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ON THE SAHARA DESERT

A Story of Travel

By DONALD CHAMBERLIN

When I first became a globe trotter Africa claimed my especial attention, not that Africa occupied by negroes, but northern Africa, which fifteen or twenty centuries ago was a Roman possession and a part of the then civilized world. I resolved to travel through Morocco into the heart of the great Sahara desert.

When I first set up for a traveler and crossed the British channel I found on the other side of that narrow strip of water a different people, speaking a different language.

But the change there was nothing to that in crossing from Gibraltar to Tangier. On the northern coast I left a British fortress; on the southern I found an Arab city. In the one was the pompous military uniform of soldiers; in the other, the long, sweeping barrican of the native.

The centuries have passed lightly over these people, changing instead of destroying. This barrican reminds one of the toga of the Romans who in the golden age of the Eternal City subjugated and occupied the African coast, and it has doubtless been handed down from the conquerors; only the toga was made of fine texture, while the barrican is of coarse cotton cloth. As to religion, there is not much choice between the ancient mythology and the superstitions of these swartzy people.

At Tangier I obtained an outfit for my journey into the desert. To travel in such a country is a very different matter from journeying in a Pullman car or an ocean liner. I needed a number of camels, a considerable quantity of provisions, to say nothing of water, and a lot of servants and guards. The camels were to carry the provisions and water and camp equipment, consisting of tents, cots, bedding and table kit. The guards were for protection against bandits, who infest the desert.

When one considers that the Sahara desert alone is in area about equal to that of the United States, that it is a

selves strong enough to attack us they would so so.

But in my case they found little encouragement. At least the game was not worth the candle. For the camels were the lives of a number of them. They have a wholesome dread of a European, and since my force was not only led by me—a white man—but well armed, they dared not attack us unless by stratagem. They could take us unaware or reduce our force. A plan to effect the latter object was put in operation while we were camping nights and traveling days.

One evening a band of Arabs came into our camp while we were getting ready for bed to ask for a little water. It was evident that they had called for the purpose of observation. There were as many of them as we were, and I was not sure but that they would attack us during the night. Just before morning, when the camp was wrapped in slumber and the sentinel would likely be drowsy, I heard the crack of a rifle. I arose at once, went out and found the sentry lying on the sand. I aroused the camp and sent men in different directions, while I examined the fallen man. He had been shot dead.

Those whom I had sent out returned, reporting that they had not seen a human being. One of them had seen a wolf, but that was all. Of course an enemy was near, but an Arab covered with his white barrican cannot readily be distinguished from the sand unless he stands against the sky line. This he is sure not to do if he desires concealment. He will lie down on the sand and pull his barrican over his dark body.

In the morning, having buried the dead sentry, we proceeded on our journey, re-establishing our camp in the evening. I was at a loss to know why the sentry had been shot, and during the night, being awake, I was thinking about what might have been his murderer's purpose when I was startled by another crack. I arose to find that another sentry had been killed. Again I deployed my men to hunt for the assassin, but not a living creature was to be found. He or they had excellent hiding ground among the sand billows, and the night was dark.

It was now plain to me that the Arabs who had visited us had done so to discover the number of our force. They had decided to reduce it by picking off a man every night until they had killed so many of us that they would feel warranted in attacking us. If they could appropriate an outfit it would be a fine property for them.

I confess I was staggered by their device. However, I set myself to meet stratagem by stratagem. The next night, after dark, I put a stake in the sand and on it fixed a dummy sentry by tying some of the fodder we carried for our camels about it and wrapping the whole with a barrican. Then I dug a hole, and after warning my men to sleep with their arms beside them and turn out on hearing shots I got into the hole with my rifle, intending to do the watching of a sentry myself.

Fortunately for my purpose there was a moon, though over it were thin clouds. It enabled me to see any moving object within a reasonable distance from my camp. I had been three hours or more in my hole and was getting cramped when I saw on the sky line of a sand billow some distance from me a black spot. It moved slowly down the side of the billow toward



I FOUND THE DEAD SENTRY.

vast stretch of sand billows, that its storms are the movement of immense sand clouds, it is not remarkable that few Europeans venture upon it. The spirit of loneliness rests on the face of the ocean of sand. The only inspiring part of the time is the night. I would look up at the starry heavens, and, surrounded as I was by a waste of sand billows, could the better realize the silent immensity of the universe.

The days being very hot, we usually traveled at night, resting under our tents by day. But during periods when the temperature admitted we would reverse the process. Night or day when resting I posted a sentry for the purpose of keeping out thieves. They would come to us on various pretenses—to ask for water, for information, indeed for anything that would afford an excuse for a visit. While with us they would purloin anything they could get their hands on. Their eyes were continually darting hither and thither for plunder, and if we were too vigilant for them they would observe our strength, our weakness, our vulnerable points; then they would go away, and if they considered them-

ms and, getting into comparatively level ground, wandered about apparently without any definite purpose.

I was not long in discovering that it was some animal of the desert in search of food. It would scratch in one place, then in another, occasionally digging a hole. In its wandering it was constantly drawing nearer my camp. When it got within a couple of hundred yards it stopped and sat on its haunches facing the camp. At that moment the clouds on the moon thickened, and I could not see the brute. When the sky lightened again it had disappeared.

I was thinking that it had gone away when I heard a crack and my dummy sentry, the support of which had been fixed in the loose sand, toppled over at an angle of about forty degrees. I was about to jump out of my hole and run forward when it occurred to me that the animal I had seen was a man covered by the skin of a wolf; that when the moon was darkened he had got into a hole and shot my dummy. Had not I better wait a few moments to see if he would leave his hiding place? I did so, and fortunately my men slept so soundly that they did not interfere.

I had only to wait a few minutes when I saw the animal walking leisurely away. Springing from my hole, I ran after the beast, and when I had got pretty near to him I stopped, took careful aim and fired. I knew that I had hit him, for I saw him roll over. At the same moment one of my men came running toward me, and he was shortly followed by the rest. We found an Arab in a wolf's skin, dead.

With my whole force I scoured the desert in a circuit of half a mile, but found not a human or a brute being. Doubtless confederates of the man I had shot were not far away, but probably had scooped out the sand, got in the depression and covered themselves, leaving only their faces exposed.

The next night we dug holes surrounding our tents, and I put a man in each hole, getting into one myself. I knew, the Arabs' stratagem having been interfered with, they would not be likely to continue it, but I feared that, having reduced our force by two men, they might think it feasible to adopt some other ruse to get near us without our being aware of their approach and rush us. But we passed the night without seeing anything except the sand and the starlit heavens, the latter, in contrast with the former, of double splendor. Our enemies had either given up their intention or were attempting to pull us into a false security. Every night during the rest of our journey to the next oasis I posted guards in holes, but we were not disturbed.

After moving southward to the twenty-sixth degree north of the equator I turned my camels' heads to the eastward to Tidikelt and thence back to the Mediterranean sea through Tunis.

It may be asked, What was the journey for? Simply to gratify my desire to experience one of the very different parts of the globe and study the peculiar peoples to be found there.

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Lambton's Population

Following are the population figures of the several municipalities in the County of Lambton, for the years 1913 and 1914.

Boscawen	1913	1914
Brooke	2290	2300
Dawn	2818	2738
Enniskillen	2722	2587
Euphemia	3227	3244
Moore	1546	1550
Plympton	3488	3488
Sarnia Township	2926	2870
Sombra	1818	2038
Warwick	3113	3346
Forest Town	2597	2487
Petrolia Town	1495	1495
Sarnia City	3899	4109
Alvinston Village	10985	11503
Arborea	788	783
Constright	418	418
Oil Springs	382	382
Point Edward	613	579
Theford	941	941
Wyoming	1215	1215
Watford	513	513
	1092	1215

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The average man on the bright side of entertaining and fun. He is one who is his own affairs but a day off and take vacation.

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