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*A Moro Legend to Explain Why
No Moslem Will Eat Pork*

The Prophet's Grandchildren*

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Author of "The Stranger From Kurdistan," "The Sultan's Jest," etc.

SULU, or Jolo, as it is often called, is a tiny hotbed of Moslem fanaticism just across the straits from Borneo, in the Philippines; it is a small, blood-soaked island inhabited by followers of the Prophet, fierce Moros who with kris and kampilan carve their way to eternal glory through the ranks of the unbeliever. The road to Paradise, they say, is paved with the heads of the infidel; and whoever dies slaying Christians is assured of a seat at the Prophet's right hand.

Like all devout Moslems, the Moros will not eat pork, nor any food contaminated with the fat of a pig. To account for this aversion, common to all Islam, they tell a strange tale, fantastic in its anachronism, and naive in its quaint conceits. And it is this tale which I shall relate, as nearly as possible, in the words of him who told it to me one night as we sailed up the China Sea, beneath star-dusted, blue-black Asian skies.

THERE are two Christs who reign and hold sway over the world: Isa the Nazarene, the White Christ, whose mother the infidels adore, and

Mahomet, the Black Christ whom the dark men of Islam revere as the prophet of Allah, the one true God. Both of these prophets have long since passed from the earth; but in the old days they were great rivals, and hated each other with exceeding bitterness.

The world was divided into two parts, one of which was allotted to Isa the Nazarene, the other to Mahomet, upon whom be peace and prayer! But at times each would encroach upon the territory of the other; and each sought to discredit the other, and to cause dissension among his rival's followers. Neither prophet neglected an opportunity to cast ridicule upon the other, for their enmity was fierce beyond description.

Now it so happened that Mahomet decreed a great feast for all of his followers, who came from far and wide to attend the festivities. And then there came to Mahomet an inspiration, the brilliant idea of inviting his rival, Isa the Nazarene, to attend the banquet, so that all true believers could see what manner of man was this false prophet who preached against the true prophet of Allah.

This White Christ of the infidel, being a cunning and subtle man, knew well that he was invited to his rival's banquet, not to be honored, but rather to be ridiculed before the followers of Mahomet; yet he never-

* This tale, current in Sulu, to the best of our knowledge has not heretofore found its way to the States. It presents the novel anachronism of Christ's and Mahomet's being contemporaries and rivals. "Since this story is a simple folk tale, and not at all my original conception," writes the author, "I present it to you unpurged and unadorned, as close to the original as I can recollect."

theless accepted the invitation, and on the day of the banquet made his appearance. All courtesy was shown him; but at the height of the festivity, Mahomet revealed himself and his intentions.

"Nazarene," he began, "it is said that in your own land you are a prophet. Tell me, is that true? And is it true that you have performed miracles?"

At these words a hush fell over the riotous assembly, for each reveler knew that the Nazarene was to be ridiculed and confounded.

"You are right," replied Isa; "I am indeed a prophet, and the son of the one true God; and it is also true that I have performed miracles."

"So you say. But what have we to confirm your claim? If indeed you are what you profess to be, assert yourself and perform some miracle for us, so that we may believe," challenged Mahomet.

"That I will not do," retorted the White Christ. "It is not permitted to work wonders for vain display."

"Just as I thought," sneered Mahomet, "you are an impostor who dares not risk a trial. Doubtless you are some pretender, and not the Nazarene you claim to be. Come now, and prove to my guests that you are no idle boaster."

"For the glory of God, I have worked miracles, and in His name I can work them; but not for display, nor out of vanity."

And thus they disputed, Mahomet calling for some wonder, some sign of the Nazarene's power, and Isa steadfastly refusing each demand.

"Well, then," persisted Mahomet, "since you will give us no miracle, exhibit the lesser gift of prophecy."

But the Nazarene likewise refused, saying that he would not abuse his power by prophesying for the amusement of the crowd. And Mahomet taunted him, calling him an impostor,

urging him to reveal himself by some sign or wonder.

"Since you insist, well and good!" exclaimed Isa, quite out of patience; "I will submit to a test. But I warn you that you will regret it to your last day. You have forced my hand; so beware, and do not blame me if the result is not at all to your taste."

"Nazarene, you can not frighten me, nor seek to evade the issue. I will abide by the result, whatever it may be."

"Very well; and what will you have me do to prove my worth?"

"My wishes are simple. I shall but ask you to look at that door at the farther end of this hall, and then to prophesy unto us what is concealed in the room behind it."

And Mahomet laughed triumphantly, for in anticipation of the test he had secretly placed his two grandchildren in the room whose door opened into the banquet hall, and had sealed the door, so that none other than himself could possibly know of their presence.

"You wish me to prophesy? And you still disregard my warning?"

"Even so. Speak!" commanded Mahomet, impatiently, exultantly.

And at these words the White Christ declared himself: "Hear then this prophecy! When you open that door, you will release two beasts the like of which there are none in the entire world."

Mahomet, who knew well what the room contained, laughed again, and commanded that the door be opened. But to his dismay and great astonishment, there came forth from the room, not his grandchildren, but two strange, uncouth beasts: for the Nazarene had in his resentment at the Prophet's persistence transformed the children into pigs, creatures that had never before existed. And thus it is that no Moslem, even to this day, will eat pork.