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ART. I.—REVIEW OF DR. MATTHEWS' LETTERS.

*The Divine Purpose displayed in the works of Providence and Grace; in a series of Twenty Letters, addressed to an Inquiring Mind. By Rev. John Matthews, D. D., [late of] Shepherdstown, Virginia. Lexington, Ky.* Printed and published by Thomas T. Skillman, 1828. pp. 221.

WE are so much accustomed to receive our literature from Great Britain, that we are prone to overlook valuable compositions produced in our own country; especially, if they proceed from a section of the United States not famous for book making; or from the pen of an author but little known. Notwithstanding the national pride, in relation to American literature, so disgustingly displayed in some of our popular journals, it is a fact, that our booksellers are in the habit of reprinting British works, on particular subjects, much inferior to writings of home-production, which lie in utter neglect. Perhaps the Eastern States ought to be considered as an exception from this remark; where, from the first settlement of the country, authorship has not been uncommon; and where almost every preacher, at some time in his life, has the pleasure of seeing something of his own composition, in print. Still it may be observed, that

And more of them might be employed to great advantage in the Church. But in such cases, the evidences of the call should be clear and decisive, leaving no doubt in the mind of the individual himself: and we think, in this case, the public estimation of his character should be well considered. It is a good rule for such a man to adopt, that unless the path of duty is made very plain before him, he should remain in the employment where providence has placed him. When once a man has arranged his plan, entered upon his course of business, formed, and adjusted his habits to his employment for several years, he should have very substantial reasons for leaving a lawful employment, and undertaking so entire a change. Examples of most disastrous character are not wanting in the ministry, where the experiment has been made, with complete failure.

With these remarks, we commend this whole subject to the most careful and devout attention of all such as think of dedicating themselves to the gospel ministry. We commend it to the fervent prayers of the church; and record our earnest supplication, that the Lord would call, qualify, and send forth able and faithful ministers of the New Testament, to supply the great deficiency of spiritual labourers in his vineyard.

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#### ART. IV.—ARABS OF THE DESERT.

*Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys, collected during his travels in the East, by the late JOHN LEWIS BURCKHARDT.*  
London: 1830. 4to. pp. 439.

THESE notes of the persevering Burckhardt relate chiefly to the Arabs of the desert, and furnish an account of their condition as late as 1816, soon after which the author died in Egypt, whilst contemplating the exploration of the interior of Africa. They are mere memoranda, which might have formed an appropriate appendix to his volume of travels in Arabia; but as they embody a larger number of particulars respecting these interesting Nomades, than any other traveller has been able to furnish, we shall undertake to condense them for our pages.

The volume commences with a classification of the Bedouin tribes of the Syrian desert. Of these the most powerful are the Aenezes, who live in the northern part of Arabia; generally passing the winter on a plain bordered by the Euphrates;

sometimes crossing it and encamping near Bagdad; and in the spring usually found towards the frontiers of Syria, stretching their line of tents from Aleppo to Damascus. They seldom, however, remain on the same spot a longer time than while the scanty herbage supplies pasture for their camels and flocks. The population of the northern Aenezes is estimated at about three hundred and fifty thousand, spread over an extent of forty thousand square miles. The number of tents in an encampment varies from ten to eight hundred. The tents are covered with stuff manufactured from black goat's hair, which is impervious to rain: they are divided into apartments for each sex, of which the men's may be designated as the parlour, the women's as the kitchen.

The Bedouin's summer dress consists of a cotton shirt, over which a woollen mantle, or a long cotton or silk gown, is worn. A turban, made of a square handkerchief or shawl, completes the male costume. The Aenezes never shave their hair, but suffer it to hang in tresses to the breast. They wear leathern girdles around their naked waists. In winter they put on a pelisse of sheep-skins. The females dress in cotton gowns, have large handkerchiefs around their heads, puncture their lips, cheeks, and arms, and dye them blue; they are adorned with rings in their noses and ears, and with glass or silver necklaces and bracelets.

The most usual weapon of the Arabs is the lance, which they procure from Gaza in Palestine, and from Bagdad; sabres, knives, clubs, guns and pistols are also in their armoury. Many of them have shields and steel coats of mail, with helmets.

Flour boiled with water, or camel's milk; or with butter and dates, bread, and dried wheat boiled with butter and oil, constitute their main diet. Of animals, they eat the gazelle and the jerboa; (probably the mouse of Levit. xi. 29. 1 Sam. vi. 4. Isa. lxvi. 17;) on extraordinary occasions, a lamb or camel is killed. Wild asses, ostriches, and lizards, are eaten by some tribes. The stork, partridge, wild goose, and a species of eagle, are also found in the desert.

Blacksmiths and saddlers are the only mechanics among the Arabs, and their's are regarded as degrading occupations, unfit for a native. The men tan their own leather, and the women weave their cloth. Their water and milk bottles or bags, are universally made of leather. Their property consists principally in horses and camels: the wealth of individuals varying from the

abject poverty of possessing one camel, to the easy circumstances of thirty or forty, or the opulence of hundreds. The fortunes, however, of a race against whom every man's hand is raised, as well as theirs against every man, are necessarily precarious: and the invasion of a hostile tribe, an unsuccessful attack, or a midnight robbery, often reduces the most wealthy to indigence in a single hour.

“It may be almost said that the Arabs are obliged to rob and pillage. Most families of the Aenezes are unable to defray the annual expenses from the profits on their cattle, and few Arabs would sell a camel to purchase provisions; he knows, from experience, that to continue long in a state of peace, diminishes the wealth of an individual: war and plunder, therefore, become necessary. The sheikh is obliged to lead his Arabs against the enemy, if there be one; if not, it can easily be contrived to make one. But it may be truly said, that wealth alone does not give a Bedouin any importance among his people. A poor man, if he be hospitable and liberal according to his means, always killing a lamb when a stranger arrives, giving coffee to all the guests present, holding his bag of tobacco always ready to supply the pipes of his friends, and sharing whatever booty he gets among his poor relations, sacrificing his last penny to honour his guest or relieve those who want, obtains infinitely more consideration and influence among his tribe, than the miser who receives a guest with coldness, and lets his poor friends starve. As riches among this nation of robbers do not confer influence or power, so the wealthy person does not derive from them any more refined gratification than the poorest individual of the tribe may enjoy. The richest sheikh lives like the meanest of his Arabs: they both eat every day of the same dishes, and in the same quantity, and never partake of any luxury unless on the arrival of a stranger, when the host's tent is open to all his friends. They both dress in the same kind of shabby gown and *messhlakh*. The chief pleasure in which the chief may indulge, is the possession of a swift mare, and the gratification of seeing his wife and daughters better dressed than the other females of the camp.”

The Arabs of Sinai are the only tribe who are not robbers by profession. An article of dress or furniture may be left without risk in the open field. Some years ago one of that race bound his own son, and precipitated him from the summit of a mountain, because he had been convicted of stealing corn from a friend.

“Bankruptcy, in the usual acceptation of the word, is unknown among the Arabs. A Bedouin either loses his property by the enemy, or he expends it in profuse hospitality. In the latter case he is praised by the whole tribe; and as the generous Arab is most frequently endued with other nomadic virtues, he seldom fails to regain, by some lucky stroke, what he had so nobly lost.”

The state of science among them is very low. It is extremely rare to find an Arab who can read or write. Most of them know the names of the constellations and planets, but are not farther advanced in astronomy. Heroic and amatory poetry are in high esteem, and is often recited by their minstrels to the accompaniment of a sort of guitar. Singing constitutes a favourite amusement in their religious and other festivals, the principal of which is that on the occasion of circumcision.

Medical knowledge is rare: written charms are in principal vogue, and some few indigenous herbs are used. The small-pox makes frequent ravages, but vaccination is now adopted in Syria, and will probably soon be resorted to by the tribes of the desert. The treatment of fevers and diseases of the stomach is abandoned, if the application of red-hot wire, or heated wood is not successful. They never practise venesection; but in cases of headache draw a few drachms of blood from the forehead by incisions. A species of leprosy is still occasionally found and is deemed incurable. Some are born with the disease. The Arabs declare, that if it once commences its ravages in a family, it is never eradicated, but that it does not descend from the parent to the child, but passing the intermediate generation, attacks the grand-child. The leper is as much abhorred and avoided as he was under the Levitical law, and this share of the misfortune involves even the uninfected members of his family. Old age is rare.

The children are trained from their infancy to the independence, toil, and cunning, which will make them distinguished thieves and freebooters. The profession of robbery is considered honourable, and the term *robber* is one of the most flattering distinctions that can be conferred on their youth. They are at the same time indoctrinated in the Wahaby religion, which our author calls the Puritanism of Islam; the ceremonies of which the Bedouins strictly observe; reciting the daily prayer, and observing the fast of Ramazan with due austerity. They dare not touch swine, blood, or corpses. Each

family usually sacrifices a camel or seven sheep, for each adult person of their number who has died during the year.

With respect to the peculiarities of the creed of this new sect of Mohammedism, Burckhardt was not able to procure full information, but has collected a hundred and fifty pages of 'materials for its history.' It was introduced among the Aenezes about thirty years ago, from the Wahaby Arabs, who take their name from Abd el Wahab, who, under the impression that the true Moslem faith had become corrupted, undertook, towards the end of the last century, to restore its pristine purity. Saoud was his first convert, married his daughter, and became the political chief of the new sect. After the manner of the great Prophet, they raised an army to correct the theological errors of his backslidden disciples, and their orthodox arms spread dismay in Arabia. The aberrations charged upon Mohammedans were principally these: that they offered veneration, almost divine, to the prophet and to many saints; invoking them, and paying sacred honours at their tombs. The graves of many sheikhs had been covered with small oratories, in which the Mussulmans assembled, and at length offered sacrifices in honour of the dead, as saints. The Wahabys made these buildings the first objects of destruction in their progress, crying out whilst thus engaged, "God have mercy upon those who destroyed, and none upon those who built them!" Even the tomb of Mohammed himself, at Medina, was attacked, but its solid structure defied the efforts of the soldiers. The Wahabys charged their apostate brethren with a Pharisaic punctuality in prayer, purifications, and fastings, whilst they neglected the poor, indulged in forbidden pleasures, disregarded the administration of justice, were too lenient to infidels, indulged in inebriating drink and lewdness, and departed grossly from the pure morals required by their religion. Wahab did not pretend to add to, or alter, any of the principles of Islam, but was resolutely bent on effecting a return to the strict requisitions of the Koran and the Sunne.

Fanaticism is the same in Arabia as in America. The followers of Wahab went on in their zeal of reformation, until they found mortal heresy in the most insignificant innovations. Their zeal was directed against the smoking of tobacco, and the wearing of rich clothing: the former practice being disapproved of by the *olemas*—the "Fathers" of Moslem—and the latter contravening the sumptuary precepts of the prophet himself.

These rigorous changes, combined with the political power

by which they were promoted, were gradually successful until the Wahabys governed the greater part of Arabia. Saoud, "father of mustachios," died in middle age, in 1814. He was an excellent man for an Arab. He was kind to his family, warm and sincere in his friendships, and inexorably just as a chief; but his bigotry was so intolerant as to allow no intercourse between his sect and the heretical Mussulmans. He compelled his adherents by force to punctuality in their devotions, regularly performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and made it a capital offence to break the fast of Ramazan. Among his judicious schemes were his efforts to diminish the frequency of divorces, and to abolish usury. His followers were distinguished by the plainness of their dress and equipage: they reject music, dancing, singing, and all kinds of games, and live with each other on terms of entire equality.

Polygamy is a privilege of the Bedouins, but few of them have more than one wife at once, though each man may divorce his wife at pleasure, and re-marry any number of times without disgracing either himself or his repudiated companion. Burckhardt saw men about forty-five years of age, who were known to have had fifty wives in this mode of succession. If a young man leaves a widow, his brother generally offers to marry her; though this is not required by law or universal custom. Notwithstanding this disorganizing facility of divorce, Arab children hold their parents in great respect, and show particular affection to their mothers.

The independence of the sons of the 'wild man' of Paran, is not controlled even by civil government. Each tribe has its chief sheikh, and every camp a sheikh, but these officers have no power over individuals, and are only selected as leaders in battle, and guides in their progresses. Their advice is respectfully received, but he does not utter a command. Private quarrels are sustained by the respective families of the hostile parties, and their dispute is settled by open violence. The Bedouin boasts that he has no master but the Lord of the Universe, and the most powerful chief would not venture to incur the retribution of the friends of the poorest of his subjects, by attempting to punish him. They have *kadis*, however, to whom they refer their great disputes, and before whom criminal offenders are brought, and mulcted in sheep or camels for their transgressions.

The law of retaliation is enjoined by the Koran, and the heir of a man unjustly slain, is allowed to put the homicide to death.

The Arabs have given a dreadful extension to this privilege, under the name of 'the blood-revenge,' by which the representatives of the deceased claim expiation from any successive generation of the murderer. Sometimes a pecuniary recompense is accepted in lieu of life, and if it is not, the slayer, with all those liable to the blood-revenge, are allowed three days and four hours to escape. Many hundred tents are often removed in consequence of a single murder, and the fugitives remain in exile for ever, if a reconciliation be not effected with the relatives of the dead. Families have thus wandered for more than fifty years, and when two generations have passed away without an acceptance of the proffered price of blood.

Burckhardt furnishes a curious account of the thievery of these tribes, which is pursued by them as a lawful vocation, and with no disgrace attached to detection, as amongst the subjects of Lycurgus. We abridge several pages on this subject.

"The Arab robs his enemies, his friends, and his neighbours, provided that they are not actually in his own tent, where their property is sacred. To rob in the camp or among friendly tribes is not reckoned creditable to a man; yet no stain remains upon him for such an action, which is, in fact, of daily occurrence. If an Arab intends to go on a predatory excursion, he takes with him a dozen friends. When they reach the camp, three of them go at midnight to the tent that is to be robbed; one excites the attention of the watch-dogs, and by flying before them withdraws them from the camp. A second advances to the camels, who are lying before the tent, cuts the strings that confine their legs, to prevent their rising, and makes as many rise as he wishes, which they always do without the least noise. He then has only to lead one, the rest follow him out of the camp. The third companion, stands in the mean time, before the tent-door, ready, with a club, to knock down any person who might come forth. Having gotten them from the camp, each seizes a tail of the strongest of the camels, which puts the animals on a gallop, and they are thus dragged to the rendezvous of the party. If the adventurous three are surrounded before they escape, the *rabit* or first one seized is asked, (the question being usually accompanied by some blows on the head) on what business he has come; to which the common reply is, 'I came to rob, God has overthrown me.' He is then taken into a tent and beaten till he renounces his *dakheil*—that is the privilege allowed every person in danger, of touching a third person, or any thing he has about him, spitting on him,

or throwing a stone upon him, exclaiming at the same time ‘I am thy protected:’ which obliges this third person to defend him, which he does at all hazards. This renunciation is valid only for one day, and must be renewed every successive day. The captive is then placed in a kind of grave in the ground of the tent, as long as his body, and about two feet deep, where he is chained by his feet, his hands tied, and his hair twisted to two stakes, and fastened in the ground. Poles are then laid across, and heavy articles heaped on them, leaving him only a small space for breath. He is kept thus—sometimes six months—until his captor exacts the utmost ransom the *rabiet* can pay, which generally includes his whole property. If, however, he can contrive to spit at any one in the tent, or even receive a morsel of bread from a child, or eat part of the same date with another person, without the renunciation of *dakheil*, he is instantly released, though the patron thus made be one of his captor’s household. Sometimes a female relation has been known to come secretly to the tent of the captive, with a ball of thread, tie one end to the foot of the prisoner, or throw it in his mouth, and then winding it off till she comes to another tent, awakes the owner, touching him with the thread, and telling him that it is under his protection. He is obliged to rise, follow the clew, and claim the prisoner as his *dakheil*. If any man should hurt the *dakheil* of another, his whole property would not be thought by the kadi sufficient to atone for such an offence—greater than if he had injured the protector himself.”

“When the robbers believe they are likely to be detected, or from any other cause, abandon the enterprize, they enter any of the tents, awake the people in it, and declare, ‘We are robbers, and wish to halt.’ ‘You are safe,’ is the reply. A fire is immediately kindled, coffee prepared, and breakfast placed before the strangers, who are entertained as long as they choose to stay. At their departure, provision is given to them sufficient for their journey home. Should they meet on their return, a hostile party of the tribe, which they had intended to rob, their declaration, ‘We have eaten salt in such or such a tent,’ is a passport that ensures them a safe journey; or, at all events, the testimony of their host would release them from the hands of any Arabs, whether of his own or some friendly tribe.”

Hospitality is the most sacred virtue of the desert; and it is stated, that a violation of these rites has not occurred within the memory of any living person. The life and property of a

stranger may be safely confided to an Aeneze; and however importunate the guides may be for presents, they are most punctiliously faithful to their employers. Yet, such is their inordinate love of gain, that no dependance is to be placed on their veracity in matters of merchandise; and they cheat each other at every opportunity. They are not chargeable, as a nation, with any excess of sensuality; being rather abstemious than otherwise. In his tent, the Arab is lazy and indolent, leaving his wife and daughters to perform the drudgery of the domestic concerns: but seated on his mare, no toil is too great for him. A striking characteristic of the Bedouin is his patience under poverty and suffering. He is too proud to show discontentment or to utter complaint: never begs for assistance, but strives with his utmost labour to retrieve his losses. Their belief in fate and a controlling Providence, enables them to meet every adversity, with a stoical endurance. But this resignation does not lead the Arab, as it does the Turk, to apathy; they are incited to stronger exertion by calamity, and reproach the Turks with the proverb, 'He bared his back to the musquitoes, and then exclaimed, God has decreed that I should be stung.'

We do not find many new illustrations of the natural history of the Bible in this volume. The female camel is the most valuable possession of the Arab, and next to it in estimation, is a fleet mare. With respect to the capability of camels to endure the want of water, it is said, that this faculty varies according to their different races: those from cold climates requiring drink every second day; but that all over Arabia four whole days in summer, or possibly, in some cases, five, constitute the utmost extent of time that they can endure the privation. In the winter they seldom drink, excepting when on journeys; the early succulent herbs supplying them with sufficient moisture. There is no territory, however, according to this traveller, in any route through Arabia, where wells are farther distant from each other than three and a half days journey. He never knew of water being found in the stomach of a slaughtered camel. He heard an incredible tradition of a camel travelling two hundred and fifty miles in a day, but had every reason to trust another account of a camel, which, for a wager, went a hundred and twenty-five miles in eleven hours. He says, that the natural gaits of a camel are not so swift as those of the horse: that its natural pace is an easy, gentle amble of about five miles an hour, at which rate it will continue for many

days and nights. Messengers have thus reached Aleppo from Bagdad, a journey of twenty-five days for caravans, in seven days; and from Cairo to Mecca, a usual journey of forty-five days, in eighteen days, without changing their animals.

Locusts abound in the desert; sometimes ravaging all the vegetation, and even penetrating the dwellings, and devouring the leathern vessels. As they come invariably from the East, the Arabs suppose they are produced by the waters of the Persian Gulf. They are still used for food when boiled, salted, and dried. Mr. Madden says, they are often ground and made into bread. Burckhardt mentions, that the general impression of the abundance of horses in Arabia, is very erroneous. The breed is limited to the fertile pasture grounds, such as those in Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Euphrates, and the Syrian plains. He supposes, that the aggregate number in all Arabia, as bounded by Syria and the Euphrates, does not exceed fifty thousand.

We cannot go farther into the details furnished in the notes before us. The outlines we have given are sufficient to show, that the character of this people has not been changed in the thirty-seven centuries, which have elapsed since the angel of the Lord proclaimed to the exile-mother of their ancestor—‘Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name *Ishmael*, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction: and he shall be a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man’s hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of his brethren.’ The tribes of the desert are the living proofs of the faithfulness of Him who heard Abraham’s prayer, and announced, ‘Behold, I have blessed *Ishmael*, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.’