

Glimpse at Farming in the "Land of Milk and Honey"



Shearing a Camel

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ZAMMARRIN, Mount Carmel, Palestine.— (Special Correspondence to The Bee.)— I give you today some bits of Palestine out of doors. Within the last few weeks I have kept away from the cities and towns and have watched the shepherds and farmers. I have seen the real Palestine, with the same sky, the same rocks and hills and the same carpet of wild flowers that were here in the days of our Lord. I have talked with the farmers in the fields, have ridden side by side with the modern Balaam as he climbed the hills on his ass, and have even put my hand to the plows, such as were used in the times of the Scriptures, and with a goad, have pricked on the bullocks and donkeys as they turned up the sod.

The Land of the Farmer

The Palestine of the Bible was a land of the farmer. The children of Israel and their leaders were reared or worked on the farm. Abraham had numerous sheep and so had Isaac and Jacob. Saul was the son of old Farmer Kish, and he was hunting his father's asses when he was met by Samuel, the prophet, who gave him a kingdom. David was watching the sheep when Farmer Jesse, his father, sent him to the battle, where, with his sling, he killed Goliath and in time became Saul's successor. Lot was one of the richest farmers the Jordan valley has known, and as for Job, who lived in old Uz, he was the bonanza cattle man of his time, owning 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 she asses and a very large household. It was in one farm village, Bethlehem, that our Savior was born, and in another farming settlement, Nazareth, that he grew to manhood. A great part of his life was spent in going about among the shepherds and farmers, and in his preaching the most of the examples and parables relate to things of the soil.

The Sheep of the Holy Land

The most common sight out of doors in the Holy Land is the sheep. They are everywhere. You find them on the rich plains where the Philistines lived; they feed among the rocks on the slopes of the Judean mountains, and spot the wilderness all the way down to Jericho. They graze on every part of Samaria and Galilee, and almost everywhere on the plain of Edra-elton. They are always watched over by shepherds, and are often driven to new feeding grounds. The greater part of this country is so thin that if you could part it off for a depth of eight inches there would be nothing but stone. It is different in the plains and the valleys, but the hills are terraces of rock covered with boulders and sprinkled here and there with patches of earth. The conditions, however, are such that the least bit of soil will grow luxuriant grass, and the sheep seem to grow fat on the stones.

I remember some flocks I saw on my way to Jordan. They were heavy-wooled animals, with tails of fat hanging down like aprons behind them. The most of them weighed 200 pounds, and the average was fatter and finer than the best sheep of America. Some were white-wooled and some brown, and others had brown heads and white bodies. I have tasted the mutton. It is excellent, and is the best meat to be had at the hotels.

Among the Shepherds

The shepherds are about the same all over Palestine. They are kindly-eyed men with fair faces, bronzed by the sun. They stand out all day on the hills with the sheep, driving them into the villages at night. Each shepherd has his staff and his scrip, a little bag of dried skin. He uses a sling as David did, and stones his sheep to keep them from straying. The strings of the slings are of goat hair and the pad for the stone is of the same material, often made with a slit in the middle, so that when a stone is put in the sling it fits close like a bag. Such things are now used in stone fights between the boys of the villages who practice to see who can throw the farthest.

The wool of these sheep is especially fine. It brings a higher price than that of Damascus, and something like a million dollars' worth of it is exported a year. The shearing is done by hand, and much of the wool is sold unwashed. Some is washed after shearing, the work being done by women, who receive less than a shilling a day.

Nearly every flock of sheep has its goats. They are usually black and can be picked out at a great distance. Some of the goats produce excellent milk, and the best as much as three quarts a day.

In the Sheepfolds

There is a great deal in the Bible about the sheepfolds. These are common in Palestine. In the villages there are often corrals and sometimes caves in the hills. The village folds are closed at night, and the shepherds keep the keys. Those of the mountains are usually open and the sheep go in and out as they will.

One of the most important duties of the shepherd is to water his flock. He does this at streams or wells. At the wells the women draw the water for the sheep, as they did in the days of the Scriptures. They use bags of goatskin untanned. The skins are taken almost whole from the goats, and the legs and other



openings tied up so that the skin is water proof. There is but one hole at the throat, and it is in this that the water is poured. The water for the household is carried in such bags, a network of ropes being wrapped around them so that it can be rested upon the back, the bag being supported by a rope around the forehead. A bag of the ordinary size, when filled, weighs at least fifty pounds. The women go along with their heads bent half double carrying such bags to their village homes. They do this day after day all their lives long.

Camels and Donkeys

The Palestine of today is a land of donkeys and camels. I suppose the latter are about the same as those owned by Job. They are reared in Beersheba, where the people largely live on their milk. The camel is the freight car of Palestine. I have seen many caravans of them going over the country. On the way here we passed some camels which the Bedouin drivers were shearing. They were clipping the wool from the kneeling beasts, which cried and moaned and now and then uttered shrieks as the shears snapped off bits of their flesh. Not a few shed actual tears. The wool of these camels is woven into a coarse cloth, which is used for weaving the coverings of the Bedouin tents.

As far as I can see these camels of the Holy Land have no easy job. They carry loads of 300 or 400 pounds each, and on short trips their packs are left on day and night. They begin to work at 3 years, and often last until they are 25 years of age. The best of them bring from \$90 to \$100 apiece and the poorest from \$25 to \$50.

As to the donkeys they are much cheaper. They form the draft animals of the poor, and are used by the farmers for carrying vegetables and wood into market. I see them loaded with olive roots on their way to Jerusalem, and now and then pass a donkey caravan, every animal carrying a bag of grain which has been balanced upon its back and which the driver holds there as he goes up the steep hills.

A Land of Milk and Honey

Palestine is sometimes called "the land of milk and honey." This it was in the past, and this it may be again. A Swiss family, not far from Jerusalem, has recently gone into the bee business, and it is producing many thousands of pounds of honey a year. The bees are kept in hives made of terra cotta jars, which are moved to different pastures several times during a season. The average yield of honey per hive is about 100 pounds, and the product is delicious.

As to the Palestine flowers, I cannot describe them. There are said to be more than 3,000 varieties. Crossing the upper plains of Sharon I rode through great fields of daisies as yellow as buttercups and as beautifully shaped as our daisies at home. There were greenish-white flowers, carpeting the roadside and among them poppies, gladioluses and lilies. In the gardens here are geraniums as large as rose bushes and on the sides of the hills wild flowers of every description. There are yellow violets and pink and blue blossoms, whose names I know not. There is also a red flower called "the blood drop of Christ." It is said to have sprung up on the spots where dropped the blood of our Savior as He carried the cross. I counted thirty-five different wild flowers in a single day's travel over the mountains of Samaria. At one place I saw what looked like piles of Bermuda onions, pulled up, lining the roadside. There were bushels of them, and I supposed they had been spilled out by a broken-down



Shepherd with one of his lambs



How they plow in Palestine



Gathering tares from the wheat

caravan. "These are my bulbs, which the farmers have dug out of the fields," said my guide, and further on I saw the men digging. These lilies are yellow and white, and they grow wild. "They toll not, neither do they spin," but they cause the farmers to toll and are one of the pests he has to get rid of.

On the Farms

There are but few farms of large size in the Holy Land. The chief cultivated patches on the mountains are those which have been cleared of stones. They are often not bigger than bed quilts and seldom contain more than three or four acres. Such fields frequently have stone walls around them. Down in the valleys and on the plains of the Philistines the farms are not separated by fences, and they are of a much greater extent. They are planted to wheat, beans and barley and grow luxuriant crops. One of the interesting scenes of the wheat fields is often referred to in the Bible. This is pulling the tares, the seeds of which, if left, will make the flour bitter. Gangs of girls are engaged in this business all over Palestine. Each gang works under an overseer, and the girls bend half double as they pull the weeds from the wheat. I am told that enemies sometimes sow tares in the wheat, as is described in the parable of the wheat and the tares as uttered by Jesus.

Speaking of wheat, it is said that Palestine is one of the places in which that grain originated. There is wild wheat here today, and the agricultural experts are investigating wild grains which are found in different parts of this country.

How They Plow

The plows of the Holy Land are about the same now as those used in the days of the Bible. They are rough affairs, made of wood tipped with iron, to which oxen and bullocks are yoked with a rough

New Religious Sect Appears in Belgium

ANTOINISM is the name given to a new religion, which is now gaining some followers in Belgium. The founder or promoter is a farmer named Antoine. The "Great Father," or the "Parent One," as his followers call him, is a man of 65, with flowing white locks and a patriarchal beard. His followers now number 160,000, of whom 300, including his wife, the "Good Mother," are adepts.

For three years Antoine has not left his house or garden. He lives entirely on vegetables, which he prepares himself. He sleeps little, resting only for two hours during the night, the greater part of which he spends walking in his garden, which has electric lamps fitted up all around the walls. He never reads anything, he will not see newspaper men, and only holds communication with the outside world by means of the telephone.

He confines his healing to ceremonies in the church, where the services are of the simplest description. At 9 o'clock a. m. the congregation assembles, and an adept, M. Deragnancourt, the publisher of the sect's literature, takes his place at a desk under a raised platform. There is complete silence for half an hour, then M. Deragnancourt announces that operations will take place at certain hours on certain days and that all who wish to be cured must have perfect faith.

Then he continues sitting perfectly still, not a muscle moving and his watery blue eyes fixed in an unblinking stare straight before him. At the stroke of 10 every one rises and the "Parent One" enters by a side door and slowly walks up the steps to the rostrum.

Wearing a black cassock and with his gray hair falling around his shoulders, Antoine faces the congregation for a full minute without moving or uttering a sound. He then lifts his right hand toward them and holds it thus extended for another minute. That is all. Those two minutes make the service. The "Good Father" walks slowly out, the adept remarks, "Every one whose faith is strong enough must be cured," and the church empties silently. No collection is made, but subscriptions are taken for the maintenance of the church, which Antoine built himself with a legacy of \$4,000.

For six months Antoine has not spoken a word to any one. People come at all hours, with all sorts of ailments and appeals. Antoine effects his cures now by deputy. His wife or some other adept stands

piece of wood fastened to the necks of the animals. Sometimes the yoke hangs at an angle of 45 degrees, reaching from the neck of a camel to that of a donkey. Donkeys and cows are also harnessed together, and bullocks and camels. The share of the plow ends in a point like that of a pickaxe. It scratches the soil, and nowhere goes very deep. The furrows are narrow, and many plows are required for large fields. The plowmen wear long gowns, and on their heads are cloths bound round with rope. They wear rough shoes or go barefoot.

Much of the land in the mountainous parts is so rough that plows are not used. The soil is dug up with a mattock or hoe and all the crops are cultivated by hand. Nevertheless, the soil is so rich that it will often produce several crops in one year. It will grow anything, and figs, olives and other fruits flourish. There are olive orchards everywhere. They cover the sides of the hills and are near every farm village. I was hardly out of sight of them on my way from Shechem to Mount Carmel, and I am told that a great quantity of oil is exported.

Taxed by the Mohammedans

The chief trouble of the Palestine farmer is the Mohammedan tax gatherer and assessor. These men have squeezed the heart out of every crop of the past, and it is only now, when Turkey has a new constitution, that the people have begun to hope that they may make something out of their lands. The tax assessors go over the country when the olive trees are in blossom and they then estimate the money which each tree should yield. They assess this amount as a cash tax, and the owner of the orchard must pay it whether the yield turns out well or not. There is often a failure of crops, and the trees produce just enough for the taxes. Sometimes they fall entirely. As a result, people have grown discouraged, and have begun to cut down their orchards and sell both wood and roots. This is forbidden by the new constitution.

The taxation is not confined to the orchards. It is

imposed upon every crop, the amount fixed being about one-eighth of the annual yield. This tax is farmed out to the highest bidder, one man taking the contract of collecting the taxes for a village or district and offering the government a lump sum in cash for them. After the allotment has been made and the price fixed, they are allowed to stand for a week or so, during which time any one who offers 3 per cent more can get the district. Once settled the allotment belongs to the man who has paid for it, and he sets a watch on the crops to see that the full taxes are paid. All the grain must be treshed at the village, and put up there in stacks of eight, each stack being of the same size.

When this is done, the tax gatherer selects the stack which he will take for the taxes and this is threshed out by itself, the farmer being required to deliver the grain as the collector directs. He may have to carry it to Jerusalem, Jaffa or Nabous, and in this way make it so costly that the farmer will be glad to sell him the grain at his price or to keep it at home.

In addition to such taxes there is the salt tax, by which every one in Palestine must use and pay for so much salt a year, the salt being a government monopoly. There is a head tax of \$2 on every male member of the community. This begins with babyhood and lasts until death, and there are other taxes upon land, as well as upon imports and everything that man eats, drinks and wears.

In a Jewish Colony

If the Holy Land could be freed from taxation and the farmers allowed fair play, there is no doubt but that the land would produce many times what it does now. Its possibilities can be seen in the various colonies which have been established by the Jews and the Germans in the various parts of Palestine. Take, for instance, Zammarrin on the southwest slope of Mount Carmel, where these notes are written. The place is about five hours' ride from Haifa, and a day's journey by carriage from Nabous. The town is owned by a Jewish colony which has a large tract of land given it by Baron Edward Rothschild of Paris. The land is high above the sea at the northern end of the plain of Sharon, so situated that it commands a view of that plain at the east and of the Mediterranean sea at the west. The country about is covered with chunks of limestone of all shapes and sizes, the bedrock cropping out in ledges with small tracts of arable land here and there.

The Jews have taken this land and have cleared it by picking off the loose rocks and they are making it bloom like a garden. They have some quite large fields on top of Mount Carmel, which are now covered with wheat. They are raising luxuriant crops of oats and beans and have vineyards as thrifty as those of South France or the Rhine. They have olive orchards which would be a credit to any part of Italy; and English walnut trees which bear like those of southern California. They are raising fine cattle which they graze on the hills in the daytime and bring in at night. The milk is excellent, and the meat as tender as sweet as the corned beef of Chicago. I am told that the land produces abundantly and that the colony does well.

A German Town in the Holy Land

The town of Zammarrin is far different from those of other parts of Palestine. Its houses are of German architecture and many of its people speak German. It has a German hotel run by an American Jew and planned upon Jewish lines. Outside the door of my room is fastened a tube of olive wood containing the Ten Commandments, and similar tubes are to be found at every door of the hotel, and also on the doors of every house in the town. The Jews kiss these tubes as they go in and out.

Zammarrin has sidewalks, and there is a water tower, filled by machinery, which gives water to every house. There is a synagogue, which is well attended, and a town hall, where the colonial officials meet and govern themselves as far as they can under the laws of the Sultan.

Indeed, the colony is a little republic, with a president and other officials elected by its members. It settles its own disputes, and makes assessments for special taxes for such things as schools and village improvements. When the colony was started it was supported by Rothschild. Later on it was turned over to the Anglo-Israelite Colonization society, founded by Baron Hirsch. It was then supported from Europe but this did not work and it is now running itself. Every family works for itself and has its own property. As a result the people are becoming independent. The standard of self-respect has risen, and all seem to be prosperous. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

An Easter Dedication

When the church bells at Eastertide ring out their glad messages telling of peace on earth and good will to mankind in the coming spring, they will also announce the dedication and opening in part of the magnificent Protestant Episcopal cathedral of St. John the Divine, on Morning-side Heights, New York. For many months past an army of skilled artisans has been pushing the work in the hope that the great gothic pile could be ready for dedication services on December 27, St. John's day, and the anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone in 1892.

But this was found to be impossible, and the date has been fixed for Easter. All is in readiness for this important event in the history of the Episcopal church in this country, with the exception of minor furnishings and decorative work, which is rapidly nearing completion. It will be years hence before the cathedral as a whole is thrown open for worship and takes its place as the largest in this country and the fourth largest in the world.

When worshippers enter the cathedral next Easter they will find completed the choir and crossings and the grand \$60,000 organ, the largest in the world, which is the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Levi P. Morton, in memory of their daughter, Lena Kerny Morton, who died six years ago; also the magnificent marble altar, and in the rear of this the famous Barberini tapestries, valued at \$200,000. These latter are now on exhibition in the Metropolitan museum.

The part of the cathedral now built represents but \$3,500,000 of the total estimated cost of \$20,000,000 and only a small fraction of the magnificent completed whole. The temporary walls will be torn down and the temporary dome, now 162 feet high, will raise its proud height of 252 feet, topped by a spire, which, from the ground will measure 425 feet, and be flanked by two towers, each 225 feet in height.

The new cathedral will be surpassed in size only by St. Peter's at Rome, the Milan cathedral and what is now the Mosque at Constantinople.