

IF I HAD THREE WISHES

My first wish is more like a dream, hoping for it to come true. Next March I would leave Bakersfield for a designated rendezvous in New York where I would embark on the first trailer caravan to travel through Northern Africa. We would leave on freight steamers which, in the hold, would carry our trailers and automobiles across the ocean to Casablanca, on the northern coast of Africa.

After a thorough check by the custom officers we assembled our 35 trailer caravan on the dock and turned on the main thorough-fare for a thrilling excursion through the semi-modern down-town. Soon we were on the outskirts of the city and were startled by the contrast of the atmosphere of living. The native quarter has not changed in the many years, hardly at all since the crusades, the beggars are still crying alms for the love of Allah, ragged and half-starved, running around, selling hand made pots and pitchers, some of brass and some inlaid with silver, and all sorts of jewelry.

We made our camp on the outskirts of the city, parking our cars and trailers in a circle as did the first American pioneer. We set up our power plant and made arrangements for police protection.

That evening entertainment previously arranged for came to our camp and put on an exhibition of native dances; dancers resplendent in colorful native dress. This wonderful show was their welcome put on by their local Chamber of Commerce, or whatever you want to call it. Anyway it was a friendly gesture and most entertaining.

For several days we had guides to show us the sights. We were taken to the edge of the city to an immense camel stable where it was arranged for us to have a short ride which was interesting, but I have known better ways to get to a desired location.

Natives followed us from the time we left camp until the guards drove them away. One of the most interesting sights was the beggar, who with a dirty rag wrapped around his waist and a long straggly beard, went around wailing for alms. The rich seemingly have no worries; they live in large mansions, have a staff of servants and live the life of Riley. In contrast the poor people live in ratty houses of one or two rooms. The children fetch water from the nearest well and thus earn a handful of dried dates, this considered a good meal for them. The street is their mecca for money, begging, acting as guides, cleaning shoes, most any tourist's errand will be performed by these young natives for a few centimes.

Our stay in Casa Blanca was much too short but we still had the rest of Africa, with her wonders and intrigues, to explore and then on to the Holy Land and finally to Europe.

But alas, this can only come to pass, as the fakir on the corner said, by the granting of two more wishes - money to provide the expenses for the trip, and a rig, trailer lingo for car and trailer, to travel with.