

TOPSY-TURVY LAND
ARABIA PICTURED FOR CHILDREN

BY

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER

AND

AMY E. ZWEMER

ARAB BOYS.

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**DEDICATED TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS WHO ARE
HELPING TO TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN**

PREFACE

This is a book of pictures and stories for big children and small grown-up folks; for all who love Sinbad the sailor and his strange country. It is a topsy-turvy book; there is no order about the chapters; and you can begin to read it anywhere. It is intended to give a bird's-eye view to those who cannot take birds' wings. The stories are not as good as those of the Arabian Nights but the morals are better—and so are the pictures. Moreover the stories are true. You must not skip any of the chapters or the pictures but you

may the preface, if you like.

{S.M.Z. {A.E.Z.

Bahrein, Arabia.

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I

WHY IS ARABIA TOPSY-TURVY LAND?

On this big round earth there are all sorts of countries and peoples. Men walk on it on every side just like flies crawling over a watermelon and they do not fall off either. On the next page you can see how they travel all around the world; some in steamships, some in carriages or on horses, some in jinrickshaws and some in the railway coaches. In Topsy-turvy Land they have no railroads and not even waggon-roads or waggons. A horse or a camel or a donkey is used for passengers and the camel caravan is a freight train.

Or if you wish, the camel is a topsy-turvy ship which sails in the sand instead of in the water. It is called the ship of the desert. The masts point down instead of up; there are four masts instead of three; and although there are ropes the desert-ship has no sails and no rudder—unless the rudder be the tail. When the ship lies at anchor to be loaded it feeds on grass and the four masts are all snugly tucked away under the hull. In Arabia you generally see

these ships of the desert in a long line like a naval procession, each battleship towing its mate by a piece of rope fastened from halter to tail! But not only is the mode of travel strange in Topsy-turvy Land, even the time of the day is all upside down. When the boys and girls of America are going to bed the boys and girls of Arabia are thinking of getting up. As early as four o'clock by western time the muezzin calls out loud from the top of the minaret (for Moslem churches have no steeples and no bells) to come and pray. Arabs count the hours from sunrise. It is noon at six o'clock and they breakfast at one; at three o'clock in the evening all good boys and girls are asleep.

MODES OF TRAVEL.

In Topsy-turvy Land all the habits and customs are exactly opposite to those in America or England. For instance when a boy enters a room he takes off his shoes but leaves his hat on his head. I do not know whether we should call it a *hat*, however. His hat has no rim and is not made of felt or straw, but is just a folded handkerchief of a large size and bright colour with a piece of cord to hold it wound round his head—a sort of a hat in two pieces. The girls go without shoes but carefully cover their pretty (or ugly) faces with a black veil.

At home you eat with a spoon or use a knife and fork. Here the Arabs eat with their fingers; nor do they use any plates or butter dishes, but a large piece of flat bread serves as a plate until it is all eaten. So you see in Arabia the children not only eat their rice and meat but their plates also. You read a book from left to right but in Arabia everybody begins at the right-hand cover and reads backward. Even the lines read backward and in Arabic writing there are no commas or capitals and the vowels are written not next to the consonants but stuck up above them. *Potato* in Arabic would be written with English letters this way:

C A C

III

Can you read it?

In your country a carpenter stands at his bench to work, but here they sit on the ground. With you he uses a vise to hold the board or stick he is planing; here he uses his bare toes. With you he *pushes* the saw or, especially, the plane away from him to cut or to smooth a piece of wood, but in Topsy-turvy Land he *pulls* his tools towards him. Buttons are on the button-hole side and the holes are where you put the buttons. Door keys and door hinges are made of wood, not of iron as in the Occident. The women wear toe-rings and nose-rings as well as earrings and bracelets. Everything seems different from what it is in a Christian country.

One strange sight is to meet people out riding. Do you know that the men ride donkeys side-saddle, but the women ride as men do in your country? When a missionary lady first came to Bahrein in Eastern Arabia and the boys saw her riding a donkey they called out: "*Come and see, come and see! The lady has no feet!*" Because they saw only one side of her. Then another one called out and said: "*Yes she has, and they are both on this side!*"

EUROPEAN VISITORS ON DONKEYS.

Another odd custom is that Arabs always turn the fingers of the hand down as we turn them up in beckoning or calling anybody. Many other gestures seem topsy-turvy as well.

In your country boys learn the lesson of politeness—ladies first; but it is not so over here. It is *men first* in all grades of society; and not only men first but men last, in the middle, and all the time. Women and girls have a very small place given them in Topsy-turvy Land. The Arabs say that of all animal kinds the female is the most valuable except in the case of mankind! When a girl baby is born the parents are thought very unfortunate. How hard the Bedouin girls have to work! They are treated just like beasts of

burden as if they had no souls. They go barefoot carrying heavy loads of wood or skins of water, grind the meal and make fresh bread every morning or spin the camel's hair or goat's hair into one coarse garment. They are very ignorant and superstitious, the chief remedies for sickness being to brand the body with a hot iron or wear charms—a verse from the Koran sewn up in leather or a string of blue beads, which are supposed to drive away evil influences.

How very thankful girls should be that in all Christian lands they have a higher place and a better lot than the poor girls and women of Arabia! For the greatest contrast is the religion of the inhabitants of Topsy-turvy Land. That is all upside down too. The Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in secret not to be seen of men; we are to go quietly alone and tell God everything. But Mohammed, the prophet of Arabia, taught his followers to pray openly on any street corner, or on the deck of a ship, in public, just like the Pharisees whom Jesus condemns. And when these people fast, as they are supposed to for a whole month, they do not really go without food, but each day at *sunset* they begin to eat in larger quantity than usual!—because they think by such fasting to gain favour with God and do not know that to fast from sin and evil habits is the fast God wants. Another thing very sad in this land of Topsy-turvy is that there are no Sunday-schools—they do not observe our Sabbath—and the boys and girls do not have bright Sunday-school lesson leaves or a picture-roll. They spend Sunday and every other day in learning all the evil they see in those that are grown up. Poor children! They have never heard the sweet words of Jesus, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." We tell you all this about them that you may pray for them that God may soon send more missionaries to preach to them these precious words. We want you all by prayer and offerings to help put a silver lining in the dark clouds of their lives.

The other chapters in this little book will tell you more about the

land and its people and as you read them do not forget to pray for them.

If you are faithful and true, always shining for Jesus, your bright light will reach as far as dark Arabia, and will help to turn that land of Topsy-turvy right side up. When joy and gladness will take the place of sorrow and sadness, and ignorance give way to the knowledge of the Truth. In one place in the Bible it tells how to make these topsy-turvy lands right side up again. Do you know where that is? Acts 17:6-7. "*These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ... saying that there is another King, even JESUS.*"

II

A LESSON IN GEOGRAPHY

In the atlas Arabia looks like a big mail-pouch hung up by the side of some railway station, pretty empty of everything. But this queer mail-pouch country is not as empty as people imagine. It is a country larger than all of the United States east of the Mississippi. It is longer than the longest mail-pouch and much wider. From north to south you can ride a camel one thousand miles and from east to west more than six hundred. But the geography of the country is topsy-turvy altogether and that is why it has been so long a neglected peninsula. People kept on wondering at the queer exterior of the mail-pouch and never opened the lock to its secrets by looking into the interior.

First of all, Arabia is perhaps the only land that has three of its boundaries fixed and the other always shifting. Such is the case with the northern boundary of Arabia. It is different on every map

and changes every year because the inhabitants go about as nomads; that is, they "have no continuing city."

Arabia has no rivers except underground. It has no railroad and very few roads at all. Some parts of the country are very green and fertile and in other parts there is not enough grass the year around to give one square meal to a single grasshopper. Arabia has four thousand miles of coast and yet only six harbours where steamers call. There are better maps of the North Pole and of Mars and of the moon than of southeastern Arabia. The reason is that men have spent millions of dollars to find the North Pole and telescopes are all the time looking at the moon; but no one has ever spent time or money to explore this part of Arabia. The Greek geographers had a better knowledge of Arabia than we have to-day.

MAP OF ARABIA.

There are no lakes in Arabia, but there is a large sea of sand called *Al Ahkaf*, in which the traveller Von Wrede threw a lead and line and found no bottom! No one has been there since to see whether his story was true. At Bahrein, in eastern Arabia, there are salt-water wells on shore and fresh-water springs in the midst of the salt sea from which water is brought to shore. Arabia has no postage-stamps and no political capital and no telegraph system. Different coins from different parts of the world are used in different provinces. It is a land of contradictions and even the waters that bound it are misnamed. The Red Sea is blue; the Persian Gulf has no Persian ships and should be called an English lake; and the *Straits* of Hormuz are crooked. This topsy-turvy land has no political divisions. Some say it has five and some seven provinces; no one knows what is its population as no census was ever taken. In nearly all countries the mountain ranges run north and south, but in Arabia they run nearly east and west. There are desert sands six hundred feet deep and mountain peaks nine thousand feet high. On the coasts it is fearfully hot and the climate is often deadly. On the highlands it is often bitterly cold; and yet

the people are all of the same race and speech and custom and language and religion.

READY FOR A CAMEL RIDE.

There are no pumps in Arabia, but plenty of wells. There are no woods in Arabia, but plenty of trees. The camel is a topsy-turvy ship and the ostrich a topsy-turvy bird. The Arabs call the former the ship of the desert; and the latter they say is half camel and half bird. In some parts of Arabia horses and cows are fed on boiled fish because that is cheaper than grass! In other parts of the country donkeys are fed on dates. Arabia has more sultans and princes than any other country of the same size and yet it is a land without a settled government. The people never meet one another without saying "Peace to you"; yet there has never been any peace over the whole land since Christ's birth or even since the days of Ishmael.

Every one carries a weapon and yet there are very few wild animals. It is more dangerous to meet a Bedouin than a lion when you are a stranger on the road. The Arabs are a nation of robbers. Now you will wonder how we can also say that Orientals are the most hospitable of any people in the world for the Arabs are Orientals. And yet it is strictly true that these robbers are more hospitable, in a way, than you people of Western countries. They have a proverb which says that "Every stranger is an invited guest"; and another which says, "The guest while in the house is its lord." If an Arab gets after you to rob or kill you, it is only necessary to take refuge in his tent for safety. He is bound then, by the rules of Oriental hospitality, to treat you as his guest. But you must not stay there too long and you must be careful how you get away! You will find instances of this respect for the duty of hospitality all through the Bible story. It was in the earliest Bible times, as later and as now, a grievous sin to be inhospitable. The cradle of the Mohammedan religion is Arabia, and yet in no country are they more ignorant of their religion. How sad to think that when they do worship God they do it in such an ignorant and

idolatrous way! In our next chapter we shall see more about this.

Arabia has no national flag, no national hymn and no national feeling. Every one lives for himself and no one cares for his neighbour. This does not sound strange of robbers but it does of people who are so hospitable. This queer country we are about to visit together and talk over with each other.

You will not grow weary by the way, we hope. If the desert tracks are long and tiresome through the following chapters, just refresh yourself in the oasis of a picture.

III

THE SQUARE-HOUSE WITH THE BLACK OVERCOAT

You think I am making fun but it is really true that in western Arabia there is a house that always wears an overcoat. This is a large, square stone house without windows and with only one door to let in the light and the air; it is empty inside, although crowds gather around it as you see in the picture. Yet this house always has on an overcoat of black silk, very heavy and richly embroidered. Every year the old coat is taken off and a new one put on. A few days ago a Moslem pilgrim showed me a piece of the cloth of last year's overcoat and he was very proud of it. It was indeed a fine piece of heavy silk and the names of God and Mohammed were prettily woven into the cloth. This man had just come from visiting the square-house and I will tell you what he saw.

The place he visited with hundreds and thousands of other pilgrims

is called Mecca and the square-house is the *Beit Allah* or house of God to all Mohammedans. It is also called the *Kaaba*, which is the Arabic word for a cube.

The Moslems believe all sorts of foolish things about the Kaaba. They say Adam built it as soon as he fell down on the earth out of Paradise, and that Abraham repaired it after it had been ruined by the flood in the days of Noah. They even show a large white stone on which Abraham and Ishmael stood when they plastered the walls; the stone still bears the impress of Abraham's feet, they say. Did you ever hear such a topsy-turvy story?

The building is about twenty-four cubits long and wide and nearly twenty cubits high. It has no ornaments or beauty except one rain-spout to carry the water off the flat roof; you can see it on the right side of the Kaaba on the picture. This spout is said to be of pure gold. In one corner of the building is a large black stone which is also an object of worship. The Mohammedans say it came down from heaven with Adam and was once pure white. By the many kisses of sinful worshippers it has turned black. Not only is it black but broken. For about three hundred years after Mohammed's death the stone remained imbedded in the walls of the Kaaba, but then some wild Arabs from the Persian Gulf came, sacked Mecca and stole the black stone. It was carried to Katif, a place near Bahrein, right across Arabia, and they kept it a long time until the people of Mecca paid a large sum of money and carried it back. On the long journey it must have fallen from the camel because, at present, it is cracked and the broken pieces are held together by a silver band. There once were a great many of these stone idols in the Kaaba, but Mohammed destroyed them all except this one when he became master of Mecca.

THE SQUARE HOUSE WITH THE BLACK OVERCOAT.

At present the stone house is empty of idols and yet all the Moslems turn in the direction of this old heathen temple to pray.

The cloth that covers it comes every year as a present from the Khedive of Egypt, who is a Mohammedan. It is very costly and is sent on a special camel, beautifully decked with trappings of gilt, and a large throng of pilgrims go along to escort the overcoat.

When the wind stirs the heavy folds of cloth, the pious boys and girls of Mecca say it is the angels that watch around the Kaaba, whose wings lift the covering. It must be a wonderful sight to see thousands of Moslem pilgrims stand around this place and kneel and pray.

Besides running around the Kaaba, kissing the black stone and drinking water from a holy well called *zemzem*, they have one day on which they sacrifice sheep or other animals. One curious custom on this day of sacrifice I must tell you of. It is called "stoning the great devil." Early in the morning thousands of pilgrims go to a place in the valley of Mina where there are three white pillars made of masonry; the first and largest is called the Great Devil. The pilgrims cast stones at this pillar. Each one must stand at the distance of not less than fifteen feet and say, as he throws seven pebbles: "In the name of God the Almighty I do this, and in hatred of the devil and his shame." The Moslems fail to realise that Satan is in the hearts of men and not behind a pillar, nor that he can be driven away with prayer better than by pebbles.

For thirteen hundred years Moslems have come every year to Mecca, and gone away, with no one ever to tell them of the Son of God, the Saviour of the World. Thirteen hundred years! Don't you think it is time to go and tell them? And will you not pray that even this place may open its doors to Jesus Christ, and crown Him Lord of all?

IV

SABBACH-KUM BIL KHEIR!

That is to say, "Good-morning!" And the Arabs in the picture do not add, "have you used Pears' Soap?" but, "have you had your cup of Mocha coffee?" Soap is a luxury in most parts of Arabia and the vast majority of its inhabitants never use it; millions would not know it if they saw it. Perhaps the old Sheikh, however, used a bit of soap to wash his hands and feet early before sunrise when he went to the mosque to pray. Now he has returned and sits in the coffee-shop ready to take a sip of coffee and "drink tobacco" from the long pipe. The Arabs always speak of *drinking* tobacco when they mean to smoke; I suppose one reason is because they use the peculiar water-pipes with the long stems in which the smoke passes through the water and bubbles out to the mouth. Have you time to stop and study the picture with me?

What a pretty window in the corner! The Arabs call a window *shibaak*, which means network, because their windows are very much like a fish-net. Glass is seldom used in Arabia except by Europeans and Arabs who have become civilised; and so the carpenter or joiner fits little round bars, one into the other, like marbles or beads on a string and the result is often very beautiful. Light and air come in (not to speak of clouds of dust) while no one can look through from the outside; and you know how afraid Arab girls and women are to show their faces to strangers.

Under the arch is the open fireplace where the big coffee-pots and water-kettles simmer all day on a charcoal fire. The old man looks quite cheerful seated on his uncomfortable stool made of date-sticks. You will read later about our old friend the date-palm and how the tree is used for nearly every purpose. I wish I could show you how they take the thin branches and punch holes in them and then deftly, before you can count ninety, build together a chair or a bedstead. I have often slept soundly and safely on bedsteads made of these thin leaf-sticks no bigger around than a child's finger. The

sticks are full of "spring" so one does not need a wire mattress, nor have I ever known one of them, if made honestly, to become a *folding bed* under a restless sleeper as they say happens sometimes in New York hotels!

Although the old man in our picture is waited on by the younger Arab (who is perhaps the keeper of the café), yet I know he is not rich. Do you notice his toil-worn hands and the patch on the shoulder of his long overcoat? I fancy too his pretty vest, so carefully buttoned by more than a dozen cloth buttons, is a little torn on one side; nor has he a fine girdle like the rich shopkeepers.

SABBACH-KUM BIL KHEIR!

Extremes meet in the picture and three countries widely apart on the map are brought close together. Of course, you know the coffee is the real Yemen article, which coming first from Mocha on the Red Sea, is still called by that Arabian name. The curious pipe with its round bottom, carved head-piece and long stem, is used everywhere in Arabia and is generally called "*nargeelie*," which is the Indian name for cocoanut. The bowl of the pipe is in fact an empty cocoanut shell; the stem once grew in the jungle and perhaps tigers brushed past it; now it is pierced to draw smoke.

The curious pipe is from India, the tobacco first came from America but the coffee is Arabian. Let us listen to the story of the cup of coffee: In a book published in 1566 by an Arab scholar on the virtues of coffee it is stated that a knowledge of coffee was first brought to Arabia from Abyssinia about the year 1400 by a pious man whose tomb is still venerated in Yemen. The knowledge of coffee spread from Yemen in south Arabia over the whole world. In 1690 Van Hoorne, a general of the Dutch East India company, received a few coffee seeds from the Arabs at Mocha and planted them in Batavia on the island of Java. In this way Mocha coffee has become the mother of Java and of all other kinds of coffee sold at your grocers'. Nothing can be more beautiful than the green hills

and fertile gardens in the Arabian coffee country. The coffee berry grows on an evergreen tree of about eighteen feet high; its leaves are a beautiful dark, shining green and the blossom of the tree is pure white with a most delicate and fragrant odour. Each tree bears an enormous number of coffee-berries; a single tree is said to have yielded sixteen pounds! Arabia not only produces the finest coffee in the world, but I think the Arabs know how to prepare a good cup of coffee better than other peoples. The raw bean is roasted just before it is used and so keeps all its strength; it is *pounded* fine, much finer than you can grind it, in a mortar, with an iron pestle; lastly two smelling herbs, *heyl* and saffron are added when it is boiled just enough to give a flavour. Some fibres of palm bark are stuck into the spout of the coffee-pot to act as a strainer and then the clear brown liquid is poured into a tiny cup and handed to you in the coffee-shop. No wonder the Arab dervishes smack their lips over this, their only luxury.

But how did the tobacco get into our picture? You can hunt up the story for yourselves in your school histories. Had not Sir Walter Raleigh in 1586 introduced the weed to the court of Queen Elizabeth from Virginia, our picture and social life in Arabia would be very different. The custom of puffing tobacco has spread like a prairie fire and it is now so common in the East that very few realise it was not always found there. There they are all together, an Indian pipe, Arabian coffee and American tobacco! How much faster and further tobacco has travelled than the Bible; how many people had begun to drink Mocha before Arabia had a missionary!

But, of course, nothing can travel for nothing; and somebody must pay the travelling expenses. America pays many millions more for tobacco in a year than it pays for missionaries. It is not surprising, therefore, that all Arabians smoke and only a very few have ever heard of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. As Jesus Himself said, "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." When people learn to love

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