

Uneasy Arabia



National Geographic Society

An Oasis in Kingdom of Hedjaz.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

ARABIA has become the scene of one of the world's latest threats of war. In the past few years the desert Bedouins, under the leadership of the sultan of Nejd, have gained control of all central Arabia, as well as Mecca with its state of Hedjaz, Asir, and large areas of eastern and southern Arabia. Now they are threatening to push their operations northward into Iraq and northwestward into Trans-Jordan. The seriousness of the latter threats lies in the fact that Iraq and Trans-Jordan are both mandates of Great Britain. Between them lies Syria, a mandate of France.

Arabia has been figuring in world affairs since the curtain rose on the first act in history, and yet it has large areas about which we know practically nothing. Because of the huge bulk of Asia, its numerous peninsulas are somewhat dwarfed, and one may fall into the error of classing Arabia with peninsulas nearer home, such as Florida. But 60 Floridas would be lost in this great Asian projection; it is, in fact, a third as large as the entire United States.

Tremendous desert wastes are not alone responsible for the fact that the outside world is ignorant of the Nejd in the heart of Arabia. That country—if the area over which the Nejdian nomads roam may be called a country—has one of the most effective exclusion laws known: the exclusion law of the sword. These people do not care to go into the outside world, and they want no visits from Western traders, diplomats, military experts, or missionaries—especially missionaries. They are blood-thirsty fanatics on the subject of religious simplicity. As Wahabites they are perhaps better known to the world than as Nejdians, for the former name they owe to their religious associations.

Their Capital a Forbidden City.

The capital of the Nejd, Rida, where was born the movement that threatens to embrace all Arabia, has been more truly a forbidden city than Lhasa. The only Westerner known to have visited it in recent years was an American physician, smuggled in that he might save the life of a chieftain, and it is believed that even this errand of mercy would not have saved him from summary execution save for a little group of defenders who for a brief time stretched their standards.

After the World War Great Britain paid the ruler of the Nejd a huge subsidy—\$400,000 a year, an "honorarium" four times as great as the salary and allowance of the President of the United States. The young sultan took the cash and let his followers go about their forays pretty much as they wished, with the result that Great Britain had to spend much more than the subsidy defending the kings of Hedjaz, Trans-Jordan and Iraq against incursions.

Ibn Saud, the sultan of Nejd and king of Hedjaz, has combined his political and military drive for a unified Arabia with a revival of Wahabism. The Wahabi sect was founded early in the Eighteenth century by Abd el Wahab, who might be termed the Cartwright of Mohammedanism, for he was essentially a Moslem Puritan seeking to turn his faith back to what he considered its simple fundamentals. Feeling that Mohammedanism should be uncompromisingly monotheistic, he was particularly disturbed by the tendency to worship Mohammed, who claimed to be only a mortal as well as Allah. He also found his co-religionists invoking Moslem saints and preached against this practice. After Wahab died his fanatical converts wrecked the elaborate tomb of Moslem teachers and even went so far as to try unsuccessfully to destroy the dome over the tomb of Mohammed at Medina.

Before his death Wahab converted to his simplified faith a powerful sheik of central Arabia, Mohammed Ibn

Saud. He became both the religious and political head of Wahabism; and he, too, took a leaf from the fundamental teachings of Mohammed and began spreading his faith by the sword.

Iraq, one of the areas threatened, is the modern name for the traditional Garden of Eden historically known as Mesopotamia. The cradle of civilization, in the belief of many archeologists and historians, is this very valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Iraq and Its King.

Iraq lies between the Arabian desert on one side and the Persian uplands on the other. West lies the French Mandate of Syria; north the Kurdish highlands of Turkey. The Persian gulf forms a corridor 1,000 miles giving Iraq a waterway to the open Indian ocean. Dates from "the Garden" come to New York by way of this corridor. Within Iraq live 3,000,000 people, a slim population for soil which once supported more people per acre than does densely populated Belgium.

Great Britain has made her Mesopotamian mandate the Arab Kingdom of Iraq ruled by a Mohammedan prince, the son of the former king of Hedjaz. King Faisal reigns where Babylonians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, Romans and Saracens ruled successively for six centuries.

Of the three principal cities, Mosul, the oil town, seems safely beyond reach of the Bedouins. Bagdad, in the center of the valley, comes by its position of capital honesty. Basra, in the Far South, is the end of what was to have been the Berlin-Bagdad railway.

Much agricultural land has been reclaimed by irrigation in an effort to revive the luxuriant Garden of Eden. Dates from the date palm are the chief product. Wheat, barley and rice are also grown. Experiments looking toward cotton growing have been promoted. Vegetables and flowers thrive in the protecting shade of palm fronds.

Trans-Jordan Full of Nomads.

Trans-Jordan, the other threatened region, lies in the northwestern corner of Arabia adjoining Palestine. Perhaps it will bring the newly independent but very old country closer to realize that its capital, now Amman, was once Philadelphia—the great-great-grandfather of the half dozen or more Philadelphias, great and small, that are to be found in our postal guides. But it was only a mere matter of twenty-odd centuries ago that the city took the name Philadelphia from its new lord, Ptolemy Philadelphus. It had existed as Rabbath Amman, chief city of the Ammonites, almost from the days of Lot, from whom the Ammonites are said to have sprung. It was after a victorious battle with these same people of Amman that Jephthah, according to the Biblical story, returned to the fatal meeting with his daughter.

When Trans-Jordan is described as stretching from the Jordan and the Dead sea toward the interior of Arabia one is likely to call up the picture of a hopeless desert. But much of the region is steppe land, a high plain supporting some flocks and even capable of tillage. Nomadism has long held the region in its grip, however, and it is as a sort of "chief of nomads" that Abdullah Ibn Hussein finds it necessary to rule. He holds his "court" not in a palace but in a group of tents which he moves with the seasons.

Amman is not inaccessible. Five hours by automobile over reasonably good roads through the sizzling valley of the Jordan suffice for the trip from Jerusalem to the capital. The Jordan forms the boundary line and across it is an iron bridge. Amman is only about thirty miles from the river, and as the crow flies is hardly more than sixty miles from Jerusalem. The Hedjaz railway, connecting Damascus and Medina, runs through the town.

Adrift With Humor

HER STRONG POINT

Employer (Interviewing would-be lady clerk)—Where were you last employed?

Girl—In a doll factory.

Employer—Doll factory? What did you do there?

Girl—I was making eyes.

Employer—Very well, you're hired, but don't demonstrate your capabilities when my wife is about.

That's Right

Bridget and Pat were studying the law of compensation.

"Accordin' to this," said Bridget, "whin a man loses one sense his others are more developed."

"Sure an' O've noticed it," exclaimed Pat. "Whin a man has one leg shorter than the other, begorra, the other's longer."

CASTS 'EM IN THE SHADE



She—"Your brother casts all other business men in the shade? Remarkable, I think." He—"Well, at least all those who use his goods—he's a window blind manufacturer."

Eternal Dissatisfaction

Let's talk about the weather. As seasons drift along, And lift the shout together, "Whatever is, is Wrong!"

Our Fellow Creatures

Her Husband—What do you want with a horse? We have two curs and you don't ride horseback.
Mrs. Goodsole—I know that. But horses are becoming so scarce each member of our Good Deeds club has pledged herself to keep at least one horse to feed the starving horseflies.

Well Enough

They were seated across the table from each other in the restaurant, the wealthy octogenarian and the gold digger.

"Will you marry me if I have my health rejuvenated?" he asked.
"I'll marry you, all right," she replied, "but you leave your health the way it is."

In Love

"Why is Eloise on the roof with a telescope?"
"Aw, she's looking for a letter by air mail."

NO MEN OR WOMEN BORN



Visitor—"How many men and women were born here last year?"
Native—"None, but the number of babies was quite large."

Unappreciated Menu

For proper bait I was inclined; The price I paid was plenty, sure I hung around for hours to find A fish that was an Epicure.

The Grand Scale

Mrs. Howard—When my daughter first married she lived at the rate of fifty thousand a year.

Mrs. Jay—How long did they keep it up?
Mrs. Howard—For their seven-day wedding trip.

In the Suburbs

"That's my place you see over there—the house and the garage close by."
"Which is the garage, old man?"

Enumerating the Things

Miss Dill—Don't think I'm as stupid as you are. I know a thing or two.
Mr. Hollownut—You know a thing or two? What, for instance?

Miss Dill—Well, you're one of them and then there are several more sumps like you.

Eyes Front

"I got all turned around coming out home this afternoon."
"No wonder. You shouldn't gaze at the girls so much."

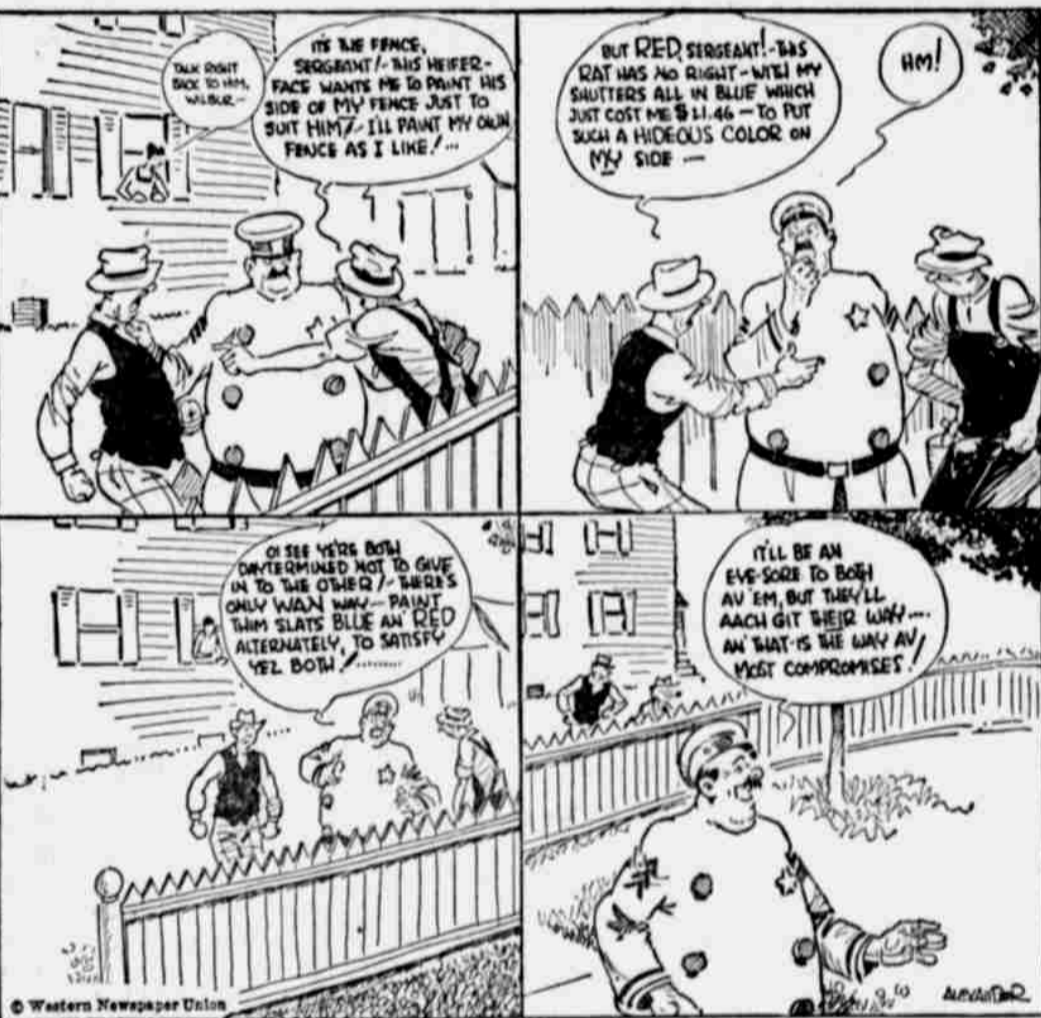
OUR COMIC SECTION

Along the Concrete



FINNEY OF THE FORCE

A Solution



THE FEATHERHEADS

Definitions



Printed Velvet for Evening

A delightful new evening ensemble consists of a very simple frock of black velvet printed with a design of brilliant popples. Over the dress is worn a cape of the same unusual velvet.

New Bags and Scarfs

Fascinating new bags, envelope in shape, and short fringed scarfs are made of unusual silk woven in wide stripes, with an indefinite pattern in silver through the stripes.

"Lady" Dress

Lustrous sheer gray velvet with a sprig of lavender flower in it fashions a sweet afternoon dress that is so feminine as to come under the "lady" dress category. It has a triple tiered skirt and its sleeves flare at three-quarters length with a long, slender cuff underneath.

Turban for Fall

The turban in any of its variations and the *peña cloche* are the outstanding features of the millinery for fall