

# LETTER FROM "MARK TWAIN."

[SPECIAL TRAVELLING CORRESPONDENT OF THE ALTA.]

[Number Four.]

**The Ubiquitous Brown--Rough Arabic Surgery--  
No Country for Courting---A Good Deal  
Married---Three Sundays in One Week---  
Ancient Customs---Moorish Notions of For-  
eign Countries---But One American Family  
in Tangier---A Dull Place.**

TANGIER, AFRICA, July 1st, 1867.

## Desecration.

EDITORS ALTA: About the first pass we made yesterday afternoon after landing here, came near passing in Mr. Brown's checks. We had just mounted some mules and asses, and started out under the guardianship of the stately, the princely, the magnificent Hadji Mohammed Lamarty, (may his tribe increase!) when we came upon a fine Moorish Mosque, with tall tower, rich with checker-work of many-colored porcelain, and every part and portion of the edifice adorned with the quaint architecture of the Alhambra, and Brown started to ride into the open door-way. A startling "Hi-hi!" from our rusty camp-followers and a loud "Halt!" from an English gentleman in the party, checked the adventurer, and then we were informed that so dire a profanation is it for a Christian dog to set foot upon the sacred threshold of a Moorish mosque that no amount of purification can ever make it fit for the faithful to pray in again. Had Brown succeeded in entering the place he would no doubt have been chased through the town and stoned, and the time has been, and not many years ago either, when a Christian would have been ruthlessly slaughtered if captured in a mosque. We caught a glimpse of the handsome tessellated pavements within, and of the devotees performing their ablutions at the fountains, but even to take that glimpse was not relished by the Moorish bystanders.

Some years ago the clock in the tower of the mosque got out of order. The Moors of Tangier have so degenerated that it has been long since there was an artificer among them capable of curing so delicate a patient as a debilitated clock. The great men of the city met in solemn conclave to consider how the difficulty was to be met. They discussed the matter thoroughly, but arrived at no solution. Finally, a patriarch arose and said:

"Oh, children of the Prophet, it is known unto you that a Portughee dog of a Christian clock-mender pollutes the city of Tangier with his presence. Ye know, also, that when mosques are builded, asses bear the stones and the cement and cross the sacred threshold. Now, therefore, send the Christian dog on all fours and barefoot into the holy place to mend the clock, and let him go as an ass!"

And in that way it was done. Therefore if Brown ever sees the inside of a mosque he will have to cast aside his humanity and go in his natural character.

## Moorish Customs.

We visited the jail, and found Moorish prisoners making mats and baskets. This thing of utilizing crime savors of civilization. Murder is punished with death. A short time ago three murderers were taken beyond the city walls and shot. Moorish guns are not good and neither are Moorish marksmen. In this instance they set up the poor criminals at long range, like so many targets, and practiced on them--kept them hopping about and dodging bullets for half an hour before they managed to drive the centre.

When a man steals cattle, they cut off his right hand and left leg, and nail them up in the market-place, as a warning to everybody. Their surgery is not artistic. They slice around the bone a little, then break off the limb. Sometimes the patient gets well; but, as a general thing, he don't. But the Moorish heart is stout. The Moors were always brave. These criminals undergo the fearful operation without a wince, without a tremor of any kind, without a groan! No amount of suffering can bring down the pride of a Moor, or make him shame his dignity with a cry.

Here, marriage is contracted by the parents of the parties to it. There are no valentines, no stolen interviews, no riding out, no courting in dim parlors, no lovers' quarrels and reconciliations--no nothing that is proper to approaching matrimony. The young man takes the girl his father selects for him, marries her, and after that she is unveiled and he sees her for the first time. If after due acquaintance she suits him, he retains her; but if he suspects her purity he bundles her back to her father; if he finds her diseased, the same; or if, after just and reasonable time is allowed her, she neglects to bear children, back she goes to the home of her childhood.

Mohammedans here, who can afford it, keep a good many wives on hand. They are called wives, though I believe the Koran only allows four genuine wives--the rest are concubines. The Emperor of Morocco don't know how many wives he has got, but thinks he has five hundred. However, that is near enough--a dozen or so, one way or the other, don't matter.

Even the Jews in the interior have a plurality of wives.

I have caught a glimpse of the faces of several Moorish women (for they are only human, and will expose their faces for the admiration of a Christian dog when no he-Moor is by,) and I am full of veneration for the wisdom that leads them to cover up such atrocious ugliness. If I had a wife as ugly as some of those I have seen, I would go over her with a nail-grab and see if I couldn't improve it.

They carry their children at their backs, in a sack, like other savages the world over.

Many of the negroes are held in slavery by the Moors. But the moment a female slave becomes her master's concubine her bonds are broken, and as soon as a male slave can read the first chapter of the Koran (which contains the creed,) he can no longer be held in bondage. It would be a good idea to apply this educational test to his race in America.

America. They have three Sundays a week in Tangier. The Mohammedan's comes on Friday, the Jew's on Saturday, and that of the Christian Consuls on Sunday. The Jews are the most radical. The Moor goes to his mosque about noon on his Sabbath, as on any other day, removes his shoes at the door, performs his ablutions, makes his salaams, pressing his forehead to the pavement time and again, says his prayers and goes back to his work. But the Jew shuts up shop; will not touch copper or bronze money at all; soils his fingers with nothing meaner than silver and gold; attends the Synagogue devoutly; will not cook or have anything to do with fire; and religiously refrains from embarking in any enterprise.

Now these fellows worship just as Moses did; their habits and customs are just as they were in Biblical times; they dress as they dressed in the buried and forgotten generations of the past--all of which is to say that they are an inconceivably rusty-looking set now and consequently must have been in the days of the Old Testament--and how they ever came to be the chosen people of the Lord is a mystery which will stagger me from this day forth till I perish.

The Moor who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca is entitled to high distinction. Men call him Hadji and he is thenceforward a great personage. Hundreds of Moors come to Tangier every year and embark for Mecca. They go part of the way in English steamers, and the ten or twelve dollars they pay for passage is about all the trip costs. They take with them a quantity of food, and when they run out they skirmish. From the time they leave till they get home again they never wash, either on land or sea. They are usually gone from five to seven months, and as they do not change their clothes during all that time, they are totally unfit for the drawing-room when they get back.

Many of them have to rake and scrape a long time to gather together the ten dollars their steamer passage costs, and when one of them gets back he is a bankrupt community forever after. Few Moors can ever build up their fortunes again in one short life-time, after so reckless an outlay. In order to confine the dignity of Hadji to gentlemen of patrician blood and possessions, the Emperor decreed that no man should make the pilgrimage save bloated aristocrats who were worth a hundred dollars in specie. But behold how iniquity can circumvent the law! For a consideration the Jewish money-changer lends the pilgrim \$100 long enough for him to swear himself through, and then receives it back before the ship sails out of the harbor!

## Spain and the Moors.

Spain is the only nation the Moors fear. The reason is, that Spain sends her heaviest ships-of-war and her loudest guns to astonish these Moslems, while America and other nations send only a little contemptible trap of a gun-boat occasionally. The Moors, like other savages, learn by what they see--not what they hear or read. We have got great fleets in the Mediterranean, but they seldom touch at African ports. The Moors have a small opinion of England, France and America, and put their representatives to a deal of red-tape circumlocution before they grant them their common rights, let alone a favor. But the moment the Spanish Minister makes a demand, it is acceded to at once, whether it be just or not.

Spain thrashed the Moors five or six years ago about a disputed piece of property opposite Gibraltar, and captured the city of Tetouan. She compromised on an augmentation of her territory, \$20,000,000 indemnity, in money, and peace. And then she gave up the city. But she never gave it up until the Spanish soldiers had eaten up all the cats. They would not compromise as long as the cats held out. Spaniards are very fond of cats. On the contrary, the Moors reverence cats as something sacred. So the Spaniards touched them on a tender point that time. Their unfeline conduct in eating up all the Tetouan cats aroused a hatred toward them in the breasts of the Moors to which even the driving them out of Spain was tame and passionless. Moors and Spaniards are foes forever now. France had a Minister here once who embittered the nation against him in the most innocent way. He killed a couple of battalions of cats (Tangier is full of them), and made a parlor-carpet out of their hides. He made his carpet in circles--first a circle of old grey tom-cats, with their tails all pointing toward the centre; then a circle of yellow cats; next a circle of black cats and a circle of white ones; then a circle of all sorts of cats, and finally a centre-piece of assorted kittens. It was very beautiful, but the Moors curse his memory to this day.

## Adieu.

I find I cannot write up my notes, and so I will stop. When we went to call on our American Consul General, Mr. McMath, to-day, I noticed that all possible games for parlor amusement seemed to be represented on his centre-tables. I thought that hinted at lonesomeness. The notion was correct. His is the only American family in Tangier. There are many foreign Consuls in the place, but much visiting is not indulged in. Tangier is clear out of the world, and what is the use of visiting when people have nothing on earth to talk about? There is none. So each Consul's family stays at home chiefly and amuses itself as best it can. Tangier is full of interest for one day, but after that it is a weary prison. Mr. McMath has been here five years, and has got enough, and is going home shortly. His family seize upon their letters and papers when the mail arrives, read them over and over again for two days or three, talk them over and over again for two or three more till they wear them out, and after that, for days together, they eat and drink and sleep, and ride out over the same old road, and see the same old tiresome things that even decades of centuries have scarcely changed, and say never a single word! They have literally nothing whatever to talk about. The arrival of an American man-of-war is a God-send to them. "Oh, Solitude, where are the charms that sages have seen in thy face?" It is the completest exile I can conceive of. I would seriously recommend to the Government of the United States that when a man commits a crime so heinous that the law provides no adequate punishment for it, they make him Consul General to Tangier.

I am glad to have seen Tangier, the second oldest town in the world. But I am ready to bid it good-bye, I believe.

MARK TWAIN.

## A Familiar Name.

Looking over the register of the Royal Victoria Hotel a while ago, I came across the name of J. C. L. Wadsworth, of San Francisco, under date of April 27th. How came he to wander to this out-of-the-way place?

I forgot to say that the population of Tangier is about 20,000. Of these, 14,000 are Moors, Arabs and Bedouins, 5,000 are Jews, and 1,000 are Christians of many nations.

M. T.