From *Travels in Morocco*, by James Richardson, ca 1859.

The dreary monotony of Moorish life was one day broken in upon by a juvenile strolling singer, who attracted a crowd of silent and attentive listeners. It was a grateful sight to see old men, with long and silvery beards, reclining in mute and serious attention; young men lounging in the pride and consciousness of animal strength; little children intermixed, but without prattle or merriment—all fixed and fascinated with the charm of vocal song. The vocalist himself was a picturesque object; his face was burnt black with Afric's sun, his bare head was wildly covered with long, black matted, and curly hair, but his eye was soft and serene; and, as he stretched his throat upwards to give compass to his voice, he seemed as if he would catch inspiration from the Prophet in heaven. A coarse brown blanket enveloped his spare and way-worn body, his only clothing and shelter from the heat by day and the cold by night, a fold of which fell upon his naked feet.

The voice of the Arab vocalist was extremely plaintive, even to the tones and inflections of distress, and the burden of his song was of religion and of love—two sentiments which all pure minds delight to combine. When he stopped a moment to take breath, a murmur of applause vibrated through the still air of the evening, not indeed for the youth, but for God! [8] for it was a prayer of the artless and enraptured bystanders, invoking Allah to bless the singing lad, and also to bless them, while ascribing all praise to the Deity.

This devout scene raised the Moors greatly in my estimation. I thought men could not be barbarians, or even a jealous or vindictive race, who were charmed with such simple melody of sounds, and with sentiments so pure and true to nature.

The Arab youth sang:—

  Oh, there's none but the One God!  
  I'll journey over the Desert far  
  To seek my love the fairest of maidens;  
  The camels moan loudly to carry me thither,  
  Gainly are they, and fleeter than the swift-legged ostrich.  
  Oh, there's none but the One God!

  What though the Desert wind slay me;  
  What of it? death is from God.  
  And woe to me! I cannot repine.  
  But I'll away to the abode of my love,  
  I'll embrace her with all my strength,  
  I'll bear her back thence, and rest her on my couch.  
  Oh, there's none but the One God!

So sang in plaintive accents the youth, until the last ray of the sun lingered on the minarets' tops, when, by the louder and authoritative voice of the Muezin calling the Faithful to prayers, this crowd of the worshippers of song and vocal harmony was dispersed to meet again, and forthwith chant a more solemn strain. The poor lad of the streets and highways went into the mosque along with his motley group of admirers; and all blended their voices and devotion together in prayer and adoration, lowly and in profound prostration, before the Great Allah!

From *Travels through the Empire of Morocco*,

by John Buffa, M.D., 1810: Letter 11 (1806): Fes

I returned very late from the review, and had scarcely dined when a messenger came to request my early attendance the following morning, to be presented to His Imperial Majesty. I repaired betimes to the palace, which is an immense pile of buildings, enclosed by a strong wall and a large deep ditch. It has four great gates, plated, both on the outside and in, with sheets of iron. I entered the front gate, and by a covered way reached a spacious court, surrounded by a piazza, under which several field-pieces and small mortars were placed. Here I was met by Sidy Ameth, a black officer, who acts as master of the ceremonies, and lord in waiting. He received me with great politeness, and conducted me, through another gate and covered way, to a second square more spacious than the first. In the centre was a most beautiful white marble basin, into which played a fountain of water clear as crystal. Over it was a kind of rotunda, supported by columns of elegant black marble. This superb square is paved with small pieces of marble, intermixed with pebbles of various colours, in the mosaic style. It is formed by four wings of the building. The front wing, exclusive of its magnificent entrance, contains several apartments and waiting-rooms, occupied by the great officers of state; the right, the library, and the treasury of the Emperor; the left, a superb mosque, and a school-room for the use of the Emperor's children, where they are taught to read and write, and study the Alcoran; and finally, the back, the great hall of audience, in which His Imperial Majesty was seated cross-legged upon a kind of couch, under a crimson velvet canopy, most beautifully decorated with figured work in gold.

I was introduced by Sidy Ameth; and after making my obsequious reverence, I stood at a great distance, waiting the Imperial commands, when His Majesty was graciously pleased to order me, by signs, to draw near, and then, by means of an interpreter, he informed me, that, in consequence of the good I had done his subjects during my residence at Larache, he had long been anxious to see and consult me. He desired me to ask any favours I chose, either for myself or my country, and they should be granted immediately. I thanked His Majesty for his condescension, and then presented him with a patent pistol, with seven barrels, which he examined very attentively in every part, and appeared highly pleased with its construction.

He commanded the hall to be cleared, and in a very friendly and familiar way told me the nature of his complaint; after which he summoned the chief eunuch, and desired me to follow him to the seraglio, to prescribe for his favourite Sultana, who was seriously indisposed. On leaving the hall of audience, we turned to the left, and arrived at a gate, which terminated the piazza on the right side of the square. Through this gate we entered a large passage, paved with marble; on each side were marble benches, upon which the eunuch informed me, the inferior eunuchs and the female attendants of the seraglio slept. This passage conducted us to another square, on the right of which is the Imperial bath. It is almost impossible to form an idea of the elegance and convenience of this structure, which is used only by the Emperor.

Adjoining the bath is a refectory, which is constantly supplied with every kind of refreshment. The other sides of this square contained the apartments of two or more ladies of His Imperial Majesty. It would be tedious to enumerate the several squares through which I passed; they differ only in splendour and magnificence, according to the rank and taste of those ladies to whom they belong: they all communicate from one piazza to another, by means of passages, such as I have described. I was extremely indebted to my black conductor for giving me an opportunity of seeing the whole of the seraglio; for I returned by a much less circuitous route than that by which I went, the apartments of the Sultana being just behind the Imperial bath. But where shall I find words to give you an adequate idea of their lovely inhabitant? Conceive every thing that is beautiful, and you may possibly arrive near the mark. She is rather below the middle size, exquisitely fair, and well proportioned. When I first saw her, she was in a very doubtful state, and I reported accordingly to the Emperor; he was sensibly affected, and besought me to exert my utmost skill, to preserve a life of so much value to him. Happily, my efforts have been crowned with success, and I hope a very short time will restore her to perfect health. She controls him in every thing, and is considered, from her absolute dominion over him, as the fountain of all favours.

Muley Solyman, the present Emperor, is about thirty-eight years of age, in height about six feet two inches, of a tolerably fair complexion, with remarkably fine teeth, large dark eyes, aquiline nose, and black beard; the *tout ensemble* of his countenance noble and majestic. He governs Barbary with discretion and moderation; in the distribution of justice, or in rewarding his subjects, he is just and impartial; in his private conduct no less pious and exemplary, than, in his public capacity, firm and resolute, prompt and courageous. In my next letter I shall give you a brief account of the succession of Sovereigns from the time of *Edris* to the present reigning family.