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RAMBLES IN MAURETANIA CAESARIENSIS

(*continued*)

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TO reach Cherschell from Tipasa you must leave the sea and go inland round the flanks of Djebel Chénoua. Just beyond the first mile you come upon a strongly built Roman farm on the left of the road. The main gate is well preserved; it appears to have given entrance to the courtyard, round which were grouped living-rooms and farm-buildings, the whole forming a quadrilateral which would offer stout resistance to any band of raiding Berbers. The excellence of the masonry suggests that the farm dates back to the early days of Roman occupation of the littoral, but it may well have played its part in resisting Firmus and his Moors in the fourth century when they swept eastward down the Taza corridor to raid the fertile fields of Caesariensis.

Some distance beyond the farm-ruins, across vineyards on the left of the road, you see a dozen tall arches of the old aqueduct spanning a cleft in the hills. Another stunted fragment of the same work lies half buried in trees and brushwood, just outside the entrance to Cherschell. The town, which was one of the first to be occupied by the French after the defeat of Hussein Dey, has won back some traces of its former busy life, and is sufficiently up to date to boast a 'bar Americain'.

It is said to have derived its old name of Iol from a Phoenician deity. It was probably a colony of Carthage, and its records go back to the fourth century B.C. But possibly the site was occupied two or three centuries earlier; the islet, where the lighthouse now stands, was exactly what Phoenician traders liked; the country was fertile, and there would be good business to be done with the natives. The two races would intermarry and the mixed race of Libyphoenicians, while mainly of Berber blood, would assimilate the language, the religion, and the

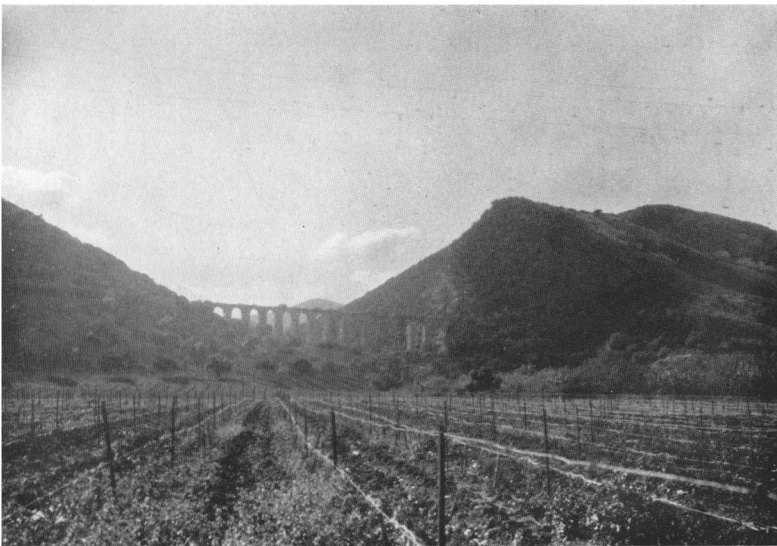
trading capacity of the Carthaginians. When the mother-city fell, Iol found no difficulty in passing under the rule of Micipsa. When the quarrels of his descendants loosened their hold on their western territories, it became the capital of Bocchus, the last representative of the old Moorish kings. His death transferred the city again to the family of Micipsa, and with the accession of Juba II its great days began. The new king determined to have a worthy capital, and Cherchell has repaid him by preserving his personality for us. It has its iconoclast saint, Marciana, just as Tipasa has Saint Salsa, but she has left no mark on the city, which is to-day as much the city of Juba II as it was at the commencement of our era.

There are few rulers of the Roman world whom we seem to know so intimately. Time has mercifully spared us the books he wrote or had written for him; but we know their contents and their range, we have the historic records of his reign, we can see many of the artistic treasures he collected, and we know what he looked like in youth and manhood and old age—'an old Academician with an air that was childlike and bland'. It is easy to make fun of him, but it seems to me idle to deny that he did a great work in his long reign. He was given the task of Romanizing Mauretania, and he carried it out with such success that the country was ready for complete Roman administration within fifteen years of his death. It is true that a rebellion broke out against the new order of things—if you go westward into Mauretania Tingitana and visit the attractive ruins of Volubilis, you will find records of its suppression. But that rebellion was inspired by devotion to Juba's house and is itself no small tribute to the success of his reign.

He was the son of the Juba who fought against Julius Caesar and ended his life in a duel with his colleague, Afranius, when fortune declared against him and his Pompeian allies at Thapsus. The young Juba lost his throne and was taken to Rome for his education. There he acquired the two great enthusiasms of his life—an ungrudging respect for the majesty of Rome and a boundless admiration for the art and the literature of Greece. He spent much of his time with Augustus, saw service in his wars and eventually received a double reward for his devotion—



Roman Farm outside Tipasa



The Chercell aqueduct, with modern vineyard in the foreground

a crown and a bride. His ancestral kingdom of Numidia had been brought directly under Roman administration; but Bocchus' death had left Mauretania without a ruler, and a brief experiment of Roman officialdom had made it clear that the Moors would be easier to handle under a king of African blood. So in 25 B.C. Caius Julius Juba went to Cherrchell and became king of Mauretania. Five years later he married or was married by Cleopatra Selene. She was the daughter of Anthony and Cleopatra, and, like her husband, she had received an orphan's education at the court of Augustus. She shared the sovereign power with Juba, coined her own money, and may have been the driving force behind his policy. Under their joint guidance the old Libyphoenician port of Iol blossomed into Caesarea, one of the great maritime towns of the Western Mediterranean. Their merchantmen traded with Italy and Provence and Spain, and, pushing through the Straits of Gibraltar, reached the Canary Islands and established purple dyeworks at Mogador.

Following the example of their patron Augustus, Juba and Cleopatra Selene rebuilt their capital and filled it with Roman architecture and Greek statuary. The spread of Roman civilization southward from the littoral was facilitated by the founding of colonies, and Juba co-operated with the army of Numidia in repressing the revolts of the Southern tribes. Loyalty to Rome was the keynote of the House of Masinissa, and from that policy Juba never swerved; his merchantmen, his soldiers, his secretaries, his administrators were all used and used successfully for the work of Romanization. Not altogether a negligible king this second Juba, in spite of his love of art and letters, his dabblings in natural history and medicine and a too receptive ear for a traveller's tale.

We may picture him at work on a sunny morning at Caesarea. He may be reviewing a detachment of Moorish cavalry and finding it none too easy to manage his own mount; or he may be watching his masons at work on the temple he is raising to Augustus; or perhaps a convoy is safely home from the dark sea beyond the Pillars of Hercules and he is hustling down to the quay to hear of fresh marvels from the Fortunate

Islands or from the pleasant wooded country which lies inland from Sala. An earnest, shortsighted man with the scholar's stoop, yet carrying himself with a certain dignity; clean-shaven, of course, as befits a Philhellene who has risen superior to the luxuriant hairiness which characterized his tough old father. We imagine him happiest, when he could put aside civil administration and military duties and busy himself with his statues and his books. These were the things that lay closest to his heart—the marble copy of some fourth-century bronze; the carefully executed reproduction of a masterpiece of Pheidias; some Egyptian goddess which the Moon Queen had just received from Alexandria; the latest treatise of Varro or Didymus Chalkenteros. The well-trained secretaries enter and Juba settles down comfortably to confirm his fame as a polymath. He lacks stenographer and dictaphone and typewriter; otherwise he might well rival the exuberant fertility of our modern best sellers. That fame is denied him, but he had at least a fascinatingly wide range of subjects with which to deal. If history was to be his main theme for the evening, he could choose between Arabia and Rome, Greece or the records of Assurbanipal; as a last resort, he could follow the example of his literary grandfather, the second Hiempsal, and fall back on his native Africa and the exploits of his own Massylian forebears, Gaia and the Divine Masinissa and Micipsa. There was all Greek sculpture for him to criticize. He might deal with the theatre and bewail its decadence. A chance conversation down at the docks might plunge him into a dissertation on the elephant's modest prudishness and charitable instincts or the magic properties of some desert herb. Everything was grist that came to the royal mill—history, natural history, geography, grammar, sociology, literary criticism, botany, art, geology.

Is it too much to picture the evening ending with a scene that anticipates modern literary methods? At Selene's urgent and repeated request ('You seem to have forgotten, my dear, that we have got Euphorbos's brother dining to-night, to say nothing of your Sheikh from Lixus and that dull soldier from Ammaedara') Juba reluctantly puts the finishing touches to his literary labours. The last précis is given, the last anecdote out-

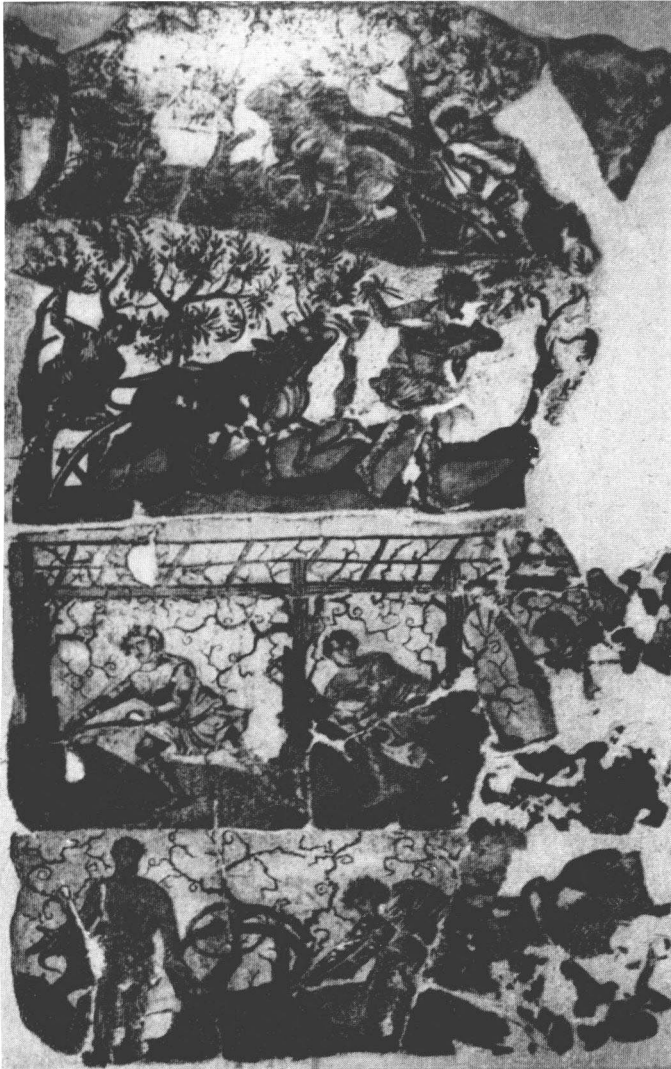
lined. The Royal Pair leaves the library. The four secretaries make due obeisance, and then with sighs of relief settle down to work. One is sketching the military reforms of Marius; a second is writing a brisk account of the domestic habits of the hippopotamus; another deals with chapter ten of 'Trade Routes in Syria'; the fourth takes up the easiest job of all, a vigorous and closely reasoned exposure of the deterioration of sculpture since the days of Praxiteles. It must have been in some such way as this that Juba won his literary reputation in the spare time left him from governing a kingdom which covered Morocco and two-thirds of Algeria. It would be churlish to begrudge him either the statue which Athens erected in recognition of his Philhellenism or the golden crown and the ivory sceptre with which Rome rewarded his military exploits.

Juba died in A.D. 23, having outlived his Egyptian consort by nearly thirty years. Their son, Ptolemy, succeeded and carried on their policy, but with inferior intelligence and less application. Seventeen years of rule could not teach him tact. He won the reputation of being the best-dressed man in Rome; the enthusiastic appreciation of his latest purple robe by the amphitheatre crowd naturally sealed his fate; his cousin, Caligula, assassinated him and appropriated his fortune. He left no heir. But the great days of Caesarea did not end with her Berber kings. The old realm of Bocchus was divided into two procuratorships, and Caesarea gave its name to the eastern division, Mauretania Caesariensis. It remained the capital and contained the government offices; a cavalry detachment was stationed there; it was the base of the Western Mediterranean fleet. Claudius made it a colony soon after Ptolemy's death and the ensuing rebellion of his freedman, Aedemon. When fortifications were put up during the second century, they contained a population of at least a hundred thousand—officials, sailors, soldiers, merchants, agriculturalists, artists, and artisans. The beginning of the third century was probably the most prosperous period of the city's history. In 217 one of its sons, Opilius Macrinus, became Emperor and for some fifteen months interrupted the succession of 'the Divine Septimian House' which had first brought the sceptre to Africa.

For three hundred years Caesarea was for the western part of Roman Africa what Carthage was for the eastern—a great cosmopolitan port, which welcomed the men and the gods of the Mediterranean world. Juba's influence still persisted, and Hellenism was still the dominant factor in the life of Caesarea. But every kind of religion flourished, and side by side men worshipped the old Moorish gods and Hercules, Cybele and Jehovah, Christ and Mithra, Isis and the gods of Greece.

Towards the beginning of the fourth century its prosperity began to decline. It became the centre of a smaller province, as the eastern part of Mauretania Caesariensis was given to the new government of Sétif. Christianity emerged as the triumphant religion, only to be rent by the bitter quarrels of Catholics and Donatists. In 372 the latter revenged themselves on the Catholic officials who had persecuted them for two generations by joining Firmus in his attack on the coast towns. Marciana did not prove as efficient a patron saint as Salsa, and Caesarea was sacked and burnt. Though Theodosius re-established it as the capital of the province after he had conquered the rebels, the great days were over. Vandal and Moor pillaged it in turn. There was another brief rally under Belisarius. Then it collapsed under the weight of Moorish raids, earthquakes, and the Arab invasions.

The most striking ruins of Caesarea are the two stretches of aqueduct mentioned above and the western baths. The latter have yielded a good deal of excellent statuary, which serves to remind us of the varied pleasures enjoyed by the loungee in that typically Roman building. It is easy to trace frigidarium, tepidarium, and caldarium in the centre and to recognize the promenades which flank the frigidarium. It is worth while paying a visit to the old naval port, which was formed by joining the Ilot Joinville to the mainland, and also to the commercial port, which lies to the east of it. You will find it difficult at first to recognize the theatre until you realize that a generation which no longer shared Juba's interest in the drama converted it into an amphitheatre; this was probably done after the destruction of the original amphitheatre, the scene of S. Marciana's martyrdom, which lies south of the Algiers road.



Mosaic at Cherchell, with scenes of country life

Unfortunately the circus to the west has not been excavated, and it is hardly possible to follow its outlines under the road which traverses it and the surrounding brushwood. The Church has two attractive mosaics, which recall the cheerfulness of the Christian bas-reliefs at Tipasa.

But the real memorial of Caesarea is the Museum, which lies just behind the Mairie on the right of the road, as you enter by the Algiers gate. In it are collected some of the statues which delighted the eyes of Juba and made his city a centre of Hellenism. Many of them may have been imported from Greece, but it is probable that others are the product of local studios which continued to turn out adequate work long after Juba's reign. The fifth and fourth centuries are well represented. Many visitors will agree with Gsell that the chief glory of the Museum is the colossal statue of Apollo, which was copied from a bronze original, created by Pheidias or Calamis; the left hand grasped the branch of a laurel, round which twines the wounded serpent, Python. Other notable works are the headless Athene with the aegis, the Woman in the Doric Peplos, the two Dianas, the benevolent Aesculapius (he was identified with Eschmoun and was popular wherever Punic blood survived), the Canephoros, the jolly Satyr playing with the panther, and the four gigantic heads, which may represent Nereus and his daughters. It is worth while studying the elaborate cuirass of the headless Augustus, which stands in the centre of the courtyard; at the top is Mars the Avenger; beneath the bearded God who had taken full toll for the Ides of March, Julius, himself a God, faces his divine ancestress, Venus; Victory stands behind the Roman, and Cupid behind Venus; beneath these again are a Triton and a Centaur, who has acquired a sea-monster's tail to replace the usual equine hindquarters.

The Museum contains many interesting stelae and pilasters, whose inscriptions and bas-reliefs throw light on the religious observances of Phoenician Iol, the Egyptian importations of Queen Selene and the funerary customs of the Christianity which superseded its two eastern rivals. There are good copies of the heads of the last three kings of Masinissa's house; the

originals of the two Jubas and Ptolemy are now in the Louvre. You will also find a badly battered head of Juba II at the age of forty. But the most interesting head of all is that of a royal lady on the west wall; nose and chin have suffered somewhat from the ravages of time; the royal head-dress and the complicated coiffure are well preserved. It is an extraordinarily expressive face—intelligent eyes, arrogant nose, firm mouth. Many of the critics suggest that this represents Cleopatra Selene; if they are right, we must abandon all romantic pictures of a Moon Princess, fragrant with the mystic glamour of ancient Nile, endowed with Cleopatra's sorcery and Mark Anthony's fire. This is the head of a woman whose will swayed her passions, a *maîtresse femme*, and Selene must have ruled her Juba with inflexible decision during the thirteen years of their joint reign.

Some of the mosaics on the walls serve only to show what a poor form of art this could be. The mutilated Judgement of Paris near the entrance is a wretched piece of work. The Three Graces have been reproduced many times since they emerged in the fourth century B.C., but they can never have failed so lamentably as they do in the mosaic behind the onyx statuette of the Diana of the Chase in the south-east corner of the Museum; colour, form, and grouping are alike repulsive, and the faces are unmistakably those of mental defectives. It is tragic that these terrible women should have been left intact by the passing of the years, which have damaged badly the brilliant mosaic of country life on the adjoining wall. From its faded and blurred outlines we can reconstruct two of the activities of the husbandman, on whose industry, then as now, the prosperity of the country depended. It was corn and wine and oil that gave economic health to Roman Africa. The Moslem invader uprooted the vine; it has been restored by France and Italy, who now share the government of the lands between Egypt and the Atlantic. The visitor to Cherchell Museum may profit by spending a few minutes in examining the mosaic which once adorned a rich man's house in the western quarter of Caesarea. The top half portrays agriculture, the bottom viticulture. A yoke of oxen draws the plough across a field, studded with trees which may be olives; they are guided by a labourer who bends

vigorously to his task; in the top panel another labourer raises his stick to beat the oxen into greater activity; below, another walks in front of them, scattering seed into the furrow they have just ploughed. All the workers wear puttee-like leggings, such as are portrayed on the Tipasa sarcophagus of the Good Shepherd. The two lower panels may prove of interest to those who have been puzzled by the fable of the Fox and the Grapes. The vines shown are not the stumpy plants which have made the fortune of modern Algeria. No one who has seen the vineyards of France or her greatest colony could imagine any sane fox exhausting itself in the way Phaedrus alleges, by 'leaping' with its utmost strength and 'when it could not reach its objective, going away and saying, The grapes are sour'. But the bunches shown on the Cherchell mosaic might defeat the most enterprising fox. They hang from trellises seven or eight feet high, to which labourers are depicted energetically training the vines. Unless the artist has idealized his subject, times have changed for the worse; all the Africans shown in the four panels are putting into their work a savage enthusiasm, for which you will look in vain nowadays in your rambles along the Turquoise Coast.