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THE REAL "LAND OF THE FREE" —WHERE ROAMS THE SHEIK

(Continued from Page 3)

and does not worry about the Koran's rules or whether his conduct might be approved of by the Prophet.

When he reaches early manhood he marries. If this wife nags him or bores him or does not prepare his meals according to his taste, he divorces her and takes another, according to his pleasure.

Civilized peoples, century after century, have sighed and have been troubled at the Bedouin waywardness. They have attempted time and again gently or otherwise to persuade him that he was not leading a godly and helpful existence. They have earnestly endeavored to raise the Bedouin to higher and better things. He has presented a great appeal to missionary-minded folks through ages. What a splendid achievement for any man or group of men to bring these splendid fellows into the fold; persuade them to give up their wild ways, accept a code of morals and ethics and become useful citizens!

The Bedouin''s physical prowess, his courage, his intelligence and his high spirit all command respect from other races. His laziness, his loose ideas of honesty, his rudeness and disregard of the opinion of other races, and his utter refusal to settle down and be a peaceful, law-abiding person has for centuries been the despair of all who have come into contact with him.

The Bedouin does not rebuff friendly overtures. He is even agreeable, sometimes cordial, toward the Englishman, Frenchman, German or American. He may listen with interest to what they have to say, but if they bore him or suggest that he reform, he is first amused, then annoyed. Persistence on the part of those who have tried to reform him has usually ended in disaster for the reformer.

The Bedouin asks only to be left alone. If necessary, he rebukes interference very decisively. He has proved his right to freedom by survival. It is interesting to compare the Bedouin to the North American Indian. The Indian gave way before the white man, and his numbers and his glory dwindled. He lost a continent—two continents, indeed. Civilization caught and enslaved him, tamed him.

The Bedouins, almost from the beginning of history—they claim direct descent from Ishmael, son of Hagar and Abraham, who with his mother was cast out of Abraham's house—have held their lands and the identity, their dignity. Now, as then, they roam all over Arabia, from the Arabian Sea as far as Mesopotamia and Syria, a distance of about a thousand miles. The land over which they roam and call their own is from three hundred to six hundred miles in breadth. They are men of the great, open spaces, indeed.

Since census-taking is a function of Government—the sort of Government that collects taxes—one guess is practically as good as another as to the number of Bedouins. Frederick Simpich, writing in The National Geographic in 1919, estimated that there were ten million Arabs, divided into two groups—Al Bedoo, or "The Dwellers in the Open Land," and Al Hadr, or "Dwellers in Fixed Localities."

Mr. Simpich ventured the opinion that the Bedouins are nomads from necessity rather than choice, but W. H. Porterfield, an American newspaperman, who has just returned from Arabia disagrees with this view.

Mr. Porterfield says that the Bedouin dislikes cities and a settled life. They look with scorn upon agricultural workers and industrial workers, excepting those industrialists—if they may be called such—of their own tribes who weave cloth of camel hair and goat wool, make saddles and other simple tools and accessories such as their nomadic life requires.

With their strength of numbers and their fighting ability, they could easily go into farming districts, put the peaceable farmers to rout and usurp their places. Instead of this, however, they prefer to let the farmers alone, since they provide certain foods that the Bedouin relishes and which he can get by shrewd trading and the money he extracts from travelers.

Moreover, they are aristocrats, son of The Prophet. This aristocracy does not pride itself on the ownership of property, lands, castles, serfs and overlordship. The Bedouin cares little for these things. His is rather an aristicracy of freedom. His slaves, even, after seven years of service, become freemen—provided they have embraced the Moslem faith.

When an ambitious nation fancies it would like to add Arabia to its dominion—as has happened many times throughout the ages—the Bedouin is indifferent. Let whoever will make his maps and claim that Arabia is his—a part of the Turkish empire, or of the British or of any other. What is a map? The Bedouin laughs at all of his co-called "rulers."

Recent visitors have found the Bedouins—all of the Arabs, indeed—glad to be free of the Turkish rule, which had endured for so long. The dwellers in the "Fixed Localities" submitted to this rule, but Al Bedoo grinned superciliously at the Turk tax collectors, or fell upon them, according to their whim.

In the old days the Sultan's army would go after them and capture a few camels and try to hold them for the taxes they couldn't otherwise collect. This scheme was of little satisfaction to the Turkish officials, however, for the wily Bedouin would manage to steal away the camels and get them back.

The atavistic pride in the ancient Arab civilization has broken out occasionally as the result of the appeal by the missionaries to reform and lead a higher and better life. The missionary schools in Jerusalem and at other points drew some of the younger men. Mr. Simpich recounts the activities of a group of Arab students living in Paris about the time the war broke out. One of these, a man named Najob Azoura, wrote a book, "Le Reveil de la Nation Arabe," which urged "a united Arabia, independent and progressive, a force in civilization, a cradle of renaissance of Arabian art, literature and science."

This must have been an alluring idea to the idealist among the Arabs, for their ancient tradition is unquestionably fine, particularly as regards the sciences. Mathematics owes the development of algebra to the ancestors of the modern Arab; in physics and astronomy and chemistry they did much of the fundamental work of discovery upon which these sciences today are based. The idea aroused enthusiasm among the educated Arabs but not among the Turks, who caught many of the Arab leaders in Syria and shot them.

The historians, Thatcher and Schwill, credit them with the manufacture of paper—or at least with introducing the art to Europe. The watch and clock were theirs. H. G. Wells, in his "Outline of History" says, "A century or so in advance of the West, there grew up in the Moslem world at a number of centers ,at Basra, at Kufa, at Bagdad and Cairo and at Cordoba, out of what were at first religious schools dependent upon mosques, a series of great universities. The light of these universities shone far beyond the Moslem world, and drew students to them from east and west."

The idea of getting the Bedouin to give up his powder play and revive the ancient culture of his fathers is rather amusing to those who know him. It might be compared to a scheme for getting the cowpuncher of the American plains to give up his sombrero for a silk hat of the "stove-pipe" order.

Books, telescopes for looking at the stars, holding phials of acid over Bunsen burners? Give up the desert camp-fire, the bitter coffee and the nargile for these?

Perhaps Al Hadr may become interested in such ways, but not Al Bedoo!

And why should he? Would the revival result in new work of equal value? Have these Arabs such mighty intellects that their scientific research would establish the Fourth Dimension, discover the secrets of life and of energy which baffle Western scientists?

It seems hardly likely.

From a standpoint of logic, honestly developed argument, taking into consideration the Bedouin's pleasures, his attitude of mind toward life, civilized man could hardly convince him that civilization would do for him anything else than enslave him. Culture accompanies established institutions, restrictions upon personal and group liberty. Laboratories must be kept clean, factories must supply equipment, mines and chemical plants must provide materials with which to experiment.

And why should the Bedouin change his life and habits? For does not the Yankee provide the amusing phonograph for his music and entertainment? Does not the Chinaman make silk for him to wear? Does not the Englishman give him tobacco and kerosene for his lamp? Does not the Frenchman provide perfumes and sweets?

Suppose the Bedouin's forefathers did show the Westerners how to do these things, is that fact not enough? The wily Bedouin grins and lives his life and lets other men work as much and as hard as they please.

Mr. Simpich finds it a rather astonishing thing that in his palace, in the forbidden city of Mekka, the Grand Shereef sat him down and wrote a telegram to the assembled representatives of the nations at Paris and Versailles, during the Peace Conference, asking that Arabia be admitted into the family of nations. Here was Mohammedanism making friendly overtures to Christendom! Slightly before this, when General Allenby was leading his forces into Jerusalem, Bedouin troops calmly quit the Turkish army and joined with the British in the delivery of the Holy City into Christian hands. "Shades," says Mr. Simpich, "of Peter the Hermit and Lion-Hearted Richard!"

We agree with him that this was indeed strange. We can see that it might have been taken as a sign of repentance and conversion on

(Continued on Page 6)

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The Leviathan Orchestra, under the direction of Keith Pitnam and led by Nelson Maple, is elaborately mounted for its vaudeville presentation. Special curtains and a number of new scenic effects are being used. In conjunction with the regular dance music, there are several solos, vocal as well as instrumental, and an especially fine saxophone quintette. The entire production has been staged by Robert H. Burnside of the New York Hippodrome.

In addition to the Leviathan Orchestra, the Whiteman aggregation for the U. S. S. George Washington under the leadership of "Waddy" Wadsworth. Included in this orchestra is Harry Archer, well-known pianist and composer, who wrote the music for "Paradise Alley" and several musical comedies. Other orchestras are being groomed for similar service on trans-Atlantic and coastwise vessels.

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