

AT DAWN

A Poem

by **OWEN MERTON**

Written in Algeria

Winter 1923-1924



Only in the morning does the master repose —
 The shepherds lead off the flocks — The women
 milk the ewes and the goats, make coffee, and
 the flat cakes of bread — then they grind the grain.

The arab passes his time talking to men in the tents.
 He tells old stories, they have a fruitful imagination,
 they have such a thirst for news that they will
 invent it if there is none.

Many of them go in for debaucheries. They go
 after the wives of the neighbors. If a
 jealous husband is afraid of his neighbor
 he shifts his camp.

When camp is struck the women fold the tents
 and load them on the camels. The man rides
 his horse, the women follow the camels, with
 the flocks — the dogs keeping an eye on all.