

لواء الإسلام

MOSLEM  
AND  
FRANK

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# **Moslem and Frank**

**Charles Martel and the Rescue of Europe from the  
Threatened Yoke of the Saracens**

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ARABIA AND ITS INHABITANTS.—LIFE AND DOCTRINE OF MOHAMMED.

The Arabian peninsula, called by the natives Jesira-al-Arab, by the Persians and Turks Arabistan, forms the south-westernmost part of Asia. It is bounded on the north by Syria and the river Euphrates, on the east by the Persian Gulf, on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the west by the Red Sea, or Arabian Gulf. Including the north-eastern desert, it occupies an area ten times the extent of that of Great Britain and Ireland. The connecting link between Asia and Africa, to which latter continent it is joined by the Isthmus of Suez, it presents in its natural features, a faithful copy of its colossal tropical neighbour, modified, however, by the imprint of a strongly marked individual character, the result of its peculiar isolated position. The attempted derivation of the name of the country from Eber<sup>1</sup>, the common progenitor of the Joctanites and Ismaelites—the two races which are assumed to constitute the great bulk of the native population of Arabia—is, at the best, but very problematical; that from the word Araba, the name of a district of the province of Tehama, and which signifies a *level desert*, would seem to rest on a safer and more rational foundation,

the far greater part of the country being indeed a dreary waste, a boundless level of sand, destitute of rivers, intersected by naked mountains, and barely relieved here and there by a shady grove or a green sward of aromatic herbs. The date-palm is often the solitary representative of vegetable life in these sterile tracts, which are scorched by a tropical sun, and hardly ever refreshed by a grateful shower. There are, however, some more favored districts, where the fertile soil produces dates and other palms, tamarinds, vines, rice, sugar, figs, tobacco, indigo, cotton, durra,<sup>2</sup> coffee, gum, benzoin, frankincense, manna, balsam, aloe, myrrh, spices, &c. The high lands in the south-west, that border on the Indian Ocean, are distinguished in this respect, above all other parts of Arabia, by a more temperate air, superior fertility, and comparative abundance of wood and water. No wonder, then, that the appellation *happy*, bestowed upon this blessed region by Ptolemy, should have been generally adopted, although originating in a mistranslation of the word Yemen, the Arabian name of this part of the peninsula, and which does not signify happy, but is simply meant to designate the land lying, with respect to the East, to the right of Mecca, just as Al-Sham (Syria) means the land to the left of that city. Ptolemy's division of the country into the *sandy*, the *petraie*, and the *happy* (*Arabia Deserta*, *Petræa*, and *Felix*), is, however, unknown to the Arabians themselves, who speak only of high land and low land. The epithet *stony*, so generally applied by geographers to the petraic division, is founded in error: Ptolemy derived the word from Petra, the name of the then flourishing capital of the Nabathæans, and

not from the Greek word *petra*, a rock or stone. Ptolemy's Arabia Petræa forms now part of the province of Hejaz, along the coast of the Red Sea. Yemen, as we have seen, occupies the south-western coast. On the south-eastern coast lies the maritime district of Oman; on the Persian Gulf, the district of Lahsa: the inland space bears the name of Neged, or Naged.

Arabia is the true native country of the horse, and remains even at the present time the seat of the purest and noblest races of that generous animal. Asses, oxen, sheep, goats, and the swift gazelle, are also indigenous; and so is the *camel*, the "ship of the desert," nature's most precious gift in the sands of Africa and Arabia. Monkeys, pheasants, and pigeons inhabit the fertile districts. The lion, the panther, the hyena, the jackal, lurk in the desert. Ostriches, and pelicans are among the birds of Arabia; locusts, that "plague of the fields," are among its insects. The coasts abound in fishes and tortoises; and the pearl-fishery flourishes more especially in the Persian Gulf.

Among the mineral products may be mentioned iron, copper, lead, coals, asphaltum; and precious stones, as the agate, the onyx, the carnelion, &c. Some of the ancient geographers speak also of the soil of Arabia as being impregnated with gold; and though no mines of that precious metal are at present known in the peninsula, who can say but that the treasures of another California lie hidden there?

The inhabitants of Arabia, whose present number may be estimated at about fifteen millions, are supposed to derive their origin partly from Joctan (in the Arabian language

Kahtan), one of the sons of Eber; and partly from Ismael, the son of Abraham and Hagar. The Joctanites, as the supposed original inhabitants of the country, have been called also true Arabians; the Ismaelites, as later immigrants, *mixed* Arabians. The Ismaelites are the Bedoweens, or Bedouins, of our time, who to the present day continue to rove through the interior and the north of Arabia, as they did in the remote times of Job and Sesostris, depending partly on their flocks, partly on the transit trade of the caravans, but chiefly on plunder;<sup>3</sup> which latter is by these wild sons of the desert looked upon in the light of an honorable profession rather than of a disgraceful and criminal pursuit. They are a fine race of men, of middle size, but well proportioned, vigorous, and active; they have regular features; their complexion is mostly dark, rarely of a lighter tint; their eyes sparkle with a fire and lustre unknown among us. They are brave, temperate, generous, and hospitable; enthusiastically addicted to eloquence and poetry. Rapine and revenge are the only dark spots in the national character of the Bedoween.

The Joctanites are the Haddhesies, or *settled* Arabians, who from the earliest times have been collected into towns and villages, more especially in the maritime districts of the peninsula, employed in the labors of agriculture, trade, and commerce. Though the Arabian house-dwellers cannot be said to possess all the noble qualities of their brethren of the desert, still the description given above of the physical and moral character of the latter applies in a great measure equally to them; they are lively, intelligent, eloquent, and witty; and, with all their habitual haughty demeanour, more

particularly to strangers, affable and agreeable in their manners and conversation.

The principal nations of Arabia mentioned by the ancients, are, besides the Skenites (*tent-dwellers*, or wandering tribes), the Nabathæans, in Arabia Petræa (Hejaz); the Thamudites and Minæans in Hejaz; the Sabæans and Homerites, in Yemen; the Hadhramites, in Hadhramaut on the southern coast; the Omanites, Dacharenians, and Gerrhæans, in Oman and Ul-Ahsa, or Lahsa; the Saranians, in Neged; and the Saracens, an obscure tribe on the borders of Egypt, and remarkable only from the circumstance that, perhaps from a fallacious<sup>4</sup> interpretation of the meaning of the word,—viz: as intended to indicate an Oriental situation—the application of the name has been gradually extended, first to the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula generally, afterwards to all Mohammedans.

The early history of the Arabians is shrouded in obscurity. That the Joctanites were not the true original inhabitants of the country, but simply later immigrants into it, would appear to result from the histories of the ancient Babylonian and Assyrian empires (however so little reliance we may feel inclined to place in these mythical and traditional histories); for we are told that Nimrod was attended by Arabian tribes—and in the list of the Babylonian kings we find six Arabian princes; and, again, among the auxiliaries of Ninus we find Arabs, under a prince named Ariæus. The Hyksos, or Shepherd Kings, who are said to have invaded Egypt about 2075 B.C., and to have held sway in that country during more than 500 years, are also generally considered to have



come from Arabia. The traditional history of Arabia mentions several kingdoms and dynasties. The two most ancient of these, dating their origin as far back as 2000 B.C., were, 1, the Homerite kingdom in Yemen, which, after a time, split into the two states of Saba, or Sheba, and Hadhramaut. About 1572 B.C., these were re-united into one empire, which about 1075 B.C. was governed by Balkis, the daughter of Hodhad, and who by some historians is thought to have been identical with the Queen of Sheba, the cotemporary of Solomon; 2, the State in Hejaz, in which the Nabathæans held superior sway.

Protected on all sides by the seas of sand and water which encompass the peninsula, the Arabian people—or, at all events, the great body of the nation—had, at all times, escaped the yoke of a foreign conqueror. King Sesostris, of Egypt, is said to have subjected some tribes of Hejaz to his rule; but it would appear they speedily recovered their independence. All the attempts made at different times, by the rulers of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and Persia, to subjugate the Arabian peninsula, proved either altogether abortive, or, even where they partially succeeded, the conquest was only transient. Thus Arabia Petræa was subjugated, for a time, to the Assyrian sway in the eighth century B.C. by Pul, or Phul, and Sennacherib; but in the sixth century B.C. we find it in independent alliance with the Persian kings Cyrus and Cambyses. Alexander the Great had formed the plan to conquer and colonise the coasts of Arabia, and to prepare in this way the ultimate subjugation of the entire peninsula. The genius of the Græco-Macedonian conqueror, the immense material means of

which he could dispose, and the possession of a powerful fleet (under Nearchus) promised a successful issue to the intended expedition: the death of Alexander (11th June, 323 B.C.) averted the threatening danger.<sup>5</sup> The attempt which Antigonus and Demetrius made upon Arabia in 312 B.C. was a failure; and the trifling conquest achieved in 219 B.C. by Antiochus the Great, of Syria, was speedily wrested again from him by the natives. At a later period, the northern tribes of Arabia were engaged for a time, with varying fortunes, in desultory feuds with the Jews under the Maccabæans, or Makkabi.<sup>6</sup> The Romans also, that all-grasping nation, cast their covetous eyes upon the flourishing state of Petræa; but neither Scaurus nor Gabinius, neither Pompey nor Antony, nor even Augustus, could prevail against the difficulties of the country, and the stubborn valor of the roving tribes of the desert. Hunger, thirst, fatigue, and disease thinned the ranks of the proud legions more effectually still than the bow, the javelin, and the scymetar of the Bedoween; and after a last vain attempt under Ælius Gallus, Imperial Rome reluctantly relinquished for a time the coveted prize. In 106 A.D., Cornelius Palma, a lieutenant of Trajan, conquered the cities of Bostra and Petra, and subdued the Nabathæans. Trajan made, also, some naval inroads, and carried his incursions as far as Katif. Petra lost from this time its importance and splendor; Bostra becoming in its stead the principal seat of the commerce of the Euphrates and the Tigris. After the death of Trajan, the conquered tribes shook off again the Roman yoke. The Emperor Aurelian broke, indeed, the power of the Nabathæans in his celebrated campaign against Zenobia,

the great Queen of Palmyra, (272 and 273 A.D.), and his triumphal car was followed by captive Arabian chiefs; but the Nabathæan *nation*, disdaining to bend to the Roman yoke, abandoned their homes, and fled to that great asylum of Arabian freedom, the desert.

At the commencement of the sixth century, (502 A.D.), the Homerite kingdom of Yemen<sup>7</sup> was conquered by an Ethiopian prince, the Negus, or King, of Abyssinia,<sup>8</sup> and remained subject or tributary to the Christian princes of the latter country to the time of the conquest of Arabia by Chosroes I. (Nushirvan) of Persia (about 574 A.D.). Still, though Arabia was styled a Persian province, the sway of the Sassanides over the peninsula was more nominal than real: the tribes of the desert remained free, and even in Yemen, we find seven Princes of the Homerites successfully asserting and maintaining the independence of their mountains.<sup>9</sup>

There is some reason to suppose that the original worship of the Arabs was that of *one* God; clouded and tarnished, indeed, by many superstitious usages, and perhaps even by human sacrifices, yet free from gross idolatry. But this primitive religion was speedily supplanted by the adoration of the sun, the moon, and the fixed stars; a specious superstition which substitutes for the invisible, all-pervading, universal God, the most glorious of his creations, and may well find its excuse in the clear sky and boundless naked plains of Arabia, where the heavenly luminaries shine with a brighter lustre, displaying to the mind of the untutored son of the desert the visible image of a Deity. Intimately connected with this still primitive faith, was the

belief in the wonderful powers and attributes of *meteoric stones*. The most renowned of these, called Hadjar-el-Aswad, is a square-shaped black stone, kept to the present day in Mecca in the Temple of the Kaaba, and which has from time immemorial been, and remains still, the sacred object of the devout pilgrimages and adoration of the Arabs of all tribes. The Kaaba is a square building, thirty-four feet high, and twenty-seven broad; built, according to the Mohammedan tradition, by Abraham, and repeatedly restored, in after ages, by the Amalekites, by the Jorhamites, by Kassa, of the tribe of Koreish, &c.; and the last time by Sultan Mustapha, in 1630. Of the original building there remains thus at present only a small portion of wall, which is held most sacred. A spacious portico<sup>10</sup> encloses the quadrangle of the Kaaba. The holy stone, which is about four feet high, and set in silver, is fixed in the wall, in the southern corner. The Mohammedan tradition relates that this stone was brought to Abraham by the Angel Gabriel, whose tears over the sinfulness of man had changed its original white color to black! Hence Mahomet was induced to make it the Kebla<sup>11</sup> of prayer, and to enjoin the pilgrimage of the faithful to it and the Kaaba. Verily, the idolatry of the ancient Arabs, who worshipped the divine power in the *meteoric stone*, that had fallen from the skies in a manner miraculous to their untutored understanding, was more natural, and even far more rational, than the present worship of the same stone, based upon this wretched and most absurd legend! The transmigration of souls, the resurrection of bodies, and the invocation of departed spirits, formed also part of the religious belief of

the ancient Arabs; the cruel practice of human sacrifices prevailed among them even up to the time of Mohammed, in the course of time the grossest idolatry became an important, and, in the end, a preponderating ingredient in Arabian worship; and the sacred Kaaba was defiled by the gradual introduction of three hundred and sixty idols of men, eagles, lions, and antelopes; among which stood most conspicuous the most popular of them, the statue of Hobal, fashioned of red agate by a Syrian artist, and holding in his hand seven arrows, without heads or feathers, the instruments and symbols of profane divination.<sup>12</sup>

But, though each tribe, each family, nay every independent warrior, might freely create new idols and new rites of his fantastic worship, yet the nation, in every age, has bowed to the religion of Mecca, and to the superior sanctity of the Kaaba. An annual truce of two, or, according to some historians, four months, during which the swords of the Arabs were sheathed, both in foreign and domestic warfare, protected the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. The great fair held in connection with this pilgrimage induced those to come whom religious ardor failed to attract. This annual gathering of distant and hostile tribes contributed greatly to harmonise and refine the wild sons of the desert; the exchange of eloquence and poetry usual at these periods, could only heighten the humanizing and elevating influence of the custom. The fanaticism of the first Moslems abolished the fair, inflicting thereby one of the many evils that came in the train of Mohammed's gigantic imposture. The rites which are, even in the present day, accomplished by the devout Moslems, are still the same they were in the days of

the ancient idolators of Arabia. "At a respectful distance from the temple, they threw off their garments; seven times they went round the Kaaba, with quick steps, kissing each time the holy stone with deep reverence;<sup>13</sup> seven times they visited and adored the adjacent mountains; seven times they threw stones into the valley of Mina: and the pilgrimage was completed, as at the present hour, by a sacrifice of sheep and camels, and the burial of their hair and nails in the consecrated ground."<sup>14</sup>

It will be readily understood that the custody of the Kaaba must at all times have proved a most lucrative affair. No wonder, then, that the neighbouring tribes should have hotly contended for it. Originally the Ismaelites held it for a long time, together with the dominion over Mecca, which resulted from it as a natural consequence. The Jorhamites, a branch of the Joctanites, succeeded at last in ousting them from it; these again were expelled by the Khuzaites, who promoted idolatry to a most formidable extent. In the middle of the fifth century, an Ismaelitic tribe, that of Koreish, wrested the custody of the Kaaba, by fraud or force, from the Khuzaites. The sacerdotal office was entrusted by the Koreish to Cosa, of the family of the Hashemites, and devolved through four lineal descents to Abdol Motalleb, the grandfather of Mohammed.<sup>15</sup>

The freedom which Arabia enjoyed, promised a safe asylum to the political and religious exiles and proscripsts from the adjacent kingdoms. The intolerance of the Magian Persians had overturned the altars of Babylon, and compelled the votaries of Sabianism<sup>16</sup> to seek a refuge in the desert. The same fate befell the Magians in their turn,

when the sword of Alexander had overthrown the Persian monarchy. Multitudes of Jews fled into Arabia, to escape the cruel persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, and greater numbers still followed during the wars of Titus and Hadrian. To all these were added, at a later period, numerous sects of Christians, fleeing from that worst of all persecutions, that of their triumphant co-religionists, from whom they might chance to differ in some abstruse point of doctrine, or in some immaterial rite. Among the persecuted sects, we may mention here more particularly the Marcionites and the Manichæans, the Jacobites and Nestorians. The latter two sects had gained many proselytes in Yemen, and succeeded even in converting the princes of Hira and Gassan to their faith. The Jews, also, had made numerous and important converts to the Mosaic belief; and we have already seen how the intolerant zeal of a bigoted Jewish neophyte, Dunaan, prince of the Homerites, suddenly interrupted the enjoyment of that absolute liberty of conscience which the Arabian *idolaters* had hitherto granted to all creeds and all sects, and brought down upon Yemen an Abyssinian invasion to avenge the wrongs of the persecuted Christians.

It was in this country, and among this people, so strangely and peculiarly constituted, that arose the apostle of a new faith, destined to knead the heterogeneous and hostile elements of the nation into one compact mass, and to hurl this with irresistible might against the adjacent empires, and even, far beyond the limits of the latter, against countries and nations formerly scarcely known by name even to the Arabian merchant.

Mahomet, or more properly Mohammed or Muhammed, (i.e. *the very famous*), the only son of Abdallah and Amina, was born at Mecca, on the 20th April, 571.<sup>17</sup> His father, Abdallah, was the best beloved of the thirteen sons of Abdol Motaleb, the son of Hashem, and chief of the family of that name; his mother, Amina, sprang from the noble race of the Zahrites. He had the misfortune to lose in his infancy, his father and mother, and his grandfather. His sole inheritance consisted in a house, an old female slave, and five camels. After the death of his grandfather, he was taken into the house of his uncle, Abu Taleb, who had succeeded Abdol Motaleb in the sacerdotal office. Here he was educated to commercial pursuits; and was, at the age of thirteen, sent with the caravan of his uncle to the fairs of Bosra, or Bostra,<sup>18</sup> and Damascus, in Syria. In his twentieth year<sup>19</sup> he fought in the ranks of the Koreish against some hostile tribes, and, by his valor, gained the appellation El Amin, i.e., *the faithful*, one of the five hundred and more surnames that have gradually been given to the Prophet of Islam. In his twenty-fifth year, Cadijah, a rich and noble widow of Mecca (according to some historians, of Bosra), engaged him as superintendent and manager to carry on the commercial affairs of her late husband. In this capacity he made a second journey to the fairs of Bosra and Damascus.<sup>20</sup>

Nature had bestowed upon Mohammed the gift of personal beauty. His cotemporaries describe him as of commanding figure and majestic aspect; he had regular and most expressive features, piercing black eyes, an aquiline nose, and a well-formed mouth, with pearly teeth; his