

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE SECTION

THE SHIP OF THE DESERT



is frequently referred to as "the ship of the desert."

You may have seen a camel. At least you have seen pictures of camels. If you examine a camel, you will decide that everything about this animal is queer. His neck and legs look too long and sprawling for his body. His feet are split into two hoofed toes almost up to his ankle.

His head is small and ugly. His brown eyes fairly pop out of his head from sockets too small for them. His nostrils are bias slits. He can open them wide, or close them almost shut during the terrible sand storms of his native deserts. His rough hair looks as if it had never been combed. On his knobby knees and arched breast-bone he wears tough leathery pads. Finally, a hump on his back does not add to his appearance.

Don't go too near a camel's head. Sometimes, for no apparent cause at all,

A V A S T he has a terrible fit of rage. Then he tries to bite and kick the person nearest.

D E S E R T One of the most noticeable things about the camel is the queer way in which he chews his food. His lower jaw swings from side to side like a hammock. His upper lip is cleft up the middle. The camel reaches for and feels his food with this thick split lip as if it were made up of two fingers.

The animal best adapted to travel across the sandy desert is the camel. And so this unwieldy animal has been one of the most useful animals to men, because of his great strength, and his ability to endure heat, thirst, and hunger. But he is a very stupid beast, and has never learned to do more than a few simple things. He never seems to know or care for his driver, who may have brought him up from a baby. He has as little sense as a sheep, is as ill-tempered as an angry bull, and as stubborn as a mule. He works, but not willingly as a horse does.

One of the few things a camel has learned to do is to kneel when he is ordered to do so. His knee-pads protect his joints from the hard ground, but he moans and groans as if in terrible pain. He knows some kind of a load is to be put on, and he complains aloud. He doesn't wait to find if the load is heavy or light. He carries with ease 500 pounds of goods for hundreds of miles across wide deserts.

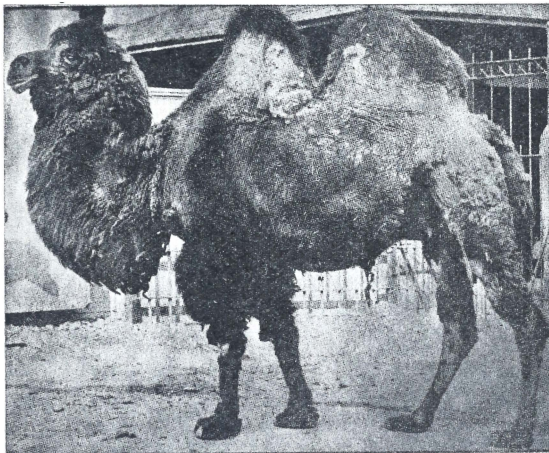
If you get seasick easily you had better not try to ride a camel. He lifts both feet on one side at the same time, tilting his body sideways. Then he lifts the two feet on the other side. So you must roll over and back. Tossing and pitching, heaving and rolling, you feel

as if you were in a sailboat on rough water. So violent is the motion that the camel-police of Egypt, who often ride day and night over the desert on racing camels in pursuit of smugglers, are compelled to bind their bodies tightly with long strips of cloth. The camel is, indeed, the ship of the desert in more ways than one.

For food, after a day's travel, a camel

scarce, and his stomach has little cells for storing water, so he can go a week without drinking, in case of need.

Camels carry burdens for their masters, furnish flesh and milk for food for their masters, and with their hair provide material for weaving cloth. Without this ugly, stupid, useful beast the hot deserts of the Old World would lie unpeopled and unknown. The camel sub-



The Ship of the Desert

is given a small measure of hard dates or dried beans. Besides, he eats the twigs, thistles, and thorny shrubs that grow here and there in the desert. Camels will eat anything. They will chew their own leather bridles or tent cloth, and they consider an old mat or a basket to eat as a great delicacy.

The camel's big, solid hump is full of fat to be drawn upon when food is

mits to his treatment, but remains untamed, sullen, and forbidding.

There is just one thing for which the camel has a soft feeling. The mother camel shows affection for her baby. When the baby camel is born, he is so weak and wobbly, he can scarcely walk. The mother perhaps has to go with the caravan of hundreds of other camels,

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traveling 250 or more miles a day across the burning sand and rocky hills. Then the baby camel is put into a hammock, and is carried by one of the freight camels. This freight camel may carry many other things besides—leather bags of water, bales of cloth and dates, jugs of oil, and blocks of rock salt.

There is a curious reason why the baby camel is not put on his mother's back. Camels are so stupid that if the mother could not see her baby, even if he were on her own back, she would be apt to think he had been left behind. Then she might turn and run back to the last camping place. If the baby is on another camel, she can see him, and she follows contentedly.

After the day's march she has her baby all to herself. She nurses him and pets him with her sensitive split lip. He cuddles up to her for warmth, for after the terrible heat of the day, the desert nights are often cold.

There are two kinds of camels—the Arabian, or single-humped camel of Arabia, Syria, and Africa; and the Bactrian camel of western Asia with two humps. The feet of both

BRAHMS

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brahmz)

3. Can you tell of Brahms' early life?

4. What music critic brought the music of Brahms to the attention of the public? How?

5. Can you give a list of compositions by Brahms?

are provided with spongy pads which spread somewhat as the animal walks on the yielding sand.

There are no records of wild camels, so domestication must have been accomplished early. In the Bible we read that Abraham took on his journey "sheep and oxen and camels." We read also that Job at one time had 6,000 camels. In modern times some Arabian and African tribes own hundreds of thousands of these animals.

REVIEW

1. Why is the camel called "the ship of the desert"?

2. How is the camel adapted to desert life?

3. Tell of the camel's disposition.

4. Why do you think the camel is a stupid animal?

5. How is the camel useful to man?

PUPPET THEATER

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Much of our scenery is homemade. Our favorite scenes are those we painted ourselves. Some pieces of scenery are glued on blocks of wood, like huge boulders for the center of the stage.

Our characters are most of them either of our own designing or cut from magazines and mounted. (This is a good occupation for a convalescent child.) They move on stiff wires, pushed or pulled invisibly. Some stages have grooves for the figures to move in, but ours can move freely all over the stage. The wires are soldered to flat pieces of zinc with upright bent pieces soldered to the center to hold the figures. We have about a dozen wires. (Figure 4)

If two persons manipulate the wires, standing at opposite sides of the stage (hidden by the curtains), they can work very efficiently and also give greater variety to the voices than if only one person puts on the play.

It is lots of fun to have a puppet theater. First make the theater. Then write the play. Make the necessary scenery and figures. Practice speaking the words and operating the figures. Then you are ready to have an audience.