



Queer People on Stamps

MANY queer folk are pictured on stamps. There's the fearsome warrior who adorns the low-value postage stamps of the French colony of Gaboon—the chief Pahouin of the Bangala tribe, resplendent in full war paint. The Bangalas are a war-like race, inhabiting the Congo basin.

In the South Seas stamp illustrated here you see Chief Tepon of Rarotonga. In his left hand is a spear in token of preparedness for war, in his right a palm fan as an emblem of peace.

In "The New Stamp Collecting" article in this week's MODERN BOY, Douglas Armstrong deals with many more queer folk whom you may see on some stamps. Don't miss any issue of

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TALES TOLD BY SALADIN'S FRIEND

It seems odd to call a book new which was written in the days of Saladin, but the Autobiography of Ousama is new to England, at any rate. It has had a strange history.

There was once a Mahomedan named Mourschid who reigned over the mountain principality of Schaidzar, near Antioch. He loved two things above all else—his religion and hunting. One day would be spent in fasting and reading the Koran, the next in riding forth with his four sons, a host of squires, falconers, greyhounds, cheetahs, and falcons, to hunt every sort of creature from grouse to lions. Thus his whole life was divided until the Crusaders came and tried to take possession of the Holy Land.

Then Mourschid and his sons devoted themselves to fighting those they called the Franks.

One of Mourschid's sons, Ousama, was born in 1095 and died in 1188, so that he lived through the most exciting period of the Crusades. The Christians captured Jerusalem and Antioch a few years after his birth, and Saladin won back Jerusalem in the year before Ousama's death.

A Hero Greater Than Saladin

In his old age Ousama wrote down his recollections. He had much to tell of battles, and much to say about his father, who was to him even a greater hero than Saladin. No one was so good at organising a hunting party as Mourschid, said his son, proudly. And then how pious he was! He had copied out the whole Koran 43 times!

Ousama wrote also of favourite horses, and of a pet falcon which always slept in his father's bedroom on a folded fur cloak, and of an old nurse who brought up three generations of his family. One day he found her grumbling as she washed a towel.

"I can't get the smell of cheese out of it. They have been touching it with hands soiled in cheese," she said.

Then Ousama pointed out that the piece of soap she was using to wash it was really a piece of cheese.

But Ousama wrote of graver themes. He told of Saladin's generosity to him. He also told of the Sultan's ruthlessness in war. He recalled the story of a servant who followed Ousama's uncle Nasr when he was taken prisoner by King Roudwan. Nasr's tent was closely guarded, but the servant was

allowed to go in and out freely while he waited on his master. One night they changed clothes, and Nasr escaped.

Next day the guards discovered the servant dressed in his master's clothes, and dragged him before Roudwan, who said: "Do you not fear that I shall behead you?"

"My lord," said the man, "you may cut off my head, but I shall be happy because my master is safe."

Then Roudwan loaded him with gifts and sent him after Nasr.

Ousama had a high opinion of the courage and honour of Arab women. After a great battle in April, 1109, in which the enemy were beaten off, he found his mother and sister sitting on a high balcony looking over a valley. The mother meant to hurl her daughter down rather than let her be taken prisoner, and the daughter was content.

Women's Wit and Courage

Medieval women had wit as well as courage. Ousama tells of a Turk who was journeying along with a woman and some merchandise. Robbers attacked them, the Turk drew his bow but the string snapped and he was driven off.

The woman then said: "Take the merchandise, but let me ransom myself with a pearl necklace which the Turk carries. Send one of your number with me after him, and all will be well."

When they had almost caught up the Turk the woman shouted:

"I have come to be ransomed by the necklace you carry in your boot."

The Turk dismounted, drew off his boot, took something out, and soon put the robbers to flight. The necklace was, in truth, a fresh bowstring.

All these tales and many more did Ousama write in the long ago.

In 1880 a famous French Orientalist, Hartwig Derenbourg, chanced upon the manuscript, which had long lain neglected in the Escorial. It was translated into French just eight centuries after Ousama's birth, and a German edition followed in 1905. Now Dr. George Potter has given an English dress to the Autobiography of Ousama (published by Routledge at 12s. 6d.).

That a book written at the Court of Saladin chances to be a new book in the reign of George the Fifth, and a very fascinating one it is to all lovers of medieval history.

GOD SAVE THE KING

To British people who live beyond the seas the King is the personal symbol of British unity in a degree that many do not realise at home.

A letter from a reader of the C.N. who lives in a part of British Columbia farther north than any other surveyed section except one illustrates how spontaneously "The King" comes into the minds of young and old when fidelity to tradition is called for.

Three generations of a family live there amid wooded mountains. Two of the daughters were picking wild fruit on a raspberry patch when a forest fire was borne toward them and they had to run to escape it. Less than a mile from the fire was the family home with

four children, the oldest nine. They were hastily carried off to their grandmother's house as the fire approached their own home. Naturally they were frightened by the excitement, and it was grandmother's task to steady them.

First (wise lady) she gave them something to eat, and then said: "And now we must sing together. Shall we sing Dare to be a Daniel? Whereupon the boy of nine said: "Don't you think, Grandma, we had better sing God Save the King?"

So that was what they sang to pull themselves together.

There is a good deal of significance in that little story from out of the distant forest.

TELEPHONING SMITH

TELEPHONING to Smith is not such an easy matter if one forgets his telephone number. The London Telephone Directory has about 3000 subscribers of this name, 35 John Smiths alone!

But before you start searching in the many columns of addresses for your particular Smith you must first be something of a champion weight-lifter, for the latest edition of the Telephone Directory weighs five pounds and has 1500 pages.

Two editions of this monumental work are issued every year, and each time it is found necessary to make about

50,000 alterations and additions. Nearly 1100 tons of paper are needed for the printing, which is done at the rate of 20,000 copies a day.

The Post Office officials will soon be faced with a difficult problem if the telephone service increases much faster. More than 12,000 names have been added to the directory since last March, needing 50 new pages. The problem was solved two years ago by printing three columns on a page instead of two; but a 5 lb. book cannot be enlarged indefinitely, and some other idea will have to be thought out.

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