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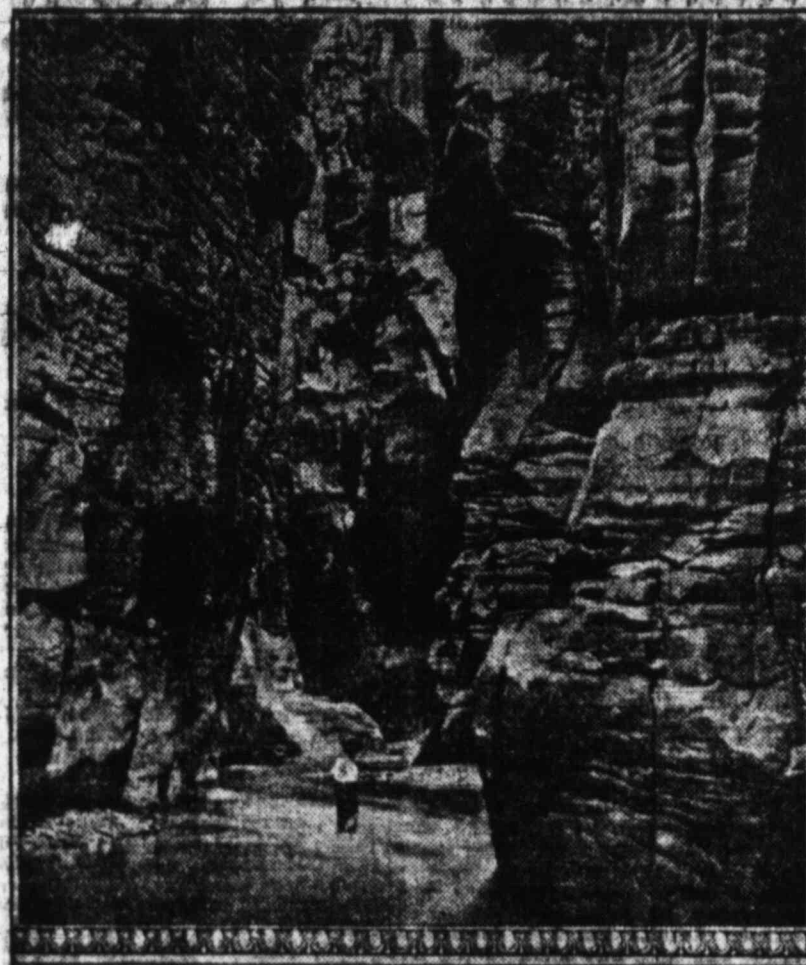
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# KAHN'S CO.

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# AROUND the DEAD SEA



GORGE OF THE RIVER ARNON

I RECENTLY spent a week upon the Dead sea, that historic but little known sheet of water in Palestine, in a motor boat, writes Harold J. Shepstone in the Quiver. Starting at the northern end of the sea, we skirted along the western shore, visiting Engedi, Masada, the great salt cave at Jebel Usdum, explored the wonderful gorges, and tramped over the delightful little fertile oases that dot its banks, and then up the eastern shore to our starting point.

The Dead sea is some forty-seven miles long and about ten miles wide at its greatest breadth. Curiously enough, it lies no less than 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. Many ridiculous stories are told about this sheet of water, even in Palestine itself. For instance, people will tell you in Jerusalem that it is impossible to swim in its waters, and that no animals or vegetables can exist near its shores. While it is true that fish cannot live in the lake, birds may frequently be seen, in certain places, flying over its surface. As for swimming, the excessive buoyancy of the water merely renders it difficult to make much headway, but swimming is both feasible and refreshing. Among the party on our vessel there were several who could not swim, yet in the evening they often ventured into the water and floated on their backs. What one has to be careful about is not to get the water into the eyes.

**Sea increasing in size.**  
It has generally been believed that this famous inland sea is decreasing in size, but the reverse is the case. Some twenty years ago there was a small island about half a mile from the north shore. This has now entirely disappeared; whilst on the west, east, and south shores evidences of the encroachment of the waters upon the land were noticeable in the presence of partially submerged forests of large trees still standing in the death-dealing waters.

In circumnavigating the lake four or five very fertile little plains, abundantly well watered, and capable of untold development, were discovered. They are so hot and so well watered that as soon as one crop is harvested, another can be put in, it not being necessary to wait for seasons or sunshine. The choicest grapes and other fruit can be gathered several times a year. A harvest of millet can be gathered in two or three months at almost any period of the year.

Sailing from the northern end of the lake, Engedi, on the west side, was our first stopping place. This must have been a little paradise in the time of Solomon, and is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. The name Engedi (the spring of the wild goat, ibex) evidently was given to it because these creatures came here for the water. The cliffs rise to a height of 1,300 feet, and the crags, no doubt, afforded a natural home for them.

**Fortress of Masada.**  
About ten miles south of Engedi is the peerless natural fortress of Masada (Sebbeh), first fortified by the Maccabees, then used as a place of refuge by Herod, and finally immortalized by the flight thither and stand made by the Sicarii, or Zealots—when the country was subjugated by Titus—in the vain hope of escaping enslavement by the Romans. The fortress, which is 1,700 feet above the sea, has steep sides at an angle of about 75 degrees, and cannot be approached except from a connecting neck called the Serpentine, at this point that the besiegers concentrated their forces. A more impregnable place, or one more disadvantageous to besiegers, could not be imagined. Here was extinguished the last spark of Jewish independence.

An eight-mile journey along the coast from here, and Jebel Usdum comes into view. This is nothing less than a mountain of rock salt, six miles long, rising at one point to a height of 500 feet. In this mountain is a large cave which was explored to the extent of about two hundred yards. It is dimly lighted up to this point by a natural shaft in the rock salt, which admits the sunlight from above. The shaft is 80 feet high and 20 feet in diameter.

From the ceiling of this cave hang great snow-white stalactites, very salty and bitter to the taste. The approach to this mountain presents most fantastic appearances of walls, buttresses, parapets, projecting towers, etc., caused by the stratification and lay of the salt bowlders.

**Canyons of Palestine.**  
Going northward, the magnificent gorge of the river Arnon was reached. This certainly contains the finest natural scenery in Palestine. The sides of the canyon rise perpendicularly about three hundred feet, and are only about two hundred feet apart, here overhanging, there overlapping or dovetailing into one another, as though this mighty mass had been violently rent asunder to allow the seething stream of the Arnon, with its cascades and whirlpools, access to the sea. The gorge was explored for a distance of half a mile, probably farther than anyone had before penetrated.

Here one is afforded a striking picture of the difference between the western and the eastern sides of this wonderful sheet of water. The cliffs along the former are of limestone, while those on the eastern shore are of sandstone of exquisite hues. Words cannot describe, nor can the palter depict, much less the camera portray, the exhaustless variety and beauty of the veining and tracery in the richly shaded sandstone forming the cliffs of this wonderful gorge.

About eight miles farther north lie the hot baths of Callirhoe. Here Herod came, when stricken with his last sickness, in the hope of finding that recovery which he sought in vain, and here the remains of his buildings can be seen. Several miles higher up lies the castle of Machaerus, where John the Baptist was beheaded. This is evidently a very volcanic region. From great clefts in the mountain-sides, where one can distinctly hear the bubbling of the flowing hot waters, clouds of steam rise up.

The Zerka—a stream almost as great as the Arnon, and amidst surroundings of much the same character, but having a small plain on the seashore that might very well be cultivated—flows into the sea some fifteen minutes' journey farther north from Callirhoe.

Here, as elsewhere, the wild oleander, with its beautiful pink flower, is abundant, also the reed, with its feathery tuft or bloom, "shaken by the wind," and referred to by Christ; also the willow, the tamarisk, and the "gharaf," a pretty-looking wild fruit much like a cherry, as well as that strange plant, the apple of Sodom. This, though looking like a beautiful fruit, collapses at the touch, and contains nothing but a little smoke-like dust and some silk-like fiber. Mount Nebo, from which Moses viewed the Promised Land, is about opposite the north end of the sea, on the tablelands, and Medaba about ten miles inland, in a straight line. Between Medaba and Kerak, before crossing the River Arnon, lies the ancient Dibon, where was discovered the gigantic Moabite Stone.

The jury in the case of Mattie Houston vs. Fort Worth & Denver for damages, returned a verdict this morning granting the plaintiff \$300; she was injured when struck by an engine in the Denver yards.

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