

CAMEL JARS WRITER BACK TO PRIMITIVE

Shakes, at 5000 an Hour, Banish Political Cares.

BIBLICAL EGYPT VISITED

William T. Ellis Says Broadway Would Pay Much to See Ample-Waistlined Riders' Motions.

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BY WILLIAM T. ELLIS.

(Special Correspondent of the Herald.)

WILDERNESS OF MOUNT SINAI

Egypt—This may not be any great shakes of a story, but it is a story of great shakes. I have ridden hither on a camel, and I now understand why the Israelites murmured at Moses. To take my mind off the sore places—never a good location for one's mind—I have been thinking some mathematical calculations concerning the number of times my carcass has been shaken by this ill-constructed beast which hides its ungainly and ill-mannered movements under the euphemism of "the ship of the desert."

Before my eyes as I write, in proof that the journey is over, rises Mount Sinai itself, where Moses received the Ten Commandments, and since leaving Tor, the nearest point of contact with the civilized world, four days ago, I have been shaken 125,000 times! The return trip will be as bad, or worse, making a total of a quarter of a million shakes for the privilege of seeing our troubled times from the standpoint of Moses!

Camel Shakes Are Calculated.

That sound like exaggeration, does it not? Nevertheless, it is as definitely a fact as the multiplication table. Repeatedly, watch in hand, I have counted the number of shakes per mile that a camel rider endures. They range from 85, at a slow walk, to 185 when the beast is trotting. The actual riding time from Tor to Sinai is 21½ hours, mostly at a walk. A little figuring will reveal how conservative is the calculation of a quarter of a million shakes for the round trip. All this that the bored newspaper reader glancing over his favorite daily, may get the news from the ends of the earth, while the while, perchance, that he had as soft a snap as these newspaper fellows! The dear reader is buying a quarter of a million agitations of my mortal frame for 2 cents.

He is shaken by a camel as different from being jolted by a trotting horse, or from the vibration of a poorly laid railway. The camel has one more joint in each leg than the horse, and, in addition, at a distance appears gracefully undulating. Actually it sways the passenger to and fro from the hips, and there is at first a jar and a strain to it that no inexperienced rider would call undulating. It is as if a giant had gripped a man at the middle and shaken him to and fro so that every atom of the body is set to vibrating.

Shakes Reach 5000 an Hour.

In aristocratic gymnasiums there is a machine called "the camel," which is supposed to simulate the motions of this beast, and therefore middle-aged gentlemen who have grown cherty around the waistline ride for five minutes of violent exercise with an attendant standing by to imagine one such with ample dignity at the latitude of his belt, mounted—what prices Broadway would pay for the spectacle of the tumultuous mounting—aboard this conglomerate of the fag ends of animal creation, and under a tropical sun, or in a smothering desert sand storm, traveling three miles an hour for seven hours a day, at more than 5000 shakes an hour! Nevertheless, at the end of the third day the victim would be able to digest cobblestones.

The saddle of a camel is a boncave affair of two boards, with six inches of nothing in the middle and scalloped on all the sides. The high pommel in front and an equally high cantle behind are first aids to safety in mounting and dismounting. As he rises or descends the rider camel makes three separate and vigorous attempts to throw his rider. The latter rides with his legs over the front of the saddle, astride the pommel, and his feet crossed on the neck of the animal. Unless his saddle is better padded than any beginner's ever is, he will be bruised black and blue at the small of his back by the cantle of the saddle; the points of his pelvis will almost puncture the flesh; his abdominal muscles will be wrenched agonizingly by the swaying to and fro; his shoulder blades will be well-nigh torn off, and all his ribs will seem to separate from that battered string of bones which he used fondly to think was a firm spinal column.

Then, as the crowning insult to injury, at the close of the first day's torture a Bedouin, to whom all foreigners are hakims, or physicians, comes to the tent to ask for medicine for his pains!

Wilderness Ways Weary.

Let him rest at noon who never rode a camel. And in a sand storm! Over the wastes of the Sinai desert—the wilderness of sin," Moses called it—there sweep frequently, and for days on end, violent winds which carry the sand and dust in thick clouds. The blue waters of the Red sea on the left are wiped out. The majestic Sinai mountain range on the right disappears. Only the plodding figures of our own caravan, heads wrapped and bent to the storm, are in sight. Helmets strain at chin straps. Impalpable dust

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- 4 33x4 Goodrich Plain
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- 18 32x3½ U. S. Plain
- 10 32x3½ Republic Staggard
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- 8 32x3½ Firestone Plain

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fills eyes, nostrils, mouth. Tiny fragments of flint cut hands and face. But life and travel consist in good part of sheer endurance, so we plod on and on until the hour for making camp, when every morsel we eat and every object we touch is powdered with the all-pervasive sand.

We have a tent; there are three of us—two Herald men and Professor C. F. Russell of the American college at Assiut, Egypt, who is free to become our Arabic tongue, since his students are participating in the nation-wide strike. Our cook, Mohammed, a Berber, also has a tent, but our six soldier guards, of the local Arab police, and our nine camel men simply seek the lee side of a bunch of camel thorn and, about a quick burning fire of the same material, sit and talk, or wrap themselves up from head to foot, like Egyptian mummies, and wait for the order to move. Our 15 camels, hobbled, wander about the desert seeking food.

Nights are cold, biting cold, on the desert, and the change from torrid noontide heat to the chill of darkness is so great that one wonders how the thinly clad Arabs possibly stand it. Somewhat similar is the contrast as we get into the mountains between the desert glare and "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." I know now where the pessimist got his figure. More than once our noontide halt has been in the covert of a huge bowlder, with sand swirling about and the blistering heat lying just outside the shadow line. A tree affords no such shade as a rock.

How quickly a man in the desert reverts to primitive cares. International problems which a week before had engrossed him slip out of mind, and his concern is for the direction of the wind and the intensity of the sun and the chances of finding a good camping place for the night. The state of our food and water supply is real conversational material.

Camel Tick Is Bloodthirsty.

Most poetry concerning the Bedouin life was written by men beside cosy library fires, who never made the acquaintance of a blood-thirsty camel tick, and it therefore needs revision. Longfellow's lines:

"The cares that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away"

than the contemplation of one's camel, and the soreness caused. The beast himself, with his lumpy, snake-like neck, and moth-eaten patches of hair, like those of a pop-eyed gold fish, with the sunken spaces of a poison snake behind them; and with his frayed ears alongside of a small brain pan, is an endless source of interest. Small wonder that he figures so largely in Arab lore. He lives on what he can crop in the desert; and, when trained to do so, can travel days without water, carrying a load of 300 pounds. His normal pace, at which movements of Asia have gone, whether as migrations of families like that of Abraham, or of nations like that of the Israelites, is three miles an hour, though a racing camel or dromedary is capable of great and long-sustained speed.

The noon halt, when belts are loosened and helmets laid aside and puttees and shoes removed, and when one lies down at ease to relieve the strain upon sore muscles, is a delight that is a revelation to the race's earliest experiences. After food—how the epicures of the American hotels and clubs would envy us the gustatory delights

of this simple repast from tin cans—it is a joy beyond the cunning of stagecraft to supply to watch the sharp movements of alert-eyed lizards; or to study the cumbersome flights of heavy-winged grasshoppers; or to behold the heat dancing upon the burning sands, or the fleecy clouds sailing lightly across rainless skies; or to contemplate the majesty of the red and rugged mountains of granite. These are the rewards of desert ways, denied to the man who lives ever within hail of a taxicab and a policeman. What though one wears his pistol ever in sight and within reach; and his rifle hanging on his saddle, the possibility of a life-and-death brush with the Bedouin gives one scarcely a thought; and at worst it is no such carking care as brings weariness into the eyes of the city man.

One day, as we drew near to Sinai, we made our noon halt in a garden; Moses may easily have watered the flock of his father-in-law Jethro by this very well. From the time we left the outskirts of Tor until this fourth day of the journey we had not seen a single human habitation. The black tents of the Bedouins are pitched up in the side wadis, or ravines. Twice we had met

passing Arabs, when there were formal and stately greetings between them and our escort, with handclaps and touching of foreheads together. This garden showed human care. Fenced in by stones, it occupied a third of an acre or more. In addition to palm trees, it contained pomegranates in all their red glory of bloom; olives, almonds, apricots and grapes.

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