

Yemen and Its Khat



Three Wise Men of Yemen.

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YEMEN, an independent country of Arabia, across the lower end of the narrow Red sea from the Italian colony of Eritrea, is the latest land to enter into treaty relations with Italy. As a result the likelihood is seen of the peaceful penetration of southwestern Arabia by Italian influence.

This reign, like all other parts of Arabia, was under at least nominal Turkish control before the great war; but since it has constituted an Imamate, under the rule of the Arab Imam Yahya ben Muhammad ben Hamid al Din, who rules from Saba, Yemen has the distinction and the good fortune to be one of the few parts of Arabia that are of agricultural importance. Under a stable government it would have an important commercial future. The British protectorate of Aden is one of the chief outlets for its produce.

Yemen's American fame rests principally upon the familiar name of an almost deserted city, Mocha, through which coffee no longer comes, where debris clutters the streets, where only mosques remain intact.

Coffee still is a major crop of Yemen, but it is exported largely through Hodeda, and in even greater quantity via Aden, port of the British protectorate to the south, which today is the commercial neck of the Red sea bottle.

Order coffee in Yemen, however, and you will not repeat the experiment. For the Arabians of coffee-land prefer the husks to the berries, and the brew therefrom has been compared to hot barley water. To the occidental mind this concoction affords neither flavor or stimulus. The Yemenite looks elsewhere for a stimulant—to khat.

The world knows almost nothing about khat. Our scientific books are nearly silent on the subject. Travelers who ought to have observed its uses write from hearsay and usually with the most amazing ignorance. There are even Europeans in the Yemen, whose servants have chewed khat every day of their lives, with so little knowledge of native life and customs that after years of residence they ask: "Why, what is khat? We never heard of it." Yet no Yemen event is complete without its presence, and no Yemen Arab—man, woman or child—passes a day if he can help it without the aid of at least a few leaves of the precious khat.

Khat Is Their Stimulant.

When the European is weary he calls for alcohol to revive him; when he is joyful he takes wine, that he may have more joy. In like manner the Chinese wows his "white lady," the poppy flower, the Indian chews bang, and the West African seeks surcease in kola. Khat is more to the Yemen Arab than any of these to its devotees. It is no narcotic, wooling sleep, but a stimulant, like alcohol. Unlike alcohol, it conceals no demon, but a fairy. The khat eater will tell you that when he follows this fairy it takes him into regions overlooking paradise. He calls the plant the "flower of paradise."

Catha edulis, as the plant is known botanically, grows to some extent in Abyssinia, but it is cultivated chiefly in the mountains of the Yemen interior behind Aden. The word khat is said to be derived from another Arabic word, kut, meaning sustenance or reviving principle, and refers to the most salient property of the plant, that of exalting the spirits and supporting the bodily strength, under extraordinary conditions, of one who eats its leaves. The researchers of Albert Better of the University of Strassburg, seem to show that its active principle is an alkaloid in the form of crystals, very bitter and odorless.

Along the steep, terraced slopes of the mountains between Taiz and Yerin you will find the small plantations of the khat farmer. Not till you have climbed nearly 4,000 feet will you see the first one, and when you reach 6,000 feet you will have passed the last.

Varieties and Cultivation.

Bokhari is the sweetest of all khat and by far the most expensive. The

supply is so limited that it is never seen except among the richest merchants of Zebide, Ibb, Taiz and Sanna. The commonest kind is Moquari, which grows in the district of Makatra, about four days' camel ride from Aden, and most of the 2,500 camel loads of khat which reach Aden in the course of a year is of this variety.

Khat cultivation is simple. The plant bears neither flowers nor seeds, but is grown from cuttings. After the farmer has flooded his field till the soil has absorbed its utmost of water, he covers it with goat droppings and allows it to "ripen" for a few days. Then he buries the cuttings in shallow holes from 4 to 6 feet apart, with space enough between the rows for pickers to pass. But the Yemen cow and the sad-eyed camel, whose maw is never filled, have a nice taste in khat cuttings, and to discourage these marauders the farmer covers each hill with thorn twigs and spiny cactus leaves. Sometimes he trains one of the half-wild dogs which infest the village to guard that particular field.

At the end of a year the young shrubs are two feet high with a thickly spread green foliage 18 inches in diameter. Behold now the farmer going out into the dawn of each morning to gaze at his field and the sky in the hope of seeing the portents of harvest time. On a morning the air is thick with bulbuls, sparrows, weaver birds, shrilly clamoring. They rise and fall upon his plants, picking at the tenderest leaves. "Allah be praised!" cries the simple farmer, "the leaves are sweet and ripe for the market."

And now he calls his women and the wives of his neighbors to the crop-picking. Under a bower of jasmine vines, with plumes of the sweet-smelling rehan in their turbans, the farmer and his cronies gather to drink kishar from tiny cups and smoke the hubbuk, while the womenfolk bring them armfuls of the freshly cut khat leaves. What a joyous time it is for all the village; for always the farmer distributes the whole of his first crop among his neighbors.

The khat plant grows from 5 to 12 feet in height and then it stops. As the foliage thickens, the larger branches are pruned out to prevent crowding, and when the plant is sixteen years old the top usually dies. It is cut off about a foot above the ground, and from the stump new shoots spring out and the plant is reborn.

Marketing in Aden.

In Aden the arrival of the khat camels is looked forward to as the chief daily event. When they arrive, about noon, the market is filled with a restless, yelling mob. Bedlam has broken loose, but it is a merry, good-natured bedlam.

After the khat is weighed on the government scales and duly taxed, it is divided into bundles the thickness of a man's forearm. Then the sellers mount tables and auction it off.

In an hour the place is all but deserted and the foot-marked, earthen floor littered with debris. Now come the vendors of firewood and all the dejected castles, like scavengers, to buy the refuse for a few pice. But out in the streets may be seen hundreds happily wending homeward, a bundle of the precious leaves under each arm, their jaws working and their eyes full of a delicious content. It is close on to noon, and you will not see them again until after two o'clock.

Contrary to the general opinion, khat is never used as a beverage in the Yemen, but the fresh leaves are invariably chewed. The youngest leaves are the best. They have a sweetish, slightly astringent taste, not unpleasant to the European palate, but certainly not alluring. When brewed, they lose most of their strength and the flavor of the decoction is much like that of grapevine "cigarettes."

Just what is the exact toxic effect of khat on the human system has never yet been ascertained. It is certainly a stimulant with a lively and nearly immediate effect upon the brain and nerve cells; the gloomiest man becomes cheerful under its influence, the most enervated active.

Cunning Forgery Plot Is Revealed

Girl's Fascination for Ice Machine Helps in Solving Big Crime.

New York.—The cast of "The Great Capitol Theater \$148,000 Check Forgery" includes a sign painter, a Fatty Arbuckle-sized elevator boy, a girl fascinated by an automatic ice-producing machine, an elderly and innocent New Jersey business man of established honesty and several as yet unidentified persons. The elevator boy, who admits, according to the police, that he got \$1,500 out of the \$148,000, is held in the Tombs on a forgery charge. The girl is being detained as a material witness.

William Roedel, the elevator operator, is what detectives call a "sap" or "sucker." He was not, according to the charge against him, unaware of the plot. But he was so naive that he got but a fraction of his share of the loot. The respectable business man was E. P. Ford, sixty-four years old.

Mr. Ford knew nothing of the plot, and when he finally became suspicious, notified the authorities. The sign painter, whose name is either unknown or being withheld, was the "master mind" in a scheme as clever as any that clever criminals have yet evolved. Nancy Kirby, the girl interested in refrigeration, was merely Roedel's sweetheart.

The largest, if not the chief, character in the plot, was Roedel. The elevator boy had been an object of pride, if also of some embarrassment, at the Capitol theater on Broadway. Once he had been a slender chap, but the ease of his life caused him to grow rapidly. Hired eight years ago, he was becoming so large that passengers in the building began to complain that no one else could get into his elevator. He weighed 256 pounds.

The Moredall Realty corporation runs the Capitol theater. One of its rules has been never to discharge an employee who was faithfully performing his duties. Even the most exacting official could not complain that Roedel was doing anything else. If he was growing corpulent it was an act of God and certainly not a cause for discharge. There were no other places vacant in the theater and he could not be transferred.

So Roedel continued operating the elevator, even if casually inspectors making their periodical examinations of the machinery looked at him with a suspicious eye and intimated that they were going to reduce the number of persons legally permissible as long as he continued to operate the hoist. "Fatty"—so he was called by his phrase-making fellow workers—was paid \$28 a week and seemed contented.

Liked His Job.

His salary may not have been commensurate with his size, but the post at the Capitol carried with it pleasant privileges. He had passes for most of the other Broadway motion picture theaters, for instance. Very frequently he was given seats for legitimate shows. Often he appeared with Miss Nancy Kirby, known along Broadway as "his steady." Miss Kirby, nineteen, or so, and pretty, also gradually acquired the pass courtesy at other theaters.

One day some weeks ago Roedel was operating his car and listening to a somewhat bored look to the occasional gibes from passengers about his size. He was due to go off duty early in the evening and was to take Nancy out. Possibly he was beginning to feel that \$28 a week was a small salary on which to give a girl a good time. It is quite possible that Nancy had started to urge him to earn more. At all events, so his story later related to the police goes, he lent a receptive ear to evil suggestions from a man who had formerly painted signs around the theater.

The artist, Roedel's alleged story goes on, said that he knew of a magnificent trick whereby he had picked up \$12,500 in Springfield, Mass. It was a clutch and now, with several friends, he was anxious to try it on a larger scale. Roedel, the man went on, had the freedom of the building in which is the Capitol theater. He knew of the offices of the Moredall

Realty corporation. All that he was to do, in return for \$15,000, was to admit them to the offices of the corporation. The whole thing was to be done on a high plane—no safe-blowing, robbery or gun-play.

"You're the kind of a man that could use money," they told him. "You ought to be a heavy spender—not just a \$28-a-week elevator pusher. With fifteen grand you can have a swell time. Haven't you got a girl that can help you have a good time?"

The picture was too alluring for Roedel, as he thought of the luxury-loving Nancy Kirby, and he gave in. He closed his eyes. The sign painter and his associates went into the Moredall Realty corporation offices one night, got out the company's check book and wrote two checks—each for \$76,500. They used the special machine by which authentic checks of the company are identified, handed Roedel \$1,500 in part payment of his share and departed.

Hire an Executive.

Then they left Manhattan and took up headquarters in Newark. Their first step there was to insert an advertisement in a newspaper saying that they wanted an executive to operate an office. This was in the name of the Forco Products company. Mr. Ford answered their advertisement and agreed to a salary of \$150 a week and a share of the profits. He was told to open offices in the Military Park building in Newark, engage stenographic help and prepare for a rush of business. One of his supposed employers called himself Howard P. Dwyer and the other went by the name of Graham.

Soon afterward the two men came in with checks that they wished to deposit. They told Ford to open an account, and he did so, in his own name, at the National Newark and Essex Banking company. He was told to deposit two checks, each for \$76,500 each drawn on the Equitable Trust company of New York, and each apparently signed by the Moredall Realty corporation. Dwyer and Graham explained they were the profits from a real estate deal. Ford deposited the checks.

A few days later the two business men breezed in smoking big cigars. Ford had been slightly puzzled by the fact that he had been asked to do nothing at all. But his employers explained all this by saying that a big deal, which was to start everything, was hanging fire. They told him to draw \$68,500 in cash. This he did. The next day they said to draw \$79,500 additional, leaving \$5,000 on deposit. Ford also did this.

From then on, for almost a week, Ford sat in his office and waited for developments in Washington. He became suspicious that his employers were not entirely honest and suggested that the Equitable Trust company investigate the authenticity of the two checks. The drafts, being extremely skillful forgeries, had been passed by the bank without question. But when the Moredall Realty corporation was notified their real nature was discovered.

Manager Eliminated.

Both the National Surety company and the American Surety company had contracts with the Equitable Trust company to protect the bank against forgeries. Ford, naturally, was the first man questioned. So straightforward was his explanation, so ingenious the scheme and so natural his innocent part in it that no one suspected for a moment that he was in any way guilty. He had lived in East Orange for a decade, had been in Paris as the representative of a textile company and had at one time been a vice president of the Durhex Leather company of Newark.

Ford was promptly eliminated as a participant in the conspiracy and went with police and the surety company operatives to examine rogues gallery and private detective agency photographic collections.

Alfred Tyrell, chief claims adjuster for the National Surety company, and Detectives August Mayer and Grover Cleveland Brown took charge of the investigation. Detectives frequented places where criminals were likely to gather, listened to rumors, but finally

Montreal Man Lays Claim to Labrador

London.—Rev. Isaac de la Penho of the Sephardi congregation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews at Montreal has just submitted to the privy council of the British empire a modest claim to ownership of the whole of Labrador. The land claimed comprises 511,000 square miles—about ten times the area of England.

Penho bases his claim, according to the Jewish World, upon a charter granted to one Joseph de la Penho, a wealthy merchant of Rotterdam, by King William III.

According to Reverend Penho his ancestor on one occasion saved King William and several members of the royal family from drowning when shipwrecked, and the king in appreciation bestowed upon "Joseph de la Penho and his heirs possession of Labrador."

heard that "Fatty" Roedel had resigned his job at the Capitol.

This was a thin clue to work on. Doing so they heard that Roedel had a girl friend named Nancy and they looked up some of the girl's friends. Where was she living? The friends said they did not know, but some of them remarked that there had been reports that she seemed to be prospering.

"She's living in a flat where there's an ice-making machine," the detectives finally were told.

Fascinated by Machine.

This proved a fertile source of information. It developed that Nancy Kirby was living at No. 7 West Ninth street, a fine new apartment hotel at the corner of Fifth avenue, where there were refrigerating machines in each apartment. Nancy had promised "Fatty" that she would keep quiet about their sudden affluence. But the ice machine was too much for her. "All you do," she told friends, "is to slip a tray of water in it. In a couple of minutes you yank it out and you have a lot of small cubes of ice. It's just like magic."

Her friends were properly impressed, so much so that when detectives crossed their trail they told of it. Then followed the unhappy evening recently when the operatives called at the Fifth avenue apartment. "Fatty" himself, gorgeous in a brocade bathrobe, opened the door. He looked at the men and knew at once who they were. "Come on in," he said. "I saw you at the Capitol last week. I'll tell you all about it. I'm tired of this Fifth avenue stuff, anyway. Give me Second avenue every time."

The detectives removed their derby hats and went in. They found the place stocked with cigars, candles and fruits. "Fatty" had been partial to these. They also found Nancy, unhappy and bitterly regretting she had told her friends in various motion picture theater ticket cages that she had struck it rich. The rent of the place, it developed, was \$325 a month. Roedel was taken in charge by the police and so was the girl. He talked freely, the police say, about the sign painter and his friends and about how he had permitted them to enter the offices of the Moredall Realty corporation.

"Fatty" admitted that he had been played for an easy thing. They never paid him more than the \$1,500. He had ten \$100 bills and \$15 in small bills with him. The rest had been spent for the necessities of life on Fifth avenue. He begged the detectives to let him keep the \$15 as a souvenir of his days of luxury.

One Man Spends Time in Collecting Odd Names

Tacoma, Wash.—Speaking of names, D. W. Clapsaddle declares he has found many others as bad or worse than his own. For twenty-five years he has carried a book in which he jots down names of people whose nomenclature is unusual, and it contains a Whiteleather, Turnspeed, Waggonwheel, Leatherberry, Grindstone, Shears, Brickbat, and Whetstone. The shortest he has heard of is Ek.

Dogs Start Fire

South Weare, N. H.—Two dogs fighting in a barn near here caused a \$3,000 fire. They upset a lantern.

Carnegie Hero Works Way Through College

Engene, Ore.—Although he has access to \$1,600 from the Carnegie hero fund, awarded him in addition to a medal for bravery, Vernon Callaway, University of Oregon senior, is working his way through school by washing dishes. This became known when trustees of the Carnegie fund wrote the university for a record of Callaway's scholastic standing.

Callaway received the awards for attempting to save the life of a schoolmate at St. Joe, Idaho. The ice broke while the boys were skating and the friend fell through.

Callaway jumped in and tried to keep him from sinking until help came. The boy drowned, however, before help came.

Glad to Pay

Philadelphia.—Bernard J. Willis is happy to pay a fine of \$100 to a bachelors' club for getting married. Mrs. Willis recently won a bathing-beauty contest.

LIFE'S LITTLE JESTS



WHY CHANGE?

A friend of ours complains that the coal he gets nowadays isn't what it used to be or what it should be for the cost. We are reminded of the story of an inventor who went to a coal dealer and said: "I have here something that you'll want, something new—a substitute coal that you can sell at half price." "Shucks!" returned the coal man. "Haven't we got one already that we sell at full price?"—Transcript.

REJECTED



Edward—Could we marry on my salary?
Mary—Just about, but I'd want to eat the next day.

Old Habits Cling

Irate Husband—Why is it that confounded new maid never answers when we ring the bell?
His Wife (placidly)—I don't think we'd better be too exacting at first, Herace. The girl tells me she used to be employed at a telephone exchange.

Case of the Docs!

First Pugglist—I'm hard, I am!
Second Pugglist—"Uh, huh! After I investigate your anatomy with my boxing gloves there'll be somebody investigating your anatomy with rubber ones.

A Purist

"Sarah ammoniac—you have it, of course."
"Do you mean sal ammoniac?" asked the druggist.
"I believe it is sometimes called that," replied the lady stiffly.

Improved With Age

Hewitt—George Washington could not tell a lie.
Jewett—Well, statesmanship was only in his infancy in his time.

Not That Way

He—People are saying you married me because I had money.
She—Nothing of the sort! The reason was that I had no money myself.

Real Courage

Maxine—You can say what you like about Reggie! He's brave, anyway.
Velma—How so?
Maxine—He keeps a pet squirrel.

SUFFICIENT FOR HIM



"Son! You left this office early yesterday. How was it you said nothing to me?"
"I said good-by, sir!"

Mother's Tip

Friend—I suppose you cook what your husband likes.
Young Bride—No; mother put me on to a better plan than that. I started housekeeping with the understanding that he is to like what I cook.

A Skeptic

Murdock—What did Mr. Dubb do after missing his seventh putt?
Joyce—Took out his tape measure and measured the ball, then the diameter of the hole.

A Liberal Parent

"What did her father give her when they were married?"
"He gave her permission to return home after three quarrels and separations, but stipulated that after more than three they would have to arrange their reconciliations elsewhere."

Quite the Reverse

Patient—I can't afford to be sick.
Specialist—Is your business so profitable?
Patient—No; yours is.

GRASSHOPPERS, ONCE PEST, ARE NOW MISSED IN WYOMING

Cowboy State Now Ready to Declare Truce With Ancient Enemy and Welcome Them Back.

Cheyenne, Wyo.—Wyoming wants more grasshoppers. The cowboy state is ready not only to declare a truce with its ancient enemy, but to bid the pest welcome home to the Big Horn basin.

In the Wyoming of antiquity the hoppers flew in clouds thick enough to obscure the sun. Five years ago the basin had plenty. The plague did its annual damage to farm crops. Turkeys were introduced to combat the insects, and did so successfully. They routed the hoppers from the farm land and pursued the depleted insect army to mountain terrain.

Now a severe decline threatens the grasshopper crop and lamentations are being heard from the ranchmen, who, in the meantime have discovered that

they can reap enormous profits from turkeys, grown half wild on the grasshopper range in the mountain foothills. The turkey growing industry has increased by leaps and bounds; grasshoppers have accordingly declined. Grasshopper preserves for the propagation of turkey food are a possibility of the future.

Big Horn basin turkeys, excelling others because the climate and food conditions found in the basin make it a natural paradise for turkeys, already are famous all over the United States for their superiority. They are sought eagerly by dealers, who pay exceptional prices to the growers, 41 cents a pound being the 1925 rate. Big Horn basin ranchmen can grow rich on turkeys if only they can produce enough fowls. An unlimited number of fowls can be produced if only the grasshopper range bears up. As matters are, production cost is one-third, or less, of the selling price.