

Great Changes Taking Place Along the Coast of Arabia and Africa



THEY LIVE IN TENTS MADE OF MATS.



GIRLS OF KASIER.



MOHAMMEDAN PILGRIMS AT PRAYER.

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ON THE GERMAN EAST AFRICAN STEAMER FELD-MARSHALL, Jan. 5.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I am on a German steamer, of 5,000 tons, sailing down the Red sea. We took ship three days ago at Port Said, and were eighteen hours going through the Suez canal. We started a while at Suez, and we are now off Port Sudan, where the new railroad across the Nubian desert begins. We are just opposite Jeddah, where, according to the Mohammedans, Mother Eve was buried, and where the Pilgrims start out over the desert to Mecca. With the ship's glass one can almost see the place where the greatest grandmother of all mankind lies. She rests outside the wall in a tomb 60 feet long, and a mosque rises over her dust. You have heard the Mohammedan story of how Adam fell. Eve gave him the apple, and he ate it, and as a punishment both he and she were cast out of the Garden of Eden. As they dropped a strong west wind was blowing, and this wafted the fairy form of Eve to Arabia; while Adam, with his heavier weight, fell down in Ceylon. There is a string of coral keys running from Ceylon to Hindostan, which is still known as Adam's bridge, and it was over them that he started out on his long hunt for Eve. It took him 200 years to find her, and the meeting was somewhere near Mecca. What became of Adam's bones we do not know, but those of Eve are supposed to lie at Jeddah.

Odd Features of the Red Sea.

Jeddah is just about half way down the Red sea. It took us thirty-six hours to come here, and we shall be fully that long in steaming to the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, where we enter the Indian ocean. The Red sea is mighty small on the map. It looks like a scratch between Asia and Africa; but the scratch is actually 900 miles wide in many places and so deep that the most of the Blue Ridge mountains could be dropped down into it and only their higher peaks would reach the surface. The Red sea is so long that if it began at Ireland and extended westward across the Atlantic it would go half way to Canada. If it could be lifted up and laid down upon the United States, with Suez at Philadelphia, Bab-el-Mandeb would be a hundred miles or so beyond Omaha, and all the way between

would be a sea canal as wide as from New York to Washington, or wide enough to accommodate all the navies of the world abreast, and leave a hundred miles or more to spare.

Rival for the Suez Canal.

This mighty waterway narrows almost to a point at each end. Where it leaves the Indian ocean it is no wider than the English channel at Dover, and it is lost at the north in the Suez canal. Starting at Bab-el-Mandeb, the coast broadens out and then runs almost straight to the upper end, where they fork into two gulfs and inclose the lower part of the Sinai peninsula. These two gulfs are those of Suez and Akabah. The gulf of Suez is 120 miles long, and it has been joined to the Mediterranean by the Suez canal. The gulf of Akabah is 110 miles long, and capitalists are now talking of making a canal from it to the Mediterranean. The Akabah canal would be a considerable distance east of the Suez canal, but it would practically parallel it. It would run through Turkish territory, and for this reason it can be built without infringing on the Suez canal concession, which relates to Egypt alone. I am told that a new canal would pay well. That of Suez is already overcrowded, and there is enough business for two.

As to the Red sea itself, it has deep water throughout. Along the main channel there is a full half mile of salt sea under the ships, and in some places it is more than a mile and a half deep. The average depth of the gulf of Suez is greater than the height of a twenty-story flat, and two Washington monuments, one on top of the other, could be sunk into the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb for the deepest ocean steamer to go over them.

Hot and Salty.

The Red sea is red hot. I have steamed many miles along the equator, but this is much hotter. The water here is shut in on both sides by deserts, which furnish no streams to cool it, and the tropical sun beats down from January to December. As a result the surface of the water is often 100 degrees above zero, and it forms a great hot-water plant steaming the air. Today Kasier is a stopping place for it used to be much more important in that respect than now. It had many inns and hotel tents outside. It was well supplied with dancing girls and the other surroundings of a true pilgrimage center. Then the Suez canal came and killed it. The port

is now nothing. Its big houses have fallen to ruins and it has become a village of one-story huts. There are emerald mines near it, however, and the desert region about shows evidences of having been once worked for gold.

Port Sudan.

The two chief ports on the west coast of the Red sea are Port Sudan and Suakin. They were nothing a few years ago, but they promise to grow into cities since the completion of the Red Sea road. There has always been something of a town at Suakin, and the original intention was to use that place as the terminus of the railroad. The British government is erecting great docks and harbor buildings. It has put up lighthouses and built a postoffice, quarters for the government officials and schools. Many lots are being sold and residences are going up. The settlers are chiefly Europeans, the most of whom come from Italy and Greece.

Suez in 1907.

I had expected to find the Red sea coasts more thickly populated. There are no cities of any size and very few villages. Even Suez has only about 18,000 people, and of them not more than 3,000 are Europeans. The town has large docks, but its trade is small, and it has had nothing like the growth which men thought would follow the completion of the canal. There is direct railroad connecting with Cairo, and passengers on their way home from India stop off there and join their ships at Alexandria, or take other steamers from that port.

Have you ever heard of the town of Kasier? It is a Red sea port that at one time had a great trade. It lies on the west coast some distance south of Suez. It was formerly the end of a caravan route from the Nile, and the early Christians crossed over that way and took boats for the Sinai peninsula to reach the mountain where Moses received the commandments. Egyptian pilgrims on their way to Jeddah. Today Kasier is a stopping place for it used to be much more important in that respect than now. It had many inns and hotel tents outside. It was well supplied with dancing girls and the other surroundings of a true pilgrimage center. Then the Suez canal came and killed it. The port

of the Red sea. They have a colony known as Eritrea, which begins about 150 miles south of Suakin and runs down almost to the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb. It is not wide and it terminates a little back of the coast where the Abyssinian hills begin. It is only a few years since the Italians tried to include in Eritrea a large part of Abyssinia and failed, owing to the bravery of King Menelik. The land they now have is of small value. There are only a few tracts that can be irrigated, and the exports are nothing. The strip is inhabited by nomads, who raise camels, oxen, sheep and goats. The pasturage is scanty and the shepherds move about from place to place with their stock. Some of the tribes live in tents made of matting and their wants are simple to an extreme.

Massawa.

The chief Italian port is Massawa. It is a little town situated on a coral island joined to the mainland by a causeway. It has two short railways which connect with the Abyssinian hills and which comprise altogether about forty-eight miles of track. The road is to be continued to the town of Asmara, near which some gold mines have been opened.

I am told that the Italians have recently built a telegraph line from their port to the capital of Abyssinia and that they are trying to increase their trade with that country. They are shipping considerable salt, which, strange to say, is so relished by the Abyssinians that it brings more than sugar and takes much the same place among them as candy and tobacco with us. The average Abyssinian carries a stick of rock salt with him and takes a suck of it between whiles. If he meets a friend he asks him to take a lick of his salt stick and his friend brings out his own individual stick and they take lick about. It is just as it was with snuff in the days of our forefathers when everyone offered his friends a pinch of his choice Macaboy.

Port of Mecca.

I regret that I shall not be able to stop at Jeddah, the port of Mecca, to which I have already referred. It is one of the most interesting places on the Red sea and 100,000 or more pilgrims pass through it every year. While at Omdurman, a few weeks ago, I saw something like 1,000 Mohammedans who were going by the new

railroad across the Nubian desert to Port Sudan, where they expected to get ship for Jeddah. Some of them had been ten years on the way and their religious enthusiasm had not waned. They started out upon camels from the borders of Timbuktu and had been forced to sell their camels for food. After that they had walked from oasis to oasis working for money to carry them onward. The town is full of hotels and many of the English government officials had to divide them up into batches and send on a trainload or so at a time. The road saved them several hundred miles of camel riding or walking, and it probably will be a great pilgrimage route in the future.

At present the pilgrims come to Jeddah from all parts of North Africa and from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean sea. They also come from India and southern Arabia, and Jeddah takes its toll from each of them. The people live by fleecing the devotees. The town is full of hotels and it is noted for its discomforts. It has a bad water supply and after each big rain there is an epidemic of fever. All who land in Jeddah go on foot from there to Mecca. The distance is sixty-five miles and a guide is required.

New Mecca Railroad.

The British are now talking of building a railroad from Jeddah to Mecca. If they do it probably will pay well, for the travel is enormous. Twenty-five years ago there were more than 90,000 Mohammedans, who came annually by sea to make their way over the sands to Mecca and Medina. There are probably half again as many more today and the railroad will so reduce the cost of the trip that the number of worshippers will be greatly increased. Indeed, the day may come when some Mohammedan tourist agent will be selling to pilgrims from all parts of the Mohammedan world round trip tickets to the birthplace of the prophet, including admission to the Kaaba and also to Medina, where Mohammed died. The sultan is already building a line southward from Damascus to Mecca, 500 miles of the road being already completed, and it is expected that it will reach Medina in 1909 and Mecca early in 1910. There is now a line from Beirut to Damascus, and one will be able to start in at that port in the western Mediterranean and go to Damascus, Jerusalem and Mecca without change of cars. The Mecca line is being built by Turkish soldiers, un-

der the supervision of a German civil engineer, and the cost is being in part defrayed by the voluntary contributions of Mohammedans in all parts of the world.

When these railroads are completed there may be a chance for Christians to visit the holy city. All who have been there in the past have had to go in disguise, and the man who would attempt it today, takes his life in his hands. The railroad will be offered by Mohammedans, and it is doubtful whether they will take Christians as passengers. They will have to cater to the pilgrims, as it is from them that their traffic must come. In the meantime, without wishing to act as did the fox who called the grapes sour, I do not believe there is much to see in Mecca after all. The town lies in a hot sandy valley watered for the most of the year by a few brackish wells and some cisterns. The best water comes in from Ararat through a little aqueduct, and it is sold at high prices by a water trust at the head of which is the governor of the city.

Mecca, all told, has only about 50,000 inhabitants. It fills the valley and runs up the sides of the hills. The houses are of dark stone, built in one, two and three stories. They stand close to the streets. There are no pavements; it is often dusty and it takes all the holiness of the surroundings to make life agreeable.

The Kaaba.

The most important place in Mecca is the sacred mosque, and the most important thing in the mosque is the Kaaba, a cube-shaped stone building which lies in its center. In the southeast corner of this building at about five feet from the ground, is the black meteorite which the Mohammedans say was once a part of the Gates of Paradise. When Adam was cast out this stone fell with him and it dropped down near Mecca. At that time it was of a beautiful white color, but it is now turned to jet, having been blackened by the kisses of sinners. Every pilgrim who comes to Mecca presses his lips to it again and again, imagining that as he does so his sins go out of him into the stone, and his soul becomes as pure as it was when he was a baby. There are several hundred thousand pilgrims who perform this kissing act every season, so that the holy stone of the Kaaba gets its millions of kisses every year. What a load of sin it must carry!

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Cosmopolitan Bunch of Devils Infest New York's Grand Opera Season

NEW YORK, Jan. 4.—The opera this year in New York has gone to the devil as it never did before. There have been more devils than any preceding season offered and they have been more varied in character.

This abundance of satanic majesties is due to the fact that New York no longer contents itself with the Gallic spirit of evil that used to strut through Gounod's opera. In addition to this lyric setting of Goethe's play, there are the operas with the text drawn from the same source by Boito and Berlioz.

The performance of these varied versions of the Faust legend was due to the presence here of singers who have especially distinguished themselves by their impersonations of Mephistopheles. Foremost

among these is Theodore Chailapine, who owes his reputation abroad to his performance of Mephistopheles in Boito's opera.

He has a very small repertoire for a bass; no singer ever came to the Metropolitan equipped with so few roles. Apart from Mephistopheles he sings Basilio, Don Carlos and Russian operas by Glinka, Rubinstein and Rimsky-Korsakoff. He will sing Leporello in "Don Giovanni" here for the first time.

M. Chailapine will also sing before he returns to Europe the Mephistopheles of Gounod. In that role he follows the conventional standards of opera, departing in no particular from the type of devil shown at the Grand Opera in Paris, whence the best of the devils are supposed to come. It was first in Russia that his impersonation of the Boito satan made him famous.

His peculiarities of dress have already been sufficiently described. Striking as they are, the basso makes his devil differ from all others chiefly in his dramatic effect.

He is an elemental creature, roaring and champing like a bull, charging the poor sinners of this world with the fume and energy of a sixty-horse power motor and leaving a trail of steam and brimstone behind him. This is the satan resulting from the union of the Italian creator and the Russian interpreter.

His frame, gigantic as it is, cannot contain his nature. He writhes with the emotions that convulse him. His face is drawn into expressions of the profoundest agony. He is not a contemplative spirit that evermore denies, but a militant fiend, storming over the failure of his efforts to harass

and distress mankind as he would like to. All the dramatic action tending to establish his conception of Boito's satan is accompanied with every helpful aid of light, scenery and mechanical ingenuity.

M. Chailapine takes the utmost pains with his makeup, which combines in an effective way the use of fleshings and bare skin. The skin is covered with a shiny, metallic powder which sparkles in the calcium. The other new devil is a less spectacular person. The expression on the face of M. Renaud gives the keynote to his conception of the devil in the text of Berlioz, and his collaborators, M. Gerard and Gerdner.

They wrote the text for a cantata, just as Berlioz did the music, and this explains the loose dramatic form of the text. When the scarcity of new operas turned the

thought of impresarios toward music by such a master, Raoul Gounod was the first to arrange the material for operatic use. It was sung first in his opera house at Monte Carlo, and later at the series of special performances given at the Theater Sarah Bernhardt in Paris.

In both of these productions Maurice Renaud embodied the idea of the Goethe devil, and in the opinion of many experts the pessimistic, contemptuous, pitying Mephistopheles who feels too sorry for the poor creatures of this world to plague them is the most striking of the lot. When he looks in on the reveling crowd at the Auerbach cellar M. Renaud's glance indicates his melancholy and disgust with the world.

He is the incarnation of Weltsehers. The more he sees of this world and the poor

creatures the more he pities and scorns it and them.

M. Renaud dresses in black but ornaments his face with a very long, pointed nose and his cap with a long pointed feather. The pictorial features of his devil, who rarely unwraps the cloak which falls about him came out of his own imagination, just as did his conception of the world weary Satan of the Goethe prologue.

M. Chailapine, on the other hand, copied his makeup from the work of a Russian sculptor. That was effected by the elemental, writhing, fighting conception that M. Chailapine has transferred to the operatic stage.

The only other role that the Russian basso has sung here is Basilio, and that proves him to be just as unconventional as to makeup and conception in all his

parts as in the Boito opera.

In spite of the critical attention that the interpreters of these unconventional princes of darkness have attracted, the public has not shown nearly so much excitement about them as was expected. New York opera audiences are not given to expressions of emotions over basses or barry-tones.

They prefer tenors or sopranos. It is for that reason that they are much more interested in the personalities of their Fausts and their Marguerites. As New York audiences also like their old friends best, they still refuse to devote their interest to other characters in the legend than the lovers of Gounod's opera.

There is no dearth of the Gounod devil

(Continued on Page Four.)



POL FLANCON, CLASSIC FRENCH DEVIL. VITTORIO ARIMONDI, FRANKO-ITALIAN DEVIL. THEODORE CHAILAPINE, RUSSO-ITALIAN DEVIL. MAURICE RENAUD, MODERN FRENCH DEVIL. MARGES JOURNET, BELGIAN DEVIL.