

The Tarboro' Journal

BE SURE YOU ARE RIGHT; THEN GO AHEAD.—D Crockett.

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ON THE NUBIAN DESERT.

The Strange Sights Seen by an
English Traveller.

BY HARRY W. FRANK.

The sun was setting. A fiery red disk sank behind the leaden clouds for ever lying along a desert horizon. For an instant they became a Tyrian girdle, then everything was merged in a somber silver-gray, as suddenly as though a great curtain had been drawn before the sun. Most of the camels were already sleeping. The rest dropped quickly upon their knees, and then upon their haunches, with the agonized wail from their long twisting throats which always accompanies the act. A few of the Mussulmans had not finished their evening prayers, but they hurried through, folded their praying mats, and as suddenly as night came on the caravan sank into silence.

Gradually, instead of growing darker, the air we were breathing seemed permeated with a deep purple dye. The soiled coats of the shaggy camels were suffused with crimson. The dingy abbas of the sleeping Arabs were robes fit for Solomon in all his glory. The sand stretched away like an ocean of blood, and the sky bending over it was a great dome of garnet. A camel opened his gentle, drowsy eyes for an instant. They were soft and brown in the fierce sunlight, but in that deep after-glow they flashed like gorgeous carbuncles, set in a fringe of crimson fur.

The day died in that crimson glory, and as everything sank into the all-absorbing shadows the stars appeared, flashing and glowing like coals of fire. With a curious soughing sound the night wind came creeping over the sand, and away in the east the heavens were still changing. The stars were less intense, the sky was luminous, a brilliant silver-gray, and the desert a dead, lusterless black.

Suddenly a disk of fire rose out of the sand, growing wider even before it left the horizon line. Very dark upon the sand lay the shadows of the sleeping caravan. Not a sound or a motion marred that moment of intense silence. But look! Right athwart the moon!

What is that outline—black as jet? It seems colossal, swinging and swaying against the clear white light. Imagination instantly recalls the wild lore of the Nubian desert. Is it some giant phantom? No. The moon leaves it now, and rising higher floods the desert with a wonderful light, in which each object becomes almost as distinct as it is by day.

The phantom suddenly whistles and far away to the left it is easy to distinguish a camel rider—a speck of black—a dot upon the desert—swinging and swaying as the ship sails toward us on the sea of sand. It is going toward the Nile, but there is a long night's journey between it and the sacred river. It is coming from—Heaven knows where. There is nothing but sand—parched and burning sand behind it for days and days, and, strangest of all, that atom is all alone.

Surely, it is coming directly toward us. Has the rider seen the lingering sparks of our dying campfires or the shadowy forms of the prostrate caravan? If so common sense should surely warn him to make a wide detour. One may be as sure that a Bedouin caravan will be a band of highway robbers if the opportunity is offered as that a Chinese junk will prove a pirate under appropriate conditions.

He is coming nearer. He must be very lonely if the sight of his fellow-men deprives him of discretion, or thirsty to venture so much for water, or hungry to forget the desert law. If he is not afraid for himself I am afraid for him. My Arabs are loyal to me because it is for their interest to be; but I fancy that might makes right with them as with all their kind.

Nearer steadily nearer. He is less than a hundred feet away. Strange that at least he has not the oriental courtesy to stop and give me his name, and in the name of Allah announce his business or ask the hospitality he requires.

Without fear, discretion or courtesy, he must be in very dire distress. It is the largest camel I ever saw. How it looms up against the sky! Its size alone would make it a prize to tempt the desert Bedouin. As I live, it is a white camel! A creature almost beyond purchase. Abraham sent a white camel to bring the daughter of his kinsman to be the wife of Isaac. The queen of Sheba came upon a white camel to Solomon in all his glory, and a white camel bore the star-eyed Cleopatra upon the green banks of the Nile; but who is this that he should mount a white camel and fearlessly traverse the Nubian desert alone?

He is clad in the gorgeous habiliments of the east. From the costly fur to the lowest trappings of a camel—cloth without so much as a goat's-hair abba or a camel's-hair efile to protect them from the desert's sun or the Bedouin's envious eyes. A pasha riding in state through his capital might envy him the magnificence with which he is traversing the Nubian desert alone.

Look at the face beneath the deep-furrowed frown. It is white—at least, in the moonlight. These eyes! Oh, you ever forget them! See that

diamond flash on the hand like a fire from the sky. The hand is upon the stately camel. A deep well comes gurgling from his long, twisting neck, indicative that, white camel though he is, he proposes humbly to obey, and, pausing, not a foot away, he turns his shaggy head completely about. Hill his great, dreamy eyes look up at his master, as though he mockingly asked: "What next?"

The devotion is contagious. It is difficult to restrain one's self from kneeling on the sand and saying: "Your servant, sir."

Hark! He speaks! He speaks in English! Pure, clear, unaccented, immaculate English. My oldest servant, who has been with me for a year, still thinks me an Egyptian Turk. Why should that magnificent being upon the white camel's back be so much wiser? But what a question! Out there, alone on the Nubian desert, a phantom comes over the trackless sand, pauses beside me, and a voice, that thrills one with its melody, asks: "Will you kindly favor me with a match?"

A match! The last thing in the world to be found on the Nubian desert—rarer even than the English language. Why, then, had that mysterious creature to suspect that in my girdle there is a case of precious English matches?

Fully convinced that I was dreaming, I produced the match and watched as it flashed and faded and flashed again at the tip of a tiny cigarette, disclosing a slender hand, an enormous diamond and—a face! That was all. The match was carelessly thrown away. The prod was used. The camel wailed and, with a conviction that extended from nose to tail, slowly resumed his pilgrimage.

As they started, the rider turned and said: "My caravan is somewhere back upon the sand. If you should pass a hundred camels, more or less, headed toward the river, with a leader who seems to be stupidly looking for something, tell him, in Arabic, that if he does not find me this side of the Nile, he is to keep on to Cairo. I am going that way."

A wreath of white smoke floated in the moonlight and the white camel moved away, growing fainter and fainter till only a dark shadow swayed upon the white sand in that mysterious land of silhouettes.

It was my first night on the Nubian desert, and, satisfied that I had seen all that would be worth seeing, I crept under my low goat's-hair tent, to think and to dream of that wonderful face in the flash of the match while it lighted a cigarette.

Two years later, while standing upon a crowded Parisian boulevard, a pair of fiery horses dashed past me, guided by the delicate hands of the most beautiful woman in Europe. With all their national enmities the Frenchmen on every hand testified their admiration in boisterous demonstrations. Only for an instant I saw the face. The next it was far down the boulevard.

"Who was it?" I asked of the nearest Frenchman. He looked at me in scornful pity, that I should be so ignorant, and replied that it was the wife of one of the wealthiest of European noblemen. "It was easy then to learn the rest—the same sad story of beauty exchanged for wealth. For a month or two each year at the height of the season husband and wife did it possible to remind society that they are one. For the rest of the year the husband spends his time—don't ask me how or where. I heard, and so may you, but for my part I am enough of an Arab not to believe what I hear when one man speaks ill of another. And the wife? You may meet her at the north pole, under a sealskin or reindeer torbation, or at the south pole wrapped in a Patagonian panja; in Europe, Asia or Africa—or even in America, for she has been there—wild, reckless, defiant, but as good and as generous, I hoar, as she is bold and beautiful.

All that I really know of her is that I met her one night alone on the Nubian desert—Detroit Free Press.

CAN PLANTS SEE?

There Are Evidences That Some Are Possessed of the Sense.

The mysteries of vegetable life are not all yet explored. An Indian botanist has made experiments which induce him to say that some plants can see. Whether the inference can be accepted or not, these experiments go to show that the plants made an effort to reach supports at a little distance, and grew towards the supports, wherever placed.

The plant was a convolvulus, and when a long pole was placed near it, and in such a way that the tendrils would have to turn away from the light to reach it, they invariably did so, and within a few hours trailed about it. That certain plants have the sense of touch is well known. The leaves of several species of Mimosa exhibit a peculiar irritability when touched or shaken.

The ancients believed that trees were inhabited by nymphs; and Tasso, in his great epic of "Jerusalem Delivered," makes trees groan and bleed when wounded.—Albany Times-Union.

Patience on Both Sides.

Miss Simkins—What are you writing mostly?
Young Author—Oh, telling my creditors to wait a little longer.—Judge.

GOLD NOT AVAILABLE.

The Troubles of a Man with a Twenty-Dollar Gold Piece.

He Had Plenty of Money, but the Money Wouldn't Get a Square Meal or a Ticket for a Street Car Trip.

"I had a twenty-dollar gold piece," said he, "and I wanted to get five cents out of it, so as to get home on the elevated. I had tried to change, brought out a big club. I didn't try to see what he was going to do with it."

"Well, I retreated downstairs and went into a restaurant and got a glass of beer. When I tendered the twenty-dollar gold piece the bartender went to the other end of the counter, and instead of getting the change, brought out a big club. I didn't try to see what he was going to do with it."

"I went out and walked a block in deep thought. I needed not only that five cents to get home on, but I had to have change for some little things up town, and something to get back down town the next day. For you might as well have had a one-thousand-dollar note as that twenty dollars in my neighborhood. Still I felt that I couldn't reasonably expect a man to change a twenty nowadays for a five-cent check. Having arrived at this conclusion, and being hungry, and morally certain that I had missed my dinner, I went into a restaurant to get something to eat. They didn't know me in the place, and I was certain to get a square meal anyhow. I ordered a very substantial dinner and leaned back to read my evening paper. Just as the food was due the head waiter came to me and asked me to change a twenty-dollar note. I told him I was sorry—couldn't do it. In fact, I was greatly in need of change myself.

"What's your smallest?" he asked.
"Twenty-dollar gold piece, all I've got," said I.
"Then you can't eat here," says he. "We've had that worked on us until we haven't got a nickel in the house. You'll have to go somewhere else."

"Here was a pretty go. But there was no help for it. Then I walked two blocks the other way till I came to the place of a man who knew me by sight, a place where I had often lunched. Being one of his regular customers, I felt that I had the right to presume on him a little. Well, I went in and had a good dinner, for I was getting all-fired hungry by this time. I washed it down with a couple of bottles of beer and felt better. When I came to pay him, however, the cashier simply asked my name and place of business. He put these down on a sheet of paper.

"But I want to pay," said I, "and I want some change."
"Sorry," says he, "can't give you no change—rather trust you."
"Then I told him the fix," I was in. He listened and said I was not the only one. And he finally lent me five cents to get home."—N. Y. Herald.

Jewels and Customs.

Jewels in astonishing profusion were worn at the queen's last drawing-room, and the handsome apartments were filled with costumes which flashed with rainbow colors. The Marchioness of Tweeddale had the seams of her dress-skirt outlined with diamonds and emeralds, and many seams of bodices were treated in the same way. Birds, butterflies and flowers of jewels, dress and boot buttons of diamonds, many ornaments of turquoise and emerald and amethyst, were in high favor, were worn. And if some one, reading this paragraph, should wish to moralize on the extravagance of these wealthy English dames, let him consider that the makers of gowns, the cutters and polishers of the dressmakers, milliners and jewelers were just so much richer for this fine display than they would have been had all the grand ladies kept their pounds and pence locked up in the bank instead of spending them for their benefit.

AN OUTWITTED CASHIER.

His Idea About His Own Shrewdness Were Rather Expensive.

A Bar Harbor cashier had a check for two thousand dollars on a Rockland bank. In the ordinary course of business the check would have been sent to Boston and thence forwarded to the Rockland bank, the whole transaction being carried out by interchange of drafts without expense. But the Bar Harbor cashier thought he saw a way to get two thousand dollars in currency without paying the premium demanded by his Boston correspondent. So he forwarded the check to Rockland by express for collection. It is, however, a very rare day when the cashier of this particular Rockland bank gets caught at disadvantage, and he easily saw through the game that his Bar Harbor contemporary was playing. He had two bills in his vault of the denomination of one thousand dollars each, and with these he cashed the check. When the cashier had paid the express on these bills and then paid another express fee in forwarding them to Boston to be changed into bills small enough to do business with, he probably had less expensive ideas as to his own shrewdness.—Lewiston (Me.) Journal.

Highest of all in Leavening Power.—Latest U. S. Gov't Report.

Royal Baking Powder

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AN ANCIENT "FAKE"

Was Printed in a New York Paper During the Revolution. What is known as a "fake" in modern journalism is but a new name attached to a very ancient offense. The editors of our early papers were not free from this discreditable practice.

One quite remarkable instance of the kind has been recently unearthed in the columns of James Rivington's Royal Gazette of October 23, 1778. Rivington printed a tory paper during the revolution and made himself most obnoxious to the patriots by publishing canards about the continental army, the congress and Gen. Washington. His office was sacked just prior to the battle of Long Island, but after that event and during the British occupation his paper was the subsidized medium of issuing British lies.

In the issue of the paper referred to I find the following remarkable bit of "faking":

"Oct. 27.—By letter from Philadelphia we learn that on the receipt of the last manifesto from the English commissioners one of the congress had the resolution to make the following short speech:

"I have listened to this manifesto with great attention, and I am ashamed to acknowledge that it breathes a spirit of candor and resolution, by which I am considerably influenced. No man in this august assembly dares to express a doubt of my true attachment to the true interest of my country. I am convinced that the interest of America is inseparable from that of Britain, and that our alliance with France is unnatural, unprofitable, absurd. I therefore move that this phantom of independence may be given up."

"He had scarcely uttered the words before the president sent a message to the Polish Count Palski, who happened to be exercising a part of his legion in the court yard below. The count flew to the chamber where the congress sat and with his saber in an instant severed from his body the head of this honest delusion. The head was ordered by the congress to be fixed on the top of the liberty pole of Philadelphia as a perpetual monument of the freedom of debate in the continental congress of the United States of America."—N. Y. Herald.

A Farmer's Heart's Desire.

Destro Wilcox, of North Lyme, Conn., is a woman of unusual appearance. She is a constant smoker, the penny clay pipe being her favorite medium. For seven years she has worked a farm without help, except in the busiest seasons. She plows, harrows and plants; harvests her crops; patches hay, chops down trees and cuts them into firewood and railroad ties; she yokes and drives cattle, shears sheep, and drives a string of from three to five yokes of oxen with a skill which is positively artistic. Desire, who is now fifty, was married when she was sixteen, but her husband drank too much hard cider to celebrate the ceremony, so his new bride took him out and chastised him severely, then jugged him into a corner with the injunction to remain till he was sober. He concluded, however, that discretion was the better part of valor, so he was away during the night and has never been seen since.

Road Courtesy.

"I saw the other day," said a citizen, "a driver who had a heavy load on a one-horse truck get stuck on a grade in a down-town street. His load was something in bags, which were piled high and which projected beyond the tail of his truck. He had a good horse, but the load was too much; he just couldn't pull it. Coming up behind was a man driving a big truck, empty, with a pair of big horses. This driver set his pole against the projecting load of the one-horse truck and spoke to his horses; they just lifted the one-horse truck into motion. The single horse spread himself and kept his load going. The man with the double truck turned off at the next corner without a word; he had simply performed an ordinary courtesy of the road."—N. Y. Sun.

Few Penns Popular.

Although steel pens are made in some hundreds of varieties, only a small number of pens attain great popularity. Pens of fanciful form have been patented again and again, only to fall of public reception, and it is exceedingly difficult to make a place for any pen that greatly differs from the few forms now widely used. A down-town stationer, who was retailing pens far below the usual market price, said, in answer to a customer's question: "Yes, they are good pens, but they are not known to the public, and they cannot be sold at market rates in large quantities."—N. Y. Sun.

SCIENCE IN WASHINGTON.

Men at the Capitol Who Develo Deeds Into Matters of Science.

There is a deal of science in Washington. The government maintains a sufficient number of learned gentlemen who are delving into the secrets of nature to constitute the nucleus of an admirable, inspiring, and sometimes inspiring, club known as the Cosmos, which is domiciled on the corner of Fifteenth and I streets, in a house that has, both family and club traditions, for Virginia scientists and statesmen have lived within its walls, and it has been the fifth place of clubs that exist both in ignorance and civility.

There is no doubt that the scientific men are rather overworked in the contemplation of the most fascinating and bewildering pictures presented by the men of science, but they have their duty and their own work, which to a well-organized scientist is sport enough.

In Washington one finds science hidden away in the most secluded of quarters. In the treasury department there are the mathematicians, the surveyors, and the geographers of the geodetic survey, but there are no original investigators here. In the war department there used to be a few meteorologists connected with the signal corps, who for many years were trying to discover the general law by which nature's explosions are governed. The "professors" have all gone over now to the agricultural department, and their scientific investigations aid the secretary's efforts to stimulate the making of hay and the growing of grain.

In the army and navy there are "professors" in "astronomy" who are known as the "ordnance sharpshooters" of the two services—in connection with the navy a large and important astronomical observatory has been built. This is the outgrowth of a naval need for a place to correct chronometers, but it has developed so rapidly that a corps of civilian astronomers has been employed, and now the divisions are objecting to any longer control of a vessel admitted who may not even remember the astronomy that has hitherto been his own serving gun at Lake Erie, or on probation at the naval academy.

Harper's Weekly.

A MID DEFENSE.

The policeman was before the Chicago police judge for retaining a visitor to the fair of one hundred dollars of more. "GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY?" inquired the court. "The prisoner looked surprised. 'I took the money, your honor,' he said. 'But I don't like your way of asking me if I did.'"

"Sir," answered the astonished judge. "I beg your pardon, your honor, continued the prisoner, 'ain't we running the fair for the money that's in it?'"

"We?" exclaimed the still amazed judge. "What do you mean by that?"

"All of us, your honor. I'm a Chicagoan," exclaimed the prisoner, but the court didn't see it in that light, and held the policeman to answer. Detroit Free Press.

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