arrest the march of the plague.

During this period many of the new colonists saw their utmost resources disappear; but gallantly they took up their task anew, and for the past dozen years only occasional slight recurrences of the pest have been noted, and they, fortunately, have been suppressed as they appeared.

Besides wheat and wine, tobacco is an almost equal source of profit to Algeria. In France no one may grow a tobacco plant, even as an embellishment to his garden-plot, without first informing the excise authorities, who, afterwards, will come around periodically and count the leaves. In Africa the tobacco crop is something that brings peace and plenty to any who will cultivate it judiciously, for the consumption of the weed is great.

Manufactured tobacco is cheap in Algeria. Neither cigars, cigarettes nor pipe mixtures, nor snuff either, pay any excise duties; and even foreign tobaccos, which mostly come from Hungary and the Turkish provinces, pay very little.

Two-thirds of the Algerian manufactured product is made from home-grown tobacco, and a very large quantity of the same is sent to France to be sold as "Maryland;" though, indeed, if the original plants ever came from the other side of the water, it was by a very roundabout route. Certainly the broom-corn tobacco of France does not resemble that of Maryland in the least. The hope of

France and her colonies is to grow all the tobacco consumed within her frontiers, whether it is labelled “Maryland,” “Turkish” or “Scaferlati.” The French government puts out some awful stuff it calls tobacco and sells under fancy names.

The tobacco tax in Algeria is *nil*, and that on wine is nearly so. Four sous a *hectolitre* (100 litres) is not a heavy tax to pay, though when it was first applied (in 1907) it was the excuse for the retail wine dealer (who in Algeria is but human, when he seeks to make what profit he can) to add two sous to the price of his wine *per litre*. There is a law in France against unfair trading, and the same applies to Algeria. It has been a dead law in many places for many years, but when a tax of four sous a *hectolitre*, originally paid to the state, by the dealer, finally came out of the consumer’s pocket as ten francs, an increase of 5,000 per cent., popular clamour and threats of the law caused the dealer to drop back to his original price. This is the way Algeria protects its growing wine industry. Publicists and economists elsewhere should study the system.

The African landscape is very simple and very expressive, severe but not sad, lively but not gay. The great level horizon bars the way south towards the wastes of the Sahara, and the mountains of the Atlas are ever present nearer at hand. The desert of romance, *le vrai désert*, is still a long way off; and, though there is now a macadamized road to Bou-Saada and Biskra, and a railway to Figuig and beyond, civilization is still only at the vestibule of the Sahara. The real development and exploitation of North Africa and its peoples and riches is yet to come.

As for the climate, that of California is undoubtedly superior to that of Algeria, but the topographical and agricultural characteristics are much the same. The greatest difference which will be remarked by an American crossing Algeria from Oran to Souk-Ahras will be the distinct “foreign note” of the installation of its farming communities. Haystacks are plastered over with mud; carts are drawn by mules or horses hitched tandemwise, three, four or five on end, and the carts are mostly two-wheeled at that. There are no fences and no great barns for stocking fodder or sheltering cattle; the farmhouses are all of stone, bare or stucco-covered, and range in colour from sky-blue to pale pink and vivid yellow. There is some American farming machinery in use, but the Arab son of the soil still largely works with the implements of Biblical times.

The winter of Algeria is the winter of Syria, of Japan, and reminiscent to some extent of California; perhaps not so mild on the whole, but still something of an approach thereto. Another contrast favourable to California is that in Algeria there is a lack of certain refinements of modern travel which are to be had in the “land of sunshine.” Winter, properly speaking, does not come to Algeria except on the high plateaux of the provinces of Oran, Alger and Constantine, and on the mountain peaks of the Atlas, and in Kabylie.

South of Algiers stretches the great plain of the Mitidja, which is like no other part of the earth’s surface so much as it is like Normandy with respect to its prairies, “la Beauce” for its wheat-fields and its grazing-grounds, and the Bordelais for its vineyards.

At the western extremity of the Mitidja commence the orange-groves of Blida, the forests of olive-trees, and the eucalyptus of La Trappe. The scene is immensely varied and suggestive of untold wealth and prosperity at every kilometre.

Suburban Algiers is thickly built with villas, more or less after the Moorish style, but owned by Europeans. Recently the wealthy Arab has taken to building his “country house” on similar gracious lines; and, when he does, he keeps pretty near to accepted Moorish elements and details, whereas the European, the *colon*, or the *commerçant* grown rich, carries out his idea on the Meudon or St. Cloud plan. The Moorish part is all there, but the thing often doesn’t hang together.

To the eastward back of the mountains of Kabylie lies the great plateau region of the Tell.

The Tell is a region vastly different in manners and customs from either the desert or the Algerian littoral. The manners of the nomad of the Sahara here blend into those of the farming peasant; but, by the time Batna is reached, they become tainted with the commercialism of the outside world. At Constantine there is much European influence at work, and at the seacoast towns of Bona or

Philippeville the Oriental perfume of the date-palm is lost in that of the smells and cosmopolitanism usually associated with great seaports. These four distinct characteristics mark four distinct regions of the Numidia of the ancients, to-day the wheat-growing region of the Tell.

The principal mountain peaks in Algeria rise to no great heights. Touabet, near Tlemcen, is 1,620 metres in height; the highest peak of the Grand Kabylie Range, in the province of Alger, is 2,308 metres; and Chelia, in Constantine, 2,328 metres. They are not bold, rugged mountains, but rolling, rounded crests, often destitute of verdure to the point of desolation.

The development of the regions forming the *hinterland*— practically one may so call the Sahara — is of constant and assiduous care to the authorities. They have done much and are doing much more as statistics indicate.

In the valley of the Oued-Righ and the Ziban, one of the most favoured of these borderlands, the government statistics of springs and oases are as follows (1880-90): —

Oases,	38	
Springs,	434	
Palms,	518,000	
Other fruit-trees,	90,000	
Value of crops,	5,500,500	frs.
Inhabitants,	12,827	

And as the population increases and fruit-growing areas are further developed, the military engineers come along and dig more wells.

The following average temperatures and rainfall show the contrast between various regions: —

		January	August	Rainfall
		(Centigrade)	(Centigrade)	(Millimetres)
Mountains —	Tlemcen	9.2	26	524
	Fort Nationale	10.1	27	982
	Constantine	8.5	26	408
Plateaux —	Géryville	7.2	25.3	126
	Djeefâ	7.2	27.6	176
	Tebessa	8.1	27.7	251

It will be noted that, normally, there is very little difference in temperature, and a very considerable difference in rainfall.

The extreme recorded winter temperatures are as follows: —

1906	Aumale	8°	centigrade
	Laghouat	45°	“
1905	Laghouat	7°	“
	Biskra	47°	“
1904	Aumale	3°	“
	Tunis	14°	“

Algeria has something like 3,100 kilometres of standard gauge railway, and various light railways, or narrow gauge roads, of from ten to fifty kilometres in length, aggregating perhaps five hundred kilometres more. Railway building and development is going on constantly, but they don't yet know what an express train is, and the sleeping and dining car services are almost as bad as they are in England. The real up-to-date sleeping-car has electric lights and hot and cold water as well as steam heat. They have dreamed of none of these things yet in England or Africa.

The railway is the chief civilizing developer of a country. The railway receipts in Algeria in 1870 were 2,500,000 francs. In 1900 they were 26,000,000 francs. That's an increase of a thousand per cent., and it all came out of the country.

The "Routes Nationales" of Algeria (not counting by-roads, etc.), the real arteries of the life-blood of the country, at the same periods numbered almost an equal extent, and they are still being built. Give a new country good roads and good railways and it is bound to prosper.

Four millions of the total population of Algeria (including something over two hundred thousand Europeans) are dependent upon agriculture for their livelihood. Wheat, wine and tobacco rank in importance in the order named.

The growth of the wine industry has been most remarkable.

In	1872	4,994,000	gallons were produced
"	1880	9,504,000	"
"	1888	60,742,000	"
"	1898	100,194,600	"

None of it is sold as Bordeaux or Burgundy, at least not by the Algerian grower or dealer. It is quite good enough to sell on its own merits. Let Australia, then, fabricate so-called "Burgundy" and Germany "Champagne" – Algeria has no need for any of these wiles.

Grapes, figs and plums are seemingly better in Algeria than elsewhere. Not better, perhaps, but they are so abundant that one eats only of the best. The rest are exported to England and Germany. The little *mandarin* oranges from Blida and about there, are one of the stand-bys of Algerian trade. So are olives and dates.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE RÉGENCE OF TUNISIA AND THE TUNISIANS

FOR twenty years France has been putting forth her best efforts and energies into the development of Tunisia, to make it a worthy and helpful sister to Algeria. From a French population of seven hundred at the time of the occupation in 1882, the number has risen to fifty thousand.

Tunisia of to-day was the Lybia of the ancients; but whether it was peopled originally from Spain, from Egypt or from peoples from the south, history is silent, or at least is not convincingly loud-voiced.

Lybian, Punic, Roman, Vandal and Byzantine, the country became in turn, then Mussulman; for the native Tunisian has not yet become French. The Bey still reigns, though with a shorn fragment of his former powers. The Bey is still the titular head of his Régence, but the French Résident Général is really the *premier fonctionnaire*, as also he is the Bey's Ministère des Affaires Étrangères.

The ancient governmental organization of the Bey has been retained with respect to interior affairs. The Caïds are the local governors or administrators of the territorial divisions and are appointed by the Bey himself. They are charged with the policing of their districts, the collecting of taxes, and are vested with a certain military authority with which to impress their tribes. Associated with the Caïds, as seconds in command, are a class called Khalifas, and as tax collectors, mere civil authorities, there are finally the Sheiks.

It was a bitter pill for Italy when France took the ascendancy in Tunis. The population of the city of Tunis to-day still figures 30,000 Italians and Maltese as against 10,000 French, – and ever have the French anti-expansionists called it a “*chinoiserie*.” Call it what you will, Tunis, in spite of its preponderant Italian influence, is fast becoming French. It is also becoming prosperous, which is the chief end of man's existence. This proves France's intervention to have been a good thing, in spite of the fact that it accounts for seventy-five per cent. of the Italian's animosity towards his Gallic sister.

The death of S. A. Saddok-Bey in 1882, by which the Tunisian sovereign became subservient to the French Resident, was an event which caused some apprehension in France.

The new ruler, Si-Ali-Bey, embraced gladly the French suzerainty in his land that his sons might see the institutions of the Régence prosper under the benign guidance of a world power. Ali-Bey resisted nothing French, – even as a Prince, – and when he came to the Beylicale throne in 1882 he gave no thought whatever to the ultimate political independence of his country. He was ever, until his death, the faithful, liberal coöperator with the succession of Résidents Généreaux who superseded him in the control of the real destinies of Tunisia.

As a sovereign he formerly stood as the absolute ruler of a million souls, not only their political ruler, but their religious head as well. The latter title still belongs to the Bey. (The present ruler, Mohammed-en-Nacer-Bey, came into power upon the death of his predecessor, Mohammed-el-Hadi-Bey in 1906.)

French political administration has robbed the power of the Bey of many of its picturesque and romantic accessories; but the usages of Islam are tolerated not only in the entourage of the Bey, but in all his subjects as well. This toleration even grants them the sanctity of their mosques, and does not allow the hordes of Christian tourists, who now make a playground of Mediterranean Africa from Cairo to Fez, to desecrate them by writing their names in Mohammedan sacred places. In other words, Europeans are forbidden to enter any of the Tunisian mosques save those at Kairouan.

It was Ali-Bey who achieved the task of making the masses understand that their duty was to obey the new régime; that it was a law common to them all that would assure the prosperity of the nation; and that it was he, the Bey, who was still the titular head of their religion, which, after all, is the Mussulman's chief concern in life.

Might makes right, often enough in a maladroit fashion, but sometimes it comes as a real blessing. This was the case with the coming of the French to Tunisia. A highly organized army was a necessity for Tunisia, and within the last quarter of a century she has got it. The French were far-seeing enough to anticipate the probable eventuality which might grow out of England's side-long glances towards Bizerte, and the Italian sphere of influence in Tripoli. Now those fears, not by any means imaginary ones at the time, are dead. England must be content with Gibraltar, and Italy with Sardinia. There are no more Mediterranean worlds to conquer, or there will not be after France absorbs Tripoli in Barbary, and Morocco, and the mortgages are maturing fast.

To-day the Tunisians are taxed less than they ever were before, and are better policed, protected and cared for in every way. Their millennium seems to have arrived. France, with the coöperation of the Bey, dispenses the law and the prophets after the patriarchal manner which Saint Louis inaugurated at Carthage in the thirteenth century.

The justice of Ali-Bey and Mohammed-el-Hadi-Bey was an improvement over that of their predecessors, which was tyrannical to an extreme. The Spartan or Druidical under-the-oak justice, and worse, gave way to a formal recognized code of laws which the French authorities evolved from the heritage of the Koran, and very well indeed it has worked.

The Bey had become a veritable father of his people, and was accessible to all who had business with him, meriting and receiving the true veneration of all the Tunisian population of Turks, Jews and Arabs. He interpreted the laws of Mahomet with liberality to all, and from his palace of La Marsa dispensed an incalculable charity.

The present Bey is not an old and tried law-maker or soldier like his predecessors, and beyond a few simple phrases is not even conversant with the French language. He is a Mussulman *in toto*, but his régime seems to run smoothly, and day by day the country of his forefathers prospers and its people grow fat. Some day an even greater prosperity is due to come to Tunisia, and then the Beylicale incumbent will be covered with further glories, if not further powers. This will come when the great trade-route from the Mediterranean to the heart of Africa, to Lake Tchad, is opened through the Sud-Tunisien and Tripoli, which will be long before the African interior railway dreamed of by the late Cecil Rhodes comes into being.

French influence in Africa will then receive a commercial expansion that is its due, and another Islamic land will come unconsciously under the sway of Christian civilization.

The obsequies of the late Bey of Tunis were an impressive and unusual ceremony. The eve before, the prince who was to reign henceforth received the proclamation of his powers at the Bardo, when he was invested with the Beylicale honours by the authorities of France and Tunisia.

The funeral of the dead Bey was more pompous than any other of his predecessors. He died at his palace at La Marsa and lay in state for a time in his own particular "Holy City," Kassar-Saïd, on the route to Bizerte, where were present all his immediate family. Prince Mohammed-en-Nacer, the Bey to be, was so overcome with a crisis of nerves that he fell swooning at the ceremony, with difficulty pulling himself together sufficiently to proceed.

The progress of the cortége towards Tunis, the capital, was through the lined-up ranks of fifty thousand Mussulmans lying prostrate on the ground. Entrance to the city was by the Sidi-Abdallah Gate, and thence to the Kasba. The Mussulman population crowded the roof-tops and towers of the entire city. The military guard of the Zouaves, the Chasseurs d'Afrique, and the Beylicale cavalry formed a contrasting lively note to the solemnity of the religious proceedings, though nothing could drown the fervent wails and shouts of "*La illah allah, Mohammed Rassone Allah! Sidi Ali-Bey!*" the Arabic substitute for "The King is dead! Long live the King!"

Before the Grande Mosquée the Unans-Muftis and the Bach-Muftis recited their special prayers, and all the dignitaries of the new court came to kiss the hand of the reigning prince, who, at the Gate of Dar-el-Bey, was saluted by the Résident Général of France.

The Tomb of the Beys, the Tourbet et Bey, is the sepulchre of all the princes of the house, each being buried in a separate marble sarcophagus, but practically in a common grave.

A fanatical expression which was not countenanced, but which frequently came to pass nevertheless, was the crawling beneath the litter on which reposed the remains of the defunct Bey by numerous Mussulman devotees. The necromancy of it all is to the effect that he who should pass beneath the body of a dead Mussulman ruler would attain pardon for any faults ever afterwards committed. Seemingly it occurred to the authorities that it was putting a premium on crime, and so it was suppressed, and rightly enough.

The political status of the native of Tunisia to-day is similar to that of his brother of Algeria. It is incontestable that the Tunisian's status under Beylical rule was not wholly comfortable, for the *indigènes* were ruled in a manner little short of tyrannical; but the Arab lived always in expectation of bettering his position, in spite of being either a serf or a ground-down menial. To-day he has only the state of the ordinary French citizen to look forward to, and has no hope of becoming a tyrant himself. This is his chief grievance as seen by an outsider, though indeed when you discuss the matter with him he has a long line of complaints to enumerate.

Things have greatly improved in Tunisia since the French came into control. Formerly the native, or the outlander, had no appeal from the Beylical rule short of being hanged if he didn't like his original sentence. To-day, with a mixed tribunal of Tunisian and French officials, he has a far easier time of it even though he be a delinquent. He gets his deserts, but no vituperative punishments.

One thing the Tunisian Arab may not do under French rule. He may not leave the Régence, even though he objects to living there. The French forbid this. They keep the *indigènes* at home for their country's good, instead of sending them away. It keeps a good balance of things anyway, and the law of the Koran as interpreted by the powers of Tunis is as good for the control of a subject people as that of the Code Napoleon.

The Tunisians, the common people of Tunis, are protégés of France, and France is doing her best to protect them and lead them to prosperity, assisted of course by the good-will and influence of the ruling Bey, whom she keeps in luxury and quasi-power.

Formerly when the native ruler did not care to be bothered with any particular class of subjects, whether they were Turks or Jews, he banished them, but the French officials consider this a superfluous prodigality, and keep all ranks at home and as contented as possible in their work of developing their country.

The one thing that the French will not have is a wholesale immigration of the Arab population of either Algeria or Tunisia. To benefit by a change of air, the *indigène* of whatever rank must have a special permission from the government before he will be allowed to embark on board ship, or he will have to become a stowaway. Very many get this special permission, for one reason or another, but to many it is refused, and for good and sufficient reasons. To the merchant who would develop a commerce in the wheat of the plateau-lands, the barley of the Sahel, or the dates of the oasis, permission is granted readily enough; and to the young student who would study law or medicine at Aix, Montpellier or Paris; but not to the able-bodied cultivator of the fields. He is wanted at home to grow up with the country.

Tunis *la ville* and Tunisia *le pays* are more mediæval and more Oriental than Algiers or Algeria. In Tunis, as in every Arab town, as in Constantinople or Cairo, you may yet walk the streets feeling all the oppression of that silence which "follows you still," and of a patient, lack-lustre stare, still regarding you as "an unaccountable, uncomfortable work of God, that may have been sent for some good purpose – to be revealed hereafter."

The morality and the methods of the traders of the bazars and *souks* remain as Kinglake and Burton described them in their day, something not yet understood by the ordinary Occidental.

This sort of thing is at its best at Tunis. Wine, olives, dates and phosphates are each contributing to the prosperity of Tunis to a remarkable degree, and the development of each industry is increasing

as nowhere else, not even in Algeria. In 1900 the vineyards of Tunisia increased over two thousand hectares, and in all numbered nearly twelve thousand hectares, of which one-quarter at least were native owned.

The wine crop in 1900 was 225,000 hectolitres, an increase of nearly thirty per cent, over the season before, and it is still increasing. The olive brings an enormous profit to its exploiters, and the Tunisian olive and Tunisian olive oil rank high in the markets of the world. Originally ancient Lybia was one of the first countries known to produce olive oil on a commercial scale. All varieties of olive are grown on Tunisian soil. The illustration herewith marks the species.

The art of making olive oil goes back to the god Mercury. In the time of Moses and of Job the culture of the olive was greatly in repute. The exotics of the East and of Greece took the olive-leaf for a symbol, but the fighting, quarrelsome Romans would have none of it; the bay leaf and the palm of victory were all-sufficient for them.

They soon came to know its value, however, when they overran North Africa, and they exploited the olive-groves as they did the plateau wheat belt. Cæsar even nourished his armies on such other local products as figs and dates and found them strength-giving and sinew-making. North Africa has ever been a *garde-manger* of nations.

What Tunisia needs is capital, and everybody knows it. The date-palm and the olive give the greatest return of all the agricultural exploitations of the country, and after them the vine, and finally the orange-tree, the lemon-tree, the fig and the almond. Each and every one of these fruits requires a different condition of soil and climate. Fortunately all are here, and that is why Tunisia is going some day to be a gold mine for all who invest their capital in the exploitation of its soil.

The date requires a warmth and dryness of atmosphere which is found nowhere so suitable as in the Djerid and the Nefzaoua in the south. Here the soil is of just the right sandy composition, and rain is comparatively unknown. For this reason the date here flourishes better than the olive, which accommodates itself readily to the Sahel and the mountains of the north. Of the vast production of dates in this region, by far the greater part is consumed at home, the exportation of a million francs' worth per annum being but a small proportion of the whole.

Almost every newly exploited tourist ground has an individual brand of pottery which collectors rave over, though it may be the ordinary variety of cooking utensils which are common to the region. This is true of Tunis and the potteries of Nabeul.

Besides mere utilitarian articles for domestic use, the shapes and forms which these Arab pottery-workers give to their vases and jugs make them really characteristic and beautiful *objets d'art*; and they are not expensive. The loving marks of the potter's thumb are over all, and his crude ideas of form and colour are something which more highly trained craftsmen often miss when they come to manufacturing "art-pottery," as the name is known to collectors.

A *cruchon* decorated with a band of angular camels and queer zigzag rows of green or red has more of that quality called "character" than the finest *lustre* of the Golfe de Jouan or the faïence of Rouen. For five francs one may buy three very imposing examples of jugs, vases or water-bottles, and make his friends at home as happy as if he brought them a string of coral (made of celluloid, which is mostly what one gets in Italy to-day), or a carved ivory elephant of the Indies (made in Belgium of zylonite). The real art sense often expresses itself in the common, ordinary products of a country, though not every tourist seems to know this. Let the collector who wants a new fad collect "peasant pottery," and never pay over half a dollar for any one piece.

Closely allied with the pottery of Nabeul is a more commercially grand enterprise which has recently been undertaken in the Sahel south of Tunis. Not all the wealth of the vastly productive though undeveloped countryside lies in cereals, phosphates or olive-trees. There is a species of clay which is suitable, apparently, to all forms of ceramic fabrication.

In one of the most picturesque corners of the littoral, just south of Monastir, is a factory which turns out the most beautiful glazed brick and tiles that one ever cast his eye upon. The red-tiled roof of

convention may now be expected to give way to one of iridescent, dazzling green, if the industry goes on prospering; and no more will the brick-yards of Marseilles sell their dull, conventional product throughout Tunisia; and no more will the steamship companies grow wealthy off this dead-weight freight. The Italian or Maltese *balancelle* will deliver these magnificent coloured bricks and tiles of Monastir all over the Mediterranean shores; and a variety of colour will come into the landscape of the fishermen's huts and the farmhouses which the artists of a former generation knew not of.

Tunis is undergoing a great commercial development, and if the gold of Ophir is not some day found beneath its soil, many who have predicted its undeveloped riches will be surprised and disappointed.

The railways of Tunisia are not at all adequate to the needs of the country, but they are growing rapidly. When the line is finally built linking Sousse and Sfax (the service is now performed by automobile by travellers, or on camel-back; or by Italian or Arab *barques* by water, for merchandise), there will be approximately 1,700 kilometres of single-track road. Algeria with an area four times as great has but 3,100 kilometres of railway.

The railway exploitation of Tunisia has not as yet brought any great profit to its founders. The net profit after the cost of exploitation, in 1904, was but half a million francs; but it has a bright future.

Great efforts are being made by the government authorities, and the railway officials as well, towards colonizing the Régence with *French citizens*. A million and a half of francs have already been spent by the government, in addition to free grants of land, towards this colonization, and in 1904 alone land to the value of a million and a half was sold to *French* immigrants.

If one wants to travel into the interior of Tunisia, off the beaten track, say to Médenine, beyond Gabès; or to Tozeur, he should find some way of fitting himself out with an authorization and recommendation from the French "civil control." This recommendation will be written in Arabic, and one will not be able to read it, nor will half the officials to whom it is shown *en route*; but one and all will be impressed by the official seal, the parchment, the heading "Praise to Allah the only God," and the date at the bottom, – which will read something as follows: 22 Djoumada 2d, 1307, – this being the date of the Hegira. Any document as mysterious and formal as this will accomplish much anywhere, so far as its powers as an open sesame are concerned.

## CHAPTER V

# THE RELIGION OF THE MUSSULMAN

NO one unless he be a Mohammedan can hope to experience the sentiments and emotions born of the Mussulman religion, or explain the fundamental principles of the Koran. It is a thing apart from all other religions, and though we may recognize many of its principles as being good and worthy, only one of the faithful can really absorb them as a part of his daily life.

The one underlying tenet which we all recognize as being something understood of all people, be they fanatics or not, is that of the purification by water. No Mussulman commences his devotions without first washing himself; he may take a conventional bath; he may wash his feet, face and hands; or he may go through a mere perfunctory sprinkling; but the form or ceremony has been complied with, and then, and then only, may he invoke Allah and his Prophet.

From the Atlantic to the Malay seas, from Turkestan to the Congo, more than two hundred millions of men proclaim that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is his Prophet. Besides these well-defined geographical limits, the Mohammedans are everywhere. You find them in China, in Japan, in India, in the Philippines, and scattered throughout Continental Europe. The strength of Islam is everywhere in evidence. And whether it is mere tribal warfare that brings it to our notice, or a “Holy War” against the infidels of Christians, as is really the case in Morocco at the present time, it is to be reckoned with as a power, as much so as the “yellow plague” of the Chinese and Japanese.

In all Islamic lands religion stands first. The Sultans – those of Constantinople and Fez – are religious heads even before they are accounted as chiefs of the state. And through its sub-heads and brotherhoods and secret societies, Islamism is spreading with a rapidity which most of the supposedly worldly-wise have hitherto ignored entirely.

In the African possessions of France alone there are in the neighbourhood of a hundred head-centres of Islamism which, until a very recent time, preached obstruction to the foreigner – and perhaps still does so in secret. France came to know and realize this very soon, and when she took over the civil and military charge of Algeria and Tunisia, she recognized the only successful policy as being one of coöperation and not of coercion. Three hundred organizations, then, – more religious sects or communities than political divisions of a people – were kept intact in most instances, and the Sheiks who formerly got obedience from their people as the sub-religious heads of this vast organization became practically mayors, councillors and justices of the peace. It was the only thing to do, and how well it has worked is best shown by the fact that Algeria has become the most flourishing and loyal of all French colonies.

These Sheiks of Algeria and Tunisia, to whom France has granted so much complimentary power, contributed in cash, in 1890, the sum of sixteen millions of francs which they had collected of their fellow Mussulmans. A gigantic sum when it is realized that it may originally have been paid to the Sheik in kind, a quintal of wheat, a half dozen sheep, or a few hundred kilos of dates. The Sheik doubtless makes something for himself as all this commodity passes through his hands, but what would you, official sinning is not confined to Mohammedans.

In return for his services the Arab Sheik, the emissary of the French civil control, gets a more modest salary than would his Gallic substitute, and he does his work more efficiently. His powers, with the backing of France, have been largely increased, even with his own people, and he is a part of a great political machine. He may even be a very learned person, an expert linguist in French, and the bearer of many decorations, even the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour. Is it any wonder that his country is peaceful and everybody satisfied! He breaks out once and again with some childish, petulant protest and compromises the whole thing; but then some French official at headquarters

makes him a present of a gross of wax candles, a bird-cage or a phonograph, and again everything runs smoothly for a space.

Before the time of Mohammed the Arabs professed diverse religions; some were Christians; some were Jews; some were fire-worshippers; and some mere idol-worshippers. Among this latter were a sect who made great idols of dough which in time became baked or very nearly petrified, and thus served the tribe of the Beni Hafa as food in time of famine. A very practical religion this!

“There is no God but Allah  
And Mohammed is his prophet.”

The faith of Islam is an obscure thing. It is supposedly a compound of the Christian and Hebrew religions – with variations. The sects of Islam are many, the two chief being the Shiites and the Sunnites. The former recognized Ali, the cousin of Mohammed, as the true successor of the Prophet, and collectively they form the major part of the Mussulman faith of India and Persia.

The orthodox followers of the Prophet, the faithful of Turkey, Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, have added to the precepts of the Koran the books of traditional sayings and maxims of the Prophet (a sort of Apocrypha, it would seem), and recognize as his successors the first four Kalifs – those of Bagdad, Cairo, Constantinople and Fez – as the legitimate successors of Mohammed.

This chief orthodox sect is further subdivided into Hanefites, Malikites, Shafiites and Hanabites, – foundations of various relations of the Prophet. They vary somewhat in their interpretations of the Koran and certain conclusions with regard to the “law” of the Prophet, but they are as one with regard to the precepts of purification, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and charity towards their fellow men, and against the outside world of infidels.

The Arabs and *Berbères Arabisés* of North Africa are mostly Hanefites and Malikites.

Five times a day the Mussulman prays: (i) at *fedjeur* (daybreak – before sunrise); (ii) at *eulam* (after meridian); (iii) at *dohar* (midway between noon and nightfall); (iv) at *aseur* (just after sunset, when his day of labour is finished); and (v) at *mogreb* (when night actually falls). There is sometimes a sixth prayer at *eucha* (supper-time).

Not all professing Mussulmans pray five times a day. There are backsliders in the Mussulman religion as in other religions; but both in the cities and the countryside the truly devout, singly, or even in groups of a score or a hundred at a time, make their “sunset devotions” with regularity and impressiveness. The devout Arab will dismount from his horse, mule or camel, will come out of his tent or house, and will even alight from a railway train or diligence if opportunity offers, and say his sunset prayer in the open air. The Mussulman does not invariably need the stimulus of a temple to express himself towards his God. In that respect he is certainly far ahead of some of the other sects found throughout the world.

The spectacle of the Mussulman’s sunset prayer in the desert – standing barefooted on his little rug or carpet and facing the east and Mecca – is impressive beyond words; and not even the most skeptical would deny to the simple faith of Islam the virtues granted to many religions more ceremoniously complicated. The ceremonies in the mosques are less impressive than those in the open air.

The following résumé of the symbolism of the eight positions of the Mussulmans’ prayer explains the attitudes and postures that one remarks everywhere in the world of Islam.

I. Standing. “I offer my God, with sincere heart and with my face towards Mecca, two *rakôh* (prayers).

II. Still standing, but with open palms raised to each side of the face, the thumbs touching the ears – “God is Great!”

III. Still standing; with the right hand crossing the left over the chest, he repeats, “Holiness to Thee, oh, God! Praise be to

Thee! Great is Thy name!” – and other prayers from the Koran.

IV. Still standing; the body inclined forward and the hands, with fingers separated, placed upon the knees. “I extol the Sanctity of the Great God!”

V. Falling upon the knees – “God is Great!”

VI. Still on the knees he makes a bow (three times repeated), the forehead and nose touching the ground, “I extol the Sanctity of my God, the Most High!”

This practically finishes one *rakôh*, but there are usually added certain recitations from the first chapter of the Koran, with perhaps a repetition of the postures.

VII. Before finally leaving the place of prayer the act of witness, *Tashabhud*, is given. He raises the forefinger of his right hand and repeats: “I affirm that there is no God but God and that Mohammed is the Apostle of God.”

VIII. The last position is the *Munjat*, or supplication, when are repeated certain suitable verses of the Koran.

Christ enters into the Mussulman religion as one of the Prophets of God. They believe that Christ was, before the coming of Mohammed, the greatest of all Prophets.

All good Mussulmans recite the prayers of their beads, just as all good Catholics say their chaplets. The Mussulman has a string of ninety-nine beads, each standing for one of the ninety-nine perfections of Allah. This rosary is often elaborate and costly, interspersed here and there with jewels; but more often than not, even with wealthy Mussulmans, it is a string of crude wooden beads. The faith of Islam is a simple one, not a showy one.

The Friday prayer at the mosques is one of the events to see in a Mussulman country. Public prayer is a social event with Mohammedans, as it is with many Christians. Soon after the sun has marked high noon, and while the siesta is still the chief blessing with many, the throng follows the first *zoual* or call of the *muezzin*.

Everything is burning and brilliant under an ardent southern sun, and a scintillating, dazzling reflection comes from each whitewashed wall until one is almost blinded. After this the cool shadows of the mosque are most refreshing. Barefooted the Mussulman throng threads its way among the myriad pillars of the court and enters the sanctuary where daylight filters dimly through a sieve of iron-latticed windows.

Praying men are everywhere, – men of the town, and nomad Arabs from the desert whose business has brought them thither. The women are all at the cemetery talking scandal, for except on special occasions, the Mussulman women are not admitted to the Holy Day (Friday) prayers in the mosques. This is in accordance to the law of the Prophet. Under a great dome a ruddier, more brilliant light showers down on the students and professors who psalm the verses of the Koran in a monotonous wail; while still farther to the rear is the infants’ school, whose pupils repeat their lessons in crackling singsong voices all day long to a pair of bearded, turbaned elders. Here and there, backed up against a pillar, a *taleb* recites his litany to the Prophet. All these voices blend in a murmur undistinguishable from any other conglomerate sound, except that it is manifestly human.

Suddenly, from high above, on the gallery of the minaret, rings out the *muezzin’s* second call to prayer, and like the reverberant light, it seems to filter down from the unknown.

With face towards Mecca the *imam* reads the Khotba, a long, dreary prayer of exhortation, but no more monotonous than the cut and dried sermon which one mostly gets in Christian churches. The *imam* is not a priest as is known of Christendom; the religion of Islam has no regular clergy; he is simply the wisest elder among the personnel of the mosque.

All through the service, as indeed at all times, a great calm reigns throughout every Mohammedan mosque. At the end of the last exhorting couplet issuing from between the lips of the *imam* a naïve joy, as of a relief from a great oppression, spreads over the assembled faithful and all rush for the open, as do congregations of other faiths. One religion is not so very different from another after all. It is only a matter of belief, not of the mode of expressing one’s adherence to that belief.

“*May peace be thine, O Mohammed, Prophet of God. Ruler of Mecca and Medina and Lord of all Mussulmans now and always.*”

This finishes the service of the mosque.

From the opaque obscurity of the maze of the mosque’s interior one comes suddenly again into the light of day. To a burning African landscape from the humidity of a cloister.

Woman’s position in Islam is peculiar. It is not according to our notions of what is right and proper, and there is no looked-for or hoped-for emancipation to be thought of. The question is both a social and a religious one. Those few Europeans who have really studied the harem as an institution have found, however, that its establishment and continuance is a plan that works well, and that the majority of these supposedly unhappy wives really love their husbands, and their destiny. If this is so, what business is it of ours to criticize the conduct of the *ménage* of the Arab or the Turk. The Prophet himself said that woman was the jewel and the perfume of this world.

Theoretically the Mussulman idea is that man is the superior creature physically, and that it is his business alone to mingle and rub shoulders with the world, leaving his wives, members of the fragile sex, to raise his family, embellish his life and console him in time of grief. All other things apart, surely these are good enough principles for anybody to found domestic bliss upon. And these are the principal tenets of the domestic creed of the Moslem. He is often not the villain he is painted. To continue the words of the Prophet – Mohammed said one day to his companions: “Would you know the most valuable possession of man? It is, then, an honest woman. She charms the eye, and is obedient, and guards his reputation intact during his absence from home.” Really the Islamic faith goes a bit farther, for it counsels man to “cloister his wife as a prevention of jealousy and doubt, the mortal poisons, the terrible unpitying destroyers of conjugal quietude.” This, too, seems good advice, like many other of the precepts of the Koran.

Many of these Arab women were born within the harem’s walls, and know not any other modes of life as preferable to their own. They regard the daily round of liberty of the European woman as an unreal, undesirable state. The harem has been the theatre of their joys since infancy, and they have become so habituated to it that their life of seclusion becomes a second nature. They would not flee the sill of the great doorway into the outer world if they could, and their only change of *locale* is to pass from the harem of the husband of their mother to that of their spouse. In the harem the Arab woman is cared for with an unthought-of luxury. All the goods and chattels that their husband values most go to enrich the harem walls and floors. The harem is a sumptuous, glorious apartment compared to the simplicity with which the master of the house surrounds himself in his own quarters.

It is the opinion of that indefatigable traveller and student of exotic things, Edmond de Amicis, that the Arab concedes nothing to the European in his chivalrous treatment of woman. “No Arab dares lift an offending hand against a woman in public.” “No Arab soldier, even in the tumult of attack, would think of maltreating even the most insolent of womenkind.” And yet Europeans of most nationalities have been known to do both these things.

In her cloister, or to be more exact, in her boudoir, the Arab woman, and particularly the mother, receives the most respectful homage and solicitude from all the household. According to the Koran the children are admonished to respect the persons of those who bore them, and a verbal declaration of the Prophet is set down as: “A child may gain Paradise only by following in the footsteps of its mother.”

The educated and advanced Arabs of the towns have done much to disabuse the public of any false preconceived ideas concerning Arab womenfolk. Contrary to common belief the Arab woman is often the intellectual and social equal of her spouse. It was only the absurd jealousy of the old-school Mussulmans that annihilated for ever the faculties of their wives.

The portrait gallery of celebrated Mussulman women is not large, but one does not forget Zobeïdah, who inspired and aided the illustrious Haroun-Al-Rachid. Islam is not in its decadence, but its sponsors are awakening to the fact that they must keep abreast of the times.

The Friday promenade of the Mussulman woman of the towns to the cemetery is her only outing, the only day off allowed her. She makes as much of it as possible, but it is a sad proceeding at best.

The Arab tomb is, generally speaking, a thing of simplicity, a simple slab bearing the Arab words for the sentiment “*Hic jacet.*” The exception is in the *marabout* tombs or *koubas*, which are often monumental, though of comparatively small dimensions, well built, symmetrical, and surmounted by a dome or cupola.

The word *marabout* signifies first of all a holy man of the Mohammedan sect, a *religieux* in fact, one whose vows, life and service is devoted to his God. Furthermore the same word is applied to the tiny mosque-like tombs distributed throughout the Arab peopled lands, which are served by a *marabout*. The two entities have become somehow indistinguishable as to name.

The *mosque-marabout* is practically a tiny house of worship, its four box-like walls surmounted by one great dome or others smaller, with never, never a minaret, the invariable adjunct of a full-grown mosque. The quaint, kindly welcome of the marabout of Algeria and Tunisia will long remain in the memory of those who have come under its influence, as did the author in the course of some months’ sojourn in a little desert oasis, peopled only by *indigènes* and the small garrison of a French military post. An excursion to visit the marabout in his humble dwelling, some kilometres away under another little clump of palm-trees, was an almost weekly occurrence. Conversation was difficult, but we all sat and looked at each other and made signs, and nodded, and clasped hands, and again nodded a farewell, the white-clad marabout’s kindly, bearded face lighting up meanwhile as if in appreciation of the glimmer of light from the outside world which had filtered through to his tranquil abode. Nothing ever more belied the words of a proverb than a marabout. The French have a remark in which he is made out an ugly, uncouth man: “*Affreux comme un marabout.*” The illustration herewith belies these words.

If you are a clergyman of the Christian church, and there are many “conducted tourists” of that order in Algeria to-day, you need have no hesitancy in making your profession of faith known to the marabout. Say simply that you are a “*marabout d’Aïssa.*” He will recognize and respect your religion, which is more than the Confucian or Buddhist will, who simply rolls his tongue in his cheek and smiles blandly. The Mohammedan’s religion is a very plausible and a very well-working one. He has no false gods or idols. That’s a good thing of itself. And superstition plays a very small part therein. That’s another good thing. The marabout is not a Mussulman priest, but a member, merely, of a religious order, – a monk virtually, and, as there are communities of monkish orders elsewhere, there are also whole tribes in Africa composed entirely of marabouts. They are looked up to by the Mussulman faithful as shepherds of the flock in the absence of a specially credentialled priest or father.

The marabouts are most numerous in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, though their vocation properly belongs to the entire Mussulman religion.

A whole tribe of the sect of marabouts, under the pretext of wishing to be free to practise their rites away from worldly contaminating influences, voluntarily exiled themselves centuries ago in the Atlas range bordering the northern limits of the Sahara. This was in 1050. From this procedure these religionists grew to such power and influence that they became virtually political rulers as well. They conquered the kingdoms of Fez and Morocco, and even sought to conquer Spain, emigrating to the southern peninsula in vast numbers, only to be chased from there to seek a refuge in Majorca, which they were able to do because of the bounty of the Mussulman King of Cordova, to whom the suzerainty belonged. Here they were known under the name of *Almoravides*, and to them was due the invention of the Spanish money known as *maravédis*.

The marabout is caricatured a little, too, in the name given to a fat-bellied copper coffee-pot frequently met with in the Mediterranean countries. Balzac describes the *batterie de cuisine* of one of his characters as consisting of *un chaudron, un gril, une casserole et trois marabouts*.

One of the greatest Mussulman saints, and the one who is the most frequently invoked, was Sidi-el-Hadji-Abd-el-Kader-el-Djilali. His tomb is at Bagdad, but all Algeria is strewn with *koubas* in his honour. He is particularly the patron saint of the blind, but the lame and the halt invoke his aid as well, for he has the reputation of being the most potent and efficacious of all Mussulman saints. A marabout is generally in charge of these *koubas*, as he is with the proper tombs of other holy men. The marabout tombs, the *koubas* and the mosques are all Mussulman shrines of the same rank so far as their being holy, sanctified places is concerned.

The pilgrimage to Mecca from all Mohammedan lands is the event of their lives for the faithful who participate therein. The pilgrims going from Algeria and Tunisia are yearly becoming greater in numbers. It is as queer a composite caravan as one has ever seen which lines up at the wharves of Bona or Sfax, there to take ship for the East. By this time it has ceased to be a caravan, and has become a personally conducted excursion. The return is quite as impressive as the departure. It is then that a sort of cantata is sung or chanted, running something like the following: —

First the waiting folk on shore shout out, —

Then the pilgrims reply: —

“O pilgrims from the house of God  
Hast thou seen the Prophet of God.”

Then the pilgrims reply: —

“We have seen! We have seen!  
And we have left him in the House of God:  
There he makes his devotions,  
There he reads his holy books.”

The marabouts then endorse it all, —

“Our Seigneur Abraham is the beloved of God,  
Our Seigneur Moses is the mouthpiece of God,  
Our Seigneur Aïssa<sup>1</sup> is the spirit of God,  
But our Seigneur Mohammed is the Prophet of God.”

The memory of a Mussulman who has departed this life is not put lightly aside with the rising of the next day's sun, but a real devotion, if a silent one, goes out towards the departed for many months, and perhaps years, after his corpse is first laid out on its mat of straw in the courtyard of his domicile or before his tent.

At this moment the vague, rigid form compels the devotion of all who were near and dear to him in life. In soft cadence they bewail his death, and prayers of the utmost fervour are sent upward on his behalf. All is calm, solemn, and well-ordered, there is no hysterical excitement, no wailing clamour, and no jealous quarrellings among the heirs.

Above all others one voice cries out a sad voluminous chant. It is the “*Borda*,” the funeral elegy of a departed soul.

An Arab funeral is a solemn affair, though not necessarily imposing. A little group of indeterminate numbers lead off, then four others carrying a litter, covered with a flowing white cloth, on their shoulders. All this is usually in the first hour after sunrise. On a little plateau of desert sand, just above the deep-dug grave, the corpse is finally placed, the company ranged about in a semicircle

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<sup>1</sup> The name the Arabs give Jesus Christ.

for one last, long, lingering prayer. The face of the corpse is turned always towards the holy city, Mecca, and when the body has been lowered into its eternal sandy cradle, and covered with a layer of sun-baked clay, and then more sand, three tiny palms are planted above. They soon wither and die, or they live, accordingly as chance favours or not, but the thing is that they be planted.

This is the end; nothing remains but for the women to come along after a decent interval and weep, never by any chance missing a Friday.

## CHAPTER VI

# ARCHITECTURE OF THE MOSQUES

GOTHIC architecture is expressive of much that a mixed or transitory style lacks, but again the Roman, or Lombard, or the later architecture of the Renaissance, have their own particular cachet quite as recognizable and quite as well defined.

Mohammedan architecture, so different in motif and treatment, is quite as expressive and, in many ways, quite as civilized as the architectural forms of Europe, and possesses in addition a certain feeling which baked clay and plaster suggests better than all other materials. A feeling which is often entirely wanting in cut stone when used to reproduce animal and plant forms.

Saracenic, Assyrian, Persian and Byzantine architectural details are all of them beautiful, if bizarre, but the Mohammedan architecture of the Moors outranks them all for sheer appeal, fantastic and less consistent though it be. Fantastic it is, but often in a simple, suggestive way, depending upon design and proportion rather than profuse decoration. This is why the mosques of Kairouan in Tunisia, or those of Tlemcen in Algeria are even more interesting than the great Mosque of Saint Sophia, or the palace corridors of the Alhambra itself, which are, in fact, but a mixture of several styles. Terra-cotta and baked clay are all right in their way, but their way is the Mohammedan builders' way, not that of the modern school architects who simulate cut stone in the same plastic products, and build up Turkish baths in palatial twenty-story Broadway hotels with the pagan decorations of ancient Rome, when what they had in mind all the time was the fountained courtyard of a Mohammedan mosque – not by any means a symbolism of paganism. Our new-school architects of the Western world sadly muddle things at times. Moorish arabesques do not mingle well with the palmer's shells of the Italian Renaissance and the English fan-lights of the brothers Adam.

The word mosque comes properly from the word *mesgid*, signifying place of adoration. The Italians make of the word, *moscheta*; the Spaniards, *meschita*; and the French, *mosquée*. All these variations are met with in North Africa. It is well to recognize them, for both Algeria and Tunisia are more "mixed" in their language and institutions than any other lands yet become affected of twentieth-century tourists. The mixture is perhaps the more likable because of its catholicity. It is certainly more interesting; but school-board and self-taught linguists will need all their wits about them to make the most of the soft, sweet tongue of a desert Arab who lisps first in French, then in Spanish and then in Italian, with perhaps an "Oh, yes!" or an "All right!" here and there. He modestly reserves his own Arabic for an exclusive harangue among his intimates.

The conventional type of mosque is undoubtedly reminiscent of the Greek basilica, but in every way more amply disposed. The plan herewith is the accepted conventional type of great mosque before it got crowded up in the cities. To-day in most large towns and cities the mosque has been shorn of many of its attributes, leaving only the inner sanctuaries remaining.

The plainness of the exterior of the mosques of North Africa is no indication of the gorgeousness of their interiors. An imposing sobriety of exterior, of all the mosques of Islam in the Moghreb, from Tlemcen to Kairouan, invariably clothes dentelled sculpture and mouldings, fine rugs and hangings, and a labyrinth of architectural fantasies possessed by no other class of civil or religious edifices extant.

The architecture of the mosques of Algeria and Tunisia, as of those of Constantinople and Cairo, is the apotheosis of a mysterious symbolism, at which the infidel can but wonder and speculate. He will never understand it, at least he will never feel it as does the Mussulman himself. It is unfortunate that we outsiders are thought of as unbelievers, but so it is. One does not forget that even twentieth-century Arab gamins at Suez and Port Saïd revile the Christian with their guttural:

“Ya Nasrani  
Kalb awani!”

This venerable abuse means nothing more or less than:

“O Nazarene  
O dog obscene!”

This comes down from tradition, for the same thing is recounted in Percy’s “Reliques.” There, in a certain anecdote, a knight calls his Mussulman opponent “*unchristian hound*,” to which the retort courteous was given as, “christen dogge.”

Of all the dainty features of a Moorish mosque none appeals to the artist as does the minaret. Minaret is the Arab name for a chandelier, lantern, signal fire, and finally the slim, graceful tower of purely Arab origin. Properly speaking it is in the application to the Mussulman place of worship, the mosque, that we know the minaret in its most poetic form. In its architectural sense, however, it is that slim, graceful, arrow-like tower which is so frequently a component part of a Moorish or Byzantine structure.

The Hebrews had a similar word for a tower which performed similar functions —*menorah*; and the Chaldeans the word *menora*; while, finally, the Syrians adopted *menortho*. Of the exotic origin of the word there is no doubt, but a minaret is first of all something more than a mere tower. It must be of special proportions, and it must be an adjunct to a more pretentious structure. Never is a minaret a thing apart.

For a comparison between the Byzantine minaret and that born of the ingenuity of the Moorish builder, the words of Théophile Gautier must be accepted as final: “The minarets of Saint Sophia (Constantinople) have not the elegance nor *svelte* of those of the Moor.”

The minaret of the mosque of the Sultan Kalaûn at Cairo is perhaps the most splendid of all contemporary works. Its height approximates two hundred feet, and though the mosque itself is ruined, its firm, square minaret, brilliant with all the fantasy of the best of Mussulman art, is to-day quite the most splendid example of its class above ground.

The minaret of El Bardenei, also at Cairo, runs the former a close second.

The square, dazzling white and more severe, though none less beautiful, minarets of Tunis and Algiers seem almost as if they were another species from the Cairene type. In reality they are not. They are one and the same thing, differing in no essential constructive element, but only in detail of decoration.

The Arabs, seemingly, have a horror of symmetry. No two structures in one street are on the same building line or at the same angle, and the sky-lines of even the Frenchified cities of Algiers and Tunis are as bizarre as that of lower New York, though not as elevated.

The Arab’s idea of a street building line is most rudimentary, but French engineers are helping him out, and boulevards, avenues and streets are being laid out, and roads and alleys straightened as opportunity offers. The Arab looks on stolidly and doesn’t in the least seem to object, though it answered him well enough previously that the doorway of his favourite mosque should be half-hidden and almost obstructed by the jutting veranda of a Moorish café, a sheep butcher’s, a silversmith’s, or a red and yellow awninged bath-house, and these, be it noted, were all set at varying angles and inclinations.

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