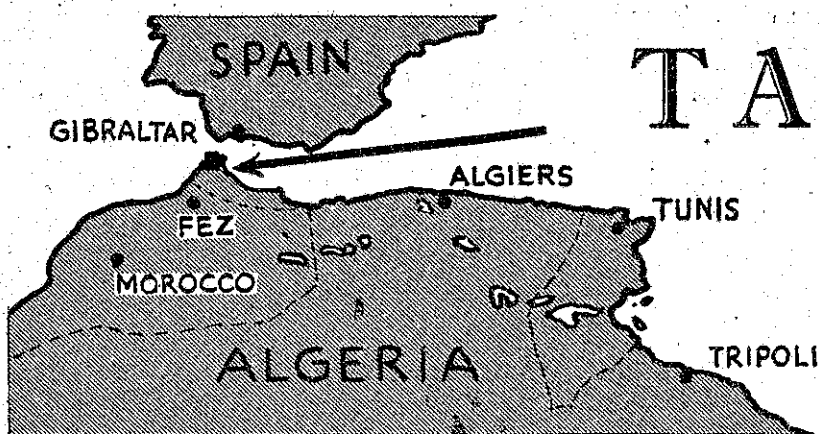




TANGIER---

Gateway to Morocco

A talk broadcast from 3YA

by

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THE Orient has many so-called gateways—Algiers, Tripoli, Tunis, Cairo, Tangier—but of them all Tangier is nearest to the Occident. It is surprising to find so close to Europe a country so thoroughly Eastern as Morocco, and Tangier is by far the most attractive gateway to it.

Its situation you will know. Almost at the extreme north-western tip of Africa, on a small bay which gives on to the broad Atlantic, it is so near Spain that by a short ride of six miles or so up to Cape Spartel, one sees the hills of Spain plainly in view. Gibraltar the lion-headed is less than 40 miles away, but interesting, as is Gibraltar it cannot offer a hundredth part of that to which Tangier invites us.

Come with me as we drop anchor in the early morning, and disembark on to a launch with its inevitable complement of bead and shawl peddlers. As in Colombo liners are unable to take us up to the wharves, so here a launch is necessary to carry us across the last few hundred yards of shallow water to that landing pier whereon bright splashes of colour in men's garments, the babel of strange tongues, the furious fighting over luggage, the eternal wrangling over tips give an immediate and raucous introduction to a typically Eastern scene.

Let us pause to appreciate the layout of the picturesque town, and think for a minute of its history. See how it nestles in the hollow of its low hills, and rises like an amphitheatre, with a blue crescent of crystal-clear sea in front, and a vast azure dome of sky above. The flat-topped houses of the native quarters gleam intensely white; what is it that is strange about them? Probably the absence of chimneys. One's mind flashes back to similar pictures: Heliopolis, after traversing 80 miles of desert; Suez, Colombo. Here and there the coloured tiles of minarets gleam like jewels in the sunshine, while occasional dark cypresses and palm trees add sombre touches to a brilliant scene.

We disembark, proceed a short way on foot, and come suddenly upon our means of transport—donkeys. We pretend to search out a knowledgeable beast; but it's really all one. We are mounted and proceed.

We are in a new world, a new humanity. To pass from the bustle of London into a Moroccan city is to plunge blindly into the midst of a civilisation which apparently has not changed perceptibly since the days of Moses.

Tangier itself, by reason of its history, is rather a place apart. In its historical associations Tangier is one of the oldest places in Morocco. Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans established trading centres there, much as they did in Mar-

*There's Tangier, Fez, and Ispahan,
Bangkok and Singapore;
There's Trebizond and Teheran,
There's Rio and Lahore.
Around the name of each there clings
Enchantment's golden veil;
The magic of strange lands and things,
The glamour of the trail.*

seilles, and called the place Tingis. It became a most beautiful city. Owing, however, to its unique position in those narrow straits that have in the past tempted so many invaders, it has frequently been the scene of many terrible conflicts between Arabs and Berbers, and also between Europeans and Moors. Walls and forts still remain witness to these.

For as, the most interesting period in the history of Tangier begins in the fifteenth century when, after many previous futile attempts, the Portuguese at last, in 1471, obtained possession of the city. During the years 1580 to 1643, it passed into Spanish hands; then it again became Portuguese, and in 1661 it was presented to our own King Charles II, as part of the marriage dowry of Catherine of Braganza.

The English made of it a typical garrison town. High hopes were entertained that it would be valuable not merely for trade and the suppression of piracy, but might see the beginning of an extensive North African colony. When, however, Samuel Pepys, the diarist, as Treasurer of Tangier, visited it in 1681 all such hopes had been relinquished. General mismanagement of inadequate funds ruined it, and after two centuries of alien occupation, the Moors again ruled over it.

To-day it is thoroughly cosmopolitan, having been constituted a special international zone apart from the French protectorate over Morocco, and outside the Spanish zone. Spanish, French, Italians, and British folk are settled here, and for this reason it has lost caste among the Moors who regard it more as an infidel-ridden show-town.

HAVING disposed of this necessary fragment of history let us look around us in the native quarters. Our donkeys amble along the commercial centre of the city, called the Little Louk, which is a steep and cobbled roadway, winding up from the harbour, through squalid native quarters to the modern and very beautiful European settlement upon Mount Washington beyond the walls.

Life in the streets is fascinating. Here are scribes and notaries in robes and turbans, squatting cross-legged on carpeted stalls awaiting the custom of their fellows. Here are tall, straight, big-boned, broad-shouldered Moors moving with a lithe grace and dignity. They wear long white gowns with the familiar enveloping "burnouses" which add considerably to their height; some of them no doubt are merchants. Jews in dingy gaberdines jostle sturdy men from the Riff mountains, dressed in rough brown clothes; grinning negresses, decked out with jewels contend quite hopelessly with seductive shrouded Moorish (Continued on page 9.)



The ubiquitous water-seller, with his goatskin water-bags, brass cups, and bell, is a common sight in Northern African towns.