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**Bishop, Isabella L. "Notes on Morocco," *The Monthly Review*, Vol. V  
(October-December, 1901), pp. 89-102.**

## NOTES ON MOROCCO

**NATIONALLY** we have often had to pay dearly for our ignorance. Countries of which we know little and care less suddenly become politically important. Then maps are hastily published, old travels are in request at the libraries, dusty consular reports are fished out of pigeonholes, badly pronounced names are bandied about in conversation, and "people " are galvanised into something which simulates interest for a few weeks or even months if the situation is sufficiently acute. Morocco has, however, just failed to become interesting. " Wolf " has been cried so long regarding the designs of France that nobody pays any attention, not even when a French army was known to be within three days of the "Holy city" of Tafilet. If any one suggests that France, having been permitted to absorb this dying empire, would undoubtedly recruit her army from its splendid fighting material, and might menace our position in Egypt and our right-of-way in the Mediterranean, acquiring, as she would, one of the pillars of Hercules, the cry is raised of "Pessimist " and "Alarmist." The wakening may come any day, and it will be a rude one.

Leaving, however, the political aspects of what will one day be known as " the Morocco Question " with the remark that of the Powers, France and Spain alone are interested in the acquisition of North-west African territory, and that the possession of a key to the Mediterranean is worthy of the ambition of the former Power, I should like to call attention to some of the factors in the present condition of Morocco

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which are to be taken into account in any estimate of her probable future. They are not new, but they are forgotten ; and I offer them as among the most interesting of the impressions made upon me in a recent ride of 1000 miles through the country, in the course of which I visited the northern and southern Capitals, the Holy city of Wazan, the coast cities, many of the agricultural and pastoral districts of the interior, and journeyed among the Berbers of the Atlas Mountains as far as the Castle of Glowa on the southern slope of the Pass of the same name on the road from the capital to Tafilet.

Among the foremost is that the Sultan has no power whatever over much of the empire which is nominally under his rule—that he cannot collect taxes, punish crime, appoint officials, secure the safety of goods and travellers, or even pass himself, though with 30,000 men, from Morocco city to Fez by a direct route. It is out of this condition of no-rule that the present difficulty with Spain has arisen. While I was in Wazan recently, some mountaineers abducted a Spanish girl and her young brother and carried them off to the mountains, where neither Sultan nor Grand Shereef has any authority. The girl was sold to be trained as a dancing girl, and her captors refused to give her up except under conditions which no self-respecting power could accept. It is in vain to demand of Morocco a daily indemnity till she is restored, and stronger measures, such as are talked about, are not likely to alter what is really the gist of the situation, that the Sultan has no power over the mountain tribes. In their lawlessness and his

powerlessness there are inflammable materials enough for a blaze at any moment. Practically there is no government at all in a great part of Morocco.

The insecurity has of late considerably increased, and is increasing—from Rabat northwards. Some of the roads are absolutely "closed," others are only kept partially open by armed men, while life and property are absolutely insecure. On the route from Fez to Tangier, which I have just traversed, caravans even of large size and well armed are daily attacked, and the goods and mules carried off to the mountains ; and I owed my

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immunity from robbery to the vague dread which the marauders have of the consequences of molesting Europeans. The sheep and cattle of villages on the same route (even of a village belonging to the Grand Shereef of Wazan, whose religious position ought to have secured the safety of his property) are being seized daily; life is of no account, and shepherds, herdmen, and harvesters, pursue their avocations armed with long guns and swords for defence. The state of lawlessness greatly resembles that which I witnessed in Armenia a few years ago, only that in the Moorish case the depredators are preying on their co-religionists. There is, by all accounts, native and Christian, a growing unrest, which has increased since the present vizier, el Menebhi, came into power, owing to the drastic measures which he has taken to rid himself of rivals, actual or possible—to general dissatisfaction with the régime and the inactivity of the Sultan, and with the time spent by him on such "frivolous innovations " as photography, fireworks, cycling, and European dramatic *troupes*, to the neglect of his regal duties. The tribes are fighting each other, the predatory mountaineers are increasing in audacity, and are looting and marauding unchecked ; every official is living in dread of sudden deposition, confiscation of his property, and confinement in a dungeon or worse, while the peasants groan under official exactions which leave them with only enough to keep body and soul together, many villages being left without a single animal for agricultural work. The fertile plain between Dimnat and Morocco city is studded with great towered castles of mud concrete, once imposing, now fast crumbling into ruin, which were the dwellings of kaïds and other rich men, many of whom have been thrown into prison by the Court in the hope of extracting large sums by way of ransom, but whose offers, or those of their friends for them, have not satisfied the rapacious expectations which had been formed. At Fez, the northern capital, which for wealth, trade, aristocratic families, learning, and energy, may be regarded as the Empire city, discontent is strong. The Sultan ought to be in residence there now ; but the date of his leaving Morocco city, constantly altered during

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the last eighteen months, is still uncertain, greatly, it is believed, owing to the influence of el Menebhi, the Moorish envoy to King Edward VII., who, though a "great man" in the southern capital, would be a "small " one in Fez, where he was a private soldier, thankful to go official errands for two or three pesetas. It is a grievance that no Fez man has anything of a position in the Government among the many recent changes. Discontent in Fez is not to be altogether despised ; for were it possible for Orientals to trust each other sufficiently to combine for a common object, the fall of the dynasty, of which Moors speak freely, might be accelerated by Fez money and intrigue, and the hatching of a plot to place

another than Abdul Aziz on the Shereefian throne. Probably the Sultan's greatest safeguard is his sacred character as a lineal descendant of the Prophet, and head of the Church.

Another impression produced on the stranger is that of the singular variety of races, and mixture of races which are assembled under the crimson flag of Morocco. The Berber of the mountains, with his narrow head, somewhat classic features, tan complexion, and lithe, active form—conquered only to a very limited extent either by Roman or Arab—retains definite racial characteristics, while the Arab of the plains, if of fairly pure blood, is in the cities deadly white, flabby, anaemic, and fat, and in the country swarthy and lean. But it is rare to find even a small village composed wholly of pure-bred Arabs. It is estimated that from 2500 to 3000 slaves, mostly girls, enter Morocco from the Soudan annually ; the admixture of black blood is obvious everywhere, and the Arab, stained in skin and coarsened in feature, has lost, and is losing, the race characteristics which he brought with him from Asia, including the energy of conquest, and the creative genius which endowed Morocco with once beautiful buildings, now falling into unchecked decay. Traces of the Soudan are general, from glossy blackness to the singular pallor of the octoroon, and the harems of the rich are full of negresses and coloured children. I am inclined to agree with M. de la Martinière, the French consul-general, who has studied the subject carefully, that

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much of the intellectual deterioration and decay of the Arab race in Morocco, and much of the sensuality and brutal passion which disfigures it, are due to the enormous and continual infusion of African blood.

The Jew occupies a totally different position from the negro in Morocco. Ubiquitous, irrepressible, in business dominating the coast towns ; in Fez, Mequinez, and Morocco city making himself felt, his numbers estimated at a quarter of a million, he never amalgamates with those who of necessity tolerate him, or swerves by one hair's breadth from his Hebrew customs or from his exclusive devotion to the Old Testament and the Talmud. His rigid observance of the fourth commandment, from which nothing can tempt him, is stronger even than his passion for gain ; but the people " dwell alone," and are not " reckoned among the nations." They count for nothing in Moorish politics ; but being the usurers, bankers, and skilled craftsmen of the community, they are indispensable to its existence, and are, on the whole, let alone. The men and women are alike handsome, and everywhere the Barbary Jew has the unmistakable characteristics of his race stamped upon him. Everywhere there are synagogues, the Hebrew ritual, and synagogue schools, and in some cities there are very efficient high schools both for boys and girls, organised by the Israelitish Alliance. In the lofty villages of the Atlas, fairly flourishing Jewish colonies of ancient origin are found, each one with its rabbi and synagogue, its small industries, its trade in dates with Tafilet, its separate quarter, its unrivalled filth, and its protective gate.

The Berber mountaineers are a purer and finer race than the Arabs, though on the Tafilet road the contamination of black blood is evident in some of the sheikhs, notably in the Khalifa of Glawa. The Berbers are energetic, warlike, and hospitable ; fanatical Moslems, though most lax in religious observances ; given to blood feuds, tribal fighting, and manly games, and loving war above all other pastimes. The women, except those of the highest class, are not secluded or veiled, and have some influence in their villages. In striking contrast

with the neglect of the Arabs of the plains to utilise for irrigation purposes the water supplies which Nature has placed within their reach, the Berbers, by carefully constructed channels, bring water from the higher levels and distribute it among their fields. In the Atlas range, stony and arid as it is, every valley is terraced for cultivation up to a great height ; fine walnut trees abound, the stones picked off the land are utilised for retaining walls, and heavy grain crops, kept free from weeds, testify to the energy and persevering industry of the cultivators.

Travelling in the Atlas nominally as the Sultan's guest, I was hospitably received in the castles of the Berber sheikhs and khalifas, and witnessed a life which, though lived on a larger scale, resembles greatly that of the medieval barons of our border castles. The fortress of the hereditary Kaïd of Glowa, the richest and most powerful of the chiefs who are tributary to the Sultan, is a huge, double-towered pile of stone on a height, with high walls enclosing the large area on which it stands. It is provisioned for a considerable term, and contains, besides 500 human beings, great wealth in slaves, flocks, herds, mules, horses, asses, arms, and ammunition. The stir through the daylight hours is ceaseless. The courts are always full of men and asses bringing in grain and forage, of slaves of all degrees of blackness hurrying on various errands, of armed horsemen dashing in and out on official business, of litigants and suppliants, of opposing parties seeking the settlement of their disputes, while couriers from Tafilet, bringing news of the French who were within three days of the Tafilet oasis, added excitement to the hubbub. The Khalifa, a young man with much coloured blood, charming in appearance and manner, is general, ruler, and judge, with the responsibility of all decisions great and small, formal and informal, resting upon him. He is ceaselessly appealed to, and on him rests at present the difficult duty of preventing any friction or collision between his tribesmen and the French ; his brother, the Kaïd, being in command at Tafilet, the holy city, the cradle of the present dynasty, for the same purpose.

There, as well as at the Castle of Zarktán and elsewhere, the khalifas spoke most energetically and with apparent frankness of their own and Berber feeling towards the French, whom they regard as their bitter enemies, and whom they are burning to fight, while they are furious with the Sultan for holding them back. "The French are seeking their own graves," said the young Khalifa of Glowa, drawing himself to his full height, and fingering longingly the trigger of his richly decorated gun. "My tribe has five divisions, and each can put into the field 1200 men, all good shots. Victory must be ours," he said. "What are their quick-firing guns ? Allah is on our side, and he is stronger than they, and we will force them back into the waterless desert," and so on, every fighting man talking in the same strain, and speaking fiercely of the inaction to which the Berbers are compelled. Reports, doubtless much exaggerated, were daily brought in by passing refugees, who said they had fled into Tafilet from the brutal treatment they had received from the French in the neighbourhood of Iglí, Figuig, and Tuat ; that there were 18,000 of them, all destitute, and that they had asked the Tafilet tribes to help them, but in consequence of stringent orders from the Sultan they had refused to do so, for the Government had warned them that if they molest the French the Sultan will lead an army against themselves, and has solemnly assured them that if they render obedience, the French will not encroach upon them. In spite, however, of the war fever, and the effervescence of the Berbers and their khalifas, I believe that things will remain in *statu*

*quo* for some time, especially as the Riff difficulty with France has been settled by the payment of an indemnity.

In any forecast of the future of Morocco the race question must bulk largely, for the population of the empire is composed of races which have only an accidental cohesion and a common bond in Islam, and between which an innate antagonism exists, with divergent and often clashing interests. This common religion is, and must remain, at once the bond and the curse of Morocco, and the most formidable obstacle in the way of its progress, chaining all thought in the fetters of the

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seventh century, steeping its votaries in the most intolerant bigotry and the narrowest conceit, and encouraging a fanaticism which regards with approval and admiration the delirious excesses of the Aissawa and the Hamdusha.

In addition to the broad features of racial distinction which mark Berber from Arab, an important element of the position is the sharp division of both races into tribes. In actual but much overlooked fact, the native population of the empire is almost altogether tribal, each tribe being closely welded by tradition, intermarriage, custom, common interests in lands and pasturage, common wrongs, and a measure of tribal government.

The nomadic pastoral tribes, dwellers in brown tents pitched in circles, and migrating at short intervals with their flocks and herds, are rigidly ruled by their sheiks and headmen. The agricultural tribes, living largely in bee-hive houses built of reeds, are also under the sway of their headmen in local matters, and all are entitled to a certain amount of autonomy. Some of the tribes are large, rich, and powerful, and successfully defy the Government, being able to render impossible even the passage of armed forces through a great extent of country. The Beni Hassan and Zemmur tribes can each put from 5000 to 6000 horsemen into the field. The more powerful tribes, such as the two latter, are frequently fighting each other, and their belligerent habits are a great obstacle in the way of internal trade. Tribal feeling is very strong, and even dwellers in the cities are linked by acknowledged ties of blood with their pastoral and agricultural brethren.

Much as I had heard and read of the misgovernment of Morocco, I was not prepared to find the reality far worse than had been reported, or for the remarkable consensus of opinion among Arabs, Jews, and Europeans as to the infamies of the administration with which the country is cursed. Alike in the trading cities of the coast and the interior, and in the clusters of reed huts or brown tents which are the permanent or migratory dwellings of the agricultural and pastoral populations, the same tales are told, and *told truthfully*, of intolerable exactions at the pleasure of the kaïds and their

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underlings, of the absolute insecurity of the earnings of labour, of the restrictions placed upon trade, and the prohibition of the movement of grain from districts where there is an abundant harvest to those

in which a bad yield is producing severe scarcity ; of the confiscation of crops by the kaïds, of the right liberally exercised by them of throwing their enemies and all men rich enough to be worth robbing into dungeons, and leaving them to rot to death ; of the growing insecurity of property, of the crimes done in the Sultan's name, of the enormous bribes necessary for the carrying of legal or business matters through fiscal or judicial hands, and of innumerable other wrongs, all of which they contend have increased in intensity since the vigorous hands of Mulai Hassan ceased to hold the reins of power, and since the present Sultan was emancipated from what was practically close imprisonment by the death of the strong Vizier, who had been all-powerful since the death of his father. It is claimed that some of these evils, specially the throwing of rich and powerful men into dungeons, have been accentuated since el Menebhi became Vizier.

No peasant is so ignorant as to be unaware of the circumstances which make his position all but intolerable ; and even the women, in spite of their timidity with foreign men, make such remarks to them as "The Government is like a fire burning into us." It is useless to disguise the fact that the Court, rich as it is, is always greedy of money, and is absolutely unscrupulous as to how it obtains it. It sells offices to rich men who are willing to pay heavily for lucrative posts, i.e., for fair chances for extortion. It deprives them of office without rendering a reason, confiscates their property, and throws them into dungeons. It appropriates the property of every kaïd at his death. It exacts costly official presents, and has the prison ready for those whose gifts are unsatisfactory. It allows rich aspirants to governorships to buy out the actual occupants, making huge profits by the transaction. This example in the highest quarter is so closely imitated by officials of all grades, that with the people " official " and "robber" have come to be synonymous terms.

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The kaïds, having paid enormously for posts which are not salaried, and being authorised to collect the Imperial taxation, to throw men into prison who are likely to be squeezeable sponges, and who have very fair prospects of ending their own days in dungeons, " make hay while the sun shines." Of every three dollars of legitimate taxation it is estimated that only one reaches the Treasury. In addition to the large sums gained by this process of subtraction, they make forced requisitions and raise forced loans, of which the lender seldom receives principal or interest. Their spies report to them any one who is supposed to have money or goods ; an interview is arranged, and the kaïd demands a large share. If the owner is contumacious he is thrown into one of those prisons, the horrors of which are well known in England, either till he dies or emerges a broken and impoverished man. No list of prisoners is kept. Most of them are not criminals at all, but men possessed of property which may be squeezed out of them, or whose friends are able to pay a heavy ransom. Many of the unjustly incarcerated only survive a few weeks or months ; some become lunatics, and many more would lose their reason were it not for the fatalism which is a feature of their creed, an absolute resignation—of the completeness of which we have no conception—to what is believed to be the Divine will.

Each kaïd has a prison, frequently on his own premises. In a prison in the courtyard of the kaïd of one of the central provinces, part of which is a dungeon formed by roofing over a stone quarry, I saw ninety-

five men crowded together, many of them heavily shackled, most of whom were there because they had possessions enough to excite the cupidity of a rapacious tyrant.

Since the Earl and Countess of Meath, Miss Hanbury, and Mr. H. Gurney made their hideous revelations of the horrors of Moorish prisons, and the efforts, chiefly of the British Minister, Sir A. Nicolson, have improved the condition of the prisons in Tangier, stringent orders have been issued by the Government to the effect that no European is to be admitted into a Moorish prison. It has been hoped that foreign

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representations have led to the abolition of the fiendish tortures which were practised and to certain reforms, but I do not believe this to be the case, except where, as in Tangier, foreign officials are on the alert.

Instances of the practice of brutal cruelties were told to me on good authority while I was in Southern Morocco, as occurring during my visit, and the following admits of no question. A high Court official was reported, truly or falsely, as having spoken disparagingly of the Sultan, and an order was signed for him to be thrown into the Mogador prison. Before leaving Morocco city the palm of the culprit's hand was deeply gashed with two cross cuts, and a stone was inserted in the intersection, the hand being afterwards stitched up in a piece of raw hide, the shrinking of which produces great agony. Mercifully, gangrene supervened, and the victim died on the road to Mogador. The infliction of this punishment, either by placing a stone or salt and quicklime in the gashed palm, renders the hand useless for life. It is, however, *the prison system as a whole* which demands the reprobation of all civilised nations, and an emphatic condemnation of its infamies, and it would be superfluous to write further of the dark and fetid dungeons in which thousands of innocent men live and die ; of cold and hunger ; of starving, naked captives clothed only with the iron chains and collars which fasten them to the walls ; of prisoners slowly done to death or swept off by typhus the offspring of starvation and indescribable filth ; of prisoners forgotten and perishing in chains and darkness ; of guiltless men paying for the soldiers who seize them, for the gaolers who keep them, for the chains they wear, for the bolting on of their heavy ankle irons, and for their lodging in these foul dens, often incurring " prison bills " which neither they nor their friends are able to pay, some who would otherwise go free remaining in captivity for the debt.

The result of gross injustice and official rapacity is seen in the poverty of a country of great natural capabilities, in the stagnation of all enterprise, and the abandonment of former industries. I mention only two—ship-building and horse-breeding. Few horses worth anything can now be bought in

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Morocco. The mares are execrable, and their progeny are soft, weedy, narrow-chested, goose-backed brutes, without stamina and weak in the hind quarters—for no man will go to the trouble and expense of breeding animals which, if they show any good points, are pounced upon by the kaïds. It is out of the universal practice of official robbery and the rapacity of a Court which, under the young Sultan, gives itself to frivolous expenditure on costly trifles \* that the well-known system of " protection " has grown up, and at this time it may be safely assumed that, whenever a Moor is making money in trade or by

other legitimate means, and is not afraid to keep a large stock of expensive goods, ride valuable mules, make frequent purchases for his harem, and live comfortably, he has " protection papers," which have been granted him by a European Power or by Brazil or America. To procure such papers, which protect them from the infamous rapacity of their own administration, and secure to them some of the rights possessed by the subjects of the Powers issuing them, Moors will do almost anything. France is using this fact to strengthen her influence in Morocco. In the early part of June the northern roads are thronged with harvesters on their way to reap the harvests of Algeria and Tunis. A number of these men annually enlist in the French army for a time, at the expiration of which they receive "protection papers," and France, by this method, is accumulating a drilled force in Morocco.

Projects of reform are talked about, more with the view of disarming English criticism and of depriving the Powers of a plausible excuse for intervention in the internal affairs of the empire than with any intention of improving the condition of the people. It must be remembered by the sanguine that all Moorish officials, and specially the man who at present is all-powerful, have " vested interests " in things as they are, *i.e.*, in

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\* Among these may be classed two photographic cameras just made for his Majesty by Messrs. Adams & Co., of Charing Cross Road, the one costing 2000 guineas, in which every particle of metal is 18-carat gold, the other costing £900, in which the metal work is solid silver, the actual instruments being simply Adams' well-known " De Luxe " cameras.

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sustaining infamies of administration which are without a parallel on earth, and that the young Sultan is altogether in their power, not one of the influences which surround him, except that of Kaïd Sir Harry Maclean, being in favour of righteousness. The following are the most noteworthy features of the reforms which have been suggested.

The idea is to begin with an experiment in two provinces, by appointing a sufficiently salaried governor to each for one year, who, if successful, is to be eligible for re-appointment. Such governors are to collect taxes and give receipts for them, keeping counterfoils of all sums received. They are to be responsible for the administration of justice and for the good order of their districts, and are to compel the people to cultivate all land within their boundaries. It is suggested that if the poverty of the peasantry renders this impossible, funds for the purpose shall be advanced by the Government on condition that it receives one half of the crop. Governors are to furnish the Government with lists of prisoners, and particulars of each case. Inspectors appointed by the Court are to visit the experimental districts annually and are to furnish reports, giving the population of villages, the extent of village land under cultivation, the number of cattle, the state of the prisons, and complaints made by the people. A duplicate of this report is to be furnished to the heads of tribes, and any inaccuracy will, upon the evidence of twelve elders, be sufficient to lead to proceedings against the inspector. Any kaïd, inspector, or other official tampering with the administration of justice, or taking bribes, is to be liable to 2000 lashes or ten years imprisonment ! The practice of one kaïd buying out another is to be abolished. In addition, it is suggested that the country be supplied with roads, bridges, and telegraphs ; that the army

be reorganised and made strong enough to support the Sultan's authority ; that foreign residents bear their fair share of taxation, and that mixed tribunals be instituted for the trial of European criminals.

It will be obvious to those who know the system of government, that this project of reform leaves the worst evils untouched.

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There can be no real remedy for the woes of Morocco which does not lay " the axe to the root of the tree," *i.e.*, to the irresponsible power of the Court, and which does not aim at the destruction of the present accursed system of mal-administration, root and branch. As opposed to officialism in general, with its " vested interests " bound up with corruption, there is but one man who runs straight, and who undoubtedly desires reform and the good of the people—Kaïd, Sir H. de Vere Maclean, for twenty-five years instructor of infantry to the Moorish army. His charming personality has won the affection of the Sultan, and such influence as he has is in favour of reform ; but on the other side are powerful officials, vested interests, tradition, custom, ancient grooves of misgovernment which have the sanctity of antiquity, and a total lack of honest men. Morocco can never be reformed from within, and any measure of amelioration of her disgraceful and deplorable condition must be carried out by men brought up in other schools than those of Moorish tradition.

It is quite possible that the Moorish Envoy, the Grand Vizier, el Menebhi, may have been induced while in England to promise certain reforms. Powerful intrigues against him were made in his absence, and his return was only just in time to avert his downfall. There are now two parties at Court, led respectively by el Menebhi and el Gharnit, the acting Vizier during the Envoy's absence, and these share the principal posts. Probably, if it be a genuine condition of things, el Menebhi will not be long in weeding out his opponents, when he will have a chance of showing the stuff he is made of. It may, however, be merely a situation designedly contrived to afford plausible reasons for not carrying out any reforms which may have been urged upon him in Europe.

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