

Yet this Arabia is the source and centre of one of the great dominant religions of the world. Seventy millions of people speak the Arabic language, and nearly as many more accept the faith of Islam. The muezzin's cry calls to prayer from Peking across "the roof of the world" and plains of India and Persia, and over a greater part of Africa—from the Red Sea to Morocco, from the Mediterranean to the Soudan. The Arabic Koran is the text-book of mosque and school throughout vast regions of island and continent, and Islam is the only rival of Christianity for the possession of the race. The Arabic language is one of the most copious, flexible and richest in the world. It has 5,744 names relating to the camel, 500 for the lion, 1,000 for the sword. It is the Koran which has given unity and vitality to this marvellous tongue.

Our own good Queen Victoria rules over more Moslem people than any sovereign in the world, over vastly more than the Sultan of Turkey. The surveys of the entire four thousand miles of Arabian coast were the work of British naval officers. Britain is the only power which has established lighthouses on these coasts and in the Red Sea. Her deep sea cables, her consuls, her ships make its trade her own. Aden is another Gibraltar. Not a spool of thread, not a jack-knife is used throughout these vast dominions that is not made in Britain and brought in a British ship. Even the rice that supports the life of most of the Arabs comes in British ships from Rangoon. A Euphrates Valley railway will soon shorten the journey between London to India to eight days.

But the special interest of Arabia is its missions. Those among the Moslems are the most difficult and discouraging of any undertaken by the Christian Church. While Islam, in its rejection of idols, was a great advance upon the paganism which it superseded, it yet presents special obstacles to the success of the Gospel. Polygamy, divorce, and slavery are interwoven with religion. "The sword of Mahomet," says Sir William Muir, "and the Koran are the most stubborn enemies to civilization, liberty, and truth that the world has ever yet known."

The forty-five illustrations and eight maps and diagrams of this handsome volume greatly enhance its value. Chapters are given on Arabian art, science, music, commerce, history, pearl fisheries,

and date industries, its problems and its prospects. It is a book full of interest and of those truths which are stranger than fiction.

Forbidden Paths in the Land of Og. New York, Chicago, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company. Pp. 258. \$1.25.

Thousands of pilgrims every year, chiefly Russian, American, English and German, make the tour through the Lord's land west of the Jordan; but comparatively few visit the little-known country to the east of the sacred river. This lively narrative records the adventures of three Presbyterian missionaries in a journey through the lands of Og, once filled with walled cities, and still abounding with most remarkable ruins of historic and pre-historic times. The fertile region of the Hauran, says our author, produces grain and insurrections. Fully one-half of the harvest is seized by the Turkish official for taxes. No wonder the Druse population are in continual revolt. "The Hauran is one of the few districts in Syria whose chief crop is not stones." Its waving fields of grain in harvest time resemble a great wheat field in Manitoba—more than we expect under Turkish rule.

Our tourists, familiar with the language and ways of the Arabs, were able to visit the most important sites and scenes of this trans-Jordan region, notwithstanding the ban of the Turkish authorities. The whole region has been the scene of battle and conquest age after age. It abounds with ruins of the most interesting character. Not the least stupendous of these are the castles of the Crusaders found at Ajlun and elsewhere. The one we saw at Baniyas we judge is vastly larger than either Edinburgh or Heidelberg castles. The ruins at Jerash have two great Greek theatres, temples, colonnades and forum on a stupendous scale. Thousands of columns still stud the briar-grown waste or lie prostrate in the sand. Some of these are thirty-eight feet high and six feet in diameter. "A forest of standing columns fills the plain. It seemed as if some giant had sown broadcast the seed from which had sprung a plentiful harvest of columns." This gives us some idea of the wealth and splendour of the Greek cities of Decapolis, spoken of in the Gospels. The writer of this fascinating narrative makes a strong plea for Christian missions among these ignorant and wretched people.