



Yemen has a long and rich history, stretching back millennia, but it is still *terra incognita* to most people. There is no other part of the Arabian Peninsula as rich in heritage, including architecture, irrigation works, inscriptions and a vital tradition of poetry, proverbs, music, dance and intellectual writing.

Yemen Update Redux is dedicated to providing a variety of past writing and images about Yemen's heritage. This includes selections from the earlier print edition of *Yemen Update* and other brief writings on Yemen and its people. Yemen's past lives on no matter the turmoil of the present.



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The Queen of Sheba as You Never Knew Her



While attending the MESA conference in Portland in 1992, I wandered into a downtown bookstore which was holding a reception for MESA members. I was browsing through the Middle Eastern books, thinking something new or significant might turn up. All of a sudden I noticed a title (*The Queen of Sheba: Her Life and Times*) by Phinneas A. Crutch, B.A., M.A., F.P.A., S.O.S. Interesting degrees, but S.O.S.? I should have gathered something was amiss from the start. This particular book was published by G. P. Putnam's Sons (New York and London) in 1922. I was unfamiliar with the work of Mr. Crutch; the more I became familiar with it, the more I found myself laughing convulsively. As it turns out, this is a farce, a tongue-in-cheek swipe at the dry archaeological fare of the time.

There is a one page bibliography at the end of the book which at first seemed to test my Yemen trivia penchant to the limit. How many of you have heard of the following: An Autobiography of Balkis of Sheba, translated from the original manuscript by the Pan-Arabian Society in 1886; Filbert's Marib Old and New, published in Boston in 1911; Hornblower's *The Enigma of Sheba*, also published in Boston in 1886; Outhouse's *With Shush in Africa*, published in Philadelphia in 1894; Tortoni's *Ma'in la Bella*, printed in Florence in 1908; Trouthook's *Street Cries and Epithets of old Ma'in*, London, 1806. Never heard of these before? Well, that's because you never read anything by Phinneas A. Crutch before.

I have no idea who the author behind Phinneas A. Crutch is, but he or possibly she was not entirely ignorant of the Queen of Sheba story. Was this a disgruntled student of Oriental Studies at a time when it was still chic to be an orientalist? Was it a well-known Assyriologist, who needed something to do in between translating biblical parallel annals? What, by the way, did Sir Leonard Woolley do for fun on those long, electricity-lacking nights on the dig at Ur? We can hardly blame Mac Gibson, because he wasn't even born at the time. If you have any ideas about the origin of this marvelous book, please send them along.

Though tempted, I cannot reproduce the entire book. I provide you with a few excerpts, to be continued next issue. In the meantime, no S.O.S. is needed, just sit back in your favorite easy chair and H.A.G.T. [D. Varisco]

The Queen of Sheba: Her Life and Times

by Phinneas A. Crutch

(New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922)

Foreward

Countless volumes, incunabula, brochures and miscellany, with which every student of history is intimately acquainted, have been issued concerning the more salient incidents of the life and reign of Balkis, Queen of Sheba.

One has only to speculate, as indeed one can scarcely abstain from doing in moments of fascinated leisure, upon this richly controversial subject, to call to mind at once such authoritative works as Professor Hornblower's *The Enigma of Sheba*, with its masterly discussions based on contemporary sources, in which he conclusively disposes of the distorted reports touching upon the Queen's accession; Gorton's *Secret Memoirs of the Court of Sheba*, which, in spite of a deplorable tendency on the author's part to accept canard for chronicle, nevertheless remains a monumental contribution of its kind to the bibliography of the period; Heimweh's scholarly monograph, *Zeitgenossen der Konigin Balkis*, an admirable study of the social and literary movements of her time; and Gaston Poteau's delightful *Voyages de la Reine de Saba*, which needs no recommendation other than its own charm and whimsicality of comment, even in less purely Sheban circles of research.

If, at so late a date, one presumes to offer an additional treatise supplementing the foregoing, chosen at random from amid the mass of printed material inspired by this

extraordinary reign, it is from a conviction, fathered by hope, that a wider survey of the time than is set forth in any of the more specialized existing documents will be indulgently received — and particularly by that great reading body of the public which is ever more deeply concerned with the human frailties of a career than with its stagecraft, more warmly stirred by a glimpse of unrecorded impulse than by the graven monuments of staid deliberation, more closely sympathetic to the personal record of advancing years than to the cold chronology of edicts.



The Queen of Sheba (from the frontispiece)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

It is in this spirit, therefore, a spirit of lenient toleration, of mild reserve in the face of temptatious criticism, of restrained veracity untouched by any gossipry, claver, or reportage, that one approached the life and age of Balkis, Queen of Sheba—she who was born before her time and remained to outlive her day, in whom the East and the West were met and the lioness couchant with the ewe, whose way was paved with well-intentioned errancy, for whom no reticence was too forbidding, no curiosity too shameless, no new departure too prodigal of candlelight. She, who was but a child, and yet who stood alone in the midst of bearded men, and, with many innocent

questions, brought them to their separate ends, *La petite Balkis*, as Gaston Poteau so quaintly puts it...

Chapter I: East of Suez

The first millennium, old style, dawned lugubriously for Sheba.

For more than three centuries she had seen the glory of the coming of a hundred lords. When it was not Rameses II it was Mernepthah. When it was not Mernepthah it was the Children of Israel. In Assyria, no sooner was Shalmaneser laid with his uncles and his aunts than Tiglathpileser I was afoot. And after him Ashurnazirpal. And after them both, Merdukzer and Eulmashshakinshum, the Babylonians. Nearer home, the Kings of Ma'in were a thorn in the flesh, a pebble in the shoe, a mote in the eye. More recently, too, the power of Tyre was risen to be a nightmare on the face of the waters.

Sheba was become the cockpit of Arabia...

Chapter II: Baby Balkis

1

At a very early age the little Queen-to-be gave evidence of two pronounced peculiarities. She was ambidextrous, and double-jointed throughout. In addition it had become apparent, as the light burden of her young years began to accumulate, that she was destined to be deliriously beautiful, in the fatal Scythian style every characteristic of which — alabaster skin, jade colored eyes, fiery red or "salamander" hair, tiny hands and feet — she possessed to a bewildering degree. Aside from that she was a romp, a hoyden, a madcap, a hotspur and a tomrig of the first water. So much so that when it came time to furnish a name for her, to supplement her royal cryptonym which might of course never be uttered above a whisper, the caconym of Balkis was chosen, meaning Tomboy.

If any evidence of her vagarious nature other than the testimony of eye-witnesses were needed Balkis herself furnishes it in striking fashion. Perhaps more than any ruler in history, certainly with infinitely greater prolixity than other contemporary sovereigns, she rushed into script on all occasions and on all topics in a passion for self-revelation which provides a veritable cranberry bog for her biographers, embarrassing though it may have been for her relatives, friends and associates whom she does not spare in her autobiography.

Of her extraordinary diaries there are four hundred and sixty-two volumes extant, half of which must be read with the aid of a mirror since, on account of her ambidextrousness, it was her practice to write two volumes at a time, one forward and the other backwards. And on the subject of her youthful



escapades she is very explicit, and disarmingly shameless.

"Salhin Palace," she says once, "was designed in what is called the Sheban manorial style, with roofs and turrets, and tin camels on top of them. Such a beautiful structure.

I was a child of the sand dunes and quite untamable.

I rode my camel-foal up the front stairs and tried to teach the Governor's high stepping Bactrians to jump, which they, poor knock-kneed creatures, were not in the least prepared to do now that I look back on it. I climbed our perilously inclined roof and slid down off it into the dunes sitting on a slaver, by moonlight in my nightdress. Already in my earliest youth I had scrambled up every monkey tree, walked on my hands on top of every wall, and sat astride of every tin camel in my childhood home. I was, I suppose, utterly fearless. I thought absolutely nothing of running along the narrow ridges of the roof at breakneck speed, shod only in my gum sandals. This alarmed people so much, however, that I was reluctantly obliged to abandon this pastime."

In another chapter she states that:

"I very soon showed a remarkable proficiency in dancing and contortionism, and could lift both my feet to the level of my finely penciled eyebrows and then clasp them behind my neck with disconcerting ease. This harmless amusement, or so I found it, seemed to shock a great number of people who went around saying, 'Look at Balkis with her Scythified airs.' A remark the full import of which I only appreciated later, but then I was never one to care what people said about me."

Again elsewhere she observes:

"I was the life, and very often nearly the death, of the palace, and what my nurse described as 'a perfect hell of a child.' Our camel driver's wife called me a little microbe. Bumptious, excessively passionate, disagreeably plainspoken, impertinent as well as foolhardy, and always scornful of etiquette I was, no doubt, almost impossible to tolerate."

So Balkis fearlessly describes herself. It seems only fitting to add Talmud's famous characterization.

"Balkis," he admits in his own diaries, "was not a plaster saint, nor even a plaster cast. She was a

calamitous, clackety, combustive little imp of creation, full of furore, improvisation, high temperatures, and the common or garden bean."

2

In the meantime her education, as befitting a little Sheban Princess, was not being entirely neglected, in spite of the great handicap under which her governesses and tutors labored as a result of her well known habit of disappearing into the dunes for days and nights at a time, accompanied only by her faithful Tyrian trundletails.

It was upon her return from one of these absences, which had been even more prolonged than usual, that she made her famous entrance into the audience hall of the palace where her guardians were assembled, discussing whether after all it were not their duty, irrespective of their personal feelings, to cause at least a nominal search to be made for her. The debate was at its hottest, many being of the opinion that it was a hopeless and entirely unnecessary task to look for a Princess in a sand dune, when the door suddenly flew open and Balkis came caracoling into the room, to the mingled relief and disappointment of the council.

"Here's me!" she announced in her shrill treble.

It is almost exclusively owing to the efforts of her devoted nurse, Sophonisba, that any results whatever in the matter of proper upbringing and breeding were achieved with the wayward child who defied correction and spurned instruction. This Sophonisba seems to have been an extraordinary woman in many ways, that she should have been able to remain in close contact with her little charge for so long without losing either her mind or the child is proof of that; and, while in the company of her other governesses and teachers Balkis was forever giving way to tantrums and miffs—often putting their eyes out with her thumbs and otherwise annoying them—with her nurse she never resorted to any bodily violence.

3

Notwithstanding the many interruptions in her schooling, Balkis was rigorously drilled in the fundamentals of learning essential to a Sheban young lady of her station.

Besides her own native Sheban, she spoke

Phoenician, Mainim, Aramaic and Hebrew, and was able to make herself quite clearly understood in Aspirine, Listerine, Phenacetine and the various Arsenic, Sulphuric and Antiseptic dialects. There was hardly a living language in fact of which she did not possess at least a smattering.

She was unusually proficient in cuneiform and hieroglyphics as also in the difficult Sheban consonantal script, written *boustrophedon*, alternately from right to left and left to right or as the ox plows. In the use of the *abacus* she was thoroughly versed, although, as she often confessed afterwards, she had absolutely no head for figures and preferred counting on her fingers to any other method of computation. To her dying day she could never master the number of finger-breadths in a palm, nor the table of spans, cubits and reeds. Gaston Poteau attributes much of her later enthusiasm for travel to her utter misconception of distances.

In the higher branches of culture she received instruction in sarcophagus painting, mummy gilding, stone carving and papyrus chewing, as well as in the arts of perfumery, cosmetics, double-dyeing and depilation, palmistry, chiropody and poisoning. She was a finished performer on the lute, the three stringed *tanbur* and the *zamar*, not to mention the harp and the dulcimer, a matchless exponent of the dance, both sacred and profane, and of course an accomplished camelwoman.

Her reading, as might have been expected from her nature, was never confined to manuscripts especially dedicated to her sex but always inclined to more masculine subjects. She soon tired of *Saphira and her Friends*, *Three little Shulamites*, *Little Mainim Maidens* and similar works, and turned eagerly to the boy stories of battle and adventure with which her half-brothers littered the nursery.

At fifteen she talked like a boy, she behaved like a boy, she often dressed like a boy, she could pass anywhere for one.

4

Balkis was just fifteen years of age when she discovered her exact relation to the crown of Sheba and the precise significance of the presence of her four older half-brothers. Hornblower vividly describes the scene.

"Until her fifteenth year," he says, "Balkis had been kept in ignorance of her close connection to the throne, very largely on account of her own supreme indifference to the history of her country." Her mother she could not remember; her father she saw very seldom, and then only as Caliph of Marib, the title which he adopted when visiting his estates; her half-brothers avoided her like the plague and never discussed family matters with their half-sister; there was nothing to arouse in her any suspicion of the true state of affairs.

On her fifteenth birthday, however, she accidentally came across a cuneiform table, inscribed on a brick which had strayed from her oldest half-brother's historical stack, showing a list of the Kings and Queen Consorts of Sheba and their progeny. At the bottom of the list she found her name.

"Hot stuff!" she exclaimed. "Everybody works but Father."

Her whole attitude towards national history changed at once. She summoned her tutors and soundly berated them for concealing these vital statistics from her, and asked a hundred and one questions concerning the ultimate possibilities of her discovery. At the end of the interview, in spite of serious damage to several members of her suite, she was forced to a realization of the fact that there had never been a Queen of Sheba in her own right. Her comment on this point was characteristic.

"We shall change all that!" she announced.

When, at great personal risk, one of her teachers ventured to point out to her that in any case she was the youngest of five children of the reigning sovereign, and consequently outranked by four half-brothers each one of whom in turn would take precedence over any claims she might advance, Balkis burst into tears and smashed the disappointing brick into a thousand fragments over the unfortunate man's head. She retired, finally, to brood over her cheerless future and as she left the apartment she was heard to observe —

'Eni, Meni, Maini, Mo,
Catch a brother by the toe,
If he cries don't let him go,
Eni, Meni, Maini, Mo!"

But as so often happens not enough importance was attached to this at the time." ...



[Next time we will continue with the visit of Balkis to Solomon.]

In the last issue of Yemen Update I published the first part of selected excerpts from a 1920's archaeological spoof attributed to a certain Phinneas A. Crutch. Still no word on who Crutch really was. Is this a mystery forever to be shrouded from future generations of South Arabian specialists? What, no sleuths among our readers? Do send in any wry comments. One reader of the last issue was so moved by the article that he paid up his dues. I received an e-mail message from Jon Mandaville, past-president and editor, who is waiting with an ottomanesque anticipation for this installment, as are Mikhail Rodionov and his daughter in St. Petersburg.

[D. Varisco]

The Queen of Sheba: Her Life and Times

by Phinneas A. Crutch

(New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922)



The Queen of Sheba (from the frontispiece)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Chapter VI Pilgrim's Progress

One of the greatest controversies arising from the many perplexities bequeathed to posterity by the reign of Balkis has raged for centuries over the question of the real motive for her visit to Solomon, aside from her natural curiosity to see with her own eyes the most talked of man in Asia Minor. A controversy which has engaged the attention not only of scholars and historians, but of men in all walks of life in every period of the world's subsequent history; and has precipitated by far the larger portion of the world's bitterest disputes — if one is to accept the verdict of one of the most erudite investigators of all time.

Gossoon, to whom reference is of course made, in his *Underlying Causes of History*, has given to society the fruit of his exhaustive, and, as he himself admits in his preface, exhausting researches into the actual wellsprings of the great schisms which have rent mankind at various times. And it is his unshakable conviction that the endless and acrimonious speculation concerning the Queen's voyage is to be found at the roots of all these successive evils.

According to Gossoon¹ "... one may attribute to this one factor, to cite only a few cases at random, the merciless enmity of Rome against Carthage, the murder of Julius Caesar, the advance of Attila upon Western Europe, the invasion of Britain by William the Conqueror, the age-long strife between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, the massacre of the

Huguenots, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, the departure of the Puritans from England, the American Revolution, the Reign of Terror, Napoleon's divorce from Josephine, and the downfall of at least nine French ministries.²

For generations the human race has fought, burned and slaughtered to settle this atrabilious dispute, and the end is not yet...."

Three distinct schools of opinion had sprung into being at so early a period even as the First Crusade, and did much to disrupt the harmony of effort of those ventures, until finally in more modern times the irreconcilable differences between these groups became crystallized into definite phrontisteries of thought which demand a brief analysis.

2

The first group, known as the Necessitarian School, whose greatest exponent is unquestionably Hornblower, hold to the theory that Balkis did not undertake the journey of her own accord, but was sent for by Solomon and coerced into convening with him; a belief expressed in their motto, Necessity is the mother of conventions. Among the really important partisans of this theory one finds Pontius Pilate, Ivan the Terrible, Martin Luther, Mary de Medici, Napoleon, Wagner, Lord Gladstone, Adelina Patti and George Washington.

The second category, often spoken of as the Heroics, has numbered among its disciples such personalities as Confucius, Julius Caesar, Brian Boru, Lucrecia Borgia, Queen Elizabeth, Cardinal Richelieu, Frederick the Great, the Duke of Wellington, Bismark, Victor Hugo, Lord Byron and Florence Nightingale.

They, on their side, profess to find in the famous journey a startling proof of statesmanship on the part of Balkis and her advisers. To their minds Balkis was a heroine and Shenanikin a paragon of diplomacy.

The third class, usually referred to as the Abolitionists, a smaller clique of which, as might be expected, Heimweh is the acknowledged master, flatly deny that the visit to Solomon ever took place; or, if they grudgingly admit it in the face of scriptural testimony, it is only to assert that the visiting Queen was not Balkis but another. Of the more outstanding adherents to this view one may cite Cleopatra, Charlemagne, Abelard, Dante, Christopher Columbus, Montezuma, William Tell, Charlotte Corday, Lord Tennyson, Tolstoi, and Queen Victoria.

3

One need have no hesitation whatever in stating

once and for all that all three of these schools are hopelessly in error.

One has only to go to Gaston Poteau for the explanation. What, as he himself points out, Diogenes really spent his life searching for and Archimedes actually discovered when he sprang from his bath shouting "Eureka," Poteau in turn unraveled. Without for a moment detracting from Gossoon's work, the truth of which he regretfully admits, the Frenchman utterly refutes Hornblower, Transom, Heimweh and the rest of them, and all their tenets, and proves the correctness of his deductions beyond peradventure.³

Poteau rests his case on the testimony of Talmud, Shenanikin and Balkis herself.

In Talmud's diaries of the period under consideration he finds the following instructive passage:⁴

"Verily, the Queen suffers exceedingly from loss of sleep, pondering throughout the night over the questions which do so vex her mind. It is her wish to visit Solomon, to lay these perplexing matters before him, and while I do not believe that any lasting good will come of it I do encourage her in this determination, deeming the journey may be beneficial to her."

This would seem to dispose of the Necessitarian theory, and, if anything, supports the Heroic point of view. Poteau, however, immediately quotes the following significant extract from Shenanikin:

"Lay late this morning, thinking of this and of that, and in particular of the Queen's dilemma, and as troublesome a problem as I ever did see. The Queen it seems is minded to visit Solomon and seek his advice on this question, if possibly he may have wisdom to explain wherein she hath erred. And she would have me tell her what I think of this plan, which I, poor wretch, cannot do, having no head for such matters.

All day thereafter at my stint, for which I had no zest whatever, and many come interrupting me with foolish prattle of what the Queen should do which did but confuse me. And so home and to bed."⁵

One is at a loss to see in this any trace of the Heroic's brilliant diplomat, any vestige of a heroic Queen displaying phenomenal statesmanship in the face of international complications — any indications, in fact, of any such emergency. There is no reference here, or in any of Shenanikin's writings, to Shush, or to Tyre, or to any impending danger to Sheba such as one would expect from the Regent if these matters had ever been under discussion. The Heroics are quite obviously cheering under the wrong window, as someone has said.⁶

But the paragraphs from the Queen's own diary which Poteau produces are even more conclusive.⁷

"... I have thought VERY deeply about this thing," she says, "and I have decided that it must be due to some little fault of my own. We all have our own



faults of course, and it is much better to recognize them and try to get the *better* of them than to remain *blind* to them, as this only leads to unhappiness and often prevents one from fulfilling one's *highest* mission in life, and of course one's mission in life is a very important thing.

But the trouble is I have tried and tried to think of a fault and I can't find any. I am not in the least conceited, but I can't help realizing that I am *peculiar* that way, because I really haven't any faults, and I always think that *false* modesty is worse in many ways than pride. And so I have decided to go and ask Solomon about it, since he has had so *much* experience and is really TREMENDOUSLY clever. I thought it was awfully cute of him to pretend to cut the baby in two when the mothers were quarreling about it last month, and he is always doing bright things like that, so they say.

I have already begun to put down questions I want to ask him and shall add to them a little every day so that I can really *profit* by my visit, and perhaps I can help him with some suggestions. I always think there is nothing like an *intelligent* question to draw a person out. I find I already have four hundred and sixty-two of them on my list, and of course before I get to Jerusalem I'll have a *great* many MORE..."

Can anyone seriously maintain that the foregoing does not entirely dispose of the Necessitarians, the Heroics, and the Abolitionists as well, at one stroke of the pen? Balkis went to Solomon in person, of her own free will, and for reasons far removed certainly from affairs of state, of which latter she does not breathe a word, she who was wont to fill pages with both hands concerning the most minute undertakings of her realm. Poteau makes this very clear.

"Ce n'est pas pour des prunes," he writes in his witty style, "it is not for a dish of prunes that the Queen undertook this journey. It was not for reasons of state, nor was it to take the air. It was to consult Solomon on a personal matter — *une affaire tres delicate* — concerning her own character. What was the nature of this fault which she so desired to discover, the basis of that experience which rendered him so competent to enlighten her?"

Why did *la petite Balkis* run at once to him *who had been married seven hundred times* ..."

The answer "jumps into one's eyes," as he ex-

presses it. Balkis went to Solomon to ask him why it was — in his opinion, who had discovered attractions in so many different women — that no man could be found who was willing to have *her* for his wife.

4

As may be imagined, the Queen's cortege for the journey was one of considerable splendor, and involved antecedent preparations of overwhelming magnitude. From contemporary outside sources one learns simply that she came to Solomon —

"... with a very great train, with camels that bore spices, and very much gold and precious stones."

This is a coldly furnished forth description of the glittering pageant which filled her courtyards with the motley of a thousand rainbows, and poured out of Marib into the plain beyond for three days and nights. Never before perhaps, and certainly never since, has Arabia witnessed such a procession winding across its golden sands, over the hills and far away.

Two such processions, for of this host one part set out in advance of the other and proceeded by land up the coast to the Ezion-geber, there to await the Queen. This caravan, comprising five hundred camels and several hundred mules guarded by three thousand soldiers of all arms, carried with it nothing but the Queen's wardrobe and the bulk of her personal paraphernalia, contained in some two thousand pieces of baggage.⁸

The other section, which was infinitely more gorgeously caparisoned and more richly freighted than the rest, included the Queen's personal suite, attendants and scribes, the retainers attached to Sophonisba, who of course followed her royal mistress, and Balkis herself; an assemblage of several hundred personages, satellites and minions escorted by the entire Sheban Guards Brigade. Poteau describes the passage of this cavalcade as follows:

"The line of march was headed by the Heralds, mounted on brindled dromedaries and supported by three companies of Guards. After them in single file came the officials selected to constitute the Queen's staff, surrounded by their slaves, and riding in brilliantly ornamented litters covered with cloth of gold to protect them from the stains of travel.

There next appeared another company of Guards, especially detailed to watch over the ten gilded cages containing the Queen's cats, and preserve order in the twenty tanks of black goldfish from which these felines were fed, an extremely arduous task owing to the peculiar ferocity of this breed of the ichthyomorphic species.⁹ The rear of this subdivision was occupied by the royal servants, hair-dressers and manicurists, under the immediate supervision of Sophonisba, and contained, besides, the Queen's ivory bath and the seventy-five white she-asses who provided the milk in which she immersed herself daily in that commodious receptacle.

After these, in her jeweled litter of state — fitted for the occasion with jade wheels rimmed with gold and drawn by thirty full-blooded zebras jingling with silver bells and diamond studded harness — preceded by a corps of air purifiers known as Dust Biters, and attended by her tablet carriers, time passers and cramp eradicators, the Queen, in a simple traveling dress of spun glass with her locks concealed by a close fitting cap of elephant's hair, feverishly dictating questions in preparation for her impending interview.

'It's the first seven hundred questions that are the hardest,' one of the scribes is reported to have informed Sophonisba.

The remainder of the train was made up of slaves, cooks, dream interpreters and scribes, together with the five hundred camels bearing the gifts for Solomon, and the other presents in kind.¹⁰

5

The Queen's train reached the coast at Hodeidah without mishap, it having been her intention to embark at that point and proceed by sea to Ezion-geber there to rejoin the first section, and it was at the former port, according to Poteau, that one of the most ludicrous, and at the same time annoying, incidents of the voyage took place.

For it seems that camp having been pitched, while the camels and other beasts with their paraphernalia were being loaded onto barges specially prepared for their reception, when it came time to put the Queen's cats aboard, the latter were no sooner safely ensconced on the deck than the rats began to aban-

don the vessel in great haste, swarms of them scurrying ashore through every loophole and down every rope.

Whereupon the sailors, ever a superstitious lot, mutinied, declaring that the departure of rodents from a ship could only spell disaster in the near future, and refusing to take passage on such a foredoomed craft. The rebellion spread with great celerity throughout the entire fleet, the crews scrambling ashore almost as rapidly as the rats, and bade fair to disrupt all the arrangements for the journey.

Balkis, when apprised of this state of affairs, flew into a rage.¹¹

"Oh rats!" she exclaimed, and caused herself to be carried down to the beach where she summoned the dripping sailory to her presence.

"Oh Queen, have a heart!" they implored her. "This ain't no time to sail on this here, now, Red Sea, no Ma'am!"

"And why not?" she enquired.

"'It's because of them rats, Queen," they explained. "They've hooked it ashore, that's what, and that there galloping menagerie ain't worth a chirp in a gale of wind, no Ma'am."

"And what do you propose to do about it?" she demanded.

"Saving your presence, Ma'am," they informed her, "we ain't going to ship on no floating sarcophagus, not by Sheba we ain't! We're honest seafaring sailormen, we are, and we stand for our rights first and last!"

"Aye, mates, that we do, by the great blistering barnacle! Yo ho and a bottle of gum..."

"But this is mutiny!" she warned them,

"Queen," they replied, "you guessed it the first time."

Things looked very black, but Balkis was not one to be abashed by circumstances. With a frown which, according to an eye-witness of the scene, would have split a rock in two she sprang from her litter and drew a line in the sand with her big toe.

"Sheba expects every man to do his duty," she informed them. "When I've finished counting up to ten those of you who haven't stepped across this line and returned to your ships will be put to death on the spot. Take your choice."

"Verily," they grumbled, "we are between the she-





devil and the deep Red Sea."

"One, two, three, four —" Balkis began to count.

At the word ten every man had stepped across, and the great Hodeidah rat mutiny, or Whisker Rebellion as it was always called henceforth for some reason, was at an end.¹²

6

A departure was finally made, amid great demonstrations of enthusiasm from the beach, and the fleet proceeded in a leisurely manner up the coast, tacking this way and that before the varying winds, and resorting to the banked tiers of oars when a calm caught the heavy-laden barges drifting. Poteau states that:

"The presence aboard of so much live stock unaccustomed to watery locomotion, and consequently assailed by terror and other discomforts of a gastronomic nature, resulted in a constant neighing and hee-hawing, a perpetual bleating and baaing and bellowing, an uninterrupted whiffling and burbling of camels, which could be heard for miles and drew men, women and children out from the coastwise villages on both shores of the Red Sea, marveling at this unusual din upon the surface of the waters.

Added to this the intermittent mewling and purring of the Queen's cats, the noise of the musicians making merry with their trumpets and drums, the ceaseless whirring of gambling wheels, and the singing of the sailors at their chanties all combined to produce a terrifying cacophony in the midst of which the ship's companies sought such sleep as they might achieve, and which brought the fish gaping from the depths, as one chronicler has said.

As for Balkis, she seems to have spent her time sorting out her question tablets and scrambling about in the rigging to her heart's content. The sailors, already considerably disturbed by the abnormal features of this voyage, were at first in great trepidation at the sight of the Queen walking carelessly from mast to mast along the ropes and winding herself around the spars, but they gradually became accustomed to the spectacle and derived much innocent amusement from it."

So the days and nights passed and Coomfidab and Jeddah were astern, and then Yemho, Aboonood and

Moilah; the waters narrowed under the shadow Sinai and the Gulf of Akabah was entered, until finally on a placid morning the shining minarets Ezion-geber came spiring over the horizon to greet the approaching armada.

7

The Queen's barge anchored in the outer harbor while the accompanying vessels were being made fast at the piers to be unloaded of their freight, and a great concourse of officials, including the high dignitaries of Ezion and the chiefs of her own caravan who were awaiting her, put out in small boats to do her homage and offer suitable tokens of loyalty and respect.

The Address of Welcome itself was unfortunately never delivered, owing to an accident to the craft in which it was being conveyed, as a result of which the majority of the marble slabs on which it had been inscribed were lost overboard and sank to the bottom of the Bay, together with the Captain of the Port of Ezion and a number of other minor patronages; but the Freedom of the City was successfully presented in a diamond casket and graciously received by Balkis, who thereupon entertained her visitors at a gorgeous banquet which is reported to have lasted three nights and two days.

At last, on the fifth morning — the official having by then, according to Poteau, recovered sufficiently to be taken back to land and prepare for his formal reception — the royal barge was towed into the inner harbor through waters strewn with roses. Sharon, and Balkis went ashore, amid the mingled strains of the Sheban national anthem and the vociferous outcries of a frenzied populace, where she was greeted by her recent guests and by the Envoy attached to her person by Solomon as his special representative.¹³

The Queen stopped to inspect the guard of honor drawn up on the pier, exchanged a few kindly words with a veteran of the Philistine War, and then drove through the principal streets behind her prancing zebras between closely packed ranks of cheering humanity to the Governor's palace where a state luncheon was served, at the end of which she is supposed to have made her famous observation, t

the effect that:

"We, who are about to diet, salute you!"¹⁴

The remainder of the day was spent in a review of the garrison, during the course of which Balkis conferred the Order of the Ivory Bath on a number of officers and was elected Honorary Captain of the Ezion Legion, and in the late afternoon her convoy set out through the North Gate for Jerusalem, increased by Magog's voluminous suite and by her own sumptuary caravan.

8

From Ezion the great host traveled slowly northward through Edom, arranged in a hollow square of which the Queen's litter, attended now by Magog, was the center, and disposed in ranks of two hundred camels abreast the better to guard against stragglers. On through the Desert of Zin, past Mount Hor to Kadesh, and ever onward to Zephath at the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, or the Great Salt Lake as it was better known. Thence, bearing westward, to Arad, and then northward again along the black stone paved road until Hebron was reached, where Balkis rested for two weeks while she sent couriers to Solomon with the news of her near approach.

Poteau says that "... the enthusiasm over her coming passed all bounds. All along the line of march the towns and villages were hung with garlands and decorated with triumphal arches; and the route which she followed was lined with spectators come from every corner of Israel, many of whom had been encamped on the spot for weeks, sometimes for months, awaiting her arrival.

Her appearance was greeted everywhere with frantic acclamations, and the magnificence of her enormous retinue aroused the bewildered, although always shrewdly appraising, admiration of the simple country folk.

"Oy, oy!" they cried continuously. "From gold she got everything! What did she done she should get it so much *mezumeh*? See now, zebras yet!"

It is estimated that Balkis received two hundred and forty deputations, accepted the freedom of more than three hundred communities, tasted some six hundred and fifty bowls of goat's milk, patted three thousand four hundred and seventy-six little girls on

the head, and had her hand kissed twelve thousand times, so much so, in fact, that her knuckles became calloused from such indiscriminate osculation."

At the end of two weeks Balkis set forth with a chosen escort on the last stages to Jerusalem, leaving the bulk of her establishment to follow a day later, and taking with her only her immediate attendants, the nobles and Heralds, one each of every kind of present for Solomon, her wardrobe, and of course her cats. On to Solomon's Pools, past Bethlehem to Rachel's Grave on which she deposited a memorial tablet, and so finally at sunset into the Plain of Ephraim where she pitched camp.

At the further side of the Valley of Hinnom spread before her, high above its four hills all aglow in the crimson light from the west, Balkis gazed long and rapturously upon Jerusalem, the Royal City of David. And on the summit of Ophel, in the porch of the House of Lebanon, summoning his wisdom against the unknown morrow, Solomon sat far into the night watching the twinkling lights of her hundred camp fires

Chapter VII The Young Visitor

7

One may not leave the account of those first weeks in Jerusalem without some slight reference to the Queen's own private impressions of Solomon, recorded in her intimate diaries. ¹⁵ Pilaster had been worthy of underlining and Colossus had earned his scattered capitals, but in the case of her host Balkis found it necessary to make use exclusively of the latter calligraphy in order to express the immensity of her fascinated admiration.

"SOLOMON IS A BEAR," she writes in one place. "OF COURSE HE IS TERRIBLY FUNNY TO LOOK AT AND VERY FUSSY ABOUT HIS CLOTHES, BUT I ALWAYS THINK IT IS SUCH A MISTAKE TO JUDGE PEOPLE BY APPEARANCES, AND WHEN YOU REALLY GET TO KNOW HIM, YOU SIMPLY CAN'T HELP LOVING HIM. HE IS SO POLITE, AND SO UNCONCEITED ABOUT ALL HIS WONDERFUL THINGS, AND SO SWEET TO HIS HORRID WIVES."





Concerning the latter Balkis observes:

"Solomon's wives are a pretty *sad* bunch on the whole. Of course with so many of them you can't expect them all to be whirlwinds, but I was surprised to find how FEW of them can hold a candle to me, but then I suppose I'm *exceptional* that way.

Ichneumon is the best-looking one, and I daresay she was really quite beautiful in her day, in that washed-out Egyptian style which some people admire although I can't *stand* it myself. Pilaff is perfectly AWFUL, so fat and greasy. Psha is a disagreeable little cat, and so stuck up although she's only a Persian and her family were really nothing at all. Panorama is rather sweet, but hasn't any brains to speak of and giggles all the time. I should think Solomon would go *crazy* when he's with her. I understand he is *very* MUCH interested just now in a Shulamite girl, but of course that's supposed to be a SECRET."

Of his wisdom she remarks elsewhere that:

"SOLOMON IS REALLY TREMENDOUSLY CLEVER. HE IS ALWAYS SAYING THE CUTEST THINGS, AND HE CAN TALK ON ANY SUBJECT AND MAKE IT INTERESTING. HE WAS TELLING ME THE OTHER DAY ABOUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO SAMSON WHEN THAT DELILAH WOMAN GYPED HIM, AND IT WAS SO FASCINATING AND SOME OF IT TERRIBLY FUNNY. I WISH I COULD REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS THAT SAMSON SAID WHEN HE PULLED DOWN THE TEMPLE OF DAGON — SOMETHING ABOUT COLUMNS RIGHT AND COLUMNS LEFT AND BEING THE FIRST COLUMNIST IN HISTORY — BUT I NEVER CAN REMEMBER STORIES UNLESS I WRITE THEM DOWN RIGHT AWAY.

AND THEN HE IS ALWAYS SO MODEST ABOUT ALL THE WONDERFUL THINGS HE SAYS, AND TRIES TO PASS THEM OFF AS THOUGH THEY WERE REALLY QUITE INSIGNIFICANT, AND I DON'T THINK HIS COURT REALLY APPRECIATES THEM AT ALL. BUT I RESPOND SO QUICKLY TO THINGS OF THAT SORT THAT I CAN ALWAYS SEE THE BEAUTY IN EVERYTHING THAT HE SAYS EVEN THOUGH I DON'T ALWAYS UNDERSTAND IT RIGHT AWAY, BECAUSE OF COURSE SOME OF HIS

SAYINGS ARE ENTIRELY TOO DARK FOR POOR ME, BUT HE IS AWFULLY PATIENT ABOUT REPEATING THEM."

In another paragraph she states that:

"I LOVE HIM VERY, VERY MUCH, IN A WONDERFUL SPIRITUAL WAY, AND I FEEL THAT OUR MINDS WERE SPECIALLY MADE FOR EACH OTHER. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPRESS IT EXACTLY, BUT I THINK HIS SPIRIT CALLED TO MINE ACROSS THE DESERT AND THAT IS REALLY WHY I CAME TO HIM. I KNOW OF CASES WHERE TWINS HAVE DONE THAT, AND PERHAPS MENTALLY WE ARE TWINS TOO. I TOLD THAT TO AHISHAR YESTERDAY AND HE LAUGHED AND SAID 'YES, GOLD DUST TWINS.' HE IS SO WITTY.

I DON'T THINK SOLOMON IS VERY HAPPY, AND SOMETIMES WHEN I TALK TO HIM HE LOOKS AS THOUGH HE WERE REALLY IN GREAT PAIN, AND I HOPE THAT BEFORE I GO I CAN DO SOMETHING TO HELP HIM, BECAUSE I KNOW THAT I HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING HEART IF HE WILL ONLY CONFIDE IN ME.

Perhaps it has something to do with that Shulamite girl. I must get Benaiah to tell me more about it, as he seems to be awfully up on everything that's going on and is *quite* a DARLING, although he is frightfully *rude* to Abishai and Magog and Hoshea and the others when they come around. I'm very much afraid they're all falling in love with me, poor dears, but *what* can I do?

I sometimes wish that I were not so *terribly* ATTRACTIVE to married men..."

8

So the weeks passed in reciprocal festivities and the time came for the Queen's official interview with Solomon. Poteau has interesting accounts of the elaborate preparations made by both parties for this function — the setting forth of Solomon's Library of Knowledge, in which every conceivable question, from Who mends the crack of dawn to What keeps night from breaking when it falls, was answered; the gathering together in classified piles of the Queen's question tablets; and the furnishing of the apartment in which the debate was to occur, including the

installation of a temporary dormitory for the scribes and attendants.

The Six Day Cyclopedic Race, as it was always referred to subsequently, took place in the Porch of the Throne, or of Judgement, a beautiful structure made entirely of cedar in which the King was accustomed to render decisions; in the presence of Jehoshaphat, the recorder of answers, Ahiah and Elihoreph, the chief scribes, the advisers whom Balkis had brought with her, Rabbi Ben Ezra, Omar Khayam and others, and her corps of ear scratchers and tongue rubbers.

"The Queen," Poteau relates, "sat on her throne which had been conveyed for the purpose from her camp, facing Solomon who occupied his own judgement seat — a superb chair of ivory overlaid with gold, the arms of which were formed by two great beasts, and which was reached by a flight of six steps, each of them flanked with lions, leading up to his solid gold foot-stool. At the further end of the Porch an orchestra of *chalis*, *shopbars*, *mashrokitha*, *tophs*, *sistra*, timbrels and sackbuts were on duty night and day to furnish soft music during the sometimes quite lengthy intervals of thought between questions."

As was customary in such cases, the meeting opened with an address by the host in which every known branch of knowledge was touched upon and set forth for the edification of the guest. As may be imagined, with such a lecturer as Solomon this feature of the program took up considerable time,¹⁶ and covered every subject connected with the earth, the sea and the sky, the animal, mineral and vegetable kingdoms, the beautiful and the damned, and the history of the human race from the Age of Innocence down to the Dangerous Ages, including the mysterious Wasted Generation —

"... all of it assembled," so Poteau states, "in compact form in what was known as Solomon's *Outline of History, or Wells of Information*, two cosmic volumes embellished with charts."

The lecture once terminated, the second part of the program was entered upon to which a privileged public was admitted. Three black pennies having been flipped according to custom, Solomon won the toss and prepared to ask his questions. As will be seen below from the stylographic reports of the proceedings the King's riddles give evidence of care-

ful preparation and seem to have troubled Balkis not a little.

SOLOMON: "Some hunters went hunting. They said afterwards, 'What we caught we threw away, and what we did not catch we kept.' What were they hunting?"

A long pause.

BALKIS: "Oh dear!"

Pause.

BALKIS: "I don't know."

SOLOMON: "Fleas."

Laughter among the Shebans.

BALKIS: "Aren't you horrid!"

SOLOMON: "A temple rests upon a single column encircled by twelve cities. Each city has thirty buttresses. Each buttress has two women, one white and one black, that go round it in turns. Solve the riddle."

BALKIS: "I'm all mixed up already. What was the first part?"

Question repeated. A long pause.

BALKIS: "How many buttresses did you say?"

Question repeated. A long pause.

BALKIS: "Go ahead, I'll bite!"

Laughter. Suppressed.

SOLOMON: "The temple is the world, the column the year, the twelve cities are the months, the thirty buttresses are the days, the two women light and darkness."

BALKIS: "Oh, but you're cheating!"

Sensation in the Porch.

SOLOMON: "Huh?"

BALKIS: "Some of the months have thirty-one days. Of course I'd have known that —"

Loud laughter among the spectators. Suppressed. Objection sustained by the recorder. Exception taken by Solomon. Noted.

A SHEBAN: "Hooray our side!"

RECORDER: "Order in the Porch!"

SOLOMON: "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceedingly wise."

BALKIS: "Now don't hurry me —"

A very long pause.

BALKIS: "Fish, flesh or fowl?"

SOLOMON: "That's a leading question."

Objection sustained by the recorder. A long pause.

BALKIS: "By me!"





SOLOMON: "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer. The conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks. The locusts have no King, yet they go forth all of them by bands. The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in the King's houses."

Applause.

BALKIS: "I guessed it was animals anyway."

Laughter.

BALKIS: "That's a lovely one, isn't it?"

SOLOMON: "Just a little thing of my own."

Exit Ahishar.

SOLOMON: "My second has two legs, my whole no more, and my first alone has always four."

BALKIS: "Now let me think—"

A long pause. Ahishar returns.

BALKIS: "Oh dear, you've got me!"

SOLOMON: "Horse-man."

BALKIS: "Doggone it! You know everything, don't you?"

Laughter.

SOLOMON: "No. There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not."

BALKIS: "It is possible! What are they, perhaps I can tell you."

Loud laughter. Suppressed.

BALKIS: "What's funny about that?"

RECORDER: "Order in the Porch. Pass out quietly please."

SOLOMON: "The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid."

Prolonged applause.

BALKIS: "Oh, that's lovely. I don't know how you do it."

A VOICE: "You tell them, Balkis!"

RECORDER: "Throw that man out."

Scuffle. A spectator is ejected.

BALKIS: "It's too sweet, really!"

SOLOMON: "Just a little thing of my own."

Exit Ahishar.

BALKIS: "You're a wise one, all right all right, I'll tell the world."

10

And then it was the Queen's turn. Before an audience which packed every available square foot

of the Porch she spread out her tablets before her and expounded her riddles, some of which seem to have thrown the meeting into an uproar and greatly incensed Solomon, the more so since his wives insisted on being present and kept up a continuous babel of recrimination at his failure to make a better showing.

BALKIS: "Ready?"

SOLOMON: "Shoot."

BALKIS: "Why does B come before C in the Alphabet?"

A pause.

ICHNEUMON: "Oh, that's easy!"

A pause.

BALKIS: "Can't you guess? Shall I tell you?"

SOLOMON: "Go ahead."

P'SALT: "Quitter!"

BALKIS: "Because a man must be before he can see. I think that's awfully good, don't you?"

SOLOMON: "Slick!"

ICHNEUMON: "Not so good."

BALKIS: "Why is a man sailing up the Tigris River like one putting his father into a sack?"

TCHALK: "Louder and funnier!"

SOLOMON: "Just a moment—"

A pause.

BALKIS: "It's a peach. You'll never guess it."

PSHA: "Chestnut, you mean."

A pause.

BALKIS: "Give it up?"

SOLOMON: "All right, spill it."

PILAFF: "You big bum!"

BALKIS: "Because he is going to Bagdad — see, bag dad?"

Groans. Suppressed. Laughter among the Shebans.

BALKIS: "Got you that time. Here's another."

ICHNEUMON: "Now then Solomon, on your toes!"

BALKIS: "How many soft-boiled eggs could Goliath eat on an empty stomach?"

PILAFF: "I think that's vulgar."

BALKIS: "Well, what do you say?"

SOLOMON: "Of course he wouldn't have put all his eggs in the same bread basket!"

Cheers from the grand-stand.

P'SALT: "Yeah, Solomon!"

RECORDER: "Answer the question."

SOLOMON: "Seventy times seven."

Applause.

BALKIS: "No, silly! Only one, because after that his stomach wouldn't be empty any longer. That's a good one, isn't it?"

SOLOMON: "Wonderful."

TCHALK: "You poor boob!"

BALKIS: "Why is a mouse like a bale of hay?"

A long pause.

PANORAMA: "Tee hee, tee hee, tee hee —"

SOLOMON: "Shut up!"

A pause.

BALKIS: "Give it up?"

PILAFF: "Certainly not—"

SOLOMON: "All right, why?"

BALKIS: "Because the cattle eat it. See, cat, cattle, it's a play on words."

Uproarious laughter among the Shebans. Loud groans from the spectators. Hoshea is carried out by Abishai and others.

BALKIS: "I think that's a splendid one, don't you?"

PHSA: "Rotten!"

SOLOMON: "Have you very many more like that?"

Laughter. Suppressed.

BALKIS: "Lots. Try this one. Why are seeds, when sewn, like gateposts?"

ICHNEUMON: "Come on, Solomon!"

A pause.

BALKIS: "Give it up?"

SOLOMON: "Certainly not. Keep still a moment, can't you?"

A pause.

BALKIS: "Give it up, do you?"

SOLOMON: *Expurgated by order of the recorder.*

PANORAMA: "Tee hee, tee — I beg pardon."

SOLOMON: "I know. Because they spring from the ground."

Prolonged applause.

PILAFF: "You can't laugh that off!"

BALKIS: "That's awfully good, of course, but it's not the right answer."

SOLOMON: *Expurgated by order of the recorder.*

ICHNEUMON: *Expurgated by order of the recorder.*

BALKIS: "How dare you speak to me like that?"

PILAFF: *Expurgated by order of the recorder.*

PANORAMA: "Tee hee, tee — ouch, Psha, quit pinching me!"

PSHA: *Expurgated by order of the recorder.*

BALKIS: *Expurgated by order of the recorder.*

SOLOMON: "There's something in what you say."

RECORDER: "Give the answer."

Suspense.

BALKIS: "The right answer is Because they propagate — see, prop a gate!"

SOLOMON: "Oy, oy!"

Uproar. Three scribes drop dead. Balkis laughs for twenty minutes. Solomon has a fit of apoplexy. Meeting adjourned.

11

And finally the one last riddle of all, which the Queen put to Solomon in private on the evening before her departure for Sheba. The question which had brought her all the way to Jerusalem, and his answer to which she does not ever seem to have understood.

"Why is it," she asked him, "that I who am so beautiful and have had so many suitors cannot find a husband?"

Solomon, so Poteau states, thought for a long while and then made the following reply, couched in terms least calculated to offend his guest, to whom he often referred afterwards as "that asphixiating woman."

"Queen," he told her. "There's many a slip of the tongue twixt the cup and the lip, and the ear is always more sensitive than the eye."

"I don't get you at all," Balkis complained, "but it sounds awfully clever!"

"Just a little thing of my own," Solomon murmured.

And with this cryptic utterance to ponder over she went from him, loaded with gifts — lead and tin from Tarshish and brass from Tubal, emeralds and cedar and fine linen from Syria, honey and oil from Israel, purple and blue from Eden and Tyre — and returned to her own country.

"... in what perplexity of mind," to quote Poteau's beautiful passage, "one cannot surmise; leaving be-



hind her such memories as one may not presume to speculate upon. A great and welcome silence descended on Jerusalem, but from the summit of Ophel a glory was departed, over the Valley of Hinnom the smoke of many camp fires was dispersed, in the House of Lebanon a faint aroma floated for many days, and then died.

And on the throne in the Porch of Judgement perhaps one sat who brooded over many things, and came to regret his wisdom. Who knows?"

Notes

¹ Ch. 1, p. 2.

² This is denied by French authorities.

³ That the results of his enquiry have not hitherto been more widely accepted is merely an indication of the fact that the public mind is always more inclined to believe obscurely complicated rumors than simple, unadorned verities.

⁴ *Diaries of a Court Physicians*, tablet 372.

⁵ *Mirrors of Marib*, chap. 18, p. 7.

⁶ Attributed to Pocahontas.

⁷ Personal, vol. 89, left handed.

⁸ For feminine students of the subject, Poteau's detailed paragraphs covering the list of these sartorial impediments will be found of engrossing interest.

⁹ *Ichthyosaurus Parvus*.

¹⁰ The mere catalogue of these offerings, as listed on a contemporary Assyrian inscription recently unearthed, gives one a more intelligent conception of the stupendous character of this royal munificence than any labored descriptive paragraphs could afford. "... of horses from Togatmah," so the inscription reads, "fifty milk-white steeds with skins of satin and flowing silk manes, each with his harness of finest leather studded with gold. And from the Isles that lie beyond the portals of the Sea, of ivory one hundred *manehs* of finest grain without any

blemish; and of ebony yet another hundred, in diverse shapes fit for all manner of usage and polished like unto a burnished mirror. And of lambs from Kedar one hundred, pure as snow; and of goats likewise a hundred, for a milking and a feasting; and of rams from that land yet another hundred to be an acceptable sacrifice. And of spice from Sheba, fifty camel loads, all manner of spice therein for a seasoning and a sweetening; and of gum another fifty camel loads, and of gold yet another fifty camel loads. And of precious stones from Sheba, fifty camel loads, to every five camels among them a different stone, and the names thereof were sardius, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, carbuncle and jade. This is the list of the gifts, nor has any been added thereto, all very fair and without any blemish, and cunningly fashioned for a pleasure and a delight, which the Queen brought to the King, Solomon, for an offering ..." As someone remarked of travel in that day: "It was not the heat but the cupidity that came high!"

¹¹ *Annals of Sheba*, cylinder 9008.

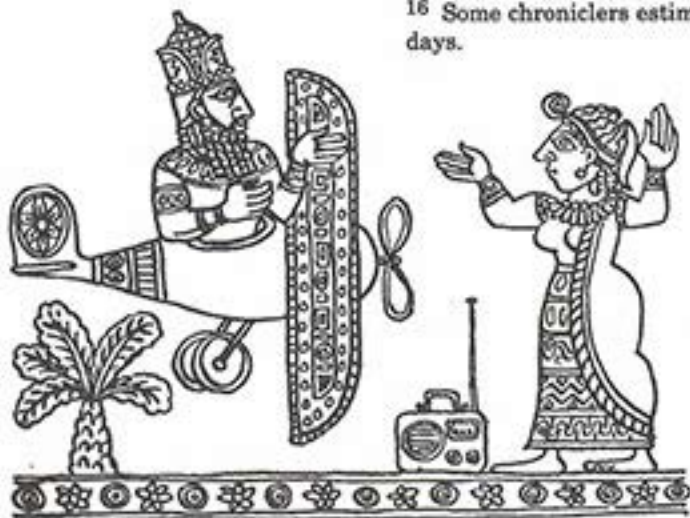
¹² Many of the sailors managed to capture rats which they took aboard with them in cages, thereby assuaging their fears to some extent, which suggests to Steinkopf the origin of mascots; the whole episode, moreover, furnishing in his opinion the basis for the ceremonies of Crossing the Line still held aboard shipboard to this day, in which, as he points out, the process of shaving plays an important part and undoubtedly has some connection with the aforementioned reference to whiskers.

¹³ As for this Envoy, a certain Magog who appears to have borne some resemblance to Colossus, Poteau is also responsible for the statement that: "This personage performed his duty with great zeal — *avec beaucoup de conviction* — and having been attached to the Queen's person by Solomon as his representative, he also quite evidently became very much attached to her on his own account, a fact to which she does not seem to have been entirely insensible." From Gorton one learns that "... it was a common talk around Ezion that the Envoy was all 'magog' over Balkis!"

¹⁴ *Annals of Sheba*, cylinder 9618.

¹⁵ Solomon, vol. 52, left handed.

¹⁶ Some chroniclers estimate as much as two and a half days.



✱ Daniel Martin Varisco (This was a paper delivered at the 1995 MESA conference in Washington, DC.)

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The Search for Phinneas A. Crutch

The verdict is still out on the true identity of Phinneas A. Crutch, pseudonym for the author of *The Queen of Sheba: Her Life and Times* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922). The last installment of his book (*Yemen Update*, no. 37, pp. 10-20) has generated an outpouring of sleuthery as to the true identity of this mysterious figure. Space does not allow me to publish the hundreds of letters and e-mail messages sent to the editorial office on this issue.

While I do not yet have a smoking pen to indict the warped epigraphic mind that must have masterminded this hoax, there are several prominent individuals who have been fingered and I will summarize the evidence gathered thus far. First and foremost among these is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the legendary Sherlock Holmes. Indeed, the characterization of Balkis as a witty queen brings to mind a host of Holmesian characters. This identification has been suggested by Sir Mallory Dhamarian, a name that hardly needs introduction to students of Yemeni Studies. Sir Mallory, who was in fact married to Dame Agatha Christina (the famous detective novelist) once overheard Doyle speaking about his interest in pulling the wool over the eyes of Sabaean specialists. The particular seance in which this occurred escapes the memory of Sir Mallory.

Another possible culprit is Sir Mallory himself, who was known to engage in an occasional tall tale when suitably tanked. Sir Mallory clearly had the linguistic capabilities to master Himyaritic A, although Himyaritic B still eludes translators. A

recent Ph.D. thesis by Jordache Levi-Strauss (University of Witlesswatersan) claims to have deciphered the enigmatic characters of the Himyaritic B tablets found in Sheba's Outhouse (the name unfortunately does not translate well from the German team which excavated the site and found much valuable material for rigorous testing). But, quite frankly, until Himyaritic C is found in situ, we will not have a definitive ABC for the script.

Perhaps the best clue so far comes from a literary-critical analysis of the footnotes given by Crutch. These footnotes refer to, among other names, a certain Pocohontas, which would certainly indicate a post-Disney origin for the text. It is, of course, possible, that the footnotes were added by a later hand and should be regarded as textual effluvium. I am of the opinion, supported substantially by Dr. Luigi Yarimi, editor of the *Mareb Forum*, that the footnotes were not put in until well after the forger had gained a toehold in the academic establishment of the time. This suggests that the most likely candidate would have been a disgruntled Ph.D. student kept waiting for decades for his or her degree. This might have been a way to let off steam and still salvage a teaching career as second to a more acclaimed Orientalist.

I am still desirous of further opinion as to the origin of Crutch and would welcome readers to send their own comments for inclusion in future issues of *Yemen Update*.

✱ D. Varisco