

Myths of the Desert.

There is no portion of the world of which more grotesque stories have been told than of the Colorado desert, and of all the myths none has gained a stronger hold on the people than that there is here to be seen the "phantom ship."

"I have actually been on the deck of the 'phantom ship,'" said an old prospector recently, and his hearers smiled blandly. It seemed to offend the old man, and he jumped up and declared that he would give those present absolute proof that he spoke the truth. They called for the proof, and he held aloft his walking stick, a heavy piece of wood.

"There," said he, "is a stick which I cut with my own hands from the deck of the old ship," and he looked proudly on his possession.

"Now," he added, "you have positive proof that the old vessel is on the desert, just as it has been described."

I, too, have seen that phantom ship of which the world has heard so much, and as I write it is to be seen on the horizon, but as a matter of fact the famous ship is a mountain which is continually undergoing a transformation of sky line, and there are few people who would really for a moment take it for a ship.

This mountain, which has long been known as the phantom ship, is in reality as mysterious as it would be were it really a phantom. It has triple peaks, and is really situated down on the peninsula of Lower California, a hundred miles or more from here, and its true name is the Black Buttes.

At sunrise in the southeast at that particular point there is nothing to break the horizon, but an hour or two later the mirage, which is always working wonders here, lifts those three peaks above the horizon, and at some times they appear like high mountains, even from this distance, but they never continue in the same form. I saw them a few mornings since, when they threw what appeared to be very tall flag poles from each of the summits, these poles being of the symmetrical form we are accustomed to associate with flag poles, and it may have been these mast-like projections wrought by the mirage which first gave the idea of a ship to those who saw the mountain. The poles did not remain in view but about an hour when they gave way to a fort-like formation, and this in turn changed to the appearance of a triple-turreted monitor.

I have seen the Black Buttes at other times when they threw out great extensions, like monster guns projecting from a fortress, and I cannot recall that the mountain ever took on the same outline at two separate times.

To the southwest of Imperial there are the Superstition mountains, and while these are of the same apparent outline at all times, they are continually changing color, and in this respect are almost as great a problem as the Black Buttes.

In a lesser degree, Pilot Knob, to the east, the Chuckawalla mountains to the north and the San Jacinto mountains to the northwest, are changing form and color continually.

If one looks at the floor of the desert itself, he is liable to be greatly puzzled at times if he is not familiar with the country, for everywhere his eye is likely to rest on water—the product of the mirage, but water which is not of use in irrigating the soil.

A gentleman who had been at Imperial but a few hours was startled to hear the dinner bell ring. Rising suddenly, he exclaimed: "Is that

really the dinner bell, or is it a mirage?"

Another person who is given to borrowing trouble has raised the question, What will happen when a county seat is established where now is the desert? He declares that a lawyer will ask a witness what he saw and the judge will rule the question out on the ground that no one here ever sees things as they are.—Imperial correspondent of Los Angeles Herald.

Salt River Valley Melons.

The Rocky Ford melon, a product of the Salt River Valley, in Arizona, found so much favor in the East last season that farmers have gone into the industry with vigor this season and carloads of the cantaloupes will be shipped as far east as New York this year. The raising of cantaloupes has been found very lucrative and dealers are very much encouraged over some feats of shipping. For instance, a consignment of melons consigned to Liverpool, reached Liverpool and the fruit, which was in a most satisfactory condition commanded almost fabulous figures at a retail store. This was used as an illustration of the possibilities of this young industry, showing that the field for marketing the product is almost unlimited. Last season perhaps not more than three carloads of melons were shipped from Arizona. It is estimated that at least fifteen carloads will reach Chicago and other points east this season.—California Fruit World.

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