

**THE
PASSING OF
MOROCCO**

**BY
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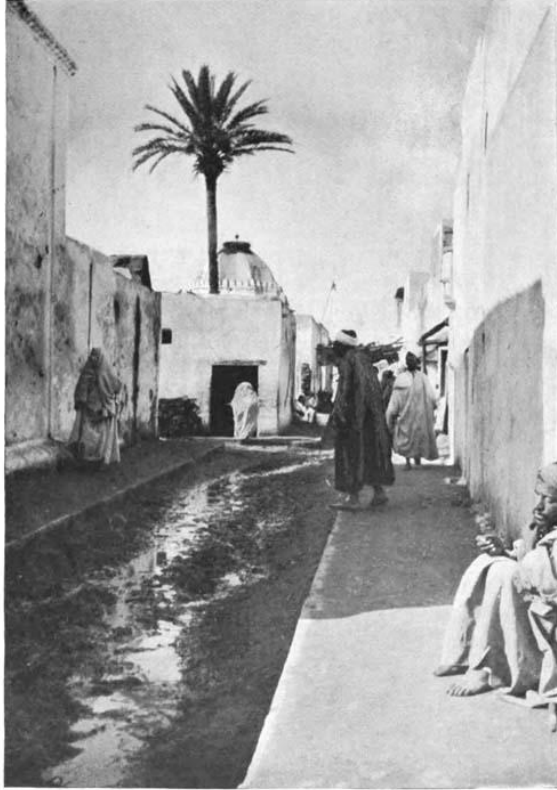
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Frontispiece.



A SAINT HOUSE.

TO
CHARLES TOWNSEND COPELAND

INTRODUCTION

FOR several years I had been watching Morocco as a man who follows the profession of 'Special Correspondent' always watches a place that promises exciting 'copy.' For many years trouble had been brewing there. On the Algerian frontier tribes were almost constantly at odds with the French; in the towns the Moors would now and then assault and sometimes kill a European; round about Tangier a brigand named Raisuli repeatedly captured Englishmen and other foreigners for the sake of ransom; and among the Moors themselves hardly a tribe was not at war with some other tribe or with the Sultan. It was not, however, till July of last year that events assumed sufficient importance to make it worth the while of a correspondent to go to Morocco. Then, as fortune would have it, when the news came that several Frenchmen had been killed at Casablanca and a few days later that the town had been bombarded by French cruisers, I was far away in my own country. It was ill-luck not to be in London, five days nearer the trouble, for it was evident that this, at last, was the beginning of a long, tedious, sometimes unclean business, that would end eventually—if German interest could be worn out—in the French domination of all North Africa west of Tripoli.

Sailing by the first fast steamer out of New York I came to London, and though late obtained a commission from the *Westminster Gazette*. From here I went first to Tangier, *viâ* Gibraltar; then on to Casablanca, where I saw the destruction of an Arab camp and also witnessed the shooting of a party of prisoners; I visited Laraiche against my will in a little 'Scorpion' steamer that put in there; and

finally spent some weeks at Rabat, the war capital, after Abdul Aziz with his extraordinary following had come there from Fez.

Of these brief travels, covering all told a period of but three months, and of events that are passing in the Moorish Empire this little book is a record.

Six letters to the *Westminster Gazette* (forming parts of Chapters I., IV., VI., XIV., XV., and XVI.) are reprinted with the kind permission of the Editor.

I have to thank Messrs. Forwood Bros., the Mersey Steamship Company, for permission to reproduce the picture which appears on the cover.

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THE PASSING OF MOROCCO

CHAPTER I

OUT OF GIBRALTAR

IT was in August, 1907, one Tuesday morning, that I landed from a P. & O. steamer at Gibraltar. I had not been there before but I knew what to expect. From a distance of many miles we had seen the Rock towering above the town and dwarfing the big, smoking men-of-war that lay at anchor at its base. Ashore was to be seen 'Tommy Atkins,' just as one sees him in England, walking round with a little cane or standing stiff with bayonet fixed before a tall kennel, beside him, as if for protection, a 'Bobbie.' The Englishman is everywhere in evidence, always to be recognised, if not otherwise, by his stride—which no one native to these parts could imitate. The Spaniard of the Rock (whom the British calls contemptuously 'Scorpion') is inclined to be polite and even gracious, though he struggles against his nature in an attempt to appear 'like English.' Moors from over the strait pass through the town and leisurely observe, without envying, the *Nasrani* power, then pass on again, seeming always to say: 'No, this is not my country; I am Moslem.' Gibraltar is thoroughly British. Even the Jews, sometimes in long black gaberdines, seem foreign to the place. And though on the plastered walls of Spanish houses are often to be seen announcements of bull fights at Cordova and Seville, the big advertisements everywhere are of such well-known British goods as 'Tatcho' and 'Dewar's.'

I have had some wonderful views of the Rock of Gibraltar while crossing on clear days from Tangier, and these I shall never forget, but I think I should not like the town. No one associates with the

Spaniards, I am told, and the other Europeans, I imagine, are like fish out of water. They seem to be of but two minds: those longing to get back to England, and those who never expect to live at home again. Most of the latter live and trade down the Moorish coast, and come to 'Gib' on holidays once or twice a year, to buy some clothes, to see a play, to have a 'spree.' Of course they are not 'received' by the others, those who long for England, who are 'exclusive' and deign to meet with only folk who come from home. In the old days, when the Europeans in Morocco were very few, it was not unusual for the lonesome exile to take down the coast with him from 'Gib' a woman who was 'not of the marrying brand.' She kept his house and sometimes bore him children. Usually after a while he married her, but in some instances not till the children had grown and the sons in turn began to go to Gibraltar.

My first stop at the Rock was for only an hour, for I was anxious to get on to Tangier, and the little 'Scorpion' steamer that plied between the ports, the *Gibel Dursa*, sailed that Tuesday morning at eleven o'clock. I seemed to be the only cabin passenger, but on the deck were many Oriental folk and low-caste Spaniards, not uninteresting fellow-travellers. Though the characters of the North African and the South Spaniard are said to be alike, in appearance there could be no greater contrast, the one lean and long-faced, the other round-headed and anxious always to be fat. Neither are they at all alike in style of dress, and I had occasion to observe a peculiar difference in their code of manners. I had brought aboard a quantity of fresh figs and pears, more than I could eat, and I offered some to a hungry-looking Spaniard, who watched me longingly; but he declined. On the other hand a miserable Arab to whom I passed them at once accepted and salaamed, though he told me by signs that he was not accustomed to the sea and had

eaten nothing since he left Algiers. As I moved away, leaving some figs behind, I kept an eye over my shoulder, and saw the Spaniard pounce upon them.

The conductor, or, as he would like to be dignified, the purser, of the ship, necessarily a linguist, was a long, thin creature, sprung at the knees and sunk at the stomach. He was of some outcast breed of Moslem. Pock-marked and disfigured with several scars, his appearance would have been repulsive were it not grotesque. None of his features seemed to fit. His lips were plainly negro, his nose Arabian, his ears like those of an elephant; I could not see his eyes, covered with huge goggles, black enough to pale his yellow face. Nor was this creature dressed in the costume of any particular race. In place of the covering Moorish *jeleba* he wore a white duck coat with many pockets. Stockings covered his calves, leaving only his knees, like those of a Scot, visible below full bloomers of dark-green calico. On his feet were boots instead of slippers. Of course this man was noisy; no such mongrel could be quiet. He argued with the Arabs and fussed with the Spaniards, speaking to each in their own language. On spying me he came across the ship at a jump, grabbed my hand and shook it warmly. He was past-master at the art of identification. Though all my clothes including my hat and shoes had come from England—and I had not spoken a word—he said at once, ‘You ’Merican man,’ adding, ‘No many ’Merican come Tangier now; ’fraid *Jehad*’—religious war.

‘Ah, you speak English,’ I said.

‘Yes, me speak Englis’ vera well: been ’Merica long time—Chicago, New’leans, San ’Frisco, Balt’more, N’York’ (he pronounced this last like a native). ‘Me been Barnum’s Circus.’

‘Were you the menagerie?’

The fellow was insulted. ‘No,’ he replied indignantly, ‘me was freak.’

Later when I had made my peace with him by means of a sixpence I asked to be allowed to take his picture, at which he was much flattered and put himself to the trouble of donning a clean coat; though, in order that no other Mohammedan should see and vilify him, he would consent to pose only on the upper-deck.

Sailing from under the cloud about Gibraltar the skies cleared rapidly, and in less than half-an-hour the yellow hills of the shore across the strait shone brilliantly against a clear blue sky. There was no mistaking this bit of the Orient. For an hour we coasted through the deep green waters. Before another had passed a bleak stretch of sand, as from the Sahara, came down to the sea; and there beyond, where the yellow hills began again, was the city of Tangier, the outpost of the East. A mass of square, almost windowless houses, blue and white, climbing in irregular steps, much like the ‘Giant’s Causeway,’ to the walls of the ancient *Kasbah*, with here and there a square green minaret or a towering palm.

We dropped anchor between a Spanish gunboat and the six-funnelled cruiser *Jeanne d’Arc*, amid a throng of small boats rowed by Moors in coloured bloomers, their legs and faces black and white and shades between. While careful to keep company with my luggage, I managed at the same time to embark in the first boat, along with the mongrel in the goggles and a veiled woman with three children, as well as others. Standing to row and pushing their oars, the bare-legged boatmen took us rapidly towards the

landing—then to stop within a yard of the pier and for a quarter of an hour haggle over fares. Three reals Moorish was all they could extort from the Spaniards, and this was the proper tariff; but from me two pesetas, three times as much, was exacted. I protested, and got the explanation, through the man of many tongues, that this was the regulation charge for ‘landing’ Americans. In this country, he added from his own full knowledge, the rich are required to pay double where the poor cannot. While the Spaniards, the freak and I climbed up the steps to the pier, several boatmen, summoned from the quay, came wading out and took the woman and her children on their backs, landing them beyond the gate where pier-charges of a real are paid.

At the head of the pier a rickety shed of present-day construction, supported by an ancient, crumbling wall, is the custom-house. Not in anticipation of difficulty here, but as a matter of precaution, I had stuffed into my pockets (knowing that my person could not be searched) my revolver and a few books; and to hide these I wore a great-coat and sweltered in it. Perhaps from my appearance the cloaked Moors, instead of realising the true reason, only considered me less mad than the average of my kind. At any rate they ‘passed’ me bag and baggage with a most superficial examination and not the suggestion that *backsheesh* would be acceptable.

But on another day I had a curious experience at this same custom-house. A new kodak having followed me from London was held for duty, which should be, according to treaty, ten per cent. *ad valorem*. It was in no good humour that after an hour’s wrangling I was finally led into a room with a long rough table at the back and four spectacled, grey-bearded Moors in white *kaftans* and turbans seated behind.

‘How much?’ I asked and a Frenchman translated.

‘Four dollars,’ came the reply.

‘The thing is only worth four pounds twenty dollars; I’ll give you one dollar.’

‘Make it three—three dollars, Hassani.’

‘No, one.’

‘Make it two—two dollars Spanish.’

This being the right tax, I paid. But I was not to get my goods yet; what was my name?



TANGIER THROUGH THE KASBAH GATE.

‘Moore.’

‘No, *your* name.’

‘I presented my card.’

‘Moore!’ A laugh went down the turbaned line.

A writer on the East has said of the Moors that they are the Puritans of Islam, and the first glimpse of Morocco will attest the truth of this. Not a Moor has laid aside the *jeleba* and the corresponding headgear, turban or fez. In the streets of Tangier—

of all Moorish towns the most ‘contaminated’ with Christians—there is not a tramway or a hackney cab. Not a railway penetrates the country anywhere, not a telegraph, nor is there a postal service. Except for the discredited Sultan (whose ways have precipitated the disruption of the Empire) not a Moor has tried the improvements of Europe. It seems extraordinary that such a country should be the ‘Farthest West of Islam’ and should face the Rock of Gibraltar.

CHAPTER II

NIGHTS ON A ROOF

I DID not stop long on this occasion at Tangier, because, from a newspaper point of view, Casablanca was a place of more immediate interest. The night before I sailed there arrived an old Harvard friend travelling for pleasure, and he proposed to accompany me. Johnny Weare was a young man to all appearances accustomed to good living, and friends of an evening—easy to acquire at Tangier—advised him to take a supply of food. But I unwisely protested and dissuaded John, and we went down laden with little unnecessary luggage, travelling by a French torpedo-boat conveying despatches.

Here I must break my story in order to make it complete, and anticipate our arrival at Casablanca with an account of how the French army happened to be lodged in this Moorish town. In 1906 a French company obtained a contract from the Moorish Government to construct a harbour at Casablanca; and beginning work they found it expedient, in order to bring up the necessary stone and gravel, to lay a narrow-gauge railway to a quarry a few miles down the coast. In those Mohammedan countries where the dead are protected from 'Infidel' tread the fact that the tracks bordered close on a cemetery, in fact passed over several graves, would have been cause perhaps for a conflict; but this—though enemies of France have tried to proclaim it—was not a serious matter in Morocco, where the Moslems are done with their dead when they bury them and anyone may walk on the graves. The French were opposed solely because they were Christian invaders

to whom the Sultan had 'sold out.' They had bought the High Shereef with their machines and their money, but the tribes did not intend to tolerate them.

After many threats the Arabs of the country came to town one market-day prepared for war. Gathering the local Moors, including those labouring on the railway, they surrounded and killed in brutal fashion, with sticks and knives and the butts of guns, the engineer of the locomotive and eight other French and Italian workmen. The French cruiser *Galilée* was despatched to the scene, and arriving two days later lay in harbour apparently awaiting instructions from home. By this delay the Moors, though quiet, were encouraged, hourly becoming more convinced that if the French could land they would have done so. They were thoroughly confident, as their resistance demonstrated, when, after three days, a hundred marines were put ashore. As the marines passed through the 'Water Port' they were fired upon by a single Moor, and thereupon they shot at every cloaked man that showed his head on their march of half-a-mile to the French consulate. At the sound of rifles the *Galilée* began bombarding the Moslem quarters of the town; and the stupid Moorish garrison, with guns perhaps brought out of Spain, essayed to reply, and lasted for about ten minutes.

But the landing force of the French was altogether too small to do more than protect the French consulate and neighbouring European houses. Town Moors and Arabs turned out to kill and rape and loot, as they do whenever opportunity offers, and for three days they plundered the places of Europeans and Jews and at last fought among themselves for the spoils until driven from the town by reinforcements of French and Spanish troops.

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