



# The Horses of the Sahara

*Eugène Daumas*

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The Arabs created one of the world's finest breeds of saddle horses, the Arabian, and they have long possessed an immense store of knowledge regarding the care, training, and breeding of this splendid horse. In the nineteenth century, General Melchior Joseph Eugene Daumas had access to their knowledge even though, as he pointed out, "it requires a great deal of patience and tact for a Christian to obtain from the Mohammedans even the most insignificant of details . . ." General Daumas was, because of his unique relationship with the Arabs, probably the first European to produce a comprehensive study of Arabian horses. And to add even greater value to *The Horses of the Sahara*, he was able to secure for the ninth edition, here translated, extended commentaries on all aspects of Arabian horsemanship by the Emir Abd-el-Kadar, one of the most important nineteenth-century Arab leaders and certainly one of the foremost authorities on the subject.

The Horses of the Sahara will be of interest not only to equestrians but also to historians and other scholars interested in the customs of the North African desert tribes and in the complex backgrounds of European–North African relations. General Daumas took part in the conquest of Algeria by France, so distinguishing himself that he was named Director of the Bureau of Algerian Affairs in the French Ministry of War. During the campaigns and the occupation that followed, he studied and attempted to understand the native peoples, with an objectivity and sympathy unusual among the colonialists of the period. His book provides fascinating sidelights on many aspects of Arab life, including customs, superstitions, religion, and family life.

Sheila M. Ohlendorf was uniquely suited to translate *The Horses of the Sahara*. An excellent rider herself, thoroughly experienced with the animals and the techniques being discussed, she also spoke fluent French, having received her B.A. degree in languages from Texas Western University (now the University of Texas at El Paso). As curator of the Hall of the Horsemen, the large collection at the University of Texas at Austin, she had access to a wide variety of supplementary authorities, which enriched both her translation and the notes that accompany the book.

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