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*The Origin and Development of the
Arabian Horse**

LEON B. BLAIR

KING HASSAN II OF MOROCCO SENT A PAIR OF BARBARY ARABIAN horses at Christmas, 1961, to an American youth who had rendered distinguished service to his own country and to Morocco.¹ Both animals were selected by the king from his royal stud and it safely can be said that no finer Arabian horses existed in North Africa. The performance record in Morocco and in the United States of both the stallion and the mare and the production record of the stallion are evident proof of their excellence. Both were furnished with registration certificates. The government of Morocco certified them to be: breed-Arabian. After clearing quarantine, both horses were delivered to the recipient in Fort Worth, Texas, by a cousin of the king, the Pasha Abdelhamid el Alaoui, in order that there might never be a doubt that the horses delivered were the ones described in the documentation.

By 1964, the mare had dropped a filly foal and was again in foal at Texas' renowned King Ranch. The blood of the stallion has been massively infused in Southwestern horseflesh. King Hassan's horses will leave a permanent imprint in America. For that imprint to assume proper perspective, it is necessary that

*To avoid possible factual errors, draft copies of this article were furnished to the Arabian Horse Club Registry of America, the International Arabian Horse Association, the American Jockey Club, and the Quarter Horse Association of Texas for comment. No errors were noted by the International Arabian Horse Association, the American Jockey Club, or the Quarter Horse Association. No reply was received from the Arabian Horse Club Registry of America.

¹New York *Times*, December 16, 1961, p. 16; "Gift of the Royal Arabians," *The Texas Horseman*, VI (May, 1962), 26 ff.; "A Gift Horse," *Arabian Horse World*, II (July, 1962), 32 ff.

some of the cobwebs of legend and tradition be cleared away from the history of the Arabian horse. If present concepts are continued, the Arabian horse will be cut off from its root source; a branch will be mistaken for the tree.

It is significant that registration criteria for the Arabian horse has been substantially changed in the United States during the last two decades. The application to transfer the registry of King Hassan's gift horses was summarily rejected by the Arabian Horse Club Registry of America. The horses were never inspected, and in the case of the mare, not even her Moroccan registration and pedigree were examined prior to rejection. No horses bred in Morocco, it was said, could be considered for registration since they would be considered "Barbs" and not purebred Arabians.² The Arabian Horse Club Registry adhered to that decision in spite of its Constitution and By-laws, Section II, Rule V, which declared eligible for registration "Any imported Barb or other Arab horse not bred in Arabia which is accompanied by authentic proof of their purity of blood."³

The registration history of the Barbary Arabian horse in America is somewhat bizarre. The American Jockey Club continued to register purebred Arabians, including Barbary Arabians, as Thoroughbreds in the *American Stud Book* until 1943. More than fifty imports were registered in Volumes I and II, six in Volume III and eight, all of Middle-East breeding, in Volume VII. Volumes VIII through XI registered additional Arabians, though none of North African breeding. In the 1960's, the Arabian Horse Club Registry of America accepted selected purebred Arabians. The International Arabian Horse Association registered half-bred Arabians and Arabian-Thoroughbred crosses. The International Arabian Horse Association, in spite of its name, however, is dependent upon the Arabian Horse Club Registry of America. The so-called international association can register only animals born of parents one of which is registered with the AHC Registry of America, and it "has no voice or influence on

²Arabian Horse Club Registry of America to L. B. B., May 28, 1962 (MS. in possession of writer).

³Quoted in George H. Conn, *The Arabian Horse in America* (Woodstock, Vermont, 1957), 209.

the Rules or decisions of the AHC Registry.”⁴ It seems somehow unreal that the ancestor of both the Arabian and the Thoroughbred is no longer considered eligible for registration in the United States. It has been a recognized breed for more than 3,500 years; the Moroccan Stud Book is the oldest in the world. On performance, the Barbary Arabian competes, no quarter asked, in open competition; and a twelve-year-old girl, riding in her first show, jumped a stallion to second place in a major show in the fall of 1962.

The terms, “Arabian,” “Barb,” and “Libyan,” are often confused. Arabian, at present, generally refers to the Arabian peninsula—or Saudi Arabia. Barbary, according to the medieval Arab historian Ibn Khaldoun, was derived from an Arabic word describing the speech of the inhabitants of North Africa. A lion, for example, *berberes* when it utters its series of soft syllabic grunts.⁵ Libya was the Greek name for all of North Africa from the west bank of the Nile to the Atlantic Ocean. Barb and Arab have been used interchangeably for centuries to describe a single breed of horses. It is the same breed which the ancients called the Libyan horse. The weight of the evidence indicates that this breed originated in North Africa and that it was recognized as a pure breed of unrivalled excellence at least 1,500 years before it was introduced into Arabia.

The British archeologist, Sir William Ridgeway, in perhaps the best reasoned and documented history to be found in the literature of the horse, placed the origin of the presently-called Arabian horse in North Africa.⁶ The fixation in the nineteenth century on Arabia as the original home is not an Arab idea, according to Major General W. Tweedie, long-time British Consul-General in the Middle-East, but was originated by the French naturalist, Buffon, and by William Scawen Blunt and Lady Anne

⁴International Arabian Horse Association to L. B. B., July 3, 1963 (MS. in possession of writer).

⁵Ibn Khaldoun, *Histoire des berberes et des dynasties Musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionales* (3 vols.; Paris, 1925), I, 168.

⁶William Ridgeway, *The Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse* (Cambridge, 1905); Elmer S. Riggs, “The Geological History and Evolution of the Horse,” *Geology Leaflet 13* (Chicago, 1932; Field Museum of Natural History); Basil Tozer, *The Horse in History* (London, 1908), 17; Roger Pocock, *Horses* (London, 1917), 129 ff.

Blunt.⁷ Even the Blunts, however, do not claim present Arabia as the birthplace of the breed but speculate upon Iraq and Mesopotamia. Against that speculation, it is worth noting that Biblical literature indicates that Abraham, although possessed of great wealth in herds, had no horses when he lived in Mesopotamia. Lady Judith Anne Blunt-Lytton Wentworth was quite dogmatic in her denial of the Ridgeway thesis but the evidence that she cites more nearly supports the Ridgeway thesis than that of the Blunt family.⁸ There is not one shred of evidence, either in the accounts of early travelers, or in historical records, or in the artifacts of the world's museums which connect the horse with the pre-Christian history of Arabia.⁹

Lady Wentworth showed little awareness or knowledge of North Africa when she explained the "Barb" simply as being the "best of the migrated Arabian horses."¹⁰ Of the renowned Burton Barb mare, she writes, "Her picture shows an Arab [and] seems to place her as a Morocco so-called Barb, not a common Barb."¹¹ Lady Wentworth's unfamiliarity with Morocco is evident in her assertion that the Palomino horse is "greatly prized in Algeria and Morocco and very rare. No Christian is allowed to possess one nor are they sold for export."¹² The French General Daumas was more accurate when he wrote of the Palomino of North Africa: "No chief will ride one and no tribe will permit such a beast to pass the night in its camp. It is called the fast of the Jew. It is a color which brings bad luck."¹³ The writer has taken pictures

⁷W. Tweedie, *The Arabian Horse: His Country and People* (London, 1844), 7.

⁸Lady Wentworth, "The World's Horse," in Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald (ed.), *The Book of the Horse* (Los Angeles, 1947); *Thoroughbred Racing Stock and its Ancestors* (New York, 1938); Lady Anne Blunt, *The Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates* (New York, 1879).

⁹See Lefebvre des Noettes, *L'Attelage le cheval de selle à travers les âges* (2 vols.; Paris, 1931), I, 98 ff., in which it is pointed out that in their pre-Christian wars against the Assyrians and against Xerxes, the Arabs were mounted on camels and that the Arabs paid tribute to Sennachrib in camels. Volume II is entirely a collection of photographs of museum artifacts, mostly from the Louvre, in which horses are depicted.

¹⁰Wentworth, "The World's Horse," in Vesey-Fitzgerald, *The Book of the Horse*, 24.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 157.

¹²*Ibid.*, 111.

¹³Melchior J. E. Daumas, *Los Caballos del Sahara* (Mejico, 1936), 184. This excellent book of tradition and history was published in French in 1861 as *Les che-*

of many Palominos in Morocco. They are not rare, are not highly prized, are usually ridden by servants, and are still called "Jewish horses." Lady Wentworth's bias can be understood, however, if considered in the political context of English diplomacy. As a result of the turmoil following the French conquest of Algeria, the supply of Barbary Arabian horses had dried up in North Africa. British interest was focused in the Middle-East and India. The Blunt family, associated with British diplomacy in the Middle-East for more than a century, acquired Arabian horses in that area. Such horses were being exported in considerable quantities from the Persian Gulf area to both India and England. It is only logical that English writing should concentrate on the Middle-Eastern Arabian horse.

It is unfortunate that so much reliance has been placed on limited English language sources when such a great variety of material is available. In legend, Pegasus, the winged horse, was born in the desert of western Libya. The *Iliad* records that Diomedes acquired from Aeneas two horses "of that breed whereof Zeus gave to Troas . . . because they were the best of all horses between the daylight and the sun."¹⁴ One of the horses was described as a bay with a white star on the forehead. With them, Diomedes easily won the chariot race at the funeral games held in honor of Patroclus. Only six such horses were known in the Aegean World, and they were reputed to be the offspring of the West Wind and of the Ocean.¹⁵ The bay color in a country where all other horses were dun or white, their speed, and the legend of divine origin plainly set them apart. Speculation apart, the evidence points to Libya, where, according to Homeric legend, the Amazons rode them, as the birthplace of the breed.

The Libyan horse did not reach Egypt until about the sixteenth century, B.C. The first mention of the horse and chariot in Egypt

vauux du Sahara et les mouers du desert (rev. ed., Paris, 1881), and is translated into English as *The Horse of the Sahara and the Manners of the Desert* (London, 1863).

¹⁴Richard Lattimore (trans.), *Iliad of Homer* (Chicago, 1951), 135, 462.

¹⁵See Fairfax Harrison, *The John's Island Stud* (S. C.), 1750-1788 (Richmond, 1931), 161, for an example of the persistence of the Pegasus legend. The founding sire of the presently extinct Narragansett Pacer was reputedly found swimming at sea, far from land. The blood of the Narragansett Pacer came into the American Saddlebred through Old Hyatoga, brought to Kentucky by the Reverend B. Bennett. Old Hyatoga died in Harrison County, Kentucky, in 1822, at the ripe age of forty-eight.

occurs during the reign of Aahmes I, a king of the seventeenth dynasty, whose reign could not have been earlier than 1587 B.C. That mention was in connection with the expulsion of the *Hyksos* people and kings from Egypt into Palestine by the pressure of Libyan tribes equipped with horses and chariots. The *Hyksos*, a Semitic people from the East, had ruled Egypt more than five hundred years. It has been suggested that the *Hyksos* introduced horses into Egypt but it is difficult to understand, if the horse did come from the East, why it was not also known in Arabia and in what is presently known as Palestine until a much later period. The exact identity of the *Hyksos* is unknown, but chronology and contemporary evidence suggests that they may have been the Children of Israel since they are credited with founding Jerusalem after their expulsion from Egypt.

By 950 B.C., three hundred years after the expulsion of the *Hyksos* from Egypt, King Solomon was importing horses from Egypt for himself and for all of the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria. Solomon had twelve thousand horses at the time, but the superiority of the Egyptian animals was such that he paid 150 shekels of silver for each one¹⁶ which, at a time when silver was more valuable than gold, was the equivalent of about \$1,500. By Solomon's time, Egypt had spilled over the west bank of the Nile into the horse-breeding areas of Libya and it is logical to assume that Solomon was importing Libyan horses. That eminent scholar, historian, and warrior, Prince Abdelkadar, last ruler of Algeria before the French conquest, says that the Arab horse descended from the stud of King Solomon, that the Arab and Barbary horses sprang from the same source, and that the Barbary horse, "far from being a degenerate form of the Arab is on the contrary, superior."¹⁷

The Libyan horse was known throughout the Mediterranean World during the Roman epoch. A monument to the charioteer, Avilius Teres, was erected in Rome about the first century, A.D. The names and origins of forty-two of his winning horses were given; thirty-eight were from North Africa and none from Asia Minor, the Levant, or Arabia.¹⁸

¹⁶*Bible*, II Chronicles, verses 14-17.

¹⁷Daumas, *Los Caballos del Sahara*, 10-19, 34.

¹⁸Ridgeway, *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, 312-313.

The horse presently known as the Arabian was introduced into Arabia from North Africa as an established and prepotent breed about the first or second century, A.D. Wild horses could not possibly have survived in Arabia where all water is drawn from wells; moreover, the Arabs then, as at present, were generally ignorant of the first principles of selective breeding.¹⁹ Furthermore, fossil remains of the horse have been found in Algeria but not in Arabia. The Greek geographer, Strabo, in the first century, B.C., saw camels, asses, and cattle in Arabia but no horses. He wrote of the Libyan tribes to the south and west of Carthage, however: "The breeding of horses is most carefully seen to by the kings; so much so that the number of colts is yearly estimated at one hundred thousand."²⁰ Such a tradition and industry did not develop in the course of a few generations.

Not only is the presently-called Barbary Arabian an ancient breed, its essential characteristics as they exist at present were already fixed 2,000 years ago. The horses were predominately bay, had pre-orbital skull depressions, had a unique set and shape of their ears, had distinctive head shapes, had typical white bracelets often extending into stockings, and had a star or blaze on the forehead. The skin was dark (or *kohl*). The Barbary Arabian either had no hock callosities or ergots, or had quite small ones. The hoofs were long and narrow and had dense horn. Barbary Arabians could be further distinguished by the covering and set-on of the tail, by the voice, and by their speed.²¹

The blood of the Libyan horse spread in concentric waves from its North African homeland and everywhere was used to create new and distinct breeds such as the Thoroughbred, the Russian Orlov, the American Saddlebred and Standardbred. Ridgeway emphasized the importance of the color, bay, in tracing the influence of the Libyan horse.²² He paid tribute to the Sultan of Morocco for preserving the purity of the blood of the royal

¹⁹Anyone who has travelled extensively in the area knows that good horses are hard to find, even in the 1960's.

²⁰T. E. Page and others (eds.) and H. L. Jones (trans.), *The Geography of Strabo* (8 vols.; New York, 1932), III, 197.

²¹Ridgeway, *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, 312-313.

²²*Ibid.*, 141 ff.; Tozer, *The Horse in History*, 17, traces the spread of the Libyan horse by its docility. Only the Libyan horse needed no bit, and the docile temperament persisted, even in cross-breeds.

stud which Ridgeway concluded was one of the two repositories of the original Libyan blood; the other was the *Al Khamseh* (the five) strains of Arabia.²³

University of Pennsylvania Professor Carl W. Gay, who was also director of Horse Breeding for the Pennsylvania State Live-stock Sanitary Board, stated that the Barb was the descendant of the ancient Libyan horse, and was found pure only in Morocco.²⁴ The *Al Khamseh* breeders were able to preserve the relative purity of the *Keheilan*, *Seglawi*, *Abayan*, *Hamdaini*, and *Hadban* strains because of geographic isolation. The purity of the Barbary Arabian in Morocco is a result of both geographic and political isolation. The Arab conquest was the last conquest of any duration to which Morocco was subjected. It is fair to assume that as the Arab conquest swept through the great horse breeding centers of North Africa the war booty included the best of the horses, for even during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed (died 632 A.D.) horses were still scarce in Arabia. It is worth noting that the Arabs who invaded Spain were, for the most part, Berbers who had accepted the Islamic religion and that even at present, the Berbers comprise seventy per cent of the ethnic stock of Morocco. The Berber language still exists, as do many of the ancient customs; it is not surprising that a people who for four thousand years bred the best horses in the world still breed excellent horses.

The influence of the Barbary Arabian upon the saddle horses of America is well documented. It came through two sources: the "blood" horse of England and the Andalusian horse introduced by the Spanish into Mexico. The origins of both are rooted in Barbary. A few blood horses had been imported into England prior to the restoration of Charles II in 1660, primarily by returning army officers; but the real impetus to the development of the Thoroughbred came when Sir John Fenwick, Master of Horse to Charles II, purchased a group of Barb and Turk mares and sent them to England in the 1670's.²⁵ This blood was crossed

²³Ridgeway, *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, 241-242, 249.

²⁴Carl W. Gay, *Productive Horse Husbandry* (Philadelphia and London, 1914), 73.

²⁵James Weatherby, *General Stud Book* (London, 1807, 1820), Introduction. C. M. Prior, *The Royal Studs of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries together with a Reproduction of the Second Earl of Godolphin's Stud Book, and sundry other papers relating to the Thoroughbred horse* (London, 1935), 66-68, 71-78.

with that of the Byerley Turk as early as 1689, and with the Darley Arabian, probably of the *Keheilan* strain and one of the few *Al Khamseh* animals to figure in the early history of the Thoroughbred, by 1710. It was not until the influence of Hutton's imported Bay Barb, and Hutton's Gray Barb, and, more importantly, the Godolphin Barb began to be felt that the "oriental" bred horses actually started gaining in influence. The Godolphin Barb (sometimes called the Godolphin Arab) was bred in the royal stud at Meknes, Morocco—which still exists with its records—and had been a gift of the Sultan of Morocco to King Louis XV of France who reputedly gave him to the Count of Lorraine. The horse was imported into England in 1730 by Edward Coke, and upon Coke's death in 1732, was acquired by Lord Godolphin. By 1750, the stud of Lord Godolphin dominated English racing. Lord Godolphin's records indicate that the Godolphin Barb in twenty-two years at stud sired only eighty-plus foals.²⁶ His merit was therefore qualitative rather than quantitative.

The first horses imported into the English colonies in North America were the common, coarse ponies of Scotland and the English Midlands. They were hardy and cheap. After the Cavalier migration to the colonies in the mid-seventeenth century, horse racing and a demand for saddle horses developed. The American historian, Donald Worcester, estimated that in 1649 there were only about two hundred horses in Virginia, and that these were mostly small, stocky, "cold-blooded" horses. Records of the quarter mile races in Surrey, Henrico, and Westmoreland counties in Virginia gave an indication of the colors of the winners: Swanson's black, Parke's gray, and Gardner's Young Fire, a pure white.²⁷ Bay, the predominate color of the blood horse, was as rare in colonial Virginia as were the colors black or white in Mexico.

So far as has been determined, a half-bred mare by the Go-

points out that the substantial importations should be credited to the Duke of Buckingham in the 1620's. In 1620, for example, of the thirty-one mares at the Royal Stud at Malmsbury, only two were called Arabians. Of the forty stallions and colts, there were eight Barbs and nine Spanish horses, but no Arabs. Within the next ten years, Buckingham imported more than fifty Barb and Spanish horses and mares.

²⁶Prior, *The Royal Studs*, 136.

²⁷Donald E. Worcester, "Early American Racing—The First Beginnings in Virginia," *The Thoroughbred Record*, July 24, 1954, pp. 44-46, 58.

dolphin Barb, imported by Alexander Clarke of Virginia in 1733, was the first blood horse imported into the colonies.²⁸ The first prominent stud in America was the Belair Stud (1747-1761), founded by Samuel Ogle, the resident lieutenant governor of Maryland. Ogle's first importations were from Spain, a Barb stallion and several Andalusian mares. Later, he imported a stallion, Spark, and a mare, Queen Mab, with a filly foal. Both were from Darley Arabian stock. In 1751, Ogle imported the famous racing mare, Selima, by the Godolphin Barb. Selima proved to be as great as a producer as she had been on the track.²⁹

The second great stud in colonial America was the John's Island Stud of South Carolina (1750-1788)³⁰ founded by Edward Fenwick, a descendant of the famous English racing family. It is not surprising, therefore, that Fenwick's importations, following family tradition, were concentrated Godolphin Barb blood. Fenwick made several successive importations, enough to maintain pure English blood, but he also used the Spanish blood in the Chickasaw and Choctaw Indian ponies. There were not enough English blood horses to supply the demand for saddle horses.

The third important stud was the Roanoke Stud (1795-1833) of John Randolph. Randolph built his stud on the blood of Janus, a grandson of the Godolphin Barb, imported sometime before 1761. Janus lived thirty-four years, dying in 1780. His influence on the early race stock in America was prodigious, especially when crossed with indigenous stock, in the development of the Quarter horse. According to Helen Michaelis, the authority on Quarter horse pedigrees, Janus is to be found in the extended pedigrees of Old Joe Baily through Old Printer, in the West Coast Quarter horses through Obe Jennings and Old Ariel, and in the Sykes and Mangrum Quarter horses through Old Tiger.³¹ John Randolph was considered by his contemporaries

²⁸Conn, *The Arabian Horse in America*, 44.

²⁹Fairfax Harrison, *The Belair Stud, 1747-1761* (Richmond, 1929).

³⁰Harrison, *The John's Island Stud*.

³¹Quoted in M. H. Lindeman, *The Quarter Horse Breeder* (Wichita Falls, 1959). The Copperbottom horse, credited by Michaelis with substantial influence on the Quarter horse, is also, according to Harrison, *The John's Island Stud*, 165, one of the sources of the five-gaited American Saddlehorse. The Copperbottoms were imported into Kentucky from Canada by Captain Matthew Harris Jouett about

as being a singularly unsuccessful breeder. Even at present, most Quarter horse breeders are not aware of the debt that they owe to this early American Quarter horse breeder.³²

Although the pedigrees of present-day Quarter horses cannot be traced with the certainty of the Thoroughbred, the evidence is indisputable that the blood is fundamentally that of the Barbary Arabian, transmitted through the Spanish horse and through the English blood horse. A close examination of the pedigree of Old Sorrel, the foundation sire of the famous King Ranch Quarter horses, shows close-up Kentucky Thoroughbred blood in the tail line and even more distinctly in the top line. Placed in a time context, that could have been only Barbary Arabian blood. There was little else in Kentucky in the mid-nineteenth century. The Quarter horse, from colonial days until quite recently, has been a "using" horse. It did not have a stud book, extended pedigrees, or the benefit of breeding theories. Its establishment and preservation as a breed almost solely on the basis of performance is proof of the potency of its foundation blood.

Numerically, the importations of blood horses were not large. Only fifty-five blood mares were imported into colonial America and the United States between 1730 and 1830, primarily by the breeding establishments indicated, and by James Delancey of New York. In examining the early records, the description "Barb" occurs more often than any other.³³ One of the better known stallions imported was Lath, another grandson of the Godolphin Barb. Lath, after a successful racing career in England, was brought to America by James Delancey, raced in the 1768-1772 seasons, then retired to stud.³⁴ Black Sultan, a sixteen-hand Barb, presented with two mares to President Thomas Jefferson in 1806, was another noted import, as was Linden Tree, a gray Barb presented to President U. S. Grant by the Sultan of Turkey in 1870. Linden Tree was the last import listed by Conn, *The Ara-*

1827. Thus the dispute over the pedigree of the Quarter horse Poco Bueno—whether his ancestry is American Saddlebred or Copperbottom—is perhaps less important than it seems.

³²Fairfax Harrison, *The Roanoke Stud, 1795-1833* (Richmond, 1930).

³³M. F. Bayliss, *The Matriarchy of the American Turf, 1735-1930* (New York, 1931).

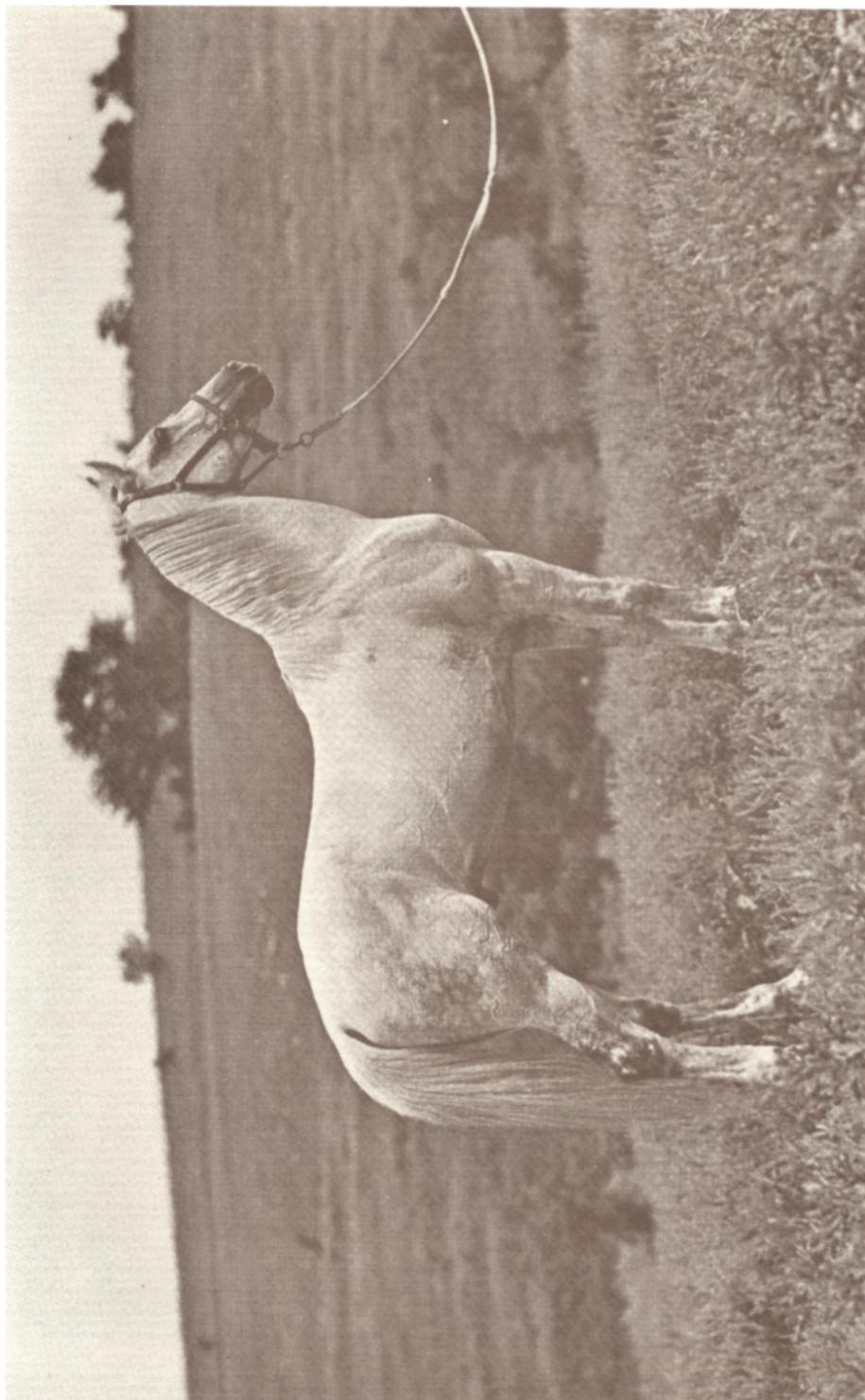
³⁴S. D. Bruce, *The American Stud Book* (New York, 1873), says that Lath raced in England in 1770, and therefore could not have been imported by Delancey in 1768.

bian Horse in America, which was described as a Barb. The earlier preference in England and America for the Barbary Arabian was not attributable simply to greater availability. Arabians were available from the Middle-East and had been from the time of the Crusades. Charles Rhind shipped four stallions to the United States from Smyrna, Syria, in 1830. One was offered at stud in Kentucky, another in Louisiana, and another in South Carolina in 1833. They left no permanent imprint, and were dropped from *Skinner's Stallion List* after 1835.⁸⁵

The story of the Barbary Arabian in the Americas would not be complete without consideration of the effect of the Spanish imports into Mexico. As with the English colonists, the first Spanish settlements in Santo Domingo and Cuba were too precarious to hazard many well-bred horses. The original Spanish colonists were not the nobility of Spain, nor were their horses for the most part other than the common work stock of northern Spain. There were, understandably, a few Andalusian horses which made their way into the northern areas of Spain and which had been used to up-grade the native stock; however, the Moors were expelled from southern Spain only in 1492. There had not been time for the predominately bay, tractable, North African blooded horses to spread to Asturias and Murcias from whence the horses of the Caribbean colonists had been drawn.

When Cortes sailed from Cuba for Mexico, he took with him eleven horses including five mares. Only two of the sixteen were "fine-bred." They were by color: nine chestnuts of various hues, three grays, one sorrel, two duns, and one "dark" colored horse. Later in the year, Narvaez followed Cortes to Mexico with another eighty-five horses. The colors are not given, but since they were drawn from the same regions of Cuba and Santo Domingo as were those of Cortes, it can be presumed that the same colors were represented. It was from the horses of Cortes and Narvaez, reinforced by later importations from southern Spain, that the wild horses and Indian ponies of North America developed. Later settlements in Argentina drew heavily on the Andalusian and Estremaduras stock of southern Spain. The effect can be noted in the colors: the wild horses of Argentina are ninety per cent

⁸⁵Conn, *The Arabian Horse in America*, 40-41.



"Soucieux," the Barbary Arabian stallion sent to Texas by King of Hassen II of Morocco

bay and not one in two thousand is black. The gray and the occasional "paint" is almost always an escaped domestic animal. By contrast, the blood of the North American horse was more diffused and the colors more variegated. Thus, the concentration of "European" blood in the Spanish horses originally introduced into North America was about the same as that of the English pony and much greater than in subsequent importations in both North and South America. The up-grading in both the Spanish and English colonies came later.

By the eighteenth century, the English colonists were purchasing horses from the Indians and the types of Indian horses had become sufficiently fixed to be described as breeds. The Chickasaw breed, sometimes called the Choctaw breed, was particularly esteemed for crossing with the English blooded horses, especially in the John's Island Stud. The Seminole breed were said to be "the most beautiful and sprightly species of that noble creature to be seen anywhere; but they are a small breed and as delicately formed as the American roe buck."⁸⁶ The English blood horse gave them size. Thus, the great American breeds of horses were developed from a fusion of horses of different origins, the only common element of which was the blood of the North African horse.

To insist upon the importance of the blood of the Barbary Arabian horse is to belabor the obvious. The Thoroughbred was created from predominately Barb blood and it became a winning breed when the blood of the Godolphin sire became generally diffused in the racing stock. A cursory examination of the pedigree of Justin Morgan, founding sire of the Morgan breed, shows him to be an inbred Barb.⁸⁷ The Quarter horse traces to the Roanoke Stud of John Randolph and the blood of Janus, a grandson of the Godolphin Barb. Most of the national breeds of horses, not only in the United States, but in all of the nations bordering upon the Atlantic were developed at a time when North African blood was available, and North African blood was used by preference. If that blood is not Arabian, then the claim of the Arabian

⁸⁶Harrison, *The John's Island Stud*, 169.

⁸⁷Reproduced in Conn, *The Arabian Horse in America*, 131, from Battel's *Morgan Horse Registry*.

to be the progenitor of all of the modern breeds of saddle horses must be denied.

The claim should not be denied the Arabian horse, however, for the Arab and the Barb are one breed, recognized as such until the last two decades. The Barbary Arabian grew larger in North Africa where the grass and other environmental conditions were better. Its blood, available again after more than one hundred years, can be used to reinforce the performance and size of the Arabians in America. Already, a crop of Quarter horse-Barbary Arabian crosses is on the ground. A Barbary Arabian mare, capable in her own right of beating most Thoroughbred competition, has been bred to the great King Ranch stallion, Zenith (by Hyperion, out of Timed, a half sister of Stymie). It remains to be seen what a fresh infusion of North African blood will produce.

In the larger sense, present tendencies to foreclose further breed development by the imposition of artificial restrictions must be carefully considered. Should not any horse be permitted to run on any established track, regardless of breed? Yet the closing of the *American Stud Book* to Arabian registry, coupled with the requirement that only those horses registered with the American Jockey Club can compete, in effect bars Arabians from major racing competition. Similarly, breed association policy of restricting registration to selected strains cannot be in the long-term interest of the breed. Recently, a research scientist of the United States Department of Agriculture cautioned against inflexible breed standards (in cattle). He pointed to the desirability of having a provision for the introduction of new blood, as is presently possible in Europe, to introduce or fix desirable new characteristics.⁸⁸ His article is worth consideration by those interested in developing any breed of livestock. Finally, any breed association needs a provision for up-grading if it is to attain general popularity; otherwise, it becomes a plaything of the wealthy dilettante. Before such things happen, a desirable first step amongst the Arabian fanciers would be the recognition of the unity of the breed by re-adopting the earlier definition: "Any Barb or other Arab . . ."

⁸⁸E. J. Warwick, "The Role of the Breed Association in Modern Beef Production," *The Cattleman*, XLIX (May, 1963), 44-58.