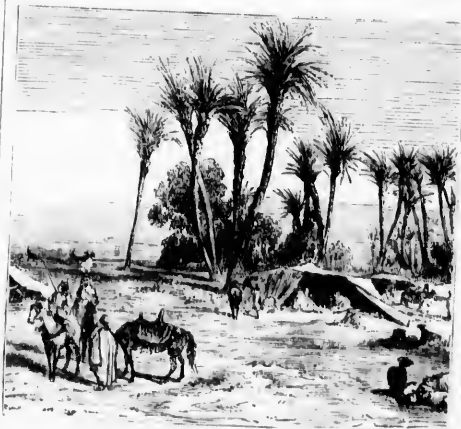


Asia. In summer the shepherds drive their flocks far up into the mountain-valleys in search of pasture.

745. The **Land of Dates** lies on the south of the Atlas Mountains. In this country, which is watered a little by the streams from the mountains, and is moistened to some extent by springs of water here and there, and by deep wells made by boring into the earth, we find beautiful groves of the date-palm, which flourish in the dry sandy plains where no other tree can live. This useful tree gives food to the shepherds, and shelters them and their flocks from the burning sun.

746. The **Sahara** is almost as large as the Dominion of Canada. Far as the eye can reach, not a tree, nor a blade of grass, nor a drop of water is to be seen; nothing but burning sand and barren rock. In other parts of this great desert there are vast tracts of firm soil, yielding dry, stunted herbage. Here and there, far apart, are springs



746. AN OASIS.

of water; and all around are green grass, shady palms, and fruitful vines. Such a fertile spot, called an *oasis*, must be very beautiful in the midst of the barren desert. Travelling merchants cross the Sahara in large companies, carrying cottons and beads to the Negroes of Central Africa, and

bringing back gold-dust, ivory, and ostrich feathers. They carry their goods on the back of the camel. This useful animal is sometimes called the "ship of the desert."

747. There is no road or beaten path across the desert, for the sand drifts about in the wind as snow in our country. Sometimes the wind blows very strongly, and the air is filled with clouds of sand. When the traveller sees the sand-cloud coming, he lies down, keeping his face close to the ground until the fearful storm has passed over. The camel also kneels and puts his nostrils down, so that he may not be suffocated with the driven sand. Travellers direct their course from one oasis to another, taking fresh supplies of water along with them.

748. **Central Africa** and the coast regions near the Equator have two seasons in the year,—a rainy season (when the rain pours in torrents during a part of every day), and a dry season. This part of Africa is highly fruitful, yielding all kinds of tropical products. Here are palms, oranges, figs, and cocoa-nuts. In some of the low marshy countries near the rivers the climate is quite unhealthy, and travellers are almost sure to be seized with malignant fevers. The native Negroes do not suffer so much, but they are said to be short-lived. Little is known of Central Africa south of Soudan, except that it is extremely hot, and has dense forests abounding in wild animals.

749. **Southern Africa** has less intense heat, and in the far south the climate is temperate, like that of the north. A great plain towards the south, called the *Kalihar* Desert, is quite barren in the dry season; but when the rains set in, it is soon covered with tall grass and beautiful flowers.

Animals.—750. In the dense forests south of the Great Desert and in the thickets along the margins of the lakes and rivers are many large wild animals—the largest in the world—as the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, crocodile, lion, and hyena. On the plains towards the south are beautiful antelopes and striped zebras. Here also is found a singular animal called the *gnu*, or horned horse.