

Mulai El-Hassan's Land.

Oddities of Life in Morocco—Ashore at Tangier—Caravans About Timbuctoo.

Special Correspondence.

TANGIER, Morocco, Sept. 11.—This principal seaport of Morocco lies directly opposite Gibraltar, near the western end of the narrow strait that separates Europe from Africa. The few miles between the two cities which any ferryboat of the United States could make in thirty minutes, occupies about five hours in this region of yesterday, where all things move slowly as in Boadilla's time. But never was greater contrast met in so short a journey than that between the twentieth century, as exemplified by the English at Gibraltar, and the life of this strange town which seems to join hands with the immemorial east of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Somebody has aptly described Tangier as "A happy mixture between the Old Testament and the Arabian Nights, with the gliding somewhat tarnished."

To visitors who have not traveled in oriental countries, the first sight of Tangier is extremely striking. Like most Mediterranean ports, it is built on terraces, amphitheatrical fashion, around a crescent-shaped bay, but unlike the others, it has no background of green hills. Segregated from a distance, under the glowing African sky, it is a charmed and beautiful island—its whitewashed houses in straight lines against the horizon, tiled minarets reflecting Uthello's "burnished sun," and here and there a royal palm standing guard over all. A concrete pier, of recent construction, permits you to land with tolerable ease—when the tide is high, but at low tide you must wade. A picturesque by unlighted entrance to Morocco on the shoulders of some unclean Jew, who, ten to one, when he gets you into the worst of the surf, threatens to drop you upon his job to be doubled. Your luggage goes to the custom house, each piece by itself, in the hands of whoever can grab it first, and who refuses to deliver it till his exorbitant demand for the service has been gratified. But the customs officials are remarkably civil—unless guns and cartridges are among your possessions. In which case, you can be patted and you are held under surveillance until your consul comes down and vouches for your harmlessness.

Entering through the quaintest of ancient Morocco gateways, you find at once the most filthy and most fascinating place in the world. Nearer to Europe than any other African city, it is yet as remote in its customs and manner of living as any portion of the farther east where Mohammed prevails and "the unspeakable Turk" has things all his own way. Pious, wicked, fawning, covetous at you under feet and turbans. The dark, vile-smelling alleys that answer for streets, fairly swarm with dirty, half-naked children, each with shaven crown surmounted by a sort of scalplock in which torments of bright-hued wool are woven and knotted. The shuffling women, in yellowish-white woolen hanks, whose heavy burdens and abject men tell of slavery and unrequited toil. The twenty thousand people that today inhabit Tangier belong to the middle ages in their usages and ideas; while from even farther back in the misty past, on their camels by way of the desert, comes a ceaseless procession of the nomadic successors of the Bible patriarchs, to pitch their tents on the borders of the town. Were it not for a few flags of European nations floating the flag-red Moorish banner, the town would be the business like but generally less jettish which has been pushed out into the bay for the convenience of the foreign steamers, the Tangier of the twentieth century might be the identical city of a thousand years ago. How can one describe it, when all familiar comparisons fail? Of course the town is completely surrounded by high walls, and inner walls divide it into two distinct portions—the Kasbah, or fort, occupying the western and most elevated section and the Medina, or city proper, at the foot of the slope. Excepting the foreign legations and consulates, the residence of a few wealthy merchants and half a dozen French and English hotels, the houses are uniformly small and mean, of one-story only, with low entrance and no windows on the street side. Roof above roof, on a succession of terraces rises the town, its streets all so narrow and exactly alike that the stranger has the greatest difficulty in finding his way about. It is unsafe, too, without a recommended guide from the hotel, who is not so likely to prove a highway robber and assassin in disguise as might one picked up at hazard on the street. The time, by the way, is wonderfully good, all things considered, and moderate in their charges as compared with those across the Straits. Most favored of foreigners are the Hotel New York, down near the landing place, the Continental, Universal and Victoria, near the center of the town; and the Villa de Paris, on an elevation in the suburbs, commanding wide views and cool breezes. Each hotel has several studios attached, for the convenience of artists, who are their constant patrons.

Never was town so full of pictures to delight a painter's soul. Nowhere else can be found such exquisite specimens of Moorish art, in the way of ancient towers, arches and tile-encrusted minarets; such tapestries, rugs and embroideries of rarest elegance; such curious mosques, with heaps of shoes outside their portals; such luminous shadows, under which merchants sit in front of their six-by-seven shops, beggars crouch to demand backsheesh, and camels file by in stately procession.

Of the various elements which make up the population of Morocco, greatest interest attaches to the Jews and negro slaves. In Tangier alone are upwards of six thousand Jews—about a third of its population, who, under restrictions which would soon exterminate any other race, have multiplied and prospered until in many ways they have become, quietly but surely, the masters of their ostensible masters. The trade and commerce of the country are mainly in their hands, and though the Moors hate and despise them, and subject them to every imaginable degradation, they yet recognize the Jews as such essential members of society that laws are actively enforced forbidding a Jew to leave the country under any circumstances. Outside of a few coast

towns, they are treated worse than brutes; and whenever it lies in their power, they retaliate with greatest cruelty. This is often possible—thanks to their superior shrewdness in money matters and the existence of a debtor's law which permits the imprisonment of a man until the uttermost farthing of his debt is paid. Today Shakespeare's Shylock finds many counterparts in Tangier and the prisons are crowded with stately, uncomplaining Moors, held "in durance vile," in many cases till their death, through petty debts owed to the Jews. On the other hand, a Moor will kill a Jew with as little scruple as he would a snake, whenever he can do so quietly. That is easy enough, as the sons of Israel are forbidden to carry arms and must make all journeys defenseless and on foot. In Tangier, Jews are allowed certain privileges which their brethren farther inland do not enjoy. Their shops are more commodious than those of their neighbors and they own considerable real estate. But they are herded like sheep in their own quarters of the city, and their dress is rigidly regulated, so that they may be known at a glance from "true believers." On account whatever must they enter any street in which a mosque is situated, they cannot build places of worship for themselves, and to pass a "holy house" with shoes on the feet means certain death. That is why all the Jews you meet in Tangier, rich and poor, are bare-footed—because so-called holy houses are everywhere. Whenever a Jew meets a Moor, he must promptly turn aside so as not to touch the garments of a follower of the prophet. This is often impossible in the extremely narrow and always crowded streets, and legal punishment for the slightest offense of a Jew ranges from cruel bastinadoing, to death by fire. The Tangier prison is a fearful one, hewn out of the rocks in a hillside. The cells, each hardly as large as a coffin, are entered by a hole through which the prisoner crawls. He is chained to the wall and passes his time doing any kind of work at which he is skilful, providing his friends bring the necessary materials. He sells his wares to passers-by, or in any way he can, and the proceeds go to swell the sum necessary for his ransom, or to keep him from starvation, as there is absolutely no provision made for the prisoners. The governor of Tangier receives the munificent salary of seventy-five dollars a year, from the sultan who lives at Fez and to whom he is accountable for the spiritual, executive and financial affairs of the city. Of course he cannot exist on that paltry sum and keep up the state expected of him; therefore, it is perfectly understood that he may rob his subjects at will, sending to the black hole in the hillside anybody who has the temerity to resist the levy demanded. The governor lives in great splendor and supports a numerous harem; for he well knows the uselessness of laying by for a rainy day. Should he accumulate anything beyond his living, it will surely be appropriated by his imperial master.

There are many negroes in Morocco and most of them are slaves; but the servitude is said to be of a mild character, and being "perishable property," the human chattels are at least as well treated as the camels and donkeys. Every city has its slave market, and the number of a man's wives is only limited by his means. As the females are more industrious and tractable than the males, they are considered a good investment, especially as their children are subject to sale; and so it is not uncommon for a Tangier Moor to have from fifty to a hundred wives. At the age of twelve or fourteen the sons of good families possess female slaves. Their fathers and mothers present them with a few, with which to amuse themselves, just as Christian parents give their boys dogs and noisier. The slaves are brought by caravan from Timbuctoo, from three thousand to four thousand every year and sold in the city markets along with sheep and fowls. Yet it is considered no disgrace to be the child of a slave mother. The present sultan was the offspring of a negress and the master who owned her; and so was the late grand sheikh of Wazwan. Some of the ugliest women, both in form and feature, to be found in Morocco are full-blooded negroes, who reign as queens in the harems of their lords.

Among the motley population of Tangier are also about four thousand Spaniards, all of the lowest class. There are also wild Bedouins of the desert, never seen without their long rifles; jetty Nubians nearly naked, light-complexioned Moors, richly clad; and, strange of all and most to be avoided, are lunatic "santos." The latter are people of any class or nationality who happen to become mentally unbalanced; when they are at once held sacred by the Moors, who believe that Allah has withdrawn their souls to heaven. Thus the crazier and more dangerous a man becomes, or the more successfully he can feign insanity for any wicked purpose, the greater his influence and impunity from crime. Instances are numerous of foreigners who have come to serious trouble through ignorance of this, by repulsing an aggressive "santo," thereupon bringing down upon their heads an Arabic curse to be carried out at the point of the knife by any native passer-by, with the sanction of the government.

FANNIE B. WARD.

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All druggists sell the tablets at 50 cents for complete treatment.

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