

IN AFRICA.

I am really very busy keeping myself cool with a fan. Despite that, however, I will endeavor to give the readers of the NEWS a pen-glimpse of a corner of Africa, beginning at Suakim.

Most of the reminders of the late war have disappeared. From our steamer the natives looked almost like naked negroes. On close inspection we find a people of really beautiful proportions, fine physiognomy, and high square forehead. Fifteen per cent. of the faces here would be called handsome in Salt Lake, if they were white. Under their not very dark brown skins hovers a glow of fire and happiness which makes one like these Nubians immediately. They have not the foxy look of the Arabians on the opposite shore, and much less the apathetic and haughty carriage of the Turk, and still the merest imp of a girl, naked as she is, walks with queenly grace, wearing a silent smile and a look of deep intelligence, which apparent intelligence she probably does not possess. Though Mahomedans, they are not proud, and look upon the whites, not with disdain, neither with great respect, but rather as upon a practical people worthy of imitation, who should not be fellowshipped.

THE TOWN AND MARKETS.

The city of Suakim has three hundred or four hundred fine houses of Oriental style, built of stone of a sub marine formation, chiefly corals of madre and millipores.

The other two-thirds of the people live in tabernacles made of branches tied together with palm leaves, etc., and covered with rags, mats or leaves. On account of the ardor of the sun, the poorest must have at least a roof during the day. Shade here is as indispensable as warm clothes with us in winter.

The markets are held anywhere in the sand of the street. The vendor, almost bare, squats under a sun-screen, and upon a mat spreads his or her wares in small piles, worth one-eighth or one quarter of a cent each. Here on the ground—

CALL IT A SHOP OR STALL

—is a display: balls of tallow, piles of spice, gums, aromatic woods, incense, vanilla, eye paint, tobacco, etc. The next woman runs (shall I call it?) a dairy. In one goat skin she has butter, fluid as oil; in the other, milk. From the third she is now squeezing out some sour milk into a coconut shell. She also sells water from the mountains beyond the desert, which is as dear almost as milk. The water, like the other wares, is carried in leather bottles. At this point we may reflect for a moment upon that passage of scripture which refers to the impropriety of putting new wine (consequently fermentible wine) in old (leather) bottles, but new wine in new bottles, as a new leather bottle is infinitely stronger than an old one, and will resist the pressure of the fermentation which continues awhile in new wine. In the days of Christ glass bottles were

not used for wine. But then, as now, in Palestine and here leather bags or bottles were used.

TOILET AND DRESS.

The women of a light color paint black under the eyes. If they are so brown or black that black paint would make no impression on them, blue paint is substituted. The women generally shave away a triangular patch of hair over the left ear only; the rest of the hair is braided in small braids or strings, numbering thirty or forty on one head. These braids are heavily smeared with tallow and aromatic ointments, and the end of each plait carries a ball of a mixture of perfume, wax, tallow and black pigment. A ring of gold generally appears in one nostril, or at least a stud of bone.

The men either partly shave the head or from the sides and back of the head, and let numerous stiff curls stand out about the head in the shape of a bell; but the hairs on top of the head stand up four inches, like a vast tuft or crown, thus protecting the skull against the sun. Hats or caps are never used by the natives. The dress of wealthy males or females consists in two large embroidered pieces of gauze or lawn, having neither button, hook, string nor pin to fasten by, but are held in place by one or both hands. Consequently a rich or modest Soudanese (or Nubian) lady, if carrying a little oil in a sea shell, vinegar in a cup, or a parcel of spices, must put the shell or parcel on her head and hold her clothes or sheets with her hands, so as not to expose more than her arms, legs and a portion of the back. A man who leaves town and starts in the desert takes off all and wraps it about his head, carrying a lance in his hand.

MORALS AND RELIGION.

Judging these Nubians by the standard of our civilized negroes, and noticing the discrepancy in dress, customs and education, some would conclude that the people of Soudan must be very immoral.

The mistake arises through our taking the American negro as a standard. The American slaves were taken from among the most barbarous, cruel, heathen tribes of anthropophagi of Senegal, Senegambia, Timbuctu and many from among the fierce Zulus. But the Abyssinians and Nubians have been, since first Egypt was peopled, always subjected to organized governments of some sort, and thus their spirits, if ever barbarous, have been broken. However destitute of clothing, these people appear neither bashful, nor immodest.

People of various ages, strangers to each other and of both sexes, associate, do business or amuse themselves together nearly without clothes, and yet maintain perfect etiquette. They are real children of nature and eye each other's nudity as much in a matter of fact way as one ox stares serenely at another. There are some Christians here of the ancient Abyssinian church who practice circumcision. The others are illiterate Mahomedans who do not mix religion as much in busi-

ness as the Arabs and Turks. Only one family of Ashkenasim Jews lives here. There are many Englishmen here who are officers of the Egyptian army, and, by appearances, believe at least in strong drink.

MASSAWA

needs to occupy but little of my attention so far as concerns the natives and their customs, as they differ but slightly from the Nubians and Abyssinians of Suakim. Here, however, the women wear four or five rings in each ear. The ear is thus trimmed with heavy rings from top to bottom. Instead of the frequent Nubian nose ring in the wing of the nostril we see here a short stud, button or stick of metal or wood, on the right side of the nose, in the very middle.

The Italians have possessed this place since six years ago. Although the town has in that short time assumed a quasi Italian aspect and shows many signs of order, regulations and law, we notice, however, that grating harshness incidental to a locality entirely under martial law.

THE BENI ISRAEL JEWS

inhabit several cities and towns of Yemeu (Arabia). Here at Massawa I went around with an old broken-down Sephardi Jew from India, whose friendship I formed by acknowledging that I was an Israelite. By talking broken *Lishana Kodeah* (Hebrew, or literally the holy language) to him, I was immediately, as I am today, reckoned by him as a Jew. By this means I had, through him, access to a very large company of these Beni Israel (sons of Israel) Jews, who form a small tribe or sect among themselves. In manners and dress they are like the Arabs, and the men are often seen with large rings in their ears and charms about their necks, which generally consist of prayers to God, begging Him to spare the bearer from sudden death, disease, etc., and that he may never be so poor as to have to beg bread. The only thing which materially distinguishes them from the Arabs is that they wear long locks or curls in front of the ears, often blown to the shoulders, while the rest of the hair is short or shaved in patches. They are of a somewhat dark color, though lighter than most Arabs. Usually they are of a delicate build or constitution, and under average size.

These Beni Israel generally make a living as silver and goldsmiths, beating out these metals into primitive jewelry for the Arabs and blacks. Among themselves they continually speak Hebrew, disdaining Arabic, calling it *mamzir* (illegitimate) Hebrew. It is universally conceded that the Arabs of Mecca, Modina and Yemen speak an Arabic coming nearest to that of the Koran. In like manner these Jews speak the best Hebrew. In saying "best Hebrew" we may for a moment consider in what may consist bad or good.

THE HEBREW LANGUAGE.

Hebrew is virtually a twin of Arabic. Like the Arabic, the Hebrew alphabet has no such letters