



Courtesy of Pollin Ross

VIEW OF TETUAN

MOSLEM NORTH AFRICA

BY MARTIN SPREGLING

AFRICA is the last, in other words now the only remaining one of the great continents, which offers to modern Europe a real opportunity to carry on "the white man's burden," in more modern speech opportunity for colonization or some form of colonial management or exploitation. In its northern section, from the Sahara desert northward, it dropped into this category much later than most Americans imagine or remember. The first effective occupation which led to an extensive and lasting colonial empire celebrated its centenary just three years ago. France had lost an American empire and the Americas were not open to further European colonization. She had further lost, if not actual possession, at least footholds that might have meant the establishment of a large and profitable Asiatic empire, and there were no convenient openings there. It was at that moment that the opportune rudeness of a pirate chief gave her clever Prime Minister Polignac occasion for the occupation of Algiers and so created the beginnings of her third, now in size and wealth the second colonial world-empire. That was in 1830.

It was no sinecure into which France had stumbled. It cost much time, money, effort, blood; it took much learning by experience, for the most part bitter, to hold what she had seized, to expand, occupy, organize and develop. Modern means of locomotion and communication, of destruction and exploitation, such as we have seen in the Century of Progress Exposition, were for the most part nearly a century in the future. It is not surprising, therefore, especially in view of France's stabilized population, that her progress in establishing and consolidating her hold upon Algeria was for a half century and more both slow and painful.

The next occupation of adjacent territory belongs in an entirely different era. It is only eight years before the Paris Exposition and its Eiffel tower and twelve years before the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago. The easy money of piracy had vanished from the Barbary Coast. In countries further impoverished by internal mismanagement the limits of taxation, however exorbitant, and of graft, however easy, were soon reached. Under these circumstances, in North Africa as elsewhere, Oriental princes, loving luxury and splendor, learned with ease and speed the gentle art of borrowing money, which wise old Europe was not loath to teach. When neither capital nor interest on these loans was forthcoming, this led first to a not unusual interim of international financial controls and squabbles. Presently convenient native disturbances occurred on the frontier between Tunis and Algiers. And so, despite Italy's protest, England and Germany conniving and Turkey being ignored, France with the aid of some 30,000 soldiers established a benevolent protectorate over Tunisia in 1881. The fiftieth anniversary of French rule in Tunis was celebrated just two years ago.

Meanwhile in a book, the largest part of which was written while the World's Columbian Exposition was in progress on the Chicago lake-front, Budgett Meakin was telling the world about *The Moorish Empire*. In this book, published 1899, Mr. Meakin gives the following picture of French activities on the western frontier of Algeria.

France especially would dearly love to see accomplished that dream of an African empire in which some of her politicians indulge, in spite of the financial burden which the glory of Algeria has been to her. This is a dream which, though not shared by everyone, has to be reckoned with in all negotiations which concern French influence in northern Africa. . .

Englishmen, knowing and caring little about Morocco, are quite incapable of understanding the grip on this land that France has secured. Separated from it merely by an unprotected frontier, well defined only on paper—so that a “much needed rectification” can be demanded at any moment—her Algerian province affords a base already furnished at two points with rail from the ports of O’ran and Algiers...At any convenient time the forays in which tribes on both sides constantly indulge can be fomented or exaggerated, as in the case of Tunis, to afford excuse for a similar occupation... All this could be accomplished with a minimum of loss, as only lowlands lie between these points, and the mountaineers have no army. But the “pacification of the Berbers” would be a lingering task, involving sacrifice of life and money out of all proportion to possible advantageous results...The “military mission” which the French maintain at the Sultan’s expense, which follows and supports him where no other Europeans can go, spies out the land and trains the leaders for a future invasion. Their Algerian Mohammedan agents pass and re-pass where foreigners find it impossible to venture, and besides collecting topographical and other information, they let slip no opportunity of recommending the advantages and privileges of French rule. The immunity which they—as subjects of a friendly Power—enjoy from the tyrannical exactions of the Moorish officials, is in itself the strongest possible recommendation. In this way France is steadily working, and who can forbid her?...In her unquestioned ambition the strong point of France is that she has no rival to fear, and that she can, therefore, afford to wait till the opportune moment arrives when, the hands of those who might protest being tied, she may strike a successful blow. So as matters stand it is only a question of time for Morocco to be added to Algeria. This remarkably well-informed and accurate summary of the state of Morocco’s affairs in the closing year of the nineteenth century contained a prophecy nearly as accurate of what was to happen in the first third, just past, of the twentieth.

It is neither necessary nor possible to enter on details here. The essential facts may be briefly stated. By something of a horse trade with Italy on the one hand and with Germany on the other, the “op-

portune moment" for France in Morocco arrived definitely in 1911-12. By management both wise and clever France not only escaped serious trouble but derived valuable aid from her North African holdings during the great war. At the end of armed warfare naturally German plums connected with this region dropped into French baskets held ready. The result, as anyone can see for himself on any good modern map of Africa, is a French African colonial empire many times the size of France itself. Of this empire Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis form a mere cap, or at most a sort of cowl or hood. From the northernmost point of Tunis, some 37 degrees north latitude it stretches to the Gulf of Guinea and beyond to the South Atlantic coast some 5 degrees south of the equator. From its westernmost point at Cape Verde in the North Atlantic region, some 17 degrees west longitude it reaches at the southeastern point of its boundary with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan the 27th degree east longitude. Even when we exclude from the calculation France herself and her holdings elsewhere, it will not be uninteresting for most citizens of the United States to compare these measurements with our own.

The tale of modern ownership of the rest of Moslem North Africa is soon told. A glance at the map suffices to show that in its allotment to France the older but less effective claims of Spain were met by a small slice known as the Rif, connected with Ceuta, and made famous for a passing moment after the great war by the dramatics of Abd al-Krim, and by a somewhat larger slice on the Atlantic coast opposite the Canary Islands, known to some of us under the gorgeously euphemistic title of the Rio de Oro.

The "internationalized" port of Tangier and its environs need to be mentioned only in passing.

Of somewhat greater interest is the large block of rather waste and uninviting territory which lies between Tunis and Algeria on the West and Egypt on the East. It is now known under the somewhat grandiose name of Libya, being divided into Tripolitania, its western half, and Cyrenaica, adjoining Egypt. These are Italian names. It is the slightly sour apple, whereby in the horse trade of 1911-12 the Italian hunger for Tunisia was supposed to be appeased. "Occupied" with considerable effort in those years, it slipped almost completely from Italy's grasp during the great war, only to be thoroughly subdued, consolidated, and organized, with "rectified" frontiers in the years that have passed since.

What sort of countries and peoples are these, which have fur-

nished modern Europe, especially France, so much colonial sport and labor, glory and profit?

Lest we waste too much post-Versaillian sentimental sympathy upon them, let it be said at the outset that this is and has been, ever since it entered upon its "historical" time, pretty thoroughly colonial area. It has been in the world's news now for something more than 2500 years. In all that time it has rarely exhibited any deep-seated and general longing for genuine independence, nor extensive and enduring capacity to manage its own affairs, though on the other hand neither has it been easy for any length of time for others to manage.

It is most instructive to pass the stages of its story before one's mind in a rapid survey.

The spotlight first falls upon this coast in the ninth or tenth century B.C., with the advent of Phoenician merchant princes, who knew the value of writing and of the controlled publicity of which this century of progress seems to be so proud. Almost everyone knows Rome's great enemy, Carthage, but few realize what a little distance inland the effective control of this or any other Punic coastal settlement penetrated. After the destruction of Carthage some think that these Phoenicians established themselves far to the south in desert surroundings (see Bodley, *Algeria from Within*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1927, p. 196 f.). In any case a thin stream of Punic blood is presently all that remains after Rome had destroyed Carthage in 146 B.C. and usurped her place in North Africa.

We have been accustomed to take Rome and her greatness as a colonizer, as we take so many men and things, largely at her own valuation. Hence she has never been deflated in our esteem and remains today greatly overrated. Actually she accomplished little more in the way of penetration and thorough control of the inland regions and their peoples than had her predecessors. A few public buildings, bridges, and roads she may have constructed more solidly. In any case her conquerors in this territory, though they were Vandals, were not as thorough destroyers as she was. Apart from a few "magnificent ruins" her traces in this region are not more significant than those of Carthage.

The Vandal kingdom, which replaced Rome early in the sixth century A.D., was an ancient Christian forerunner of the later Moslem pirates.

The reconquest after about a century in the name of Rome by

the Byzantine Belisarius meant little except some reduction in the numbers of Vandal men of military age and an added mite of vain glory to the crown of Justinian.

A century later again what was left of this was replaced by Moslem Arab domination. Contrary to popular conception, except for a gradual and not very great change in religion and a progressive and more extensive change in language, this was for three centuries not very different from what had gone before. About the matter of religion, language, and a more serious change in population we shall say a few words presently. In the meantime the merry game goes on pretty much by the same old rules.

In crusading times two dynasties, native Berber in origin and in their original military force, but Moslem in religion and Arab in speech, attain a greater degree of independence and for a space of two centuries a larger extent of subjugated territory than the Numidian and Mauretanian kingdoms of ancient Roman times. After that, despite the influx of cultured Spanish Moslems the whole mass reverts to its natural state of quarreling sections, princes, tribes, with Christian Europe, Spanish, French, and Norman, nibbling with ineffective encroachments at the maritime borders, but not yet ready to assume effective rule.

This state of affairs is brought up to date by a few centuries, during which on the one hand Ottoman Turkish suzerainty of a sort, on the other, in Morocco, lordly Arabic or pseudo Arabic Shereefian dynasties supply at least the semblance of foreign domination which seems to be the natural measure of "self-determination," which the native "nations" of North Africa require. This is the era of the Barbary pirates, which leads up to the modern state of affairs with which this essay started. Its lasting result is a thin trickle of Janissary blood, blood of all the peoples of Europe and hither Asia, especially Asia Minor, united only in that they all were *kular*, that is, slaves, of the Sultan. Hence their descendants by native women are *Kuloghilus*, slave-children.

We have spoken several times of the "natives" of North Africa. Who are these natives, these Moors and *szelte* Othellos, who appear so romantic and interesting, especially to "Anglo-Saxon women," in their native habitat, as Bodley so demurely relates in his *Algeria from Within* (p. 69ff.), and on our own soil, as we saw them but yesterday in the Moorish village of our great Century of Progress Exposition? In the first place it must be clear from what we have

said of the remnants of Phoenicians and of Roman and Ottoman soldiery that even the most aboriginal of these natives are in some measure mixed blood. Further, it may be said in a broad, general way that a large proportion of the population of this extensive area is in greater or less degree of Berber extraction. Just who in the last analysis these Berbers are is hard to say. They were certainly there, when the Phoenicians discovered their land. And in greater or less purity, in more or less solid blocks or interspersed and inextricably intermingled with non-Berbers, as nomads, farmers, and city dwellers, they still exist from the borders of Egypt to the Atlantic ocean, from the southern Sahara to the Mediterranean. He who desires more information may begin by reading Rene Basset's article on the Berbers in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* and Mathéa Gaudry's masterly study *La Femme Chaonia de l'Aurès* (Paris, Geuthner, 1929), both of which will lead to further reading. Here it must suffice us to say, that the original Berber element may be the residue of a prehistoric white wave of immigration, which crowded the greater part of a previous layer of inhabitants south of the Sahara into the Negro and Negroid area. With such light modifications as have been suggested, the Berbers form the main bulk of the population from the beginning of history to the middle of the eleventh century.

In religion and everyday life the gods, rites, and institutions of Phoenician and Roman masters leave something of their color on native cults and customs. Presently the great Jewish missionary wave, called the Dispersion, Judaizes a portion of the populace. In the early centuries of the Christian era the Christian modification of this new type of religion replaces the Jewish in its missionary activity. In their own way the Berbers are Christianized. Finally the Moslem form of the same religious type replaces the Christian, and the Berber country remains Mohammedan to the present day. But whether they be Christian or Moslem, they retain enough of their old customs to make them distinctive. And always, in place of the established, official form, they choose some rebellious, heretical type of religion. Curious early Christian or semi-Christian sects, Montanists, Novations, Donatists, Manicheans flourish in Roman Africa. It is the same in Islamic times. Berbers enroll in Moslem Arab armies and help them conquer Spain. Disappointed in their hope of gain and place in the official Islamic system they turn to rebellious forms. Kharidjism, which means "rebelliousness," becomes the fa-

vorite religious watch word of the Moslem Berbers. In curious sects, Ibadites, Sufrites, this "rebelliousness" retains its hold on Berber sections of the land to this day. The heretical Shiite family of the Fatimids find the first solid foothold for their great rebellion against the Caliphate of Baghdad among the Ketama Berbers of Tunisia. In fact the three greatest counter-caliphates established in hostile contrast to the great central caliphal idea of Islam, that of early Medieval Spain, that of the Fatimids, and that of Morocco, which was more or less fully disestablished only in our own times, all arise in Berber or semi-Berber lands. But the Fatimid venture was to cost the Berbers dear.

Several times now reference has been made to the eleventh century A.D. as an incisive epoch in the Berber story. The Berbers had attached themselves to the rebel Fatimids and had helped them conquer Egypt and Syria and to threaten Baghdad itself. With the Fatimids settled and centered in Cairo, the Berbers at home resumed the merry game of rebellion, with its point now turned against their new masters, the Fatimids. This time they were punished with a scourge, compared with which Carthage, Rome, Vandals, Byzantines had been but the crack of a child's lash, a scourge such as some two thousand or more years before they themselves may have been to those who were before them. The Fatimids had no army, but they had, troubling the peace of Egypt, a horde of Arab nomads crowded out of desert Arabia, a confederation of Arab tribes best known as the Bani Hilal, "the children of the crescent." To these they opened the flood gates of Egypt's western frontier. This was no mere raid, that flooded suddenly only to ebb back again. This was no mere military campaign that might establish garrisons, in which Phoenician, Roman, Turkish, French soldiery might play with or even marry a few native women. This was the epic migration of a nomad, a wandering people, men, women, and children, bag and baggage. It was a great flooding sea of humanity that rolled slowly along, submerging lowland and plain. Just when Europe was sending its crusading armies in ineffective dribblets eastward on a more northerly line to the Holy Land, this Arab host was drifting irresistibly westward until it reached the Atlantic. The relatively pure Berber element is crowded before it into mountain retreats or to the southern border of the Sahara. All along the line of their drift the Arab terror is still alive under the ashes: not only in Algeria, of which Bodley in *Algeria from Within* (p. 22, compare p. 26) tells the story, but all

along the line you may "ask anyone who the natives are and they will reply "Arabs"; some of the more intelligent will say "Arabs with a sprinkling of Berbers". To the Berbers it was this kind of a scourge. To the Arabs it was and is an epic saga, which their minstrels chant to this day in the cities and villages of Egypt (see Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* and Taha Hussein, *An Egyptian Childhood*), and which Bertram Thomas heard as he, the first European man, crossed the great south-central Desolate Quarter of Arabia (see his *Arabia Felix*, Scribner, 1932, p. 208 ff, 277 ff, 289 ff.). This compound of human chemistry, with a further admixture of more southern color, to which we shall come presently, this is the romantic Moor, this is the Moslem North African whom the French, Spaniards, and Italians found, as during the past century they entered this forbidden land.

Very curious, interesting and perhaps instructive as well is the ebb and flow of human migration, culture, and force over this odd Eden of North Africa. First, before the time of written historic news, a clear drift northwestward from North Africa of a people that builds dolmens, cromlech, cairns, and Stonehenge circles. Are the people, who did the prehistoric sculptures and drawings of Northern Spain and Southern France of this race or drift? Did they, as seems likely to this writer, drift from an African center with the great crescent of their dolmens extending east and northeastward through Syria-Palestine to Asia Minor, as well as northwestward through Spain and France to England and Scandinavia? Or did they, from a Syro-Palestinian source, drift westward over Europe (Olmstead's *History of Palestine and Syria*, p. 23, 24 ff.)?

In any case, presently they are submerged by a great counter-march of what we may for want of a better name call Berber folk. Whence do they come? It would seem from Europe, for their urge and drift is eastward and southward until they reach the limit of their expansive power on a frontier that may be called in the East Egyptian and in the South "The Color Line."

Then, from the time when history becomes interesting news, we have written records and they show a curious rhythm.

A thin, but not ineffective thrust westward by Phoenician commerce and commercial exploitation impinges along the Mediterranean coast on the solid "Berber" block. It slips over the straits of Gibraltar into Spain, and in a very thin trickle through the straits

along the North Atlantic coast of Africa and Europe, perhaps as far as Britain.

As this westward drift comes to a stop and begins to ebb, it is met by a counter stroke, this time chiefly military and political and from the North. Rome "wipes out" Carthage and plants upon the ruins its standards and its garrison-colonies. The polite language becomes Latin, and a veneer of Latin culture, thinning out rapidly to nothing as we look southward, overspreads the rich coast area. A little variation is introduced at this point by the little, and not very significant westward trek of the Vandals. The vandal drop is quickly lost in the Berber bucket. It was, as their last king, Gelimer, shouted, as he was marching by the wheels of Belisarius' triumphal chariot, but a *vanitas vanitatum*. And Rome's colonization was not much more. Perhaps, indeed, the force needed to keep Africa and other colonies subjugated and the counter flow of African and other peoples and cultures into Rome did as much or more for the undermining and ruin of Roman power than Roman military strokes and police surveillance ever accomplished in the ruin of Carthage and the uplift of North Africa into the Roman world.

Beginning with a very slim raiding thrust westward the Moslem Arab with ridiculous ease toppled Rome's tottering remnants out of the picture. Military campaigns follow, but they accomplish little more than had other military attacks before them. Then the Arab migration changes the face of the land. Despite attempts, clearly fostered by France to arouse something like a general Berber consciousness (see Massignon, in *Whither Islam*, edited by Gibb, London, 1932, p. 91f.), North Africa is today more thoroughly Moslem Arab in language and feeling than ever it was Berber, Latin, Jewish, or Christian.

With this last East-West movement ended, but Arab-Berber amalgamation not yet fully accomplished, we come once more, as Louis Massignon (*Whither Islam*, especially p. 79 f. and p. 97 f.) clearly observes, to a distinct North-South movement of power, feeling, ideas, and population. This, perhaps, is the most distinctive accomplishment of the great French and the lesser Spanish and Italian action of this and the bygone century in the story of human culture. What it means in full and what its issue will be no man can yet say.

A few elemental facts stand out clearly. Though the "pacification" of Morocco seems to be not yet definitely accomplished and

complaints against Italy and France, as well as against Britain, simmer throughout the Moslem world, France especially, and Italy and Spain in her wake, have carried police law and order much farther from the Mediterranean southward in North Africa than ever was done before in the world's history. Roads are built and maintained, motor cars and airplanes are everywhere, there is no longer a terrible Sahara as of yore, safety and an increasing measure of sanitation are the rule, education of French type is spreading in the land, the French language is definitely superimposed on Arabic and Berber.

On the other side of the picture, Massignon speaks of "Intermigration on a South-North axis" continuing "to expand without interruption". What does this mean? The effective migration of Europeans southward certainly does not penetrate far south of the coast line. Influence and rule is one thing, migration is another. Influence and rule mean a very thin sprinkling of European administrators, police chiefs, White Fathers or White sisters, with here and there, as needed, a greater body of soldiery. But, as Bodley says (*Algeria from Within*, p. 38), "the actual French occupation of the land does not penetrate very far—in fact, in a great many areas the Frenchman is leaving the interior and returning to the coast. Again and again one passes through European villages with a church built to accommodate a thousand people or so, and one sees about twenty European dwellings in the town and the rest of the houses in ruins or inhabited by Arabs." And even in Algeria these coastal immigrants seem to be fully as much Spanish or Italian as French. In the market gardens all along the coast east and west of Algiers "the expert labor is chiefly supplied by Majorcans and Sicilians" (Bodley, *Algeria from Within*, p. 154). Westward, of course, the Spaniards predominate still more, and eastward Italian predominance begins notoriously in Tunisia itself.

On the other hand Massignon says (*Whither Islam*, p. 80) "the flow of North Africans to France for employment as manual laborers and workmen, which in 1910 was limited to some 500 dockers at Marseilles. . . . has risen to the enormous figure of 150,000 workmen in 1927." In very interesting sketch maps on p. 82 and 83 Massignon further shows the distribution of sectors in and about Paris" inhabited by Moslem immigrants from North Africa. . . . They have succeeded in insinuating themselves on all sides, and . . . they are incorporated into the French life of the city, not shut off in a closed

quarter like the Chinese quarter ("Chinatown") of San FranciscoSome seventy per cent of them remain for more than three years, and twenty per cent appear to be definitely established in France."

In connection with this South-North drift and with the "racial hybridization" which Massignon thinks conceivable, another element, not stressed by either Massignon or Bodley, will be of distinct interest to the intelligent American observer. Even before the advent of France in North Africa, Arabic Islam had a distinct tendency to break down an ancient "color line" and all race consciousness. Whereas in ancient times and even as late as Ibn Khaldūn (about 1400 A.D.) a fairly distinct color line ran south of the Sahara, since that time enough Negro and Negroid elements have been introduced as slave soldiery, concubines, and for other service, and more recently, especially by the Senussi dervishes, as full-fledged Moslem freemen to constitute a very appreciable factor in the population of North Africa. France shows no disposition to decrease this flow and has, in fact, by better roads, greater safety, and better means of transportation smoothed and cleared its channels. Those of us who are interested in "the rising tide of color" as a vital factor in the modern history of human culture should not overlook the important part it plays in modern Moslem North Africa.