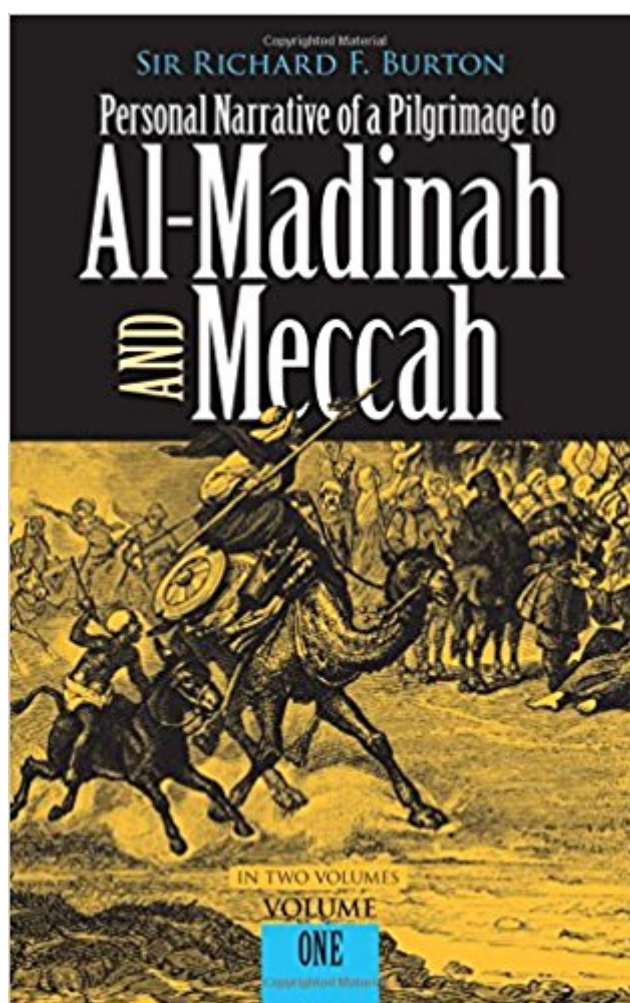


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Personal Narrative Of A Pilgrimage To Al-Madinah And Meccah (Volume 1)



Synopsis

Impelled by wanderlust and the spirit of adventure and aided by an extraordinary facility in Eastern languages, Sir Richard Burton (1821-90) was one of the great traveler-explorers of history. He was the first European to enter the capital of Somaliland and the first to discover the Great Lakes of Central Africa. He was also an Orientalist of the first rank. But it is for his pilgrimage in 1853 to Mecca and Medina and the most sacrosanct shrines of Islam that Burton is best known and for his celebrated book that recorded his experiences during the journey. Successfully posing as a wandering dervish, he gained admittance to the holy Kaabah and to the Tomb of the Prophet at Medina and participated in all the rituals of the Hadj (pilgrimage). He is still one of the very few non-Moslems to visit and return from Mecca. Above all, Burton was a sharp observer of character, customs, and physical surroundings. These pages contain a treasury of material on Arab life, beliefs, manners and morals; detailed descriptions of religious ceremonies, mosques, temples, etc.; and a variety of ethnographic, economic, and geographical information. Whether telling of the crowded caravan to Mecca, engaging in minute analysis of Bedouin character, waxing lyrical about a desert landscape, or reporting conversations with townsfolk or fellow pilgrims, Burton gives us a vivid picture of the region and its people. Along with his thorough familiarity with the cultures and languages of the Middle East, Burton exhibited a resourcefulness and presence of mind that were to serve him well along the way. These qualities saw him through many a taut situation in a country where violence was easily kindled. And they permitted him to get to and into places a man with less enterprise would never have dreamed of going. This book's value to historians of culture and religion, Orientalists, and other scholars is obvious. Yet it is as a great classic of travel that it has attracted such a wide audience. Burton's highly personal style, vigorous opinions, and his matter-of-fact humor against a backdrop of constant hazard and possible exposure have delighted tens of thousands of readers for more than a century. This reprint gives today's readers an opportunity to enjoy this unique work.

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Customer Reviews

I read this story 40+ years ago while I was stationed in Iran. Still fascinates me.

Having read a biography of Sir Richard Burton, I wanted to read something he wrote himself. He isn't the best writer ... or rather it's very over detailed and of course, seeing as it was written long ago, it doesn't flow that much. But this is one of the world's most fascinating characters and if you want to know more about Islam as it was (and still is), in Mecca ... it's worth looking into.

Trenchant observations and clever wit from a young man who risked his life to visit Mecca in disguise. If you love history, read this.

I haven't read this volume yet, but wanted to leave a review to note that this is Volume 2, beginning with Chapter XXI. I don't see any reference on the site to Volume 1, so perhaps it is not available. Still, it would be better if this book's page more clearly described what the buyer is getting.

This was an interesting story about an Englishman who traveled throughout the Mideast disguised as a Muslim (I think about the late 1800s). Even though he includes extensive footnotes, he uses many phrases in French and other languages (without explanation), many times I do not understand the crux of the issue. I have often been confused while reading this book, so I think it will take a better scholar than I to enjoy the story!

I agree with the above reviewer: 'A Riot'. This is easily one of the funniest books I've ever read. It's like some Boys Own Gone Wrong. I read both parts on lunch hours at my corporate job and embarrassed myself through both volumes laughing out loud at much of it. Just... oh, man. Funny, funny, stuff. I admit my humor runs to the crude, and 3rd World, and I am a huge fan of absurdity, and this book (books) fill the bill. Burton's writing isn't dated at all. It is also very serious, and there is real death; if you're not accustomed to that, and haven't been around that venue, where people die

around you and you really can't spend the time to dwell on it too much, this book is probably not for you. I found it both deadly serious and, more importantly, screamingly funny. Also, again, an important source of hilarious Muslim 'backwoods', 'Homer and Jethro' jokes. The one about the dog's head and the Imam put me out of my chair at work laughing. I laughed about it all day, and am laughing about it now. Another gem: the 'Respectable Lady of the House' cursing her own boy as 'The Son of a Prostitute'! What? Awesome stuff. If you've ever been around Islamic cultures and view them as staid and humorless, this book puts the lie to that. Gut-busting situational humor. Burton's pathological detail about the devotionals reads like guys I know (and myself) talking deadly shop. I will bore you all night about microscopic details concerning cultural fine points about human beings I've fought against. I know Vietnam Veterans with crazy knowledge about Vietnamese. Burton reads like that. His writing is so nutty because his stress level was so high. If he made one mistake he was dead, and all the people who trusted him. So he detailed his every thought, microsecond by microsecond. These two volumes were his life. He effed up, he was a dead man. I recognize the intensity. I'm now reading his further volumes, and he should have gotten married to his later wife and cooled out. He didn't, and his life ended like most PTSD sufferers: in brilliant ignominy. My two cents.

I have an old copy of this book, purchased for 50 cents at a used book shop. Liked it so well that I got a digital copy. It is a very important book yet no one cared much about the topic or the author when I purchased it in the 1980s. It is an outstanding, first person account of Sir Richard Burton's travels through the Islamic world before it was modernized. Cannot possibly recommend this more highly to anyone wishing to understand the true nature of the Islamic world. Burton took this pilgrimage posing as a muslim.

Sir Richard Burton wrote his "Personal Narrative" of his travels to Mecca and Medina in modern Saudi Arabia, which he began in 1853. This is, or should be, one of the classics of European exploration of the Middle East. Burton was well enough versed in the Arabic language and the local Islamic customs to travel disguised as a "darwaish" or scholar from Afghanistan - a cover he used to account for slight variations in pronunciation of some Arabic words. He was an acute observer of local people and their customs, he was able to argue Koranic and Sharia law with other travellers and he had an exhaustive historical knowledge of the regions he traveled through. How he managed to write his extensive notes as he traveled without being detected was one of the achievements of his exploration. Unfortunately, this publication does no service to the writer or to the

reader. In fact this book is an insult to the memory of a distinguished explorer and anthropologist. Whoever published this volume (wisely, the publisher's identity is not given) should be thoroughly ashamed of it. It contains many typographical errors, sentences end in mid-paragraph, new paragraphs begin without capitals and many paragraphs are formatted so badly they are difficult to read. Burton's notes in other scripts, such as Greek or Arabic, are not reproduced. At the end of most chapters we have one or two large paragraphs taking up most of a page. These are apparently Burton's footnotes but no numbers are given. Nor are footnotes indicated in the main text. Together these faults have completely destroyed Burton's work. They even destroy the credibility of those parts of the text that contain no production errors. Given the hundreds of errors in this book and the obvious negligence with which it has been published the reader cannot be sure that what he or she reads is what Burton wrote. This book cannot be recommended for any reason at all.

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