

**THE QUEST OF THE
FOUR-LEAVED CLOVER,
A STORY OF ARABIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649150076

The quest of the four-leaved clover, a story of Arabia by Walter Taylor Field

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WALTER TAYLOR FIELD

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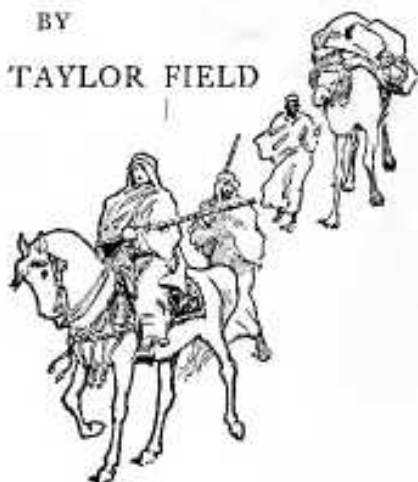
A STORY OF ARABIA



ADAPTED FROM
THE FRENCH OF LABOULAYE'S "ABDALLAH"

BY

WALTER TAYLOR FIELD



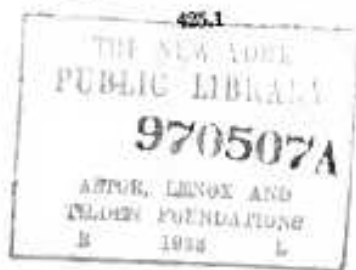
GINN AND COMPANY

BOSTON • NEW YORK • CHICAGO • LONDON

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The Athenaeum Press
GINN AND COMPANY • PROPRIETORS • BOSTON • U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

Arabia is to children a land of romance and enchantment. Its mysterious deserts with their half-obliterated trails and their passing caravans, its sunshine and color, its free, wild life, the swift passion of its children, always near the surface and ready to leap into instant action, — these things appeal strongly to the mind of youth; for the Arabs are a simple people and their life has all the directness and vigor of childhood.

"The Quest of the Four-Leaved Clover" shows us the Arabian character at its best. It gives a picture of Bedouin life among the tents, and, incidentally, of city life in the bazaars. But, more than this, it gives a glimpse into the spirit of one of the great world religions that is yet but little understood in Christian countries. It shows the Mohammedan faith with its fatalism and its moral earnestness, and teaches the great lesson of service to one's fellow man. One cannot read the story without a closer feeling of brotherhood with all mankind, without a realization that life is only good as it offers opportunities for doing good. The book is thus useful in three

ways : (1) as a story ; (2) as a side light on Oriental geography, life and manners, religion and civilization ; (3) as the concrete illustration of a great moral truth.

The original story, known as "Abdallah ; or, the Four-Leaved Clover," was written in 1859 by the French scholar, Édouard René Lefebvre de Laboulaye. Its author was born in Paris in 1811, studied law, and at twenty-eight wrote an important legal work which won him high rank in his profession. In 1849 he became a professor in the Collège de France. He was an ardent lover of liberty and an admirer of American institutions. He wrote a political history of the United States, and a number of political satires : "Paris en Amérique" (1863), which ran through thirty editions ; "Contes bleus" (1864) ; "Nouveaux contes bleus" (1865) ; and "Le prince Caniche" (1865). He was a man of wide sympathies and rare personal charm, handsome and dignified in bearing, and gracious in his intercourse with his fellows. He died in 1883.

"Abdallah" was to him a labor of love. In it he escaped from his arduous professional life and found wings for his soul. He tells us in a preface to one of the later editions that, of all the books that he has written, this is his favorite, and that he feels for it a father's tenderness. Before beginning to write it he surrounded himself with Arabian and Persian books,

read the Koran twice, and made for himself an Oriental atmosphere which has been beautifully reproduced in his story. He says: "Not a precept is to be found in my book which has not been drawn from the Koran or from tradition. I have not attributed to my Abdallah an opinion, a sentiment, which has not been derived from some Mohammedan author. It is often forgotten that Mohammed was inspired by the Bible; it is still oftener forgotten that man finds in his heart the law which demands good and which stigmatizes evil. Let us be better than the Mohammedans; it is our duty; but let us not deny their goodness nor their generosity. The human race is but one family. Though we differ in beliefs, we are one in heart."

The present story is an adaptation. In translating it, certain portions of the original which are distinctly offensive to American habits of thought have been omitted; its too realistic descriptions of death and bloodshed have been softened and the thread of the story has been slightly altered to meet the changed conditions. The justification for this lies in the fact that Laboulaye wrote for an earlier generation and for an audience accustomed to somewhat lower social ideals than we demand to-day for the youth of America.

W. T. F.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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