

lion, the leopard, the hyæna, the jackal, the ape, the antelope, the ostrich, the pigeons, the pintads. The capital of this oasis, the town of Aghades, was formerly very prosperous, and rivalled Timbuktu.

Entire kingdoms, in the Desert, occupy each but a single oasis. Thus we may regard as great oases, in the north, Fezzan, a mountainous country, with fertile valleys ; and, in the south, Darfour, situated to the west of Cordofan. Egypt itself is only, as we have said, a great oasis.

It is the palm tree forests which especially constitute the oasis. The Arab says that God created the palm tree at the same time as man, to make it minister to the sustenance of human life ; this is the same beneficial mission which the banana discharges in the tropical regions. The palm prospers in the African oasis, because that hardy tree can accommodate itself to, and even thrives well upon, the brackish water, which is all the Desert can furnish. The palm and the date are the commonest trees of the oasis. The female palms are especially abundant ; male palms are rare. The Arabs artificially fecundate, in the spring, the female palms, by shaking upon them the pollen of the male flowers.

The Arab knows how to create, under some conditions, an artificial oasis with a few palm trees. For this purpose, he digs a hole about thirty feet in depth, and in this hole he plants a palm tree. The far-reaching roots pierce the soil, and penetrate to the watery subterranean strata ; thenceforward it can dispense with artificial irrigation, and under its shadow other vegetables can be cultivated. It sometimes happens that the winds fill up these palm tree holes ; the Arab then courageously recommences the fatiguing task of clearing them to a depth of thirty feet of the encroaching sands.

Besides palms and dates, numerous shrubs, vegetables, and cereals are cultivated in the oases. Barley is also grown ; that truly cosmopolitan cereal which flourishes all over the world, from the icy wastes of Lapland to the burning sands of the Sahara.

Nowhere in the Desert, except in the forests of its oases, does the traveller meet with beasts of prey. The fancy of the poet has