

OS 13

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OS 13

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Small John

W. J. J.

Tunisia

I The Approach

II The Wisdom of Al Ziktar

both unpublished

A.C.

holograph

Drafts for a few letters at the back

Tunisia.

A Tunis.

I The Approach.

When old travellers get together, the talk turns, sooner or later, on a fascinating question: Which is the finest harbour in the world?

One cannot quarrel too fiercely with the buccannee who plumps for Vera Cruz, with the 1800 feet

of Attalappett towering above it
is air so clear that it seems ready to
overwhelm the torrid plains of
jungle and the little port with
its stone horns jutting into the
gulf. It would be hypercritical to
object that the mountain is not
part of the harbour.

But very violent controversy is
sure to arise when the talk
turns to the rival claims of
Hong Kong, Sydney, and the
Golden Gate. (New York is
merely spectacular, a cinema

monstrosity.)

However, ~~well~~, if the controversy reaches a point when knives and pistols are about to ~~be~~ arrive on the scene, the oldest of the old hands will step in and save bloodshed by remarking:

Well, gentlemen, there is much to be said on every side of this question. But we can all agree on one point, that there is only one journey in the world - until airoships make a couple of thousand miles or so an hour - which enables a man to see three of the finest harbours in the planet, and those of strangely diverse beauty, within four and twenty hours of actual steaming.

(Where's that? chirps the nice boy
in the corner of the smoking-room,
so excitedly.)

The gruff old peeremake growls: Vhy,
Naples, Palermo, Tunis.

And the bowies and the autumities
vanish, and the steward brings
the drinks of peace.

'T would be a sorry jest to seek to
entertain any body with a description
of the Harbour of Naples: enough
to say that its constitution is very
strong and has survived all that
has been written about it.

Palermo is another story. There is
very little of self-advertisement
about ~~the~~ Sicily: it is quite content
to exist and look beautiful and
excite the imagination. More, it is
only to the most refined and
delicate imaginations, & minds
steeped in history and Theocritus
and the Odyssey that the island
makes its most intense appeal.
There is a faery quality in the
moral atmosphere: one feels
instinctively that the island is
lying in wait for the visitor,
reserves for him surprises alike
disquieting and delicious.

Of course, ~~such~~ adventure never comes to
tourists: Sicily is like opium, one
never gets its pleasures, inconceivable
and infamous, until one is fast in
its coils. To appreciate Sicily one
must give up the world for ever, even
as a monk cannot enjoy the Communion
of the Most High until he has taken
the irrevocable vows.

Let us pass on!

The steamer skirts the coast. The
Sea assumes a million hues, canary
to deep purple; the mountains
seem to glide ^{backwards} past, just as
in "Parsifal" the scenery travels.

past the voice knight. They change;
he changes not. Now there come
low freshores, large wastes of
desolate banks, white rocky
islands peer from the rainbow sea,
and dip, and disappear.

Night sinks upon the Venetian
glass of Ocean like an anæsthetic,
and the traveller's ~~dream~~ waking
dream merges into loss of
consciousness. He awakes wakes
before the dawn; the flush of
the excitement of the unknown
and the mysterious effects his
sleeping blood. He ~~resumes~~.

hastens, almost feverish with
delightful anticipation upon
deck, and finds the world
transformed to a dim tapestry
of velvet - sky, sea, all soft
and faint — — —

Then, with an inexpressible
thrill, he suspects (rather than
sees) a density more deep
than air or water, dividing them;
and his soul whispers: "Africa".

He leans upon the bulwark of
the ship, as one entranced. He
sinks into delicious fear: the
land of infinite promise lies

before him. "Mystery! Mystery!" That
is the name upon the forehead of the
Greatest, the most dreadful, contrast.
It is the fascination of the king-cobra.
Life lies within its heart, life more
intense than the heart of poet hath
conceived - life so intense that death
itself is merely its banchuan, the
spice which gives piquancy to its
marvels.

"Lapsed in this unweaned air," the
traveller loses that sense of time
and space which oppresses the
subconscious mind of all of us.
The ~~chase~~ coast takes shape

before his eyes; he hardly perceives it. He wakes as the sun strikes the nape of his neck, flinging up suddenly from the grey banks of the horizon, and the ship stops.

Without warning he is translated into a world of mundane activity; he becomes aware of the material facts of nature.

Before him lies a busy port: the name alone suggests a thousand curious surmises: La Goulette.

And he realizes the supreme

concentration into a single definite
purpose of his whole life's vague
ambitions in this symbol: the
vast of ocean is no more: his
way lies through a strait canal,
banked by two rigid lines of
stone that stretch beyond eyesight
to --- he knows not what.

~~The bright and endless~~

A narrow deep between two
lapsed lagoons, salt lakes whose
desolation laughs by reason of
uncounted myriads of diving
birds, and enlivened to rosy
promise by the dawn-bright

glow of flocks of flamingos. Sacred
indeed are they, and careless of man.
The rush of the midget trainway on
the northern embankment does not
disturb their mystic meditation.
The wash of the steamer, going
ahead dead slow, disturbs them
no whit.

And the traveller makes his way
into a gilded haze of mystery.
Is he a little like the soul
of Dante, when Virgil guided
him to unknown realms, subject
to unknown laws? Then let him
lift his eyes toward the South;

There shall be see the hope of man,
the strength and safety of the
mountains. There Bon Hornie,
"The Father of Horns", lifts his
twin peak into the sky, faint
rose inspiring the dim grey; behind
him, Taylrokan, lord of waters, the
true wet-nurse of all this land,
raises its strange saw-peak.

Miraculous the comfort of this
solid beauty in a world of
lacy glamour. Month after
month one gazes on those rocks,
and tries not of their utter

glory. They always change, and are
always the same; they have the secret
of the universe. Oh do not go and
climb them! Keep them as sacred
falismons, as memories of first love,
as promises of what shall be
hereafter!

Meanwhile, the ship is gliding,
gliding, gliding — the cool air
glitters with sun-gilded dew
and hides the secret of Africa
in its ephemeral love. Air is
the virgin veil of the continent, and
it is spangled with a million
gems of so spiritual in essence

That their material vehicle does not
offend the aspiring soul.

But oh! disquiet — the ship
glides. Whither, oh whither?
Impatience mingled with dread
confounds the single-hearted ecstasy
of all but the most firmly-^{disillusioned}
of ^{the} Seekers of the Golden Fleece!

One is reminded of the ordeals of the
~~antiquities~~ of Eleusis: "long have ye
wandered in darkness: now seek ye the
light". Only: the "darkness" was this
luminous haze; and the "light" is

a veritable crystallization of law.

Before him rises a pool of Stygian blackness, indeed: but it is framed by a dream-city: Tunis the White.

From the fortress-crowned hills on the left to the marble-palaced woods on the right, the city sprawls: the lazy city, the beautiful city, with no blot but the ephemeral curse of ugly cathedrals. For the secret of the joy of Tunis is to ignore the prostitution of the artificial superstitions that blasphemous her lord, the Sun!

Yes: one must be resolute to shut one's
eyes on the nondescript provincialism
of the sordid, stupid, utterly banal
brutalities of the barbarian invader;
in their midst, virgin to the eyes, like
a strangely camouflaged, lies the vast
oval of the native city, brave with
mosques that bear witness to the
truth of the Universe: "He God is
One; He is the One Eternal;
nor hath He son, nor sire; He
hath nor equal, nor companion."

The marvel of that candid city
glows from rose-pink to dazzling
white as the sun strikes upon its

roofs & domes, leaving the beholder
into still deeper trance as he glides
through the quiet water way, bathed in
pure calm.

Then of a sudden the ship stops
and swings; he wakes to find
the canal opened out into a
pool alive with argosies;
and on the wharf a motley
crowd awaiting him. The shock is
rude: he switches into a positive
mood (from his beatific contemplation
intense excitement seizes him: his
instinct cries within him that this.

land is rich with experiences such as he
never guessed were possible. And he
begins to understand that all the
guidebooks, all the histories, are lies;
that the truest book in the world is
the Arabian Nights.

II

The Wisdom of St Peter.

O thou who wouldst travel in Tunisia,
leave at home ^{your} skates, ^{your} umbrellas, &
^{your} prejudices.

If you cling passionately to ^{your} skates
& umbrellas, all right; to bring them
will only cost you a few francs excess
baggage. But if you insist on
bringing your prejudices, it will cost
you thousands of francs, and 90%
of the whole enjoyment of your
journey.

Unless you come from Monkeyville, &
are afraid of being lynched when
you get back, read up a little
evolution; try to understand what
is meant by biological adaptation.

They manage life differently in
Africa; if you want everything
the way it is in Detroit, why
not stay in Detroit?

You can't get kous-kous in
Illinois; so you won't mind if
you can't get a porterhouse steak
in Tunis. And if you could,

it wouldn't agree with you.

The food of Tunisia is very varied and excellent; the stuff imported to cope with the obstinacy of the tourist is inferior. Ask for fish; ask for oriental dishes; drink the admirable local wine at a franc or so a bottle; it is honest-to-God pure food, and tastes better than imported vintages.

Try to avoid being angry with the Arabs for not talking Middle West; in fact, it will

be better for than you think to
learn their language, which is the
key to their thought - and they
don't think along your lines at
all. Their idea of what is good
& bad in life, what is worth while,
bears little or no relation to
your own. And mere picturesque
mysteries become tiresome; whereas
if you can once understand what
is in the back of an Arab
mind, you discover a whole
new moral world of infinite
dignity and beauty. Their
philosophy has stood the test.

of more centuries than yours has
stood years: and there are ^{even} a few
who doubt whether your 100% red-
blooded go-getter Babbitt theories
of the Cosmos would survive a
little wholesome diversity.

Do not try to uplift the Arab;
he does not understand your point
of view, and cannot; for your
conditions of life are not his, and
it is these on which men weave
their gossamer metaphysics.

Try to get it into your head
from the start that the ragged
unwashed beggar thinks you

dirty, ill-mannered, and a superstitious
blasphemer; your wife a shameless
and presumably immoral slut.
There is moreover a grotesque side
to you; your awkwardness, ^{your} ~~and~~
foolish aimless behaviour, your
crazy curiosity, your helplessness,
your ignorance of the most elementary
rules of ^{politeness} ~~goodness~~: all
these things move him to laughter
and to pity.

If you intend to get the most
out of your journey, you must
acquire his sympathy & respect;

the first step to which is the comprehension of his ideals.

And about the worst thing you can do is to try to obtain his esteem by throwing your money about. Do not be mean, like the French; the quality these Arab most admires is justice, which depends on an exact knowledge of values. Generosity he appreciates; but it must be based on genuine good feeling, on true understanding of the circumstances of each particular case. You must

never let him fool you, or take a
liberty with you; that but accentuates
his natural contempt for you.

More, never take a liberty with him, ^{away time and, uncorrupted}
by Christian influences, is a gentleman. But the true humility of the

Saint, the ever steadfast purpose
to learn, ~~you~~ has his respect.

You must persuade him to take
you seriously; and that is a
question of how seriously you
take yourself.

At Paris, and the whole
country opens up to you, a
wealth untold of unsuspected
interests. 99% of Frenchmen
leave without ever having

seen more of the country than they
could get by looking over an
album of picture postcards in
the sedate seclusion of the
Home or Main Street.

Never in a hurry: never exhibit
agitation or annoyance: never change
your mind.

Unexorable in patience, inflexible of
purpose, imperturbable in calm,
more like some God placed high
above all accidents of life upon
some path of destiny inscrutable.

Hotel du Cadran Bleu
Fontainebleau

Madam

My^{re} Shurway has had to be
taken away to a hospital.

The three children of whom the
eldest is seriously ill ^{and has to be isolated} are in the
charge of a chambermaid to
whom already much money is
owing.

I have written to Sir Crowley, but
I suppose that he can do nothing.

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M^r Shumway has had to be
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I suppose that he can do nothing.

I hope that you will come ~~see~~ ^{here} before
worse things happen.

Yours KB

P.S. The bill for the linen
which you promised for
the house & did not
bring amounts to 1716 fr.
You may send it to
Etablissements Jannet, Minet
Puteaux
Seine

I hope that you will come ~~see~~ ^{here} before
worse things happen.

Yours KB

P.S. The bill for the linen
which you purchased for
the house & did not
bring amounts to 1716 fr.
You may send it to
Etablissements Jannet, Maest
Puteaux
Seine.

Taper

Collins

March 24

Dear Mr. Sporn

A gentleman in London Mr. G. Yorke
of Mansfield St. W. 11.
is arranging for the private publication
in English of part III Book 4.

I have told him that the printing could
be done more cheaply in Germany
than in London; and I suggested your
name.

I have two propositions to make to you.
Mr. Yorke is a wealthy man but
cannot spare ~~for~~ dispose of ~~£~~ for
more than a certain part of his
income for this purpose, but
we could pay you in ^{with} instalments as the
progresses; or we could settle the
whole account not later than the
winter solstice.

The other proposition is that you should

Take this book in English as one of
the regular publications of ^{the} Sydenham-
Society. ~~But~~ In this case you would
have to rely upon us to sell the
copies and arrange all the business
details. We propose to issue the
book by private subscription in
the first instance, with ~~the~~ a larger
and cheaper edition to follow.
Please let me have your ideas on this
matter as soon as possible.

Kuntzel

28 March

Dear little sister

93 -

Your letter of M. 22 the idea of
the Poll-Tax was to establish this principle
of raising income. It is a very good
~~test~~ of the real value of the love
of the work. You can at least ask
always, explaining that this small
contribution is expected: and
presently results will begin to come.
Alea came over from E. about
a week ago. She never said a
word to me!! Really, doing things
behind my back is not quite
straight forward. Her excuses
have seemed insincere. For
instance, what she wrote to you.
People who suffer from cold

are foolish to go to Scotland when they
have a well-built house in a
pleasant climate with central
heating and big open fire places.
I went to see her yesterday. The
Gods have reproved her with
lumbago.

The folly and waste of her Hayward
had been dreadful. We have been
paying three rents instead of one
the house has been badly damaged
by not having a responsible person
there, and six months of my
time has been almost wasted.
Now the house has to be shut
up; so I have no longer access
to my books and papers.
Kinette and the children are to be

Someless.

There does not mean ^{to} do any harm;
but she does not understand
magick. She is afraid of life and
reality. She wants to live in
a Xmas story for children!

Naturally the Gods have got after
her.

Please do not forget that 777
is a extremely valuable property.
The publication arrangements must
be made on business lines, and my
copyright fully protected.

I will write again in a few days -

93 $\frac{93}{93}$ Fraternally

Yorke.