

THE NEW ARABIA

HOW THE ENGLISH ARE GOBBLING THE PENINSULA AND PLANNING ITS RAILROAD DEVELOPMENT

(Special Correspondence of the Desert News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

ADEN, Arabia, Dec. 10.—Have you ever heard what some one said to the Englishman who boasted that the sun never set on John Bull's possessions? It was "that the sun did not set for fear the old pirate might steal some-thing more."

As it is now the English own countries in nearly every part of the globe, they have more land in North America than they have. They have recently added to their African colonies, so that they now own more than one-third of that continent, and they are slowly and surely gathering in everything else that lies loose. One of their latest acquisitions is Arabia. They now practically control the whole of it. They have the Sinai peninsula, through their possession of Egypt, and they can control that part of Arabia along the Red sea through the ports which they are opening on the opposite coast. They have entered into the closest of relations with the sultan of Oman, and they have two unswerving kings in the person of certain of their political agents and consuls general, who control the whole of eastern and southern Arabia. The first of these is stationed at Bushire, in Persia, but he has control over the various tribes and the Arabian side of the Persian gulf, which give the English the trade of that region; and the same is true as to the tribes of southern Arabia, who are controlled by the British resident here at Aden. These two consuls-general have established postoffices and postal routes through their respective spheres of influence, and they control not only the mails, but money matters as well. They are working in connection with India, and the moneys used are rupees and annas. If difficulties arise between the Arabs and Persians, they are brought to the English resident here at Bushire, and if between the tribes of southern Arabia, they are brought to Aden for adjustment.

ARABIA TO HAVE RAILROADS.

At the same time, the English are considering the development of the peninsula. They have proposed to build a pilgrimage railway from Jeddah, on the Red sea opposite Port Sudan, to take the great army of Mohammedan worshippers inland to Mecca. This would connect with their new railroad which now crosses the Nubian desert from Suakin to the cape to Cairo route, and would open up an immense passenger traffic from central Africa and upper Egypt during the pilgrimage season. If the English are not granted the concession for that road it will probably be built by the Mohammedans themselves, and in any event it will be more or less under British control, and be a feeder for the Egyptian railway system.

Another railroad project is to run a line from Aden into Yemen. The latter province is one of the richest of Arabia. It has a good rainfall and is noted for its coffee and grain and fruits of various kinds. The idea is to run the line from Aden almost directly northward to Sana, one of the chief cities of Yemen and an important commercial center. The road will make that town the capital of western and southern Arabia.

A third and still more ambitious project is to build a railroad across the northern part of the peninsula, making thereby a short cut to India and Persia and to the rich valley of the Euphrates, at the head of the Persian gulf. The present plan is to start the road at Port Said, and go eastward across the peninsula to Bushra, on the Euphrates. The most of the way will be right through the desert, and the distance altogether about 1,000 miles. I understand that the route is a feasible one, and the probability is that the efforts the Germans are now making to

THE ARABIAN PENINSULA.

As to Arabia itself, I doubt whether it will ever furnish a large traffic for railroads. There are certain provinces, such as Yemen, Oman and the Valley of Mesopotamia, which are fairly well populated, but the whole peninsula has altogether not more than five millions, and these are scattered over a territory one-third as large as the whole United States. There are not a score of towns of any size in all Arabia and you can count the cities on your fingers. The most of the country is like that about Aden, consisting of bleak, bare and rocky desert, with only a collection of black tents or thatched huts to break the monotony, and with trackless sands reaching off into the distance. And still Arabia has a coast line 1,300 miles longer than the distance between New York and San Francisco. It measures about 1,500 miles from north to south and 1,200 miles from east to west. Almost the whole of the United States east of the Mississippi could be crowded inside its borders, and a considerable part of it is still unexplored by white men. It is a mountainous country. It has peaks twice as high as Mount Washington, and the tableland of Nijl is on the average more than a half mile above the sea. South of Mecca there are mountains over 8,000 feet high, and the hills here at Aden are about as high as the average elevation of the Blue Ridge in Virginia.

Yemen, northeast of Aden, running along the Red sea, has a fairly good rainfall and climate. The same is true of Oman and Muskat. The valley of Mesopotamia is watered by the Euphrates, and is as fertile as Egypt; but the greater part of the peninsula is as barren as the Sahara.

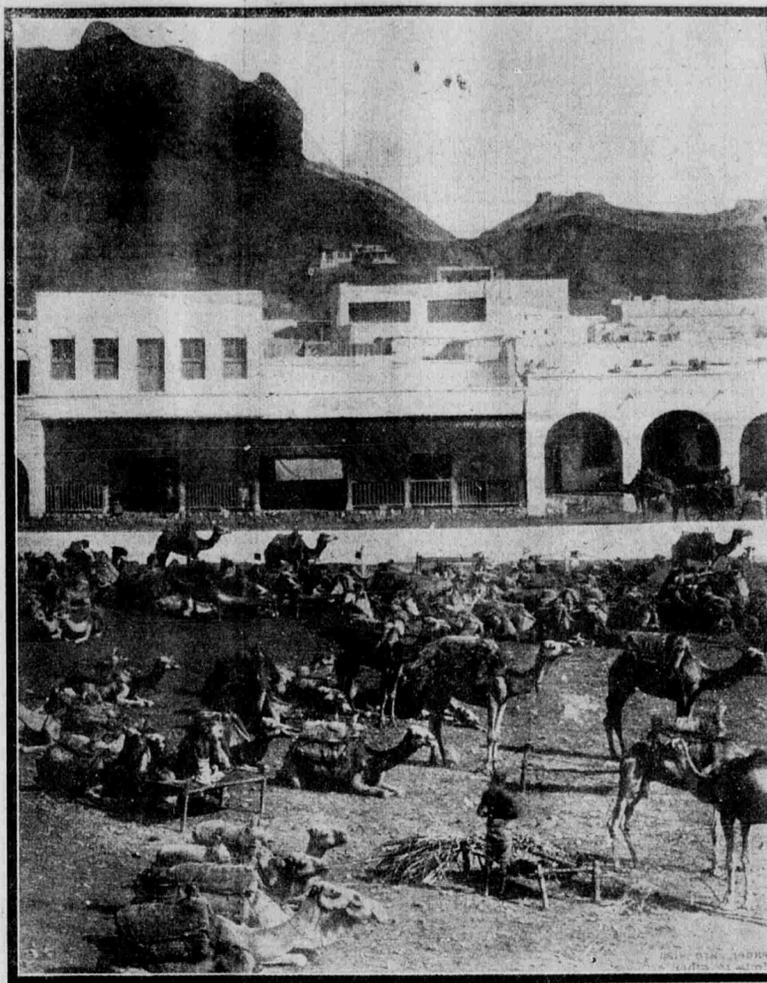
THE LAND OF MOCHA COFFEE.

The very best of our Mocha coffee is shipped from Aden to the United States. It comes here on camels from the province of Yemen. It is raised there by the natives, each family having a few bushes about its house, and producing only enough for home use and a little for trading. There are no big plantations and no coffee factories. The berries are gathered when ripe and dried in the sun. After this they are put up in bales, and carried on camelback over the hills to this place. They are hulled between millstones turned by hand, and are then winnowed and sorted for shipment. The labor work is done by the women, who look over each grain carefully and take out the bad ones. Labor is cheap, but the coffee has to go through many hands. It pays toll to the chiefs of the tribes who own the country through which it is carried, and as a result it must be sold at high prices. For this reason we have imitations of Mocha coffee from all parts of the world. During my stay on the plantations of Brazil, I have seen them labeled as Mocha, and Guatemala and other coffees are sold under the same name. Just now they are bringing coffees from Ceylon and Java to Aden and transshipping them here. They lie in the warehouses for a few weeks, and they go forth re-marked, and perhaps rebranded, as Arabian Mocha.

THE ENGLISH AT ADEN.

This port of Aden has belonged to John Bull for something like 68 years. He took possession of it in 1839, and later on gobbled up the island of Perim in the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb. That island is about a hundred miles from here, and the two places practically control the entrance of the Red sea and the Suez canal. As for Aden, it is the Gibraltar of this part of the world, as well as one of the greatest of the British coaling stations. Something like 3,000 steamers and native craft call at it every year. The harbor is excellent, and the outer entrance is more than three miles wide. The inner waters have been so dredged that steamers of 26 feet can go everywhere, and there is room enough for all the vessels that pass through the canal to anchor here at one time.

From the Mediterranean to the Euphrates by Train—Iron Tracks for Yemen and Mecca—John Bull's Gibraltar at Aden Which Controls the Suez Canal—A Desert City and Its Curious People—A Land of the Camel—Something About the Arabian Horse.



CAMEL MARKET AT ADEN.

Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter.

Aden is strongly fortified. The town stands on a volcanic isthmus, and it is guarded by a broad ditch, which has been cut out of the solid rock. It has a garrison of 3,000 or 4,000 men, guns of the latest pattern, and no one knows how many subterranean and submarine mines.

A DESERT CITY. I wish I could show you the town as it lies before me. It is the sorriest city I have ever seen. There is nothing to compare with it, except Iquiqui, on the nitrate coast of South America, and Iquiqui is a Paradise to it. Imagine a great harbor of sea green water, the shores of which rise almost abruptly into ragged mountains of brown rock and white sand. There is not a blade of grass to be seen, there are no trees, and even the cactus and sagebrush of our American desert are absent. The town is without vegetation. It is as bare as the bones of the dead camels

in the desert behind it, and its tropical sun beats down out of a cloudless African sky. Everything is gray and dazzling white. The houses on the sides of the hills are white, the rocks throw back the rays of the sun, and the huts upon their sides are of the same gray color as themselves. The city looks thirsty and dry. It is dry. There is only a well or so in the place and these, I am told, the English bought of their owners for some-

thing like \$1,000,000. Almost all of the water used is condensed from the sea, and fresh water always brings its price. There are no streams anywhere within miles. The town is situated in the crater of an extinct volcano, and there is one great depression nearby in which some famous stone tanks were made a thousand or so years ago. These tanks are so big that if they were cleaned out they might hold 30,000,000 gallons of water. As it is, they have now a capacity of only 8,000,000 gallons. The water is caught when it rains, and is sometimes auctioned out to the highest bidder. The receipts go to the English government, and a good rain may bring in \$15,000 or \$20,000 or more.

THE PEOPLE OF ADEN.

This is my second visit to Aden. My first was 16 years ago, when I stopped here on my way around the world. I do not see that the town has changed and I doubt whether it has any more people than it had then. The population is about 40,000, and it is made up of all the nations and tribes common to the Indian ocean. It contains Arabs, Africans, Jews, Portuguese and East Indians. There are about 4,000 Europeans, and in this number are the merchants, officials and soldiers. The majority of the people are Arabs and the prevailing color is black. There are tall, lean, skinny black Bedouins from interior Arabia, who believe in Mahomet, and go through their prayers five times a day. There are black Mohammedans from Somaliland and black Christians from Abyssinia. In addition there are Parsees, Hindoos, and Indian Mohammedans of various shades of yellow and brown. A few of the Africans are woolly-headed, but more of them have wavy hair, and the hair of the women hangs down in cork-screw curls on both sides of their faces. Of these people neither sex wears much clothing. The men have a rag around the waist, and the women wear only skirts which reach to the feet.

The East Indians are everywhere. They do the most of the retail business and trading, and they are found peddling on every street corner. They dress according to their caste and their religion. The Parsees, who are worshippers, wear black preacher-like coats and tall hats of the style of an inverted coat scuttle. The Indian Mohammedans wear turbans and the Hindoos wrap themselves up in great sheets of white cotton. In addition, there are many Greeks and Italians, and not a few Persians. The English dress in white and wear big helmets to keep off the sun.

CAMELS AND CARAVANS.

This is the land of the camel. Caravans are coming in and going out of the city every day. They bring bags of Mocha coffee and gums and take out European goods and other supplies to the various oases. There is a considerable trade with Yemen and also with the tribes of southeastern Arabia. There are always camels lying in the market place, and one sees them huddling and crying as they are loaded and unloaded. They are the most discontented beasts upon earth, and are as mean as they look. One bit at me this afternoon as I passed it, and I am told that they never become reconciled to their masters. Nevertheless, they are the freight animals of this part of the world, and the desert could not get along without them. They furnish the greater part of the milk for the various Arab settlements, the people make their tents of camel's hair, and they are, in fact, the cows of the desert. They are of many different breeds, and they vary as much in character as horses. There are some breeds that correspond to the percheron, and the best among them can carry half a ton at a load. There are others fitted only for riding and passenger travel. The ordinary freight camel makes only about three miles an hour, and 18 miles is a good day's work. The best racing camels will travel 20 hours at a stretch, and will cover 100 miles in a day. Seventy-five miles in 10 hours is not an uncommon journey for an Arabian racer, and much better speed has been made.

As to prices, an ordinary freight camel brings about \$30, but a good riding camel costs \$100 and upward.

HOW GOD MADE THE CAMEL.

Have you ever heard how the camel was created? Here is its origin, as told by the Arabs. They say that God first formed the horse by taking up a handful of the swift south wind and blowing upon it. The horse, however, was not satisfied with his making. He complained to God that his neck was too short for easy grazing and that his hoofs were so hard that they sank in the sand. Moreover, he said there was no hump on his back to steady the saddle. Thereupon, to satisfy the horse, God created the camel, making him according to the equine's suggestions. And when the horse saw his ideal in flesh and blood he was frightened to death at its ugliness and galloped away. Since then there has been no horse that is not scared when it first sees a camel.

This story makes me think of the Arab tradition as to how God made the water buffalo, which, as you know, is about the ugliest beast that has horns, hair and skin. God's first creation was the beautiful cow. When He had finished it the devil happened that way, and as he saw it he laughed at the job and sneered out that he could make a better beast with his eyes shut. Thereupon the Lord gave him some material such as He had put into the cow and told him to go to work. The devil wrought all day and all night, and the result was the water buffalo.

THE ARABIAN HORSE.

I have made inquiries here and elsewhere as to the Arabian horse. He is a comparatively scarce animal and he does not run wild in the desert, as some people suppose. Indeed, comparatively few of the Arabian tribes have horses, and the best are kept on the plateau of Ughl, in the center of the peninsula. They belong to the Anazah tribe, which is one of the oldest of all, and which claims to date back to the flood. It is a wealthy tribe, and it has been breeding horses for many generations. The best stock has pedigree going back to the time of Mahomet, and the very choicest come from five mares which were owned by the prophet and blessed by him. These horses seldom go out of Arabia. They are owned by the chiefs, and are not sold, except in times of the direst necessity. Now and then a few get into Egypt and other parts of North Africa, and the sultan of Turkey is able to buy some for his stables.

During my stay in Algeria I saw 150 stallions in the great army stables at Bldah. Perhaps one-third of them were Arabian, and they are kept to breed horses for the French army. The khedive of Egypt has some Arabian thoroughbreds, and there are a few in Morocco and Abyssinia.

It is occasionally that a pure-bred Arabian goes to Europe or the United States. The best of the breed that have ever imported were those which Gen. Grant brought from Constantinople. This was I think, during his tour around the world. (What was that?) Key he and the sultan visited the royal stables together. As they looked over the horses the sultan told Grant to pick out the one he liked best, and he designated a dapple gray called the Leopard. "It is yours," said the sultan, "and this also," pointing to a four-year-old colt called Linden Tree. In due time these two horses arrived in the United States and were put on Gen. Ed. Beale's farm near Washington. They were used for breeding, and they produced altogether about 50 fine colts.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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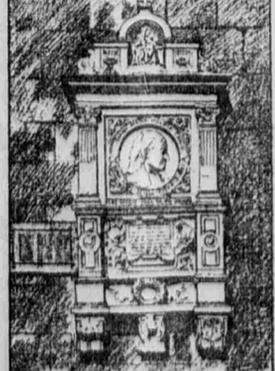
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AN INTERESTING PORTRAIT.
The picture of the famous author of "Jane Eyre" shown herewith is from a crayon drawing long in the possession of the late Rev. A. Bell Nicholas, her



husband, who died last December at the age of ninety. He left this most reliable portrait of his gifted wife, who survived her marriage only a few months, to the British national portrait gallery.

MEMORIAL TO NOTED NOVELIST.
The monument shown in the cut has been erected recently to the memory of Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, author of "John Halifax, Gentleman," and



many other stories which are still popular in all English speaking countries. It is in Tewkesbury abbey church, Tewkesbury, it will be remembered, was the home of the hero of "John Halifax, Gentleman."

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