

# The Land of Lost Causes

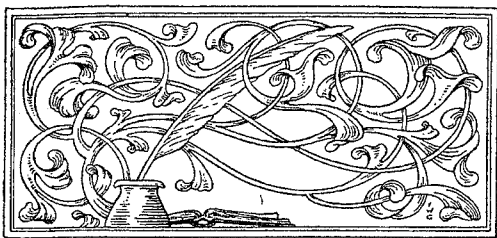
By  
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## THE LAND OF LOST CAUSES



ASK your interest in a land of weird fascinations, strange geography, peculiar ethnology, abnormal history and unusual civilization; where the past is living and the present dead; where big is little and good is bad; where women work while men sleep; where bottom is top and last is first; where vice is virtue, a sinner a saint; where the worst is best and the best is bad; where decadence is progress and begins with birth.

Everything runs east and west, the mountains, the rivers, the valleys, the plains, the lakes, the deserts and shorelands, making an isthmus from east to west two hundred miles wide by a thousand miles long, flanked on one side by a sea whose dangerous coast the ancients feared, and on the other by a desert still unconquered.

Zaghouan's sun-tipped, snowy peak marked the eastern entrance of this pathway to Sidi Okba and the pillars of Hercules, the western exit for Gebel Terek.

It is of the continent of Africa, but less African than Louisiana; it almost touches Europe at its extremities, but is less European than Illinois; its eastern end is more than a thousand miles from Asia, but it is more Asiatic than Asia. Of the twenty-six hundred years which have elapsed since Dido's landing furnished inspiration for poet, painter, and orator, it has during eighteen hundred years been governed by Asiatics. Though Spaniards predominate in the west, Italians in the east, and the French between, still eleven of the twelve million inhabitants are Asiatic in race or civilization. Arabs in the desert, Moors in the city, Berbers in the mountains, and Jews in the market place, they are always Asiatics.

The desert Arab is a degenerate gipsy, with the rags of a plantation negro, the habits of a red Indian, and the ambitions of a Mexican peon; but he, as well as his cousin, the city Moor, is a stately figure, with an inscrutable countenance, walking as one likes to think the prophets of old walked before God, but with a carnation tucked behind his ear, and a set of checkers in his pocket.

One day in the desert south of Biskra, we walked far from our carriage, until we

came upon a half-dozen Arab tents spread in a shallow valley between low hills of sand. A stately Arab responded to my salutation, and when I asked if we could visit him, said "Oui." He asked the women to restrain a flock of vicious dogs, and we entered his tent. It was low, of coarse cloth, with brush and weeds around the edges. My wife sat on a battered treasure chest, and I with the patriarch on the ground. Six women, ten children, and many dogs crowded in a promiscuous mass about the entrance. I asked him many questions about Arab life, the deserts, the contents of the tent, and to all he gravely answered, "Oui," "oui," "oui." The contents of the tent looked about like the contents of the storage end of a tumbled down barn on a third-rate farm, just before the spring cleaning. They had in the tent six kids, each with its head through a large loop on a rope, and one of them he detached to amuse my wife. After we had exhausted his hospitality, or at least our desire for it, we left, and when I gave this modern Abraham fifty cents he received it, and bowed us out of his settlement with princely dignity. Dignity is as common with Arabs as graft with American politicians. My Arab friend, Kairallah Ben Mustapha, of Tunis, says that the desert Arabs are intensely spiritual, that they live in the desert where the sky comes down close to the earth, and

where God seems to be very near, and hence, he says, they are speculative, meditative and spiritual, instead of practical and worldly. Well, it may be so.

Yousef Rachid, a bright little French-speaking Moor in Algiers, took us into his home. We passed through a wide, richly carved ancient doorway, into a dark and slimy corridor. At one side was a dungeon-like first floor room, in the center of which was squatting, at an open fire on the floor, a dismal wretch who was described by Yousef as a Kabyle who had rented this dark chamber for his city residence. We climbed up several flights of stairways and passed along hanging balconies about a central court until we reached a bright, clean little apartment, and met Yousef's mother and sister, unveiled, and much as we might have met any stranger. Yousef brought out and showed us his white gandoura, which he proudly told us his sister had made, and he was about to wear for the first time on some festal occasion.

When we called on Kairallah, my wife visited his wife, while I visited with him in a separate room. Mrs. Kairallah was interested in the nature and cost of Mrs. Parker's raiment. She thought Chicago was somewhere near Berlin, and expressed a half-horrified delight at the suggestion of walking abroad unveiled amongst men. She had a wonder-

ful view over Tunis, the bay, and Carthage, a cultivated husband, two bright little children, but a mind empty of even the first fruits of female modernism.

The Berber lives in his stone hut in the mountains, just as and where the Phœnicians found him, unconquered, and his race is one of the purest in the western world, for successive invasions have swept around, but never wholly engulfed him, though the language, religion, and civilization of Arabia have made him their own.

The Jew accepts this land as if it were his native Palestine. In Tunis alone there are fifty thousand Jews, and they constitute about fifteen per cent of the population of the large cities. Here the Jewish women fatten themselves and to accentuate the effect of obesity wear tall peaked caps, bare the lower limbs, and wrap a wealth of clothing about the belt line. They are the only civilized women known to me who are proud of being fat.

A negro newsboy in Biskra tried to sell me a copy of the *London Times* for ten cents, then for five cents, then for one cent, and then he offered to give it to me. When I paraphrased for him the advice about taking gifts from the Greeks, he offered to pay me five cents for taking it, and, drawing himself up proudly, looked over the group of Arab and other bootblacks with whom he was surrounded, and said, "Je suis

negre,"— and that was the first time I ever saw a negro who was really proud of being one. They too are Mohammedan and Asiatic.

Modern sanitary regulations are a farce, and there are no microbes, for if it were otherwise these crowded populations who live, work and walk, traffic and eat in markets or streets with vaulted roofs, or where the houses almost meet overhead, and the sewers run midway, would have been dead long ago, whereas in point of fact their death rate is very low.

For twelve hundred years this land has been and still is Asiatic—the only place outside of Asia where Asia has successfully planted and maintained a large colony. Such are the peoples of northern Africa. Now for their history.

North Africa has had occasional native princes, like Jugurtha, Juba, and Massinissa, always confined to particular localities, and their dynasties usually have been short lived and invariably dependent; but it seems always to have been really governed by some foreign military power.

When the land emerges from the prehistoric period, it is in the possession of the Phœnicians, who had numerous cities along the coast, and dominated the whole land, although they never really conquered it. The Romans succeeded them, ruled Africa for nearly six hundred years, and early in their



occupation established the Third Legion at the city of Tebessa, one hundred and ninety miles southwest of Carthage. Later that Legion was established at Lambese, a hundred miles farther west. Six roads were concentrated on Lambese, and nine on Tebessa, and by these roads and that Legion the Romans ruled North Africa.

Genseric crossed from Spain, and in one short year conquered the land, and the Vandals ruled it for one hundred years. Belisarius reconquered it for Constantinople, and the Greek Empire ruled it for a century. The Arabs quickly conquered the land and maintained themselves until the year 1519 A.D. The Turks then took and ruled Africa by a military caste until about 1830, when the French arrived.

We have noticed that the Third Roman Legion, stationed at Lambese, ruled northern Africa for centuries. Within six miles of the remains of the vast Roman Officers' Club, which rise in the midst of the ruins of Lambese, is Batna, a walled Arab town, the camp of a French army corps, which rules Africa to-day, just as its Roman predecessor ruled fifteen hundred years ago.

Has any other great section of the earth's surface such a unique history?

What is still more astonishing about North Africa is that each succeeding civilization obliterates the traces of its predecessor.

Although the Punic nation had established a splendid civilization in northern Africa, when Carthage was overcome the Romans allowed almost nothing of that civilization to remain. To-day there seems to be less of Punic traces in northern Africa than of Etruscan remains about Rome.

Roman civilization well-nigh reached its summit in northern Africa. That vast region is a museum. Monuments, statues, fountains, temples, columns, arches, theaters, coliseums, catacombs, harbors, highways, aqueducts, water cisterns, baths, houses, whole cities, and other evidences of Roman splendor, are to be seen everywhere in the wildest profusion. There are baths which rival those of Rome, arches as perfect as those of the Eternal City, a coliseum in some respects superior to that at the capital, and mosaics so abundant that instead of surrounding them with brass rails, or covering them with glass, or mounting them on the wall, or permitting some miscreant to make a living by covering them with sand and then sweeping it away to give the traveler a view, the people of Africa and the tourists walk on them as did their predecessors fifteen and eighteen hundred years ago.

When the Arabs arrived they completely obliterated this Roman splendor. They discarded the sites of the old Roman cities. They never occupied Timgad. They built

Tunis several miles from Carthage. Kairouan they placed in a desert region, not on the site of any previous city. The olive groves which were said once to give a continuous shade for the traveler from one end of Africa to the other, were destroyed, and the Roman civilization utterly disappeared.

There seems to be a blight on everything in Africa. If a thing has been splendid elsewhere, here it dwindles into insignificance. Let me illustrate this by one of many possible examples.

When first I saw a camel at the circus, I was infatuated, and wanted to run away from home and live forever near that desert beast. In the bible he was a noble animal. The Queen of Sheba, out of the misty uncertainty of her country, came riding on a camel when she visited Solomon. Abraham sent a servant with camels for a wife for Isaac; and Isaac, walking in the eventide, looked up, and saw Rebecca and her damsels at a distance, coming on camels, with great quantities of gold and jewels, and when they drew near, he was glad. The Wise Men came out of that shadowy land of mystery which lies beyond the Jordan, riding on camels, with perfumes and precious stones to cast at the feet of Jesus. The bible camel walks with a lofty step and a stately air as he emerges from the measureless depths of his desert home, covered with priceless rugs and cloth of gold,

ridden by prophets and priests and kings and Wise Men, and burdened only with frankincense and myrrh and gold and jewels and fruit. But the camel of northern Africa has fallen far from that high altitude. He is a mean and measly wretch with an ugly mouth; he complains bitterly when you put his load on and when you take it off, when you stop him and when you start him, when he is full and when he is empty. He likes to anchor on one of those vast manure piles which lie outside of Arab cities, and he rejoicingly wallows in the deep filth of an inn courtyard or market place. He carries the family and the family umbrella, draws the spring wagon to town, is loaded up with a mountain of twigs and brush which serve for fuel, and is then ignominiously kicked and cuffed through a narrow dirty street between mud hovels like a common pedlar's donkey; and at last when you behold him afar off, receding along the skyline of some distant sand ridge, he sinks into the category of creeping insects.

Tartarin, who went to Africa to hunt lions, when he shot a donkey in the suburbs of Algiers for a lion, and later found himself stalking a blind lion, who was begging his daily bread with a dish in his mouth, was not more humiliated than I when first I saw an African camel yoked up with a jackass, drawing a crooked stick which in that country passes for a plow.

But if the camel in Africa has lost his picturesqueness, he has retained his usefulness. He is the city man's oil pull truck, express cart, and delivery wagon; he is the farmer's gasoline tractor; and he is the dilapidated freight car of the desert railroad.

Every religion planted in Africa is doomed to decay. When the Romans appeared they so far destroyed the Punic temples and adopted so little of Punic practices that when the empire fell, nothing was left of the Punic religion. All that can be found is certain graves, of doubtful authenticity, about Carthage, and a quantity of small stone boxes, which are said to be coffins for the ashes of the infants who were burned on the altar of Moloch. Let us nourish the belief that the Phoenicians did burn their infants, and that these are their coffins, so to preserve some relics of this great religion.

In like manner, the Roman religion was completely extirpated by the Arabs.

If an old Roman should to-day rise from the dead in an Italian village, he would find life much as he left it. In the temple he would find the statues of his divinities, his candles, his flowers, his processions. If an African Roman should wake from the dead to-day, in a North African Arab village, he would find nothing in the life or the language of the people to recall his earthly experiences, and particularly in the mosques he

would find no statues, no candles, and no processions.

Nowhere else in the world were there such religious controversies and religious enthusiasm as throughout Christian Africa; but when the Arab appeared, not only were the Latin language and the remains of paganism extinguished, but the Christian religion also was extirpated.

Recently in the French Academy was read a learned discourse tending to prove that so late, I believe, as the twelfth century, there still remained somewhere in the western African mountains some traces of what the academician believed to have been a Christian community. This shows how completely Christianity had been extinguished. Has anything like this occurred elsewhere? Christianity survives in Armenia, and in Abyssinia, in some form, but never perhaps has a great region, where Christianity was so thoroughly founded and made part of the life of a great population, been so completely denuded of Christian civilization as northern Africa.

It is sad to think that the Christian religion should be so reduced in a country where the learned St. Augustine, by his doctrine of original sin, laid the foundations of the Christians' hell, and by his doctrine of infant damnation, furnished it with a tesellated pavement of children's souls.

Perhaps that last idea comes from the marvelous mosaics of the Roman period and the little stone coffins of the infant victims of Moloch.

But the destroying Arab religion is itself not immune, for here it has sunk to its lowest point. It must have been a religion of real power, for otherwise how can we explain its expansion, its swift victories, and its magnificent temples? The mosque at Kairouan rivals the most famous buildings of Europe. Its vast court has few if any equals. Its forest of columns reminds one of the Cathedral of Cordova. Its Mihrab, miraculously faced toward Mecca, as all Mihrabs are, is beautifully decorated with tiles and wonderfully moulded stucco. Its lofty pulpit of carved wood has no superior. The whole vast mosque, even in its somewhat decayed condition, speaks of a period when there was power and purity in the religion which brought it into existence. To-day the Mohammedans of Asia talk of reform, but not those of Africa. The Mohammedans of Asia are inclined to progress, but those of Africa want no progress. Nothing seems left of that great religion except slavery for women, idleness for men, a paradise of depravity, and the muezzin's call, which, when you hear it in the watches of the night, in some oasis town, the moon shining, and the wind whispering through the tall date palms and across

the shallow waters of a rippling stream, the desert vast and silent all about you and the very heavens bent down close to earth, you will agree with me is a call to prayer which deserves a better fate and a nobler use.

The attitude of Mohammedanism with reference to woman shows how that religion has deteriorated in northern Africa.

In Mahomet's time woman was held in little esteem in most Christian countries. She had been virtually condemned by Paul. Tertullian, the great African, about two hundred years after Christ, called her "the devil's gateway, the unsealer of the forbidden tree, the deserter of the divine law, the destroyer of God's image—man." Saint Chrysostom, four centuries after Christ, called her "a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, a painted ill." Such was the prevailing Christian opinion of woman in Mahomet's time, and she was treated accordingly, at least by Greeks and Syrians. Mahomet in a way emancipated woman, and under Mohammedan law she has great freedom and many rights, and is not locked up like a criminal. Now, however, in Africa she is a slave. Heavily veiled, she emerges from her house, enters a cab with all the curtains closely drawn, no matter how hot the weather; at her destination, still heavily veiled, rushes from the cab to the doorway,



and that is what she calls "taking an airing." Her visits are confined mostly to marriages, births, and deaths. She has one great outing, however, and that is on Friday, when with others of her sex, heavily veiled, and robed in white, she is permitted to visit the cemetery. There you may see these women in crowds, sitting upon the low tombstones or monumental slabs, in attitudes of grief, but, we are told, engaged in delightful gossip. The missionaries tell us their conversation consists of matter unfit for repetition in polite society, and their pleasure in listening to the low singing of erotic lyrics.

As a last word on North African religion, let me give you a picture of one of their saints. A saint is a leader in a Mohammedan religious order. A particular saint about whom I learned, and several of whose compeers I saw in action, lived in Tunis, and died not long ago. His strong point was never to remove his shirt, and such was his sanctity that when he needed a new shirt he entered any convenient shop and without molestation appropriated the first shirt which pleased his fancy, and put it on over the others. That is something in a land where rights of property are so sacred. When he died he had on thirty-two shirts. The savor of his sanctity ascended unto heaven. At intervals when he needed more publicity, he would wound himself, but only to let a little

blood flow over the shirts. Thus he gradually became a very holy man. He sat in the market place with a weathered copy of the Koran on a miniature sawbuck before him; and when a Jew and Arab had finished a violent business transaction, in which perhaps a slightly decayed green hide of a small calf and a plugged five-franc silver piece figured conspicuously, he would wipe away the Arab's sins by reading to him a few passages from the sacred book for a handful of coppers. He cured the bodily diseased by dancing until he got into a frenzy, and then stepping on their chests; and he aided the mentally worried by the simple process of spitting on their garments as they stood about him. His fame was very great, but Paradise longed for him, and now he sleeps in his kouba under a small, low, shining dome of spotless white, placed, I know not where; it may be in the dry bed of a desert river where it glistens under perpetual sunlight, or on the border of some timid stream whose scanty but priceless waters fructify a grove of golden date palms, or in a grove through whose foliage and deep shadows the kouba's outlines are but dimly seen; or better still, in the midst of some vast field of green surrounded by a small group of cypress trees pointing their long green fingers toward the blue sky, for in such places sleep the marabouts, and nobody ever had a

nobler tomb. His virtues may not be quite intelligible to us who revere only the emaciated and melancholy saints of Christian art, but he has served a useful purpose. His family is now a marabout family. His sanctity has spread over his whole race, and in one way or another they will profit by it for a long time. As they gladly encouraged him in his saintly occupations and with ardor erected his tomb, so now with fervor they celebrate his memory, and with religious devotion linger about his last resting place, ready to take alms from any passer-by.

In northern Africa they celebrate three sacred days. The Arab celebrates Friday, the Jew Saturday, the Christian Sunday, but while there the tourist usually takes no chances and celebrates none of them.

Northern Africa has to its credit the utter extinction of three great religions, the Punic, the Roman, and the Christian, and the reduction to its lowest terms of a fourth—Mohammedanism.

Africa in literature and learning is sacred soil. Fronto, the famous rhetorician and tutor of Marcus Aurelius, was born at Constantine, in 40 A.D. I like to think of him as influenced by the magnificent city of his nativity, the capital of Numidia, the city of a thousand sieges, where the Rummel rushes in a wide circle through a deep gorge of

matchless beauty, leaving an island-like rocky elevation for the city site. Deep in the cool shadows of that gorge are to-day in use the Roman hot and cold baths which he doubtless used, and far above at the top his eyes rested upon that Roman bridge and aqueduct, whose remains still delight the observer. The valleys and mountains, in widening circles, he saw from the city walls and towers, or from the still more lofty heights of Sidi M' Cid, on the opposite side of the gorge. I like to think that out of all this Fronto evolved those meditations which he afterwards communicated to Marcus Aurelius, and which appear as that great man's work.

In reading the meditations, I find no evidence of any such influence, but I should be the last to assume that therefore they were not so inspired. I have no doubt that one of our research professors will some day, if moved to the task, prove by internal evidence that the meditations of Marcus Aurelius were in fact written by Fronto, and inspired by sentiments evoked in him by the scenery of that marvelous African city where he was born and passed the latter portion of his life; and may we not even hope that in due time some prairie judge will dethrone Marcus Aurelius and give Fronto a new place in history?

Early in the Christian era Julius Quintius Flavius Rogatianus gave to Tingad, a city

about fifty miles south of Constantine, its public library, the remains of which are still to be found on the principal public street. It was an extensive building, encroaching evidently by permission of a facile city council, on one street, and occupying an entire block. It was decorated with beautiful marble columns, inlaid marble walls, and mosaic floors, and had a semi-circular foyer in which undoubtedly the scholars of the period met to discuss literature, philosophy, and public affairs.

The extent of the educational system of Africa is illustrated in the life of St. Augustine. He first went to school in his native city of Thagaste, now Souk Ahras, about eighty miles east of Constantine, Fronto's home. A little later he went to Madaura, twenty miles south on the highway which led to the Roman city of Tebessa.

Half-way between Thagaste and Madaura, St. Augustine passed through the city where Arnobius had lived and studied, and where he had, as one of his students, Lactantius, also born in Africa, and sometimes called the Christian Cicero. At Madaura he studied Latin and Greek in what might be called a provincial college. Madaura was not without literary associations and inspirations. Long before Augustine's time Lucius Apuleius was born, lived, and taught, and may have there written the famous "Golden

Ass," from which so much literary inspiration was evolved. Augustine may have gone southward along the road to Tebessa, and thence west along another great highway to Timgad and Lembese, or he may have gone direct from Thagaste to Timgad, a distance of less than a hundred miles. We can picture him as lounging in the foyer of the public library of Timgad, reading the masterpieces of Greek and Latin literature which contributed so conspicuously to his own scholarship, for certainly he would not have let that great public library with its twenty thousand rolls escape his all-including literary vision.

At 18 years of age he drifted away one hundred and seventy miles to the east, to the University of Carthage, and his account of that city shows that it then possessed in the highest degree all the educational advantages of the Sorbonne and the Latin quarter in Paris. Nor did St. Augustine, not then a saint, deny himself any of its opportunities. He loved much in Carthage and Carthage was always loved by him. In his day it had seventeen churches, and a vast number of students and scholars. Moreover, it was the birthplace of Latin Christian literature, the scene of many historic synods, the place where Julian had assumed the purple, and the theater of the labors, sufferings, and ambitions of the early Christian fathers.

Tertullian was born in Carthage. He created Latin Christian literature. He studied at Athens, Rome, and Carthage, law, medicine, and philosophy. He was a great traveler and student. Cyprian followed him as a leader of thought in Carthage and finally suffered martyrdom. Carthage had all the learned faculties and a tradition of scholarship some hundreds of years old when St. Augustine went there. Later St. Augustine returned to teach at Thagaste, and finally as the Bishop of Hippo, sixty-five miles north of Thagaste, on the seashore, he died at the age of seventy-five, in the year of 430 A.D., about the time when the literature and higher civilization of northern Africa began to dwindle. Augustine lived there about forty years, waging incessant war with the Donatists and Pelagians, and writing the "Confessions" and the "City of God." He was the greatest of the church fathers, the greatest Christian writer after Paul, and yet all his life-inspirations were African.

There is something of the Gaelic, much of the Saxon, and perhaps more of the Norman in the England of to-day. There is much of the Greek and more of the Latin throughout the whole of Europe. But in Africa nothing of this rich Roman literature survived the coming of the Arab.

But, if the Arab would not accept anything of what he found, nevertheless he came not

empty handed. He brought with him a rich literature, and real science. It was strange that Spain and North Africa kept the lamp of learning burning when the Christians of Europe had allowed it to become well-nigh extinguished. The Arabs had genuine poetry before the time of Mohamet; they had, we are told, the tempestuous poetry of war, the rippling poetry of love, and the refreshing poetry of hospitality. Averroes, the celebrated physician and philosopher of Cordova, of the twelfth century, was great enough to be condemned by the University of Paris and the Pope. Tlemcen became a great seat of learning, a kind of mediæval Arabian Athens. It is certain that northern Africa once was the seat of great intellectual activity during the Arab period. It had schools and colleges and philosophers and doctors of medicine, and many illustrious characters.

All this has disappeared. There is no learning, no science, no literature, and poetry has degenerated into erotic trash.

The condition of learning and education amongst the Arabs to-day is therefore interesting. At Oran I stumbled into a little hovel in the Arab quarter where two white-robed priests were conducting a boys' Koranic school. They stood in the corner while the little fellows, in a circle on the floor, each with a wooden shingle before him, one side inscribed with verses from the Koran



and the other decorated like a Persian rug, were yelling themselves hoarse. By the aid of an interpreter, I negotiated with the priest for one of these books, exquisitely done, which he had taken from a boy and handed me for examination. I agreed to pay him four dollars for it, and threw it into the cab, whereupon there was an angry demonstration from the assembled crowd, and I was told by my volunteering interpreter that I had misunderstood the priest, that it was not lawful for him to sell the book because it had a sacred character, that he did not mean immediate delivery, but that he would come to my hotel in the night time and furnish me one of these books. About 9 o'clock in the evening, word came that the priest waited for me in the shadow of a mulberry tree in the park. My wife upbraided me for corrupting this religious leader and diverting him from the path of his duty, but I persisted. I found him, but declined to finish the transaction in the dark. I insisted upon an opportunity to inspect the book. With a great show of secrecy, and many earnest entreaties that I conceal the deed, he led me into a dark corner of the hotel and brought out from beneath his white ber-nouse a book which I instantly saw was a fraud. The chirography was greatly different from that which I had seen on the books used by the boys. Possibly it was in the ver-

nacular, or had not been written by a priest. While it resembles the real thing, it is not just what the boys had. I have wondered whether it did not contain something like the bad Indian's card of introduction, "The bearer is an infidel and scoundrel, he tried to seduce me, but I have fooled him." Nevertheless, I bought it for two dollars.

What was going on there is just what is going on in every African community with respect to the education of children. They are learning sections of the Koran by heart. Those who are sufficiently proficient or have influential relatives are sent to the provincial colleges, and one of these I entered at Sidi Okba, a true Arab town, a few miles east of Biskra in the desert. This is one of the two tombs of the great Sidi Okba. He was Mahomet's barber, he kept three of the hairs of the prophet's beard, and he conquered northern Africa; and these three things made him great. He was buried only in two places, Sidi Okba and Kairouan,—much too few for so illustrious a character.

But his tomb makes Sidi Okba a sacred town, and the provincial college, as all Mohammedan educational institutions are, was attached to the mosque. In times past some faithful worshiper had endowed a college. It consists of a beehive-shaped building, like the tomb of Agemennon, with the smell of a smoke-house and a hole in the top, and in

the center on the floor the student has a right to build a fire and cook his food. This is the refectory. The college dormitory consists of a series of small holes in the outside of the inner walls of the mosque, in each of which one or two students may insert themselves and sleep. The recitation room is a certain narrow walk on the porch between the inner and the outer entrances of the mosque, where the students stand in a long row as the worshipers pass by, and for hours at a time, until blue in the face, scream out at one another the verses of the Koran. They rival each other in the rapidity and intensity of their efforts. When they have thus learned to repeat the whole of the Koran, their college education is complete, and they are ready for the university.

There is but one great university in this part of Africa, and that is at Tunis. My friend Kairallah arranged a little meeting at his house for me with two of the professors of this university. They sat cross-legged, each wore yellow slippers, light yellow stockings, an undergarment of butternut broadcloth and an outer garment of light blue, and each had a fez almost entirely covered by a white turban. The student who comes to the university spends from two to five years as a mere collegian, and then gets his bachelor degree. He then teaches two years for nothing, and studies two more years,

when he is ready for the competitive examinations for a professorship. He then serves as a second-class professor, at a nominal salary, until a vacancy exists, when he competes for the first class. The professors told me that the solitary object of the university was to teach men their relations to each other and to God, as pointed out by the Koran. All else is merely incidental. If they study the works of their fathers, or books of literature, or history, it is solely to illuminate the Koran. The professor sits by a column in the mosque and talks with his students.

I entered a medersa, or dormitory, which the pious of some previous period had endowed. A carved gateway led from one of the great souks, or markets, from in front of a green tomb of a marabout decorated with low-flying banners, into a courtyard around which were arranged little rooms, each with one door and one window opening on the court. The room which I entered was almost exactly like that of an old-fashioned American college. There was a little table with an oilcloth cover, a few books and scraps of paper, a couple of tumbled-down chairs, a bunk in the corner, some wall decorations of an academic nature, and three or four jolly college boys. When they tried to find out where I lived, my explanation led them to find a geography of the vintage of about a century ago. It had some twelve

or fifteen maps, and we finally discovered America,—the America of lakes and rivers, but without railroads, cities, or towns. I was able to point out to these university students the approximate position of Chicago on that map.

Such is the sad state of learning and literature in the land of Fronto, St. Augustine, and the early Arab scholars.

My friend Kairallah has two sons. One of them is in this university preparing for the Mohammedan religious or judicial life, the other is in a government French school preparing for the civil service. Kairallah is taking no chances.

The desert is the only thing in Africa which is not in a state of decay. I should like to write about the desert, with its appealing call to all who see it. Never had I such a lure as the African desert. I should like to write about the mirage which we saw in the dry Lake of Hodna, once a garden spot under Roman rule, but now a desert; and about the opalescent mountains which we saw reflected in the matchless blue of this imaginary lake. I should like to write of the many strange, peculiar, unusual, and weirdly interesting things in Africa. For example, there is a river where you see the ruins of a Roman bridge, near by the ruins of an early Arab bridge, still nearer, the ruins of a modern bridge, but you cross the river by a ford.

Not so very far away there is a splendid concrete bridge over the dry bed of a desert river which appears to be dry a little over twelve months in the year. But while northern Africa is a most entertaining and fascinating portion of the globe, it still remains true, as I have tried to point out, that everything in Africa declines, from its establishment until its extinction, and is then succeeded by something which sinks to a still lower level. I assign no cause. I offer no explanation. In what I have been saying, of course, I have disregarded the presence of the French. Perhaps in their effort to establish their civilization in Africa they are simply starting on the toboggan slide which has been worn smooth by Phœnician, Roman, Vandal, Greek, Arab, and Turk, and down which we have seen tumbling successively the civilizations, the religions, and the educational systems of the Phœnicians, the Romans, the Christians, and the Arabs.

With all the fascination of this land, it seems that the civilization of the Arab in northern Africa is at a lower stage relatively, if indeed not positively, than any civilization, Arab or otherwise, which has preceded it. North Africa is a sad land, whose language has no word for hope, and where every cause is lost.

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