

THE OASES OF BARBARY

STRANGE FEATURES OF LIFE IN THE
HEART OF THE LIBYAN DESERT.

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

TRIPOLI, 1907.—I have just returned from Mechia, the great oasis which lies on the edge of the Libyan desert, east of Tripoli. It faces the Mediterranean and is an island of green on the edge of this mighty ocean of sand. It contains more than a million date palms, fully as many olive trees, and vast groves of oranges and lemons. The oasis is cut up by roads, much like the streets of a city. Each little farm has walls six or eight feet high, and everywhere are to be seen the tall frameworks of the wells by which the land is irrigated. The motive power for raising the water is cows, camels, monkeys and women. In many places tunnels or long inclined ditches, beginning at the wells and sloping downward for several hundred feet, have been dug, and in these as tracks, the cow, monkey, camel or woman trots up and down, drawing the rope running over a wheel on the top of the framework, which raises the water. At the end of the rope is a huge bag of skin open at both ends. This is dropped in the well, and the water, rising along the rope, is pulled up, thus forming a closed bottom, and the whole is dragged high up into the air. The bottom is now released, and the water pours out into a reservoir. One of these buckets will hold about 20 gallons; and as the work goes on all day, the supply raised is enormous.

AN OASIS FARM.

During my stay I visited some of the gardens. They are of all sizes, and are beautifully kept. One I remember was cut by cement conduits, running along on the top of the ground, so arranged that every little tract could be irrigated at will. Under the rich orange groves beds of beautiful flowers were to be seen here and there, and in most places three crops were growing on the same soil. Over the whole, rose date palms, with their ragged trunks, their wide-branched fan-like leaves quivering in the breeze, and their yellow fruit shining like gold under the sun. The trees below with oranges, pale yellow lemons, flaming pomegranates and even with peaches and pears, or whether they were merely vegetables were growing, and I saw even alfalfa and grain of different kinds. This garden was in the charge of a Bedouin and several slaves. The women were boiling dates in a pot, about the size of an apple butter kettle, over a fire, out in the open. I don't know whether they were making date butter or date honey, or whether they were merely cooking dates, for sale in the markets. The women were loaded with jewelry. I bribed one with a franc, and she let me take a photograph. These others were more bashful, and they wrapped themselves up in their shawls whenever the camera was pointed their way.

THE OASES OF BARBARY.

The oases of Tripolitania, or Barbary, as it is often called, contain practically its whole population. They are scattered over a territory one-ninth as large as the United States, and they have altogether about one million people. A large number of them, such as Mechia, are found along the shores of the Mediterranean; others are further south in the desert, in a great depression known as the Fezzan, and in addition there are others in the beds of dry rivers, where the water supply comes from springs or artesian wells. There are caravan routes leading from Tripoli to all these oases, and also routes crossing the desert to the Sudan from oases to oases.

Tripoli is, in fact, the commercial metropolis of the eastern Sahara. It lies almost directly north of Lake Chad, and its routes across the desert are the shortest, although by no means the safest. The roads over the Sahara lead not only to Lake Chad, but also to Tuat and Timbuktu, so that Tripoli gets much of the trade of the French Sahara as well.

The French decidedly object to this, and they are now making special arrangements for the caravan to land their wares at Ghat in southern Tunisia. They have policed the Sahara with their camel soldiers, and are now sending expeditions with such of the caravan as pass that way. So far they have not created the requisite market at Ghat, and within the past few

months the reputation of that port has been greatly injured because it has no merchants at hand ready to buy out the large caravan when it arrives. The caravans often carry goods to the value of tens of thousands of dollars, and a big capital is required to handle their trade. The last caravan which called at Ghat had to put its wares upon the steamers there and ship them to Tripoli.

IN THE FEZZAN.

I have heard much about the great oases centers from the merchants of Tripoli. They tell terrible stories of the horrors of the desert, and of the gloomy villages scattered through it. Between here and the Fezzan there is a wide plain of hot stones upon which travel is almost impossible when they hurry across. This plain, known as the Hamma, is about as big as Kentucky, and its altitude is near that of the Blue Ridge mountains in Virginia.

The Fezzan, which lies on the other side of the Hamma, also covers a large territory. It is a shallow depression in the desert, spotted here and there by oases. It lies just about eight hundred miles north of Lake Chad, and the chief caravan route to Kuka and Bornu pass through it. The trans-Saharan trade of the past has largely consisted of slaves, and slaves are carried from the Sudan by that route through the Fezzan to Tripoli today. From here they are smuggled to Tunisia, Algeria and Turkey, finding a ready market in the harems of those cities. They are taken on the steamers, as the nominal wives of their masters. No Mohammedan will tolerate any inquiry into his family arrangements, and such a statement prevents investigation. Not long ago the number of slaves carried across the desert through the Fezzan amounted to as many as 10,000 per annum, and it is said that the route from the Lake Chad can even now be followed by the bleaching bones of the human beings who have died on the way. The fatal and the Fezzan is Murzuk, a gloomy city containing about 7,000 people. It depends almost entirely on the caravan trade.

GHAT AND GHADAMES.

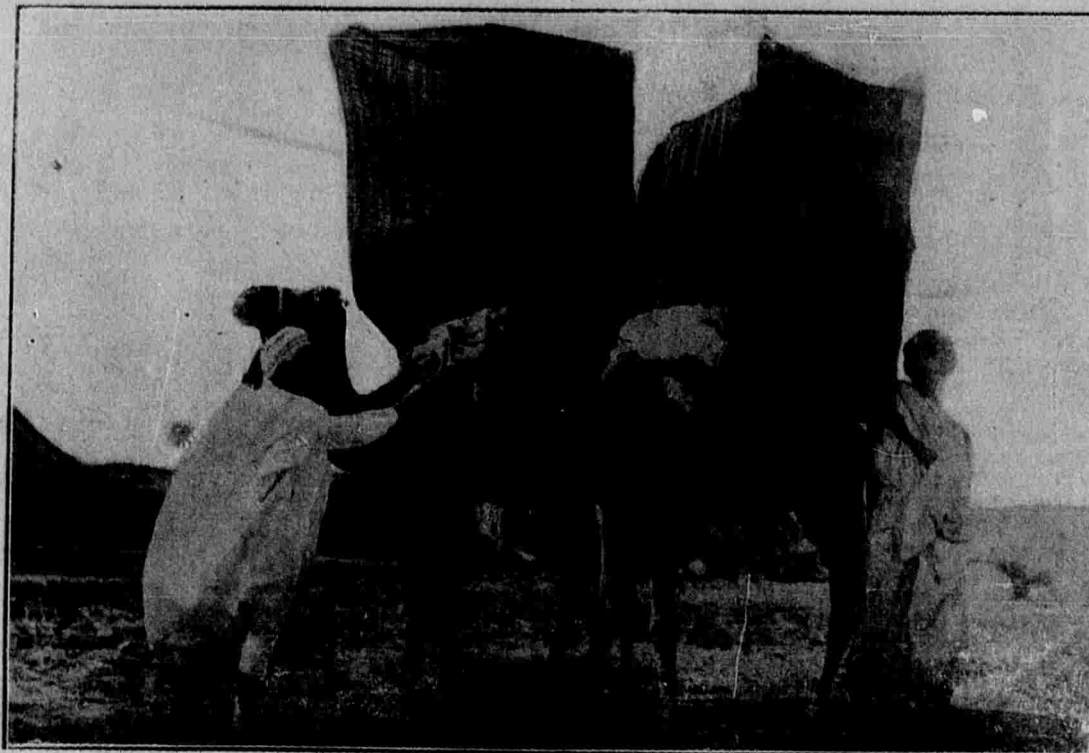
Another important caravan center is the oasis of Ghat, which lies in the bed of a dry river, and a third is Ghadames, in another dry river some distance away. Ghat is famous for its great fair, which is held once a year, bringing together traders from all parts of the Sahara. In ordinary times the town has only about 4,000 population, and the fair has to be held on a great plain outside the city. The city is surrounded by walls and entered only by gates. Its streets are dark passages, with houses built over them, so that going through it is like traveling through the tunnels of a mine.

Ghadames—I hesitate to write the word, it sounds so much like swearing—the same character as Ghat. It has been a trading place since the days of the Romans, and the caravans of the Fezzan, Tuat, Timbuktu and Lake Chad all pass through it. Ghadames is twice as big as Ghat. It is surrounded by a wall three miles in length, but the people live in only one corner of the inclosure. The houses are so laid out that the women can walk from one to another on the roofs, which are reserved for their use.

CAPTURED BY THE AMERICANS.

Some of the most interesting parts of this region are along the Mediterranean sea. Here in Tripoli we have 60,000 people. Farther eastward, in Barka, is the town of Benghazi, which was a thriving city in the days of the Phoenicians and Romans, and still further east is Derna, the only place on the African continent ever occupied by

A Visit to Mechia, Near Tripoli—Something About the Fezzan and Murzuk—Ghat and Ghadames—An African Town That the Americans Captured—Caravan Routes Across the Sahara—The Slave Trade—The Commerce of the Sahara—Ostrich Feathers and Alfa Grass—How the Arabs, Bedouins and Mozabites Court and Marry.



A MARRIAGE IN THE SAHARA.

"The Bride is Carried to Her Husband's Home Upon a Camel"—Photographed for the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.

Americans. It was captured by our fleet in 1815, and the ruins of a battery which was then erected on the heights are still to be seen. I am told there are other tracks along the Mediterranean coast which might be cultivated, if properly handled, and that the ruins of many Roman settlements still exist there. It is through that region that the khedive expects to build his railroad from Alexandria to Tripoli.

THE PRODUCTS OF THE SAHARA.

The products of the desert are much larger than are generally supposed. The caravans which are now coming here bring quantities of ostrich feathers and also cotton, dates, tobacco and grain, as well as the ivory and gold dust of the Sudan. The output of the oases themselves is greater than that of any similar area on earth. As I have already said, these desert islands comprise altogether a tract about twice as big as the state of Virginia, and they produce almost every kind of grain. Outside of them there are vast tracts which are used for the grazing of millions of camels, sheep and goats, as well as horses and cattle. And of late years a new crop has been found which is bringing fortunes into the Sahara.

This last is alfa grass. It grows wild along the edges of the desert and upon the plateaus where there is only a slight rainfall. A few years ago this crop went to waste, but now the Arabs are gathering it and it is brought in from everywhere by car and caravan. I saw it stacked up along the railroad in the deserts of Algeria and Tunisia; the trains were loaded with it, and there were mountains of it on the wharves of every port I visited.

Here in Tripoli the alfa grass is brought in upon camels. It is picked by the Bedouins, Arabs and Berbers, every blade of it being pulled from the ground. It is packed in bags about four feet wide and eight feet in length. Two of these bags are slung over the hump of a camel, and are thus carried for miles over the desert. When the

grass arrives at Tripoli it is weighed upon steelyards and paid for at about ten dollars a ton. It is then baled up like hay and shipped on the steamers to England, where it is used for making the best of books and writing papers.

Some of the great newspaper companies of England have put up factories in Algeria for the handling of alfa grass; and it is said that its value was originally discovered by the Lloyds of Lloyd's register. It makes a much better paper than wood pulp; but it is more costly, and there is no possibility that it will displace the latter.

MERCHANTS OF THE SAHARA.

A large part of the caravan business at the ports is handled by Greeks and Italians. The alfa grass is bought by Italians, who act for the English, shipping this stuff to Liverpool and London, and bringing back hardware and Manchester cottons. The date exports also are in the hands of Italians, although the bringing of the dates here is largely through native tribes, who make a specialty of merchandising.

Have you ever heard of the Mozabites? They are sometimes called the Jews of the Sahara. The Arabs say that while it takes five of their people to beat a Jew at a bargain, it requires at least five Jews to get the better of one Mozabite. Indeed, many believe that the Mozabites are of Jewish origin. They are the descendants of the old Carthaginians, who were driven down into the desert and settled there. Carthage was founded by Jews, and it was ruled by Queen Dido the Jewess. At any rate, the Mozabites are superior to the Jews in their trading ability, and they have monopolized certain kinds of trade in the desert.

They have seven cities, far down below Algiers in the middle of the Sahara, at just where the caravan tracks cross. They are engaged in commerce there, and also in Algeria, in Tunisia and in nearly every trading center of North Africa. These men stay away from home only for two years at a time. Their laws require that they come back

every so often, and their wives can claim a divorce if they remain longer than two years. If a man absents himself more than two years his wife has not only the right to marry again, but she can take possession of all the property belonging to the family and keep it.

I am told that the Mozabite women are true to their husbands. They wear black while their husbands are absent, and make great feasts when they come home. Among the vintages served on such occasions are barbecued camels and sheep. At the same time a dinner

is given to the poor, and this, strange to say, takes place at the cemetery. Here the wife plays the Lady Bountiful, sitting on the tomb of her parents, while she hands out the soup and dispenses her alms.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN THE SAHARA.

All the women of the Sahara marry young. A girl is often betrothed at eight or nine; she is married at 12 or 13, and is an old woman at 30. At ten she begins to primp and look at the men, and something is supposed to be wrong with her if she is not married at 17 or 18. As to the age of the husband, that matters not. He may be 15 or 60, and he may have several wives. The marriage is usually arranged by a female matchmaker, employed by the groom, who is supposed to find out all the details as to the character and wealth of the bride. She goes with her to the bath and investigates her beauty; she makes such inquiries at home about her cooking and housekeeping ability as enables her to furnish a description. The groom is supposed to pay a certain sum for the bride, and she is expected to bring him a small fortune in jewelry and household effects.

Preparatory to the wedding the bride is put through a course of training. She is bathed and greased again and again, and her skin is coated with powder. On the wedding day she is wrapped up in so many veils that she looks more like a bundle than a woman, and in this shape she is carried on a camel or donkey to the home of the groom. The first home of the desert bride is with her husband's family; but only when she is the first wife. If he has other wives she goes to the common tent, and there takes her place as boss of the establishment. She holds this position for a year or so, but after that comes down to everyday life and does her share of the work. She aids in the cooking, in gathering fuel and in weaving the cloth for tents and the family clothing.

THE OULED NAILS.

Have you ever heard of the Ouled Nails? They are to be found in every oasis, and there is a whole street given up to them in Biskra, the so-called Paris of the Sahara. They are noted for their beauty and are professional entertainers, much like the Nautch girls of India, the Ghavazi of Egypt or the Gelsbas of Japan. Robert Hichens rather effusively describes them in "The Garden of Allah," making them more beautiful than I have found them either in Biskra or here. The Ouled Nails sing and dance for money in the Moorish cafes. Any one who will pay for a cup of coffee can see them, and scores of these dark faced, turbaned, long-bearded Arabs will sit and watch them for hours. The girls are paid by the

owners of the establishments, but they also collect contributions from the foreigners present, coming to them and kneeling down at the close of each dance. Thereupon the dancer takes a silver coin with his lips and presses it upon the forehead of the dancer. The coin sticks and the girl raises and goes through the wild abandon of another dance, moving her head so gently that the coin remains where it was placed.

The dance of the Ouled Nails is the well known stomach dance, in vogue throughout the orient. It consists of a series of contortions of the hips and abdomen, while the rest of the body remains stationary or perhaps sways back and forth. The girls are fully dressed; there is no exposure of person, and they lack the ballet lights of our wicked stage. Nevertheless, their actions are more demure than those of the worst of our dance halls. Their profession is considered respectable, and after a time they take the money they have thus made and go home to marry their lovers.

FRANK G. CARPENTERS.

The Daylight Moon.

Miss Corliss Babson, the champion woman high jumper, is very fond of children, and at a tea at Vassar the other day she repeated a quaint child saying:

"I was walking in Gloucester one morning with a little girl," she began, "and looking over my shoulder, I saw the moon—large and round and pale, as it is often seen—in the bright blue sky."

"The moon in the morning," said I. "The little girl looked at it and frowned."

"Yes, that is the moon," she said. "Tain't lighted, though."

Art Piece of China Free

Commencing June 15 and continuing one month, each case of

Carnation WheatFlakes

sent out will contain one package with a special prize, an art piece of English china. Exceptional value and beauty—Royal Cobalt Blue with heavy gold incrustation. Our select semi-porcelain ware will continue as usual. No guesswork to cheapen price and menace life.

SEE YOUR GROCER.

Pacific Cereal Association



WANDAMERE IS DELIGHTFUL AFTER THE SHADOWS FALL.

NOTABLE CAREER OF FAMOUS OLD CRUISER.

Within 2,800 yards of Fort Sangley the Baltimore opened fire with her starboard batteries, gradually reducing her speed and stopping her engines. She poured a rapid fire into the shore batteries and a small gunboat nearby, at the same time heading for the warships Reina Cristina and Don Juan de Austria.

The Baltimore then received the concentrated fire of all the remaining guns in the fort, the enemy seeming to fire with great deliberation. One of their shells exploded on her deck, slightly wounding five men with splinters. The impatient Baltimore gunners had difficulty restraining themselves as the missiles of the Spaniards splashed around them.

Finally the Baltimore swung around and poured a broadside into the Cristina with terrific effect. Admiral Montojo's old flagship was torn to pieces,

and the captain and most of his men were killed. After the destruction of the Reina Cristina, the Baltimore turned her guns on the Austria. Finally she sent a shot into the warship's magazine, which ended that ship.

The Baltimore, Boston and Concord then attacked the stone fort at Cavite and soon demolished it. Two of the enemy's shots struck the Baltimore and wounded six men and two officers. Six of the men were hurt by their own ammunition, and the first Spanish shell exploded in a box of three-pounder ammunition. No one of the injured men would go into the sick bay, however.

During this engagement five small projectiles struck the Baltimore, and with one exception exploded or broke up. The most serious blow was from a 37 steel shot which entered the side forward of the starboard gunway, 3 feet above the line of the main deck.

It passed through the hammock netting, down through the deck plates and steel deck, bending and cracking the deck beam in the wardroom of state-room 5. It then glanced up through the engine-room, banging against a six-inch gun on the port side, putting it out of action. Then it was deflected to starboard, striking a ladder and dropping on deck. In its passage it struck the box of ammunition which caused the injuries of the sick men.

A second shell entered a foot above the berth deck, forward of the blowers, passed through the athwartship gangway, and hit the exhaust pipe of the starboard blower, causing a slight leak. The third shot entered two feet above the water line on the port side and passed into the coal bunker, where it exploded.

The fourth entered six feet above the berth deck and exploded in a locker. The fifth struck and slightly bent

the starboard forward ventilator.

The Baltimore was almost badly injured by the shock of her own guns as by those of the enemy. Her upper cabin skylight, the after range finder and two whaleboats at the davits were destroyed by the concussion of her 8-inch guns.

No matter what her calling in the future, the Baltimore is never likely to lose her reputation as a staunch vessel that always fulfilled expectations. Capt. Schley, who had the Baltimore during the first two years after she went into commission, reported that her speed as well as her ability as a gun platform at sea was unequalled. He questioned whether in her class she had a superior in the navies of the world.

The Baltimore's behavior on her last three years cruise on the Asiatic station, from which she returned to do out of commission a month ago, has been no less commendable. Although her engines were out of shape and her boilers all needed repairing, she made the long run from Manila to the Brooklyn navy-yard on schedule time to an hour.—New York Sun.

SALT LAKE CITY, TUESDAY, AUG. 6.

THE RINGLING BROS.
WORLD'S GREATEST SHOWS

A BIG NEW 6 FOLD CIRCUS
ALL WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THIS
CAPITAL INVESTED
\$3,500,000
85 DOUBLE LENGTH
RAILROAD CARS
BIG GORGEOUS NEW RICH GORGEOUS FREE STREET PARADE 3 MILES LONG
ALL KINDS OF TRAINED WILD ANIMALS AND A BIG NEW 300 CAGE ZOO

375 PERFORMERS IN 15 ARENAS
TRAVELING CITY OF SOLENDORS
1280 PERSONS
650 HORSES
40 ELEPHANTS
100 CAGES OF WILD ANIMALS

60 Acrobats and The 12 Mirza-Golems
60 Aerialists and the 10 Flying Jordans
60 Riders the Bedins and Daisy Hodgini
50 Clowns the World's Funny Men
375 Circus Artists
200 of Them Imported from Europe

At 10 O'clock
Every Morning
The Longest
Richest Street
PARADE EVER SEEN

Admission Tickets and Numbered reserved seats will be on sale show day at the corner of THE SMITH DRUG CO. at exactly the same price charged in the regular ticket wagons on the show grounds.

THE GREATEST SUIT SALE of THE SEASON

\$9.75 BARTON'S SALE \$9.75

MEN'S AND YOUNG MEN'S FINE SUITS.
\$15, \$18, \$20 and 25, NOW \$9.75

HERE'S A SNAP AND NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT.

They are our new spring suits, this season's make. Plenty of time yet to wear light and medium-weight suits. Men's and Boys' Suits, Hats, Furnishings, all must go. It will pay you to drop in. **BETTER HURRY.**

45-47 Main St. Clothiers to Men and Boys