

Rev. Stifler Views Famed Carpenter Shop

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stopped us at the entrance to both the little bedouin villages through which we passed. At one place a little child heaved a two-pound rock against our car. We felt for a while as though we were nowhere. Only Mt. Hermon kept us in our bearings. About eleven we came to a bridge. Beside it was a huge barracks, more or less in disrepair. Where were we? At the ancient river Pharpar, at the spot where Paul was supposed to have been converted. The river banks were beautiful, the water clear as crystal. One could hardly believe he was out there in the desert. It lent fresh significance to Jesus' figure of the Water of Life. Water in that land is life.

Damascus, Oldest City in World

And then Damascus, the oldest city in the world, its origin unknown, occupying the greatest oasis in the desert, "the first port on the first ocean man ever learned to navigate." We settled and had our lunch at the Hotel and were then taken through the city westward to Mohammed's Hill overlooking the city. What a sight it was. All around us was the desert—the mountain on which we stood was desert and there at our feet was the deep verdure of this ancient city. It comes about this way. The river Abana fed by the eternal snows of the Lebanon Mountains flows through the city and having given life to its thousands, the river runs out into the desert about seven miles, forms a little pool and disappears.

For so many centuries have the Damascenes been handling that river for their purposes that as one wanders through the streets and lanes, seeing here a little brook, here a water fall, here a broad and gardened canal, he easily forgets that all these are artificial water courses made there, some of them a millenium or two, maybe five, ago. Damascus is a city of 400,000 souls but it occupies no more territory than Evanston.

Like Jerusalem it is partly within walls and partly spread outside except that the walls are not too prominent or in such good repair as in Jerusalem. One almost feels himself a character in an Eastern Romance as he travels through the city. People of every sort

through its streets. It is the noisiest city I have ever been in. Our car was equipped with two horns but besides that the chauffeur kept his cut-out open constantly. The Damascus Palace was our hotel. It was our most uncomfortable resting place on the whole trip. Yet it was the best place in the city. Plumbing is a lost art in Damascus. Cooking also. We were glad our visit was not long.

See Famed Paul's Window

There was much of interest in Damascus. We saw the street called Straight where Paul lodged. We saw the window in the wall from which he was supposed to have been let down in a basket to make his escape. We visited a great factory where inlaid furniture and brass goods were made by hand, mostly children's hands, alas!—and rugs were woven. One huge rug we saw was being woven for a Chicago man. It was made of camel's wool and the figures in the rug featured camels.

It was in Damascus that I ate my first prickly pear—the first of the great cactus plants of those eastern lands. There is an approved way of eating every sort of fruit of course, the orange has its way, the apple, the banana, and the rest. The only way to eat a prickly pear successfully is to have someone, who knows how, peel it for you, then put it all in your mouth at once, let it dissolve there and remove the hundred little seeds that remain from the process. It is not a very refined performance, but the fruit is indescribably luscious.

There were soldiers everywhere in Damascus, and barbed wire. Great destruction was wrought there in 1925 when the French bombarded the city. Poor old city. Its history has been one of tears and terrors. What it needs is to have America charter the Leviathan, load it with an army of 3,000, a third of whom must be doctors and nurses, a third teachers and social workers, and the other third architects and builders. It would cost less to maintain such an army than it does the fighting kind and what they did would be constructive and would gain the ends of peace.

Max and Bruce Drever, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Drever of 135 Beach road, Glencoe, are returning from school for the holidays Saturday, December 21. Max attends Western Military school, and Bruce attends the University of Illinois.

Henry Stein is returning today from Exeter academy to spend the holidays at his home in Winnetka.

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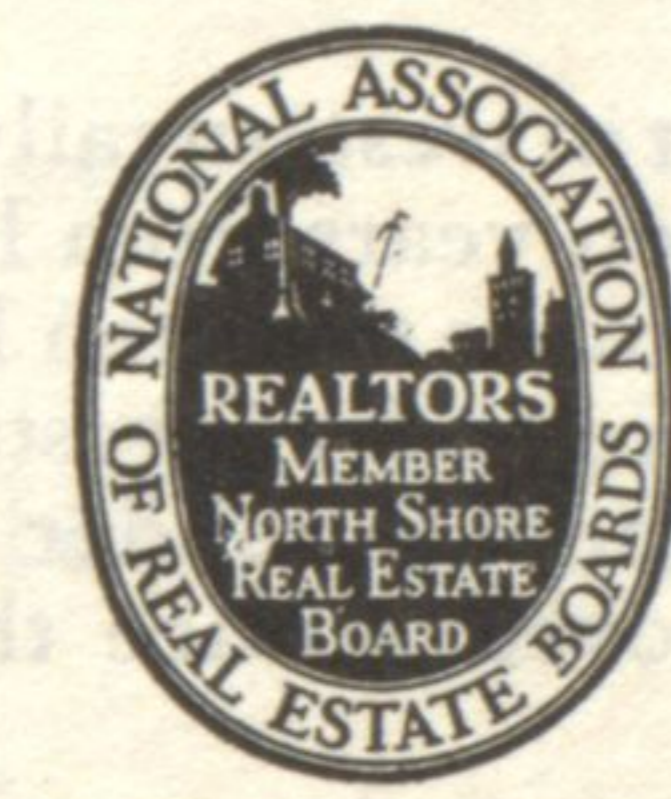
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