



Ophiuchus

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Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

93 from Sekhet-Bast-Ra!

This newsletter contains the second of nine installments of a pamphlet that was written by Richard Burton on his pilgrimage to Mecca and other sacred sites of the Islamic religion. He masqueraded as a Muslim and wrote with perceptive information on the pilgrims, traditions, sacred sites, information on Mohammed, etc. Following that is a book review of a biography of Richard Burton and an outline of the life of Richard Wagner. The outline includes personal history, musical works, etc. Next you'll find a short tidbit on one of the lesser known Gnostic Saints, Forlong Du. The third article is an essay written by Paul Gauguin. Most are familiar with Gauguin's impressionist paintings, but his writings give insight on how he thought and perceived the world around him. At the end of his essay is a partial list of his diaries and other written works.

Finally, current events and a calendar of events for the next three months. An initiate of the Order in good standing may attend Gnostic Mass and the Rites of Eleusis as long as they give adequate notice, which can be done by writing in

advance.

Future issues of Ophiuchus will contain information on and written work by the Saints of the Gnostic Mass, Crowley, other cultural variations, book reviews, the best letters to the editor, etc.

Contents

The Caravan across the Desert by Richard Burton, originally published by the British Museum	2
Book Review: Burton Biography.....	4
The Outline of the Life of Richard Wagner..	5
Who was Forlong Du?	7
The Falsehood of Truth - an essay by Paul Gauguin	8
A Partial Source list of the writings of Paul Gauguin	10
Current Events	11
Editorial Note	11
Heisenberg Calendar	12

Respectable men mount dromedaries or blood camels, known by their small size, their fine limbs, and their large, deer-like eyes. The saddles have huge crimson sheep-skins between tall metal pommels, and these are girted over fine saddle-bags, whose long tassels of bright worsted hang almost to the ground. Irregular soldiers mount picturesquely equipped "screws". Here and there rides some old Arab shaykh, preceded by his valets performing a war-dance, compared with which the bear's performance is grace itself; firing their duck-guns in the air or blowing powder into the naked legs of those before them, brandishing their swords, leaping frantically with bright-coloured rags floating in the wind, and tossing high their long spears tufted with ostrich-feathers. Women, children, and invalids of the poorer classes sit upon rags or carpets spread over the larger boxes that form the camel's load: those a little better off use a short cot fastened cross-wise (shibriyah), and the richer rider in pairs,

using panniers covered with an awning (shugduf), and made to resemble a miniature green tent, that sways and tosses upon the animal's back. Grandees use gorgeously painted litters (takhtrawn), borne between camels or mules with scarlet and brass trappings, and they are accompanied by led horses. The vehicle regulates the pilgrim's expenses, which may vary from five pounds to as many thousands, and the pauper must live on alms.

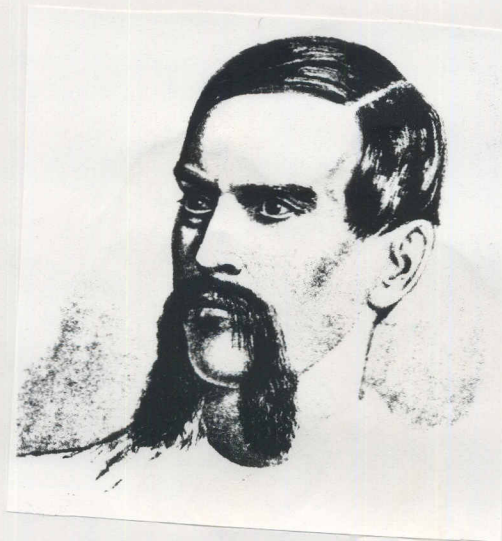
It is a haggard land, this - a land of

wild beasts and wilder men - a region whose very fountains murmur the warning words "Drink and away", instead of "Rest and be thankful". A sandy valley, in which the beasts sink to the fetlock, threads the peaky hills behind Jeddah. About half-way is a mass of reed huts and leaf-thatched hovels, called the boundary (El Haddah), where caravans halt for coffee and water. Here all unbelievers who intend to visit the sheriff or prince of Mecca at his country quarters in the Taif mountains must leave the direct road, lest their glances pollute the shrine.

And here I may observe that though neither Koran nor Sultan enjoin the death of Jew or Christian intruding within the columns that note the sanctuary limits, nothing could save a European detected by the populace, or one who after pilgrimage declared himself an unbeliever. The Turkish and Arab authorities would do their best and fail. I mention this the more particularly as my friend, the learned Dr. Wilson, of Bombay, once proposed to attempt the sacred

city in English garb - he would have been shot by the first Bedouin that met him. Another friend informs me that in 1860 a Jew, who refused to repeat the Moslem creed, was crucified by the bigoted and turbulent Meccans.

After "the boundary", we enter upon the Meccan plateau, which is now hard with gravelly clay, then covered with sand-heaps. And here I may observe that the popular idea of the desert being a "sandy sea", dotted with oases like islands, is rarely



Burton's Wedding Portrait © Rice

realized by the traveller. The wilds of Arabia and Africa are mostly plains of rock and of a hard clayey earth, which wants only water to become luxuriantly fertile. Our final rise is by a long flight of rough and broken stone steps, dangerous to the animals for whose convenience they were made: it is a comparatively modern construction, ascribed to one of the ill-fated Barmecides. The pilgrims who try to arrive about midnight, pitch their tents on a plain or table-land outside the city, and with loud cries of "Here am I!" impatiently await the dawn. Many are the thanks to Allah, and mutual congratulations that their eyes are about to rest upon the edifice towards which every Mohammedan from his earliest days turns in prayer, and which long before the birth of Christianity was revered by the patriarchs of the East.



A Qadiri Sufi © Rice

government files, records, personal letters and diaries, interviewed many individuals, etc. Before this he spent eighteen years traveling to cities and places that Burton was said to have visited and lived. He retraced

Burton's steps all over the world. Rice even stayed at the brothel where Burton lived while studying mysticism and gathering information for his general. Rice had the pleasure of witnessing the Sufi sword dance, the same type of dance in which Burton had been an active participant. He spoke to yogis, Sufis, Sikhs, ranis, maharajas, shaykhs, Brahmins, etc.

It is needless to say that his book on Burton is a masterpiece, which details the life of a

Gnostic Saint. Rice's attention to detail is remarkable. Rice includes pieces of Burton's writings throughout the book. Rice explains particular cultural references in order for the average reader to grasp what was exactly is going on or happening. For example this is quotation from the book: ... Burton was engaging in *taqiya*, concealment, in the matter of his religious beliefs and practices. Why should he not engage in dissimulation?- those who understood, would. This rather mysteriously described oratory was related to his own brotherhood, the *Qadiris*. He avoided giving specific information about the Cairo tariqa, although the Gulshani oratory was the embodiment of his Sufi training in Sind. "Gulshan" (or Gulistan) means rose garden, a popular term for a dervish convent, and the rose was at the heart of the practices here, as it was in Sind,

Book Review

Edward Rice's *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton*

For ten years Edward Rice had gathered information on Sir Richard Francis Burton. He spent days going through old

Heisenberg Calendar

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 individual authors.

"If you know how many people
 are coming, then you don't know
 the date. If you know the
 date, then you don't know how
 many people are coming."

The Gnostic Mass is
 scheduled the first Sunday of
 the month at 6 p.m. All O.T.O.
 members in good standing are
 welcome, however advance notice
 is necessary. The new date for
 the Rite of Mercury is October
 10, 1993 e.v. at 2 p.m. The
 Research Guild will have a
 tentative meeting on October
 17, 1993 e.v. at 6 p.m.
 Practice for the Rite of Luna
 will be November 24, 1993 e.v.
 at 2 p.m.

**Love is the law,
 love under will.**

