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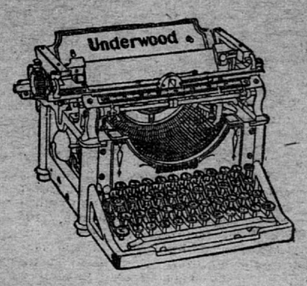

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CHILDREN OF ASIA FIND HOME IN ST. PAUL

RAMSEY county, Minn., includes among its residents many wanderers from the land of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid. There are Arabs here—both of the tame, or urban, variety, from Joppa and Jerusalem, from ancient Sidon and the Tyre of the Crusaders; and one or two specimens, it is said, of the "wild," or Bedouin, Arab, taken from the desert at an early age before they left Old Asia for Young America. There are many Syrians, a Kurd or two, and even a whiskered pilgrim from Iran.

But without reflecting upon the orthodoxy of a county and a city famous for their many churches, it may be disclosed that, until recently, neither the county of Ramsey nor the city of St. Paul contained a single representative of the original Christians, so to speak—that is, of the most ancient Christian nation in the world, Armenia.

At present the local colony of Armenians has risen to fair proportions. It contains twenty-four members. The children of Mount Ararat have become more numerous here than the Kurds or Persians, although they are far outnumbered by the Syrians, and probably by the Arabs.

St. Paul, indeed, is now the metropolis of Northwestern Armenia in America. There are twenty-four travelers here, as told, from the snows of the upper Tigris, and there are but fifteen in Minneapolis. No Armenians, it is said, are to be found elsewhere in Minnesota. There are none in South Dakota, none in Montana and only two in North Dakota.

Yet the total number of Armenians in the United States is about 30,000. Most of them have settled in the New England states, in and about New York city, and in California.

In California? This would be natural, one would imagine. California must remind them of their home in Asia Minor, of their fig trees, and their fervid sun.

"Not at all," was the abrupt answer of a St. Paul Armenian yesterday.

"Armenia," continued Paul Keljik, a local rug dealer, "Armenia is much more like Minnesota. Only your winters are so short and your bluffs look to us like very little mountains."

America's Idea of Asia

And then an American, whose concepts of Asia Minor had inevitably entangled that land with glaring sand, date trees, rose gardens, the cooling sherbet, and the caravan's rest in shaded khanyard till the sun drops lower—then he stopped to think of Armenia as it is, of Armenia as a land of mountains well nigh as icy as those of hymnal Greenland. He remembered Ararat the snowy. He pictured Uncle Noah standing, with congealed beard, upon the quarterdeck of the stranded ark, flapping his prehistoric mittens against his patriarchal ribs and anxiously inspecting the original goose-bone weather gauge.

Minnesota, therefore, feels "like home" to most Armenians. Except that in this state the summers are longer and more moist; the winters are shorter, and the snow is not so deep.

"Why, in Kharput, where I came from," Mr. Keljik said yesterday, "the winter and the snow usually last six months. They arrive in October and they don't leave until April. But to make up for the winter the sun is very hot in summer and there's scarcely any rain."

Attired strictly a l'Americaine and holding a derby hat in his kid-gloved hand, Mr. Keljik turned from a telephone in his store yesterday to watch an automobile puff its way up the snowy street.

"I used to go fishing in the Euphrates," he said reminiscently, while the secretive smile of the Mysterious East illumined his languorous, black-brown eyes.

"But," he continued in the excellent English he has learned by thirteen years' practice, "but I really had more fun out at my uncle's, going swimming in the Tigris. You know that river starts near Kharput. It's a very small river at the village where my uncle lived, and fine for swimming. It was always cool on the hottest summer day. Its waters were fresh and clear, too, just like the Minnesota lakes.

Armenia Like Minnesota

"Yes, Armenia is a good deal more like Minnesota than it is like most of California. But you can't get away from the cold weather as easily as we could when I was at home. We weren't any of us as fond of traveling as you Americans are. Our family had lived around Kharput, they used to tell me, about 1,200 years—'old settlers,' I suppose, we were. But if we very much wanted a change of weather in the winter time we had to go south only a little farther than from here to Duluth, and we could then sit in the rose gardens around Bagdad. Another old town, Bagdad is, of course. A good many of the people in the 'Arabian Nights' used to live there, if they lived anywhere.

"And then if we found the weather too warm in the summer at Kharput we could 'run up' to Erzerum. That's higher up in the mountains and snow is on the ground there about eight months in every year. I said 'run up,' but our people don't run over there, if they can help it. I'm afraid it will be some time before you'll see many automobiles on the streets of Erzerum."

A familiar climate and a flourishing business are not the only reasons why Mr. Keljik feels at home in St. Paul. Most of his relatives are now living here with him. His old father and mother and his youngest brother came over from Armenia to Minnesota only two months ago. He now has five brothers in St. Paul and one in Minneapolis. The first brother emigrated to the United States fifteen years ago. Paul Keljik followed two years later. He has sisters here also, sisters-in-law, cousins as well.

The Keljik family, indeed, constitutes five-sixths of the local Armenian colony. Members of the family and their compatriots are engaged here in various industries. The Keljik brothers sell rugs. Three of the Keljiks' cousins are porters and "housemen" in St. Paul hotels. A brother-in-law is employed at a shoe factory. One other Armenian is a restaurant porter, another a hotel cook, a third is a stationery engineer.

A niece of Mr. Keljik is attending the Jefferson public school, from which she will soon be graduated into the Central high school. She is expert at basketball. She tells her uncle, "It's just the same thing—almost, I mean—as we girls used to play down on the river bank at home when I was very little."

"The river bank" was the bank of the hoary Euphrates. And the "basketball" of Kharput was doubtless played thereabouts, minus the Jefferson school improvements, when the little girls stopped playing to see Alexander and his glittering host go by on their way to conquer the world. The same game may have been interrupted, too, when one little girl had occasion to inform another small maid about what "my papa" had just related concerning the "awfully horrid time" some Greek soldiers had been having in the mountain snows, on their way home from a place where Mr. Cyrus had had a dreadful fight with Mr. Artaxerxes.

The weather, the basketball, and even the religious worship in St. Paul reminds the few Armenian residents of their far-off country where the curtain rose on that continuous tragedy called History.

"We go to the Episcopal church here, to Christ church," said Mr. Keljik. "It's most like our own church, though our service is not so very different from the Catholic service. In fact, when I was at Jerusalem—I was educated there for a priest, but I never took orders—I used to notice that our Armenian worship, which is so very old, is very much like both the Greek Catholic and the Roman Catholic worship.

"We're certainly all Christian brothers together, and we Armenians are the eldest brothers. Our church goes back to the third century. Our country was the first to adopt Christianity as the state religion. We separated from the Greek church in the sixth century, if I am not mistaken.

"Our 'catholicus' or pope, as you might call him, lives at Elchmiadzin in a monastery on Mount Ararat. We have a patriarch at Constantinople; but in America our highest clergyman is Bishop Saragian, of Worcester, Mass. One of our American churches is at Worcester. There's another in New York city and another at Fresno, Cal.

"We'll have a church here, I suppose, when we can get together more of our people. Some persons wonder why we don't have our own church now. They tell me, 'Why, I've seen lots of Armenians in St. Paul.'

"But that isn't true. The men from Asia Minor that go about selling rugs and peddling are not Armenians at all. They are Syrians."

Speaking of churches reminded Mr. Keljik of a beautiful Armenian church in his own venerable city. And by the Kharput church was suggested a great castle or citadel, around which he had played when he was young.

Its dimensions were so remarkable that they should have attracted more attention from travelers.

"Oh, it was a big, splendid castle on a high hill," Mr. Keljik declared. "I have tried to remember how big it was compared with the blocks here and with your tall buildings, like the Masonic temple in Chicago. And I should say that the old, old castle at Kharput was so big that it covered about twenty St. Paul blocks, and was about forty stories above the hill!"

St. Paul May Have Letters Shot Through Postal Tubes

TWO weeks ago in New York city a special delivery letter was mailed at the Harlem station. It was directed to a young woman who lived four miles from the station. In a fraction less than thirty-five minutes an answer from the girl was placed in the hand of the sender of the original message.

In order to get to the girl and return the message had to traverse the busiest part of the city twice, but it reached her in ten minutes, allowed her ten minutes to think of the answer and ten minutes to return. The odd five minutes was occupied in handling the letter at the stations at each end of the route.

Under ordinary circumstances it would take a messenger, equipped with everything in the way of transportation and endowed with all the good luck possible, at least two hours to accomplish the trip. It would cost a dollar at the least calculation to hire him and pay his expenses, and yet the United States government did the trick for less than 25 cents.

This apparent impossibility was accomplished by means of the system of pneumatic tube, in use in the metropolis. It illustrates the value of the idea better than any amount of argument, for it shows results, and results are what are demanded in this age and generation.

Postmaster General John Wanamaker, of President Harrison's cabinet, recommended an appropriation for the installation of pneumatic tubes for handling mail. After his retirement a short line of conduited tubes was placed between the main station in Philadelphia and one of the substations and this was the beginning of the practical use of the system in the United States.

Five Lines in Philadelphia

In Philadelphia today there are five expensive lines carrying practically all the first class mail of the big Quaker town to and from the trains and the central station.

New York, Boston, St. Louis and Chicago are also provided with the air pipes, thus constituting a pneumatic delivery system in each of the five largest cities of the country.

Reports on the operation of the systems are monotonous in their unanimity. Each year when the postmasters of those cities inform the department at Washington of the doings of the sections under their charge, they tell the same story. They pile praise on praise and recommend the extension of the lines wherever practical.

Last year's report of the Boston postoffice showed that the pipes were handling something less than 400,000 nices of mail matter to and from the trains each day and that it would be possible with the same equipment to carry six times as much.

The worth of the idea has been fully demonstrated according to the reports of the postoffice officials, and it has been received with so much favor by the people that a constantly growing demand is heard in Washington for an extension of its beneficence to smaller cities.

With the idea of satisfying this demand or at least of looking over the field with great care a commission has been named by the government to call at any place where a strong demand comes from and investigate the conditions surrounding the case.

The men are experts in mail matters and since the formation of the committee have been called to look into the claims of numerous cities. Towns of the size of Cincinnati, New Orleans, San Francisco and the Twin Cities are given first attention under the instructions of the postmaster general, and the committee has been called to investigate all of them. St. Paul, through the commercial bodies, has made an application for a visit from the committee and has included Minneapolis in the terms of the request.

Will Visit St. Paul

Superintendent of Mail Deliveries H. J. Hadlich strongly favors the introduction of the pneumatic tubes here and has urged the fact upon the attention of the Commercial club and other organizations. He says that the committee will call in St. Paul probably within the next two months, but could give no definite date for their arrival.

The system in use in the big cities is one in which the pipes are of eight-inch diameter. These pipes are laid in conduits and protected amply from injury.

There is no great engineering problem involved in putting in the system, for a little frost or a lot of water makes little difference in working the system. All that is required is to have the pipes out of the way of other subterranean structures and to guard them as much as possible from too much stray electricity.

In the big towns where they are in use they are buried all the way from two feet to a dozen or more and follow any kind of a reasonable curve without special care from an engineering viewpoint. The tubes are air and water tight and are highly polished on the inside. This, however is more the result of use than the original condition of the interiors.

How the System Works

From the central station the most used line of course extends to the railroad depots. It is continuous, with the exception of a place into which the "cartridges" can be inserted and from which they may be taken. Out of the central station lines are also run to the commercial and substations practically the same pattern.

Superintendent Hadlich traced the course of a supposititious letter mailed at Lake Harriet, Minneapolis, and addressed to a cattle man at South St. Paul, in order to show how the idea works.

"The letter is mailed," said he, "at 10:30 in the morning at Lake Harriet. A carrier is due at the box at that time and receives the missive. He continues his round and at 11 o'clock arrives at the substation.

"The letters are sorted and the message to the cattle man finds its way into a cartridge destined for the central office in Minneapolis in less than five minutes.

"The cartridge is a cylindrical object, just fitting the bore of the tube. It is two feet long and opens on the side by a sliding panel. One of these cartridges holds 600 letters and may be packed full in an instant.

"The edges of the cartridge are covered with soft material that tends to fill the bore air tight when the head of the cylinder is inserted.

"The receiving end of the tube is on an inclined plane and strikes the conduit proper at a sufficient distance from the place of entrance to give it a good start. The mail clerk closes the cartridge and pushes it into the pipe that stands in the room.

The cartridge slips in easily and moves slowly out of sight. The slow movement, however, is but momentary, for when the clerk swings the gap together an air pressure of about a hundred pounds to the square inch is exerted behind the cartridge and the same kind of suction pressure is exerted in front of it. In a second it darts away like a rifle bullet on its journey to the central office.

"The power is furnished by heavy motors and air pumps, one of which pulls and the other pushes, giving the air current in the pneumatic tubes a speed slightly greater than a mile a minute. This is strong enough to break steel plates and it whisks the cartridges along as if powder was behind them.

"The distance is about four miles from the station and in about four minutes the cartridge from the substation is in the federal building on First avenue south. It is forced into a receiver and rolls out on a table provided for that purpose. A clerk opens the cartridge and shakes out the contents. Then the mail is sorted again and the stockman's letter is placed in another receptacle and slipped into a tube on the other side of the room. In less than five minutes from the time of its receipt it is on its way again.

At Lightning Speed

"Across the river it shoots at the same rate of speed and in five minutes more it is in Merriam Park substation. We are supposing that the letter is contained in a through cartridge and the transfer to the St. Paul tube is made in a minute. Five minutes later it is here and the clerks have shaken out and distributed the contents once more. Then it goes to the tube connecting the central office with South St. Paul and four minutes later the officials at South St. Paul are wondering when Mr. Jones will call for his mail.

"The trip has been made in twenty-four minutes, which time is slow compared with that made in New York on some classes of the service.

"Now to show just how fast it is from station to station I would call attention to the fact that under no system of transportation in use here aside from the telegraph and telephone could it be done in less than three hours with every condition favoring.

"Another advantage of the pneumatic service, aside from its speed, is the fact that it is continuous. A cartridge may be sent every fifteen seconds and the power is sufficient to move them along even when they are heavily loaded without diminution of speed.

"One of the great points to be urged in favor of the tubes is the extension of time during which the mails may be held open. At present it is necessary to close all mails at the central office at least thirty minutes before train time. This is necessary in order to carry the mail to the depot and prepare it for shipment. A letter mailed after the mail for a certain train is closed must wait for the next train, even though the train will not move out for half an hour. In the case of a letter to San Francisco this may mean a delay of twenty-four hours.

"Under the tube system it will be possible to hold the mails open practically until train time. It would cut off anywhere from twelve to thirty-six hours in correspondence between the Twin Cities and points out in the state, and in local business will be even more serviceable."

Work Is Under Way

The buildings of the national capitol are connected with tubes and so are the departments. They have proved their worth there, and now the business men of St. Paul have become interested in the plan. Mr. Hadlich made a long talk before a committee of the Commercial club some time ago and outlined the whole method as he understood it. The committee was impressed and work has been started to secure the advantage of the system for St. Paul.

It is proposed to have a line from the central station to the union depot. Another from the depot to the commercial station; another from central to Bradley street station, and a fourth from central to St. Anthony station. These are all the local lines that will be recommended to the committee, but a St. Paul line to Merriam Park and a connecting line with Minneapolis, as well as a similar local system in the Flour City, are said to be favored by the authorities and business men.

In New York the tubes are used to some extent to ship newspapers from the presses to subscribers, and the system is said to work very nicely.

The tubes require little repair work and seem to get better and more efficient the longer they are in use. In the great European capitals pneumatic tubes are in general use and are part of the government's equipment in Germany. The tubes in Berlin are much smaller than the American tubes, but in spite of the size, which is only three inches, the vast first-class mail of that city is moved through the tubes without hitch or apparent effort.

The government places a limit on the amount to be spent on the tubes, but the construction is done by private companies like other classes of government work.

It is hoped by the officials that one line of tubing can be finished and in operation in St. Paul by the first of next year.

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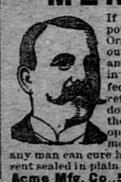

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