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**A PRICELESS RELIC.**  
**THE FAMOUS BLACK STONE OF THE TEMPLE OF MECCA.**

**How This Treasure of Islam Appears at the Present Day and the Various Theories of Its Origin—Guarded by Mohammedans.**

So carefully is the black stone of the temple of Mecca guarded, even to this day, that the accounts given by different writers as to the nature and appearance of the black stone exhibit some considerable variations, for orthodox Mohammedans cannot be prevailed upon to give a straightforward description of it, and more adventurous, like the several European hadjis (Burchardt, Burton and the others) could only gratify their intelligent curiosity by stealthy investigations. Detection in the act of pursuing such investigation would have cost the travelers their lives, in pursuance (as Mohammedans suppose) of the law of the prophet. Your faithful Mussulman cannot understand that any other motive than worship should lead any one to visit Mecca.

The Mohammedans believe that this famous stone was brought down from heaven by angels. It is set in the wall of the Caaba, which stands within the great colonnade. The stone is four feet nine inches from the ground and is kissed and touched with great veneration by every pilgrim to Mecca.

Mr. Bate mentions what intelligent travelers have recorded concerning the nature of the black stone. One of them tells us that it is undoubtedly a large aerolite—an opinion which scarcely harmonizes with its reputed quality of floating in water, since aerolites usually contain a large percentage of heavy, metallic matter, such as iron pyrites.

Another traveler reports that it looks like a piece of lava, containing small extraneous particles of some white and yellowish substance.

Still another of these authorities affirms that it is a fragment of volcanic basalt, sprinkled throughout its surface with small, pointed, colored crystals and varied with felspar upon a dark ground, like coal, excepting one of its protuberances, which happens to be a little reddish.

Others, again, claiming an equal title to exact knowledge, give it as their opinion that it is nothing else than an ordinary piece of stone from quarries in which the Meccan territory abounds. These last mentioned travelers, however, appear to overlook the circumstance that this opinion of theirs does not take due cognizance of that property of the stone to which we have just alluded and also the circumstance that the only kind of stone yielded by the Meccan quarries is a sort of gray granite.

Not so difficult is it to form an idea as to its size and present appearance. In form it is an irregular oval, the inequality of its two longer sides imparting to it a somewhat semicircular appearance. It measures about 6 inches in height and 8 in breadth, the diameter on its lower and wider side being 8½ inches. The surface is protuberant and somewhat knobby or undulating and has the appearance of being composed of a number of smaller stones of different sizes and shapes, securely fitted together with cement and perfectly smooth.

Its appearance is as though the original piece of stone had been broken to pieces by a violent blow and then repaired. And, as a matter of fact, this appears to be the true explanation of this irregularity of the surface, for it is recorded by the Arabian historians of the Caaba that in the year 413 of the Hijra an emissary of a certain Egyptian khalifa, known as "the Mad Khalifa Hakim," shattered it to pieces by a stroke of a club, and they relate that after this event the pieces and even the dust also were carefully restored and the fragments cemented together.

The protuberances mentioned are 12 or 15 in number and are such as to impart to the surface of the stone a muscular or pebbly appearance. Near the middle there is a hollow which reaches to about as much as two inches below the outer edge of the stone and is of a kind to suggest to the visitor the surmise that one of the protuberances may have been removed.

The color of the surface of the relic is at the present time a deep reddish brown, or, as some have described it, a metallic black, and, notwithstanding the polished appearance imparted to it by the constant touching of unnumbered myriads of devotees, it yet bears on its undulating surface what appear to be evident marks of volcanic origin.

These muscular protuberances, however, are attributed by the Moslem authorities to the incessant oscillations and rubbings of the faithful. The smoothness may perhaps be attributable to this cause, but the obviously fractured and pebbly appearance is not accounted for in this way.—Asiatic Quarterly.

**Women and Their Cats.**  
Louis Wain, the famous cat painter, professes to believe that a cat owned by a woman is the mirror of its mistress' temperament. He says that if a cat that has been constantly with its mistress is suddenly removed from her society the creature will show the characteristics madame has displayed. If she has been snappish, pussy will scratch; if she has been sulky, pussy will snulk too. If this were really true, it would pay a prospective husband to steal the cat of his ladylove before taking the fatal matrimonial step. As the cat is about the most independent creature alive, one can't help being skeptical of Mr. Wain's theory.

A French writer has ascertained that Napoleon's favorite dish was bean salad, and that he held that 60 cents a day ought to be enough for any one's meals. Louis XV, on the contrary, had a favorite dish, made of the eggs of various birds, which cost \$100.

**IT WAS NOT TOO LATE.**

**A Story of European Diplomacy and Our Civil War.**

The Outlook gives an interesting story of the Spanish administration, when, during our civil war, the Emperor Napoleon formed the ingenious plan of uniting European nations in a change of the international law governing blockades. The admiralty law of the world at present extends the jurisdiction of any nation for one marine league from its shores. If, therefore, any blockade runner could get within three miles of Jamaica, Cuba or Porto Rico, he was safe from any interference from our blockading fleet.

Napoleon proposed that, instead of one league, the limit of local sovereignty should be extended to three leagues from shore, and he persuaded the Spanish minister to come into his plan.

Such an extension of neutral limits would have greatly hindered the operations of our blockading fleets. All the negotiations were conducted with great secrecy, but orders were sent from Spain to the West Indies, instructing authorities there to extend threefold the range of their dominion over the sea. These orders had already gone when Horatio Perry, the American secretary of legation, got wind of the treachery of our ally.

Mr. Perry told his wife. She told the Duchess of Montpensier, who hated Louis Napoleon, and the duchess told her sister, the Spanish queen. Then the queen sent for Mr. Perry and asked what it was all about.

"You are injuring your best friends," said he after explaining the matter, "at the solicitation of this intriguer whom you have reason to believe is your enemy."

The queen, regret sent for her prime minister and interrogated him. He replied that her majesty had signed the order on such a day.

"But no one told me what it meant," said Queen Isabella. "No one told me that this is a heavy blow to my American allies."

No one had told her! The minister was sorry if her majesty disliked it, but it was too late to help it. Why was it too late? Because a steamer had gone to the West Indian fleet with the orders which changed one league to three.

Then said Isabella, "It is not too late for me to accept your resignations."

But the senator did not want to resign, and the other senators did not want to resign. So they found a fast steamer to take out orders rescinding the other orders, and the blockade was maintained for the next year.

**RUNNING A THEATER.**

**The Big Salary Account That New York Houses Must Meet.**

The salaries of actors and actresses vary so much that no fixed prices can be quoted. It may suffice to say that the salary list of a stock house for performers will not come to less than \$1,000 a week, and is often considerably more.

The salaries in the "front" are about as follows: Business manager, \$60 to \$75 a week; box office man, \$30; assistant, \$15; two doorkeepers, \$8 to \$12 each; head usher, \$8; other ushers (three or four), \$7; lithograph men (two), \$15; night watchman, \$10.

The salaries of the attaches of the stage are all fixed at union rates. Furthermore, the manager must employ three men on a side—that is, three stage hands on each side of the stage, including the stage carpenter and his assistant—and two flymen, men who work the curtain and drops up in the "flies," the regions above the stage.

The union rates are as follows: Stage carpenter, \$30 a week; assistant, \$25; electrician, \$25; assistant, \$15; property man, \$25; assistant, \$15; back doorkeeper, \$7; stage hands, \$1.50 for each performance, \$2.50 per day for putting on a play, 50 cents an hour for rehearsals and 62½ cents an hour for all labor half an hour after the fall of the final curtain. Orchestra leaders get \$40 to \$50 a week, and the union rate for musicians is \$25, except in operettas, when it is \$4 a performance.—"The Business of a Theater," by W. J. Henderson in Scribner's.

**Melancholy Thought.**

When a man really gives his thoughts up chiefly to eatables and drinkables, he generally ceases to think of anything else after awhile. It is related in an old book on French cookery that Fontenelle, a French author of the early part of the eighteenth century belonging to the school of the precieuses, or literary exquisites, was found one beautiful morning lying at ease on the slope of a hill.

In the valley was a large flock of sheep. They skipped about daintily, waiting for their guardian to take them home. A friend of Fontenelle surprised him gazing meditatively upon these sheep.

"Aha!" said the friend. "The amiable philosopher ponders without doubt upon the vicissitudes of life."  
"Yes," said Fontenelle. "I had been carefully looking over this flock, and I said to myself, 'It is possible that among these 200 sheep there is not one tender leg of mutton!'"

**Why Wood Crackles.**

Wood crackles when it is ignited because the air expanded by heat forces its way through the pores of the wood with a crackling noise. Green wood makes less snapping than dry because the pores contain less air, being filled with sap and moisture, which extinguish the flame, whereas the pores of dry wood are filled with air, which supports combustion.

**Very Different.**

"Snags and I have quarreled," said Squidly to McSwilligan.  
"Then when you separated of course you did not exchange assurances of distinguished consideration?"

"On the contrary, we exchanged assurances of extinguished consideration."—Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

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