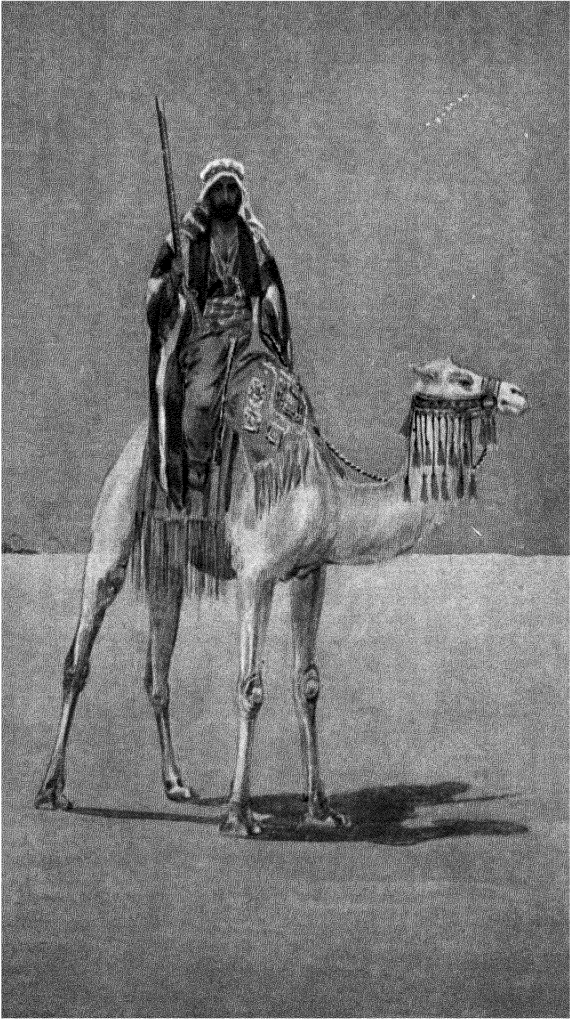


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The ROMANCE
OF TRAVEL

A TRIP
UP THE
NILE

~ BY ~
ELIOT WARBURTON



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**THE
ROMANCE OF TRAVEL**

A CRUISE IN NORTHERN SEAS
BY LORD DUFFERIN

IN THE FORESTS OF BRAZIL
BY H. W. BATES

A TRIP UP THE NILE
BY ELIOT WARBURTON

DAYS IN THE GOLDEN EAST
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PREFACE

THIS series is intended to fulfil a want long felt in schools. Teachers and others, interested in the study of geography, have often insisted on the importance of boys and girls reading genuine accounts of great voyages and discoveries as told by the travellers themselves; such books, from the point of view both of geography and of literature, are much more valuable than second-hand accounts of lands and peoples such as make up the usual "Geography Reader." The records of famous travellers are among the most interesting books in our language, and the careful reading of such books affords valuable lessons in geography, especially on its more "human" side.

These books have been carefully edited, but not condensed; occasional names and passages, and technical descriptions and details—which are not necessary to the enjoyment and continuity of the story—have been omitted, and maps and pictures and occasional explanations of terms have been added, so as to make the books thoroughly suitable for children of school age.

This series will, it is believed, prove that real tales of travel are (to say the least) quite as easy to read as ordinary books on geography.

NOTE

THESE chapters are taken from *The Crescent and the Cross*, by Eliot Warburton—a work which surpasses all others in its description of Egypt and the Nile, that famous river and country “consecrated to everlasting immortality in the annals of the Prophets.” In these pages the reader may enjoy all the romance and realities of Eastern Travel—he may, with the author, visit the Egyptian bazaars, the Pyramids and Sphinx, the ancient tomb-temples and cities, and other marvels which fringe this unique river.

By seeing Egypt in its savagedom and slavery before the days of the British occupation, he will be able to realise the advantages of the latter. The peasants can now keep the money they earn, barbarous punishments have been abolished, and thousands of hitherto wretched people are now reaping the benefits of civilisation. Cairo has been converted into a “fair semblance of a civilised European capital,” and this change has taken place on a smaller scale in all the chief centres of Egypt.

CHAPTER I

ALEXANDRIA

TOWARDS evening, on the eighteenth day since leaving England, the low land of Egypt was visible from the masthead. A heavy gale had been blowing ever since our departure from Malta, and, though a brilliant sun was shining, foam-clouds swept the decks, converted into rainbows as they passed. Not a sail appeared upon these lonely seas, that once swarmed with navies of war and commerce—the only object visible from the deck was a faint speck upon the horizon, but that speck was Pompey's Pillar.

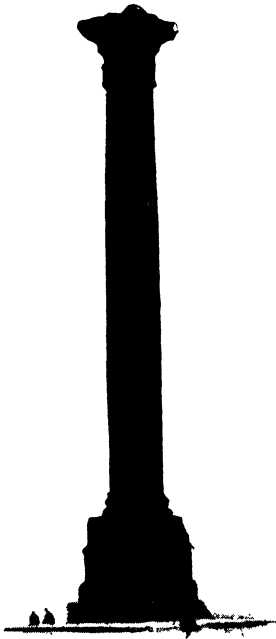
Alexander the Great found a colony of Greeks settled at Racotis; his keen perception at once discovered what we have only just found out, that this was in truth the seaport of all India. He ordered a city to be created, which Alexander invested with his own name,¹ and thus started into existence the haven of our search.

It has been truly said that the ancient city "has bequeathed nothing but its ruins and its name" to the modern Alexandria. Though earth and sea remain unchanged, imagination can scarcely find a place for the ancient walls, fifteen miles in circumference; the vast streets; the magnificent temple on its platform of one hundred steps; the

¹ This was in 332 B.C.

four thousand palaces, and the homes of six hundred thousand inhabitants.

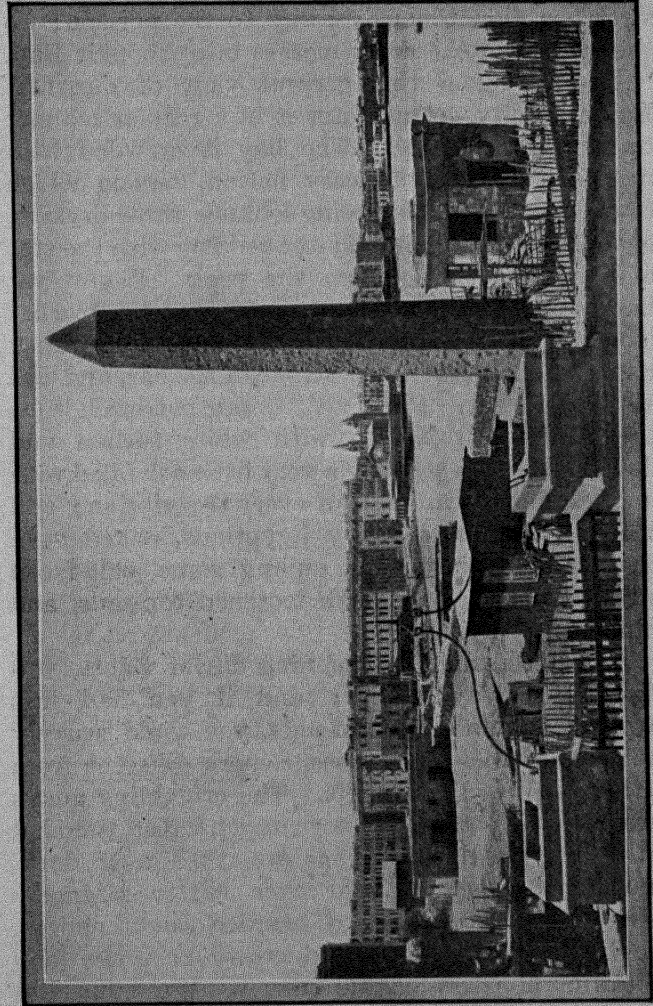
All that is now visible within the shrunken and mouldering walls is a piebald town—one-half



POMPEY'S PILLAR

European, with its regular houses, tall, and white, and stiff; the other half, Oriental, with its mud-coloured buildings and terraced roofs, varied with fat mosques and lean minarets. The suburbs are encrusted with the wretched hovels of the Arab poor; and immense mounds and tracts of rubbish occupy the wide space between the city and its walls: all beyond is a dreary waste. Yet this is the site Alexander selected from his wide dominions,

and which Napoleon pronounced to be unrivalled in importance. Looking now along the shore, beneath me lies the harbour in the form of a crescent—the right horn occupied by the palace of the Pasha, and a battery; the left, a long, low sweep of land, alive with windmills; in the centre is the



ALEXANDRIA : PART OF HARBOUR AND CLEOPATRA'S OBELISK

city: to the westward, the flat, sandy shore stretches monotonously away to the horizon; to the eastward, the coast merges into Aboukir Bay.

Having taken this general view of our first Egyptian city, let us enter it in a regular manner to view it in detail. The bay is crowded with merchant vessels of every nation, among which tower some very imposing-looking three-deckers, gigantic, but dismantled; the red flag with the star and crescent flying from the peak. Men-of-war barges shoot past you with crews dressed in what look like red nightcaps and white petticoats. They rise to their feet at every stroke of the oar, and pull all out of time. Here, an "ocean patriarch" (as the Arabs call Noah), with white turban and flowing beard, is steering a very little ark filled with unclean-looking animals of every description; and there, a crew of swarthy Egyptians, naked from the waist upward, are pulling some pale-faced strangers to a vessel with loosened top-sails, and blue-peter¹ flying.

At length, amid a deafening din of voices, you fight your way ashore; and if you had just awakened from a sleep of ages, you could scarcely open your eyes upon a scene more different from those you have lately left. The crumbling quays are piled with bales of eastern merchandise, islanded in a sea of white turbans wreathed over dark, melancholy faces. Vivid eyes glitter strangely upon solemn-looking and bearded countenances. High above the variegated crowd peer the long necks of hopeless-looking camels. Wriggling and struggling amidst all this mass are picturesquely

¹ Blue flag with white square, hoisted before sailing.

ragged little boys, dragging after them shaven donkeys with carpet saddles, upon one of which you suddenly find yourself seated with scarcely a will of your own; and are soon galloping along filthy lanes, with blank, white, windowless and doorless walls on either side, and begin to wonder when you are to arrive at the Arab city.

You have already passed through it, and are emerging into the Frank¹ quarter, a handsome square of tall white houses, over which the flags of every nation in Europe denote the residences of the various consuls. In this square is an endless variety of races and costumes, most picturesquely grouped together, and lighted brilliantly by a glowing sun in a cloudless sky. In one place, a drove of camels are kneeling down, with jet black slaves in white turbans, or crimson caps, arranging their burdens; in another, a procession of women waddles along, wrapped in large shroud-like veils from head to foot, with a long black bag, like an elephant's trunk, suspended from their noses, and permitting only their eyes to appear. In another, a group of Turks in long flowing drapery, are seated in a circle smoking their chibouques² in silence; grooms in petticoat trousers are leading horses with crimson velvet saddles richly embroidered; a detachment of sad-looking soldiers in white cotton uniform is marching by to very wild music; and here and there a Frank with long moustaches is lounging about, contemplating these scenes as if they had been got up simply for his amusement.

¹ *i. e.* European.

CHAPTER II

THE NILE

“EGYPT is the gift of the Nile,” said one who was bewildered by its antiquity before our History was born (at least, he is called the father of it).¹ A bountiful gift it was, that the “strange, mysterious, solitary stream” bore down in its bosom from the luxuriant tropics to the desert. For many an hour have I stood upon the city-crowning citadel of Cairo, and gazed unweariedly on the scene of matchless beauty and wonder that lay stretched beneath my view: cities and ruins of cities, palm-forests and green savannahs,² gardens, and palaces, and groves of olive. On one side, the boundless desert, with its pyramids; on the other, the land of Goshen, with its luxuriant plains, stretching far away to the horizon.

Yet that river, winding like a serpent through its paradise, has brought this land of Egypt from far regions, unknown to man. That strange and richly-varied panorama has had a long voyage of it! Those quiet plains have tumbled down the cataracts; those demure gardens have flirted with the Isle of Flowers, five hundred miles away; those very pyramids have floated down the waves of the Nile.

The sources of this wonderful river are still veiled

¹ The Greek writer Herodotus.

² Grassy, treeless plains.

in mystery¹—it is the very heroine of geographical romance, often and warmly wooed, but never won. The remotest inhabitants seem to know as little of its origin, yet more remote : I have conversed with slave-dealers familiar with Abyssinia as far as the Galla country, and still their information was bounded by that vague word—*South* : still from the South gushed the great river.

This much is certain that, from the junction of the Taccaze, the Nile runs a course of upwards of twelve hundred miles to the sea, without one tributary stream. During this career, it is exposed to the evaporation of a burning sun, drawn off into a thousand canals, absorbed by porous banks and thirsty sands, drunk of by every living thing, from the crocodile to the pasha, from the papyrus to the palm-tree : and yet, strange to say, it seems to pour into the sea a wider stream than it displays between the cataracts a thousand miles away.

The Nile is all in all to the Egyptian : if it withheld its waters for a week, his country would become a desert ; it waters and manures his fields it supplies his harvests, and then carries off their produce to the sea for exportation : he drinks of it, he fishes in it, he travels on it : it *is* his slave, and used to be his god.

The Arab looks upon all men as aliens who were not fortunate enough to be born beside the Nile ; and the traveller is soon talked into a belief that it affords the most delicious water in the world. The natives dignify their beloved river with the

¹ The Nile is formed by several head streams, which flow into Lake Victoria Nyanza. This lake was discovered by Speke in 1858.

title of "El Bahr," *the sea*; and pass one-third of their lives in watching the flow, and the remainder in watching the ebb, of its mighty tide. The inundation begins in May, attains its full height in August, and thenceforth diminishes—until freshly swollen in the following year. The stream, economised within its channel as far as the first cataract, spreads abroad its beneficent deluge over the vast valley.

Then it is that Egypt becomes an archipelago studded with green islands, and bounded only by the chain of the Lybian Hills and the purple range of the Mokattam (or Arabian) Mountains. Every island is crowned with a village, or an antique temple, and shadowy with palm-trees or acacia groves. Every city becomes a Venice, and the bazaars¹ display their richest and gayest cloths and tapestries to the illuminations that are reflected from the streaming streets. The earth is sheltered from the burning sun under the cool bright veil of waters; the labour of the husbandman is suspended, and it is the season of universal festivity. Boatmen alone are busy, but it would seem to be pleasant business; for the sound of music is never silent beneath those large, white sails, that now glitter in the moonlight, and now gleam ruddily, reflecting the fragrant watchfires on the deck.

This picture is of rare occurrence, however—the inundation seldom rising to a height greater than what is necessary for purposes of irrigation, and presenting, alas! rather the appearance of a swamp than of an archipelago.

As the waters retire, vegetation seems to exude

¹ Eastern markets.

from every pore. Previous to its bath, the country looked shrivelled, and faded, and worn out : a few days after—and old Egypt looks as good as new, wrapped in a richly green mantle embroidered with flowers.

* * * * *

Arrived at Alexandria, the traveller is yet far distant from the Nile. It was midnight when we arrived at the point of junction with the great river ; and a regular African storm, dark and savage, was howling among the mud-built houses when we disembarked there, ankle-deep in slime. A crowd of half-naked, swarthy Arabs, with flaring torches, looked as if they were ready to escort us to the realms of darkness, jabbering and shouting violently, in chorus with the barking of the wild dogs, the roaring of the wind, and the growling of the camels, as a hailstorm of boxes and portmantaus were showered on their backs ; donkeys were braying, women shrieking, Englishmen cursing sonorously ; and the lurid moon, as she hurried through the clouds, seemed a torch waved by some fury, to light up this scene of infernal confusion.

We were soon fizzing merrily up the stream ; and, after a night spent upon the hard boards in convulsive but vain attempts to sleep, we hurried on deck to see the sun shine over this renowned river. Must I confess it ? We could see nothing but high banks of dark mud, or swamps of festering slime, with here and there a dead buffalo, that lay rotting on the river's edge, half devoured by a flock of vultures. In some hours, however, we emerged from the Rosetta branch, on which we had hitherto been boiling our way to the great river, and hence-

forth the prospect began to improve. Villages sheltered by graceful groups of palm-trees, mosques, santons'¹ tombs, green plains, and at length the desert—the most imposing sight in the world, except the sea.

The day passed slowly; the view had little variety; the wildfowl had ascertained the range of an English fowling-piece; the dinner was as cold as the climate would permit; the plates had no knives and forks, and an interesting-looking lady had a drum-stick between her teeth, as I pointed out to her the scene of the battle of the Pyramids, which now rose upon our view.

That sight restored us to good-humour: we felt that we were actually in Egypt.

¹ Mahommedan monks or saints.

CHAPTER III

CAIRO

Its Port-view from Without—Within—The Citadel—Petri-
fied Forest—Chicken Ovens—Feast of Lanterns—Slave Market.

MORNING found us anchored off Boulac, the port of Cairo. Toward the river it is faced by factories and storehouses; within, you find yourself in a labyrinth of brown, narrow streets, that resemble rather rifts in some mud-mountain than anything with which architecture has had to do. Yet, here and there, the blankness of the walls is broken and varied by richly worked lattices, and specimens of Arabesque masonry. Gaudy bazaars strike the eye and relieve the gloom, and the picturesque population that swarms everywhere keeps the interest awake.

On emerging from the lanes of Boulac, Cairo, Grand Cairo! opens on the view: and never yet did fancy flash upon the poet's eye a more superb illusion of power and beauty than the "city of Victory"¹ presents from this distance. The bold range of Mokattam Mountains is purpled by the rising sun; its craggy summits are cut clearly out against the glowing sky, as it runs like a promontory into an ocean of verdure; here, wavy with a breezy plantation of olives; there, darkened with acacia

¹ "El Kahira," the Arabic epithet of this city, means "the Victorious"; whence our word Cairo.

groves. Just where the mountain sinks upon the plain, the citadel stands upon its last eminence; and, widely spread beneath it, lies the city, a forest of minarets with palm-trees intermingled, and the domes of innumerable mosques rising like enormous bubbles over the sea of houses. Here and there, richly green gardens are islanded within the sea, and the whole is girt round with picturesque towers and ramparts, occasionally revealed through vistas of the wood of sycamores and fig-trees that surround it.

The approach to Cairo is a spacious avenue lined with the olive or the sycamore; here and there, the white marble of a fountain gleams through the foliage, or a palm-tree waves its plumy head above the santon's tomb. Along this highway a masquerading-looking crowd is swarming towards the city; ladies wrapped closely in white veils, women of the lower class carrying water on their heads, and covered only with a long blue garment; here, are camels perched upon by black slaves, magpied with white napkins round their head and loins; there, are portly merchants with turbans and long pipes, gravely smoking on their knowing-looking donkeys: here, an Arab dashes through the crowd at full gallop, or a European still more haughtily shoves aside the pompous-looking, bearded throng. Water-carriers, calenders, Armenians, barbers,—all the people of the *Arabian Nights*, are there.

And now we reach the city wall, with its towers as strong as mud can make them. It must not be supposed that this mud architecture is of the same nature that the expression would convey in Europe. No!—overshadowed by palm-trees, and a crimson

banner with its star and crescent waving from the battlements, and camels couched beneath its shade, and swarthy Egyptians in many-coloured robes, reposing in every niche; all this makes a mud wall appear a very respectable fortification in this land of illusion.

And now we are within the city! And what a change! A labyrinth of dark, filthy, intricate lanes and alleys: in which every smell and sight from which nose and eye revolt meet one at every turn (and one is always turning). The stateliest streets are not above twelve feet wide; and, as the upper stories arch over them toward one another, only a narrow serpentine seam of blue sky appears between the toppling verandahs of the winding streets. Occasionally a string of camels, bristling with faggots of firewood, sweeps the streets effectually of their passengers; lean, mangy dogs are continually running between your legs, which afford a tempting passage in this petticoated place; beggars, in rags quivering with vermin, are lying in every corner of the street; now a bridal procession squeezes along, with music that might madden a drummer; now the running footmen of some bey or pasha¹ endeavour to jostle you towards the wall; unless they recognise you as an Englishman—one of that race whom they think the devil himself can't frighten, or teach manners to.

Notwithstanding all these annoyances, however, the streets of Cairo present a source of unceasing amusement and curiosity to the stranger. It has not so purely an Oriental character as Damascus, and the intermixture of Europeans gives it a char-

¹ Turkish officers.

acter of its own, and affords far wider scope for adventure than the secluded and solemn capital of Syria. The bazaars are very vivid and varied, and each is devoted to a peculiar class of commodities : thus you have the Turkish, the Persian, the Frank bazaars ; the armourers', the weavers', the jewellers' quarters.

These bazaars are, for the most part, covered in,



POTTERY MERCHANTS

and there is a cool and quiet gloom about them which is very refreshing ; there is also an air of profound repose in the turbaned merchants as they sit cross-legged on their counters, embowered by the shawls and silks of India and Persia ; they look as if they were for ever sitting for their portraits, and seldom move a muscle, unless it be to breathe a cloud of smoke from their bearded lips, or to turn their vivid eyes upon some expected customer—

those eyes that seem to be the only living part of their countenance.

If you make a purchase of any value, your merchant will probably offer you a pipe, and make room for you to seat yourself on his counter. If you accept the hospitality, you will be repaid by a very pleased look on the part of your host, and a pipe of such tobacco as only these squatters of the East can procure. The curious and varied drama of Oriental life is acted before you, as you tranquilly puff away, and add to the fragrant cloud that fills the bazaar. Now, by your host's order, a little slave presents you with a tiny cup of rich coffee, and you raise your hand to your head as you accept it; your entertainer repeats the gesture, and mutters a prayer for your health.

Let us purchase an embroidered vest, or a silk scarf from the venerable Abou Habib, for the sake of his snow-white beard and turban. He makes a movement, as if to rise, of which there is as little chance as of the sun at midnight; he points to the carpet on which he "hopes to Allah that your beneficent shadow may fall." You ascend his counter, and sit down in the place and attitude of a tailor with perfect gravity. Your dragoman¹ lounges at the door, to explain the sights that pass in the streets, or the sounds that issue from the lips of your entertainer. Conversation is not considered a necessary part of a visit; and if you will only stay quiet, and look pleased, you may pass for a very agreeable person.

Let us make a purchase, and accept the pipe graciously offered by our merchant. Then, in the

¹ Interpreter.

absence of any claim on our ears, let us use our eyes and look about us. A house is being rebuilt nearly opposite; masons, in turbans and long blue chemises, and red slippers down at the heel, are engaged, as if in pantomime, with much gesticulation, but little effect: a score of children are supplying bricks and mortar in little handfuls, chanting a measured song, as if to delude themselves into the idea that they are at play.

Now, a *durweesh*,¹ naked except for a napkin, or a bit of sheepskin round his loins, presents himself, claiming rather than asking alms: his wild, fierce eyes—his long, matted, filthy hair, falling over his naked, sun-scorched shoulders—and his savage gluttony—proclaim his calling—a something between a friar and a saint of Islam.

Here, is a water-carrier, with his jar of cool sherbet, adorned with fresh flowers: he tinkles little brazen saucers to announce his progress, and receives half a farthing for each draught. There, is a beggar devouring his crust, but religiously leaving a portion of it in some clean spot for the wild dogs. Now, an old man stoops to pick up a piece of paper, and to put it by, "lest," says he, "the name of God be written on it, and it be defiled." Here, is a lady mounted on her donkey, and attended by her own slave; she might seem to be a mere bundle of linen, but that a pair of brilliant eyes relieve her ghastly appearance.

All these, and a thousand other quaint personages, are perpetually passing and repassing, with hand upon the heart as they meet an acquaintance,

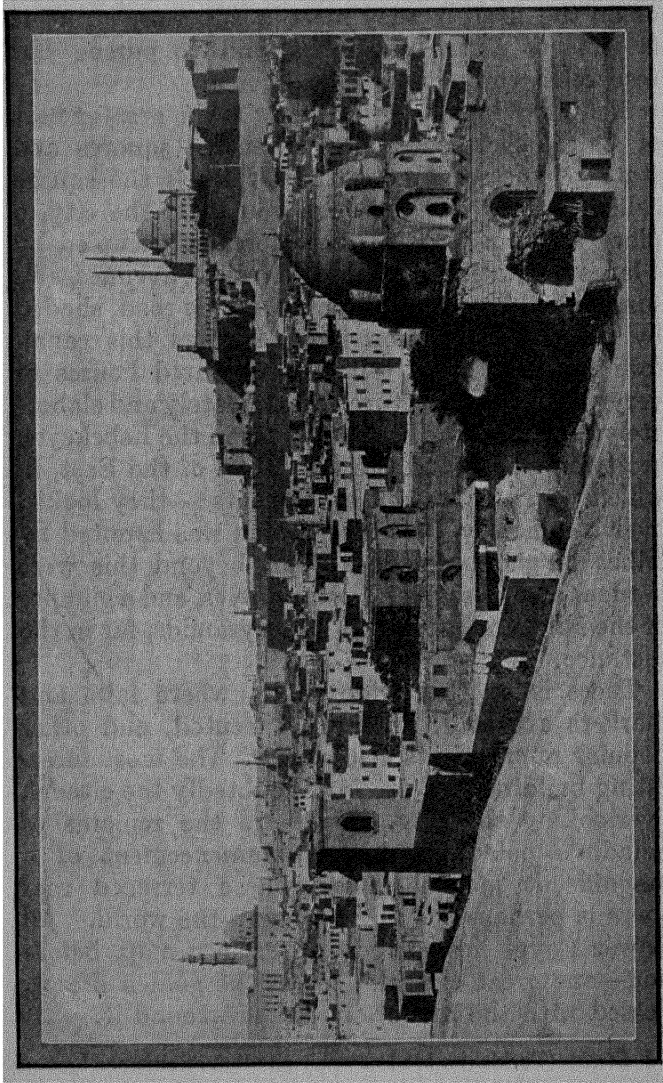
¹ *Durweesh*--a Persian word meaning *one who asks alms*. (A Turkish or Persian monk.)

or on the head if they meet a superior. But it is time to return our pipes, and to pursue our researches through the city.

Mean-looking and crowded as is the greater part of Cairo, there are some extensive squares and stately houses. Among the former is the square called Esbekeyeh, by which you enter the city, a place about a mile in circumference, occupied by a large plantation, divided by straight avenues, and surrounded by a dirty canal. A wide road, shaded by palm and sycamore-trees, borders this canal, forming a street of tall, mud-coloured houses of very various architecture, but delicately and elaborately carved. The best buildings in the Esbekeyeh are two palaces, and the new Hotel of the East, in which we had pleasant apartments:—they looked over a cemetery, it is true, which was haunted by tribes of ghoulish dogs; but beyond this were gardens and kiosks,¹ and palm-groves, and a glimpse of the Nile, and, above all, the Pyramids, far in the distance.

There is another wide space, where fairs and markets are held, criminals executed, and other popular amusements celebrated. The most interesting building in Cairo is undoubtedly the citadel, overlooking the city. Here are the remains of Saladin's palace, and the commencement of a magnificent mosque, from whose terraced roof there is perhaps the finest view in the world. All Lower Egypt lies spread out, as in a map, before you—one great emerald, set in the golden desert, bossed with the mountains that surround it.

¹ *Kiosk*—(Turkish) a kind of open pavilion or summer-house, supported on pillars.



CAIRO

To me, the most interesting spot within these crime-stained precincts was that where the last of the Mamelukes¹ escaped from the treachery of Mehemet Ali, who had summoned the Mameluke Beys to a consultation with him. The Beys came, mounted on their finest horses, in magnificent uniforms, forming the most superb cavalry in the world. After a very flattering reception from the Pasha, they were requested to parade in the court of the citadel. They entered the fortification unsuspectingly—the portcullis fell behind the last of the proud procession : a moment's glance revealed to them their doom : they dashed forwards—in vain !—before, behind, around them, nothing was visible but blank, pitiless walls and barred windows ; the only opening was towards the bright blue sky ; even that was soon darkened by their funeral pile of smoke, as volley after volley flashed from a thousand muskets behind the ramparts upon their defenceless and devoted band. Startling and fearfully sudden as was their death, they met it as became their tearless character—some with arms crossed upon their mailed bosoms, and turbaned heads devoutly bowed in prayer ; some with flashing swords and fierce curses, alike unavailing against their dastard and ruthless foe.

All that chivalrous and splendid throng, save one, sank rapidly beneath the deadly fire into a red and writhing mass—that one was Emim Bey. He spurred his charger over a heap of his

¹ Long the sovereign rulers of Egypt ; their government was overthrown by the Turks in 1517, but they formed part of the Egyptian army till 1811, when Mehemet Ali massacred them as described above.

slaughtered comrades, and sprang upon the battlements. It was a dizzy height, but the next moment he was in the air—another, and he was disengaging himself from his crushed and dying horse amid a shower of bullets. He escaped, and found safety in the sanctuary of a mosque, and ultimately in the deserts.

The objects of interest in the neighbourhood of Cairo are very numerous. Leaving for the present the Pyramids, let us canter off to Heliopolis, the On of Scripture. It is only five miles of a pathway shaded by sycamore and plane-trees, from which we emerge occasionally into green savannahs, or luxuriant corn-fields, over which the beautiful white ibises are hovering in flocks.

In Heliopolis, the Oxford of old Egypt, stood the great Temple of the Sun. Here the beautiful and the wise studied love and logic 4000 years ago. Here Joseph was married to the fair Asenath. Here Plato and Herodotus pursued philosophy and history; and here the darkness that veiled the Great Sacrifice on Calvary was observed by a heathen astronomer. We found nothing, however, on the site of this ancient city, except a small garden of orange-trees, with a magnificent obelisk in the centre.

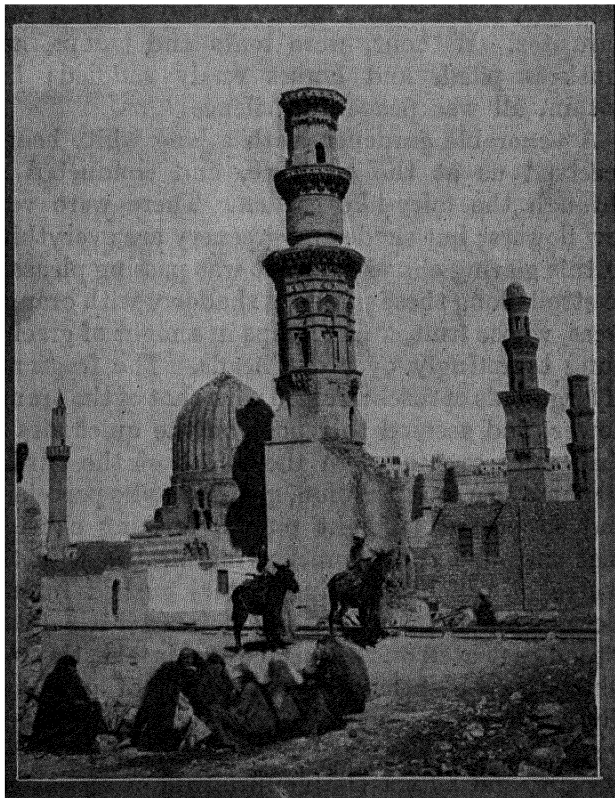
Here is the garden where grew the celebrated balm of Gilead, presented by the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, and brought to Egypt by Cleopatra. On our return towards Cairo, we were shown the fountain which refreshed and the tree which shaded

and garden of Mehemet Ali. We rode along under a noble avenue of sycamores, just wide enough to preserve their shade, and, at the end of three miles, came to a low and unpretending gateway, picturesque, however, and covered with parasites. Without, were tents and troops, and muskets piled, and horses ready saddled; but within, all was peace and silence.

A venerable gardener, with a long white beard, received us at the entrance, and conducted us through the fairy-like garden. There were very few flowers; but shade and greenery are everything in this glaring climate; and it was passing pleasant to stroll along these paths all shadowy with orange-trees, whose fruit, "like lamps in a night of green," hung temptingly over our heads. The fragrance of large beds of roses mingled with that of the orange flower, and seemed to repose on the quiet airs of that calm evening. In the midst of the garden we came to a vast pavilion, glittering like porcelain, and supported on light pillars, forming cloisters that surrounded an immense marble basin, in the centre of which sparkling waters gushed from a picturesque fountain. Gaily painted little boats for ladies floated on the surface of this lake, through whose clear depths gleamed shoals of gold and silver fishes. In each corner of the building there were gilded apartments, with divans, tables, mirrors, and all the simple furniture of an eastern palace, in which books or pictures are never found.

The setting sun threw his last shadows on the distant Pyramids as we lay upon the marble steps, inhaling the odours of the orange and

pomegranate groves—dreamily listening to the vespers of the busy birds, the far-off hum of the city, and the faint murmur of the great river.



TOMBS OF THE MAMELUKES

The evening breeze was sighing among the palms and the columns of the palace, when we started; a brilliant moon lighted our gallop back

to Cairo, whose gates were long since closed, but opened easily to a bribe.

In most cities we find a fringe of suburbs that prepares us for the transition from busy streets to silent fields; but at Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo, the moment you issue from the gates you are in the desert, and the hyæna and the Arab prowl within hearing of the citizen. In a lonely valley, about a mile from Cairo, stand the tombs of the Mamelukes : these are palaces of great beauty and the richest Moorish architecture; they are now fast falling to decay, and only inhabited, or rather haunted, by some outcast Arabs and troops of wild dogs. They form a grand cemetery of their own, surrounded by the desert.

About five miles beyond these tombs is the "petrified forest" : it is a vast, shelterless wilderness of sand, strewn with what seemed the chips of some gigantic carpenter's shop. There are no roots—much less any appearance of a standing tree. I have seen fragments of this petrified wood in other parts of the desert, which seemed to belong to the sycamore and palm-tree. They are found in the driest and most shelterless places, and when living must have had a hard time of it.

We entered their foundling hospital—a gloomy and filthy hut, in which a woman was squatting, with a dark, little, naked imp at her bosom; she sat sentry over a hole in the wall, and insisted clamorously on backsheesh.¹ Having satisfied her in this particular, we introduced ourselves, with considerable difficulty, into a narrow passage, on either side of which were three chambers, strewn

¹ Money, "tips."

with fine mould, and covered with eggs, among which a naked Egyptian walks, whilst he turns them with most hen-like anxiety. The heat was about 100°, the smell like that of Harrogate water, and the floor covered with egg-shells and struggling chicklings. The same heat is maintained day and night, and the same wretched hen-man passes his life in turning eggs. His fee is one-half the receipt; he returns fifty chickens for every hundred eggs that he receives.

It was the feast of lanterns. As we strolled by the soft moonlight, under the avenues of sycamore and olive-trees that shadow the Esbekeyeh, we could see through the vistas an extensive encampment in the distance; innumerable lamps of various colours, and painted lanterns, shone among the tents and the dark foliage; not only did they glitter on every bough, and on a thousand banners, but scaffoldings were raised, on which they hung in garlands and festoons of light. The very sky above them wore the appearance of a faint dawn: every glimpse of the canals, every leaf in all the grove, shone with their reflected radiance. Of course, *we* were soon struggling through the many-coloured crowd of the prophet's worshippers that thronged the encampment.

A Moslem mob is good-tempered and patient beyond belief; and that sea of turbans stagnated as calmly as if every wave of it was exactly in the position that he wished to occupy. Each tent was crowded to excess by performers in a most singular religious ceremony: a ring of men, standing so closely side by side that they supported each other in their exhausting devotions, were vehemently

shouting "Allah,"¹ or rather "Ullah," in chorus. Many were foaming at the mouth, and all utterly exhausted; these fell, from time to time, among the crowd that was quietly squatted within their excited circle; they were instantly succeeded by others, and this proceeding continued till morning; every tent had its tranquil mob of squatters, surrounded by a convulsive ring. None of the crowd appeared to take the slightest interest or curiosity about the business, before or after they had performed their own part. They then lighted their pipes, where they had room to do so, and gently struggled towards the flower-ornamented stalls, where coffee and sherbet were supplied.

I went to visit the slave-markets, one of which is held without the city, in the courtyard of a deserted mosque. I was received by a mild-looking Nubian, with a large white turban wreathed over his swarthy brows, and a cloak of white and brown striped hair-cloth, strapped round his loins. He rose and laid down his pipe as I entered, and led me in silence to inspect his stock. I found about thirty girls scattered in groups about an inner court: the gate was open, but there seemed no thought of escape: where could they go, poor things?—"the world was not their friend, or the world's law." Some were grinding millet between two stones; some were kneading the flour into bread; some were chatting in the sunshine, some sleeping in the shade. One or two looked sad and lonely enough, until their gloomy countenances were lighted up with hope—the hope of being

¹ The Mahommedan name for God.

bought! Their faces were, for the most part, wofully blank. Their proprietor showed them off as a horse-dealer does his cattle, examining their teeth, and exhibiting their paces: he asked only from twenty-five to thirty pounds sterling for the best and comeliest of them.

The Abyssinians are the most prized of the African slaves, from their superior gentleness and intelligence; those of the Galla country are the most numerous and hardy. The former have well-shaped heads, beautiful eyes, an agreeable brown colour, and shining, smooth black tresses. The latter have low foreheads, crisp hair, sooty complexions, thick lips, and projecting jaws.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE UPON THE NILE

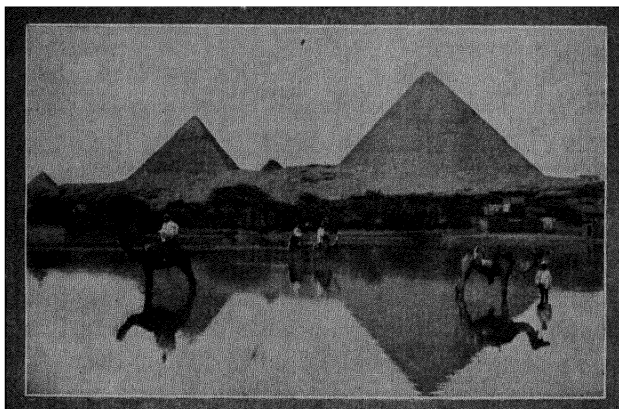
The Tent—The Boat—Scenery—Animal Life—Night Storm—
Sugar Plantations—Catacombs—Mummies—Crocodiles.

I

THE sun was setting behind the Pyramids when I embarked; but night and day made little difference in this country, and the former is only associated with the idea of rest when it happens to be too dark to see. It was bright moonlight as I mustered our swarthy crew on the river's edge. Their countenances were full of hope and eagerness; and, when their inspection was concluded, each kissed my hand and placed it on his head, in sign of devotion and fidelity. Their dress was principally a pair of loose cotton drawers reaching to the knee, a long blue shirt, and the red cloth cap called a *tarboosh*, which, on state occasions, is wound round with a white turban by the lower classes. The crew consisted of a *rais*, or captain, a pilot, and eight rowers, whom, with one exception, we found good-humoured, faithful, honest, and affectionate fellows. Two servants completed the equipment; one of whom, named Mahmoud,¹ has the well-deserved character of being the best *dragoman* in Egypt.

¹ Mahmoud, Mehemet, Mahomet, are all variations of the same name.

Now the cable is loosed, a long towing-line is drawn along the shore by the sailors; the pilot perches himself on the spar deck; the captain squats at the bow; and the Nile ripples round our prow, as we start on a two months' voyage, with as little ceremony as if only crossing the river in a ferry-boat. Palms, palaces, and busy crowds glide by; the river bends, and the wind becomes



THE PYRAMIDS, AND THE RIVER IN FLOOD

favourable, the sailors wade or swim on board, enormous sails fall from the long yards, like wide unfolding wings; the union-jack floats from the poop, and our private flag from the lofty spars; the pyramids of Gizeh on our right, the distant minarets of Cairo on our left, slowly recede; and the cool night-breezes follow us, laden with perfumes from Rhoda, and faint murmurs from the great city. The crew gather about the fire with "dark faces pale around that rosy flame"; and

discuss, in a whisper, the appearance of the pale stranger, who reclines on a pile of Persian carpets as contentedly as if he had been born and bred under the shadow of the palm.

It was a lovely night, with just wind enough to bosom out our snowy sails that heaved as with a languid respiration; the moon shone forth in glory as if she were still the bright goddess of the land, and loved it well. No longer do the white-robed priests of Isis¹ celebrate her mystic rites in solemn procession along these shadowy banks; no longer the Egyptian maidens move in choral dances through these darkling groves, with lotus garlands on their brow, and mirrors on their breasts, which flashed back the smile of the worshipped moon at every pant of those young bosoms, to typify that the heart within was all her own, and imaged but her deity.—There is no longer mystic pomp or midnight pageant in the land of Egypt; we may look in vain for venerable priest or vestal virgin now. Yet still does Isis seem to smile lovingly over her deserted shrines, and her pale light harmonises well with the calm dwellings of the mighty Dead. These, with their pyramids, their palaces, their temples, and their tombs, are the real inhabitants of this dreamy land.

This sailing on the moon-lit Nile has an inexpressible charm: every sight is softened, every sound is musical, every air breathes balm. The pyramids, silvered by the moon, tower over the dark palms, and the broken ridges of the Arabian hills stand clearly out from the star-spangled sky. Distant lights, gleaming faintly among the

¹ The chief Egyptian goddess.

scarce seen minarets, mark the site of Cairo, whose voices come at intervals as faintly to the ear. Sometimes the scream of a startled pelican, or the gurgle of some huge fish as he wallows in the water, may disturb the silence for a moment, but the calm that follows is only the more profound.

All nature seems so tranced, and all the world wound in such a dream, that we can scarcely realise our own identity: hark to the jackal's cry among the Moslem tombs! See where the swarthy pilot sits, statue-like, with his turban and flowing beard: those plains before us have been trod by Pharaohs; these waters have borne Cleopatra; yonder citadel was the home of Saladin! We need not sleep to dream.

The night is gone—gone like a passing shadow: the sun springs suddenly into the throne of purple and rose-coloured clouds that the misty morn has arrayed for him. There is scarcely a dawn: even now it was night—then day—suddenly as a cannon's flash.

Our boat lay moored to the bank. Mahmoud started to his feet, and shouted "Yallough!" like a trumpet. Till then the deck seemed vacant; but then up starts the crew, who sleep in grave-like apertures between the planks, wrapped in their white *capotes* or shroud-like garments. All nature seems to waken now; flocks of turtle-doves are rustling round the villages; dogs are barking the flocks to pasture, cocks are crowing, donkeys are braying, water-wheels are creaking, and the Moslems prostrate themselves in prayer; with forehead to the ground, or hands crossed upon their bosoms—their eyes motionless, and their

lips quivering with the first chapter of the Koran.¹

For my own part, a plunge into the Nile constitutes the principal part of a toilette in which razor or looking-glass is unknown. Re-dressed, re-turbaned, and re-seated on my carpet, Abdallah, with a graceful obeisance, presents a chibouque of fragrant Latakia tobacco, as different from our coarse English tobacco as a pastile from burnt feathers; and Mahmoud offers a little cup of coffee's very essence. In the meantime, the crew are pitching the tent upon a little lawn beneath some palm-trees: for yonder forest shadows the ruins of Memphis, and the gardens wherein Moses used to wander with Pharaoh's daughter.



CHIBOUQUE

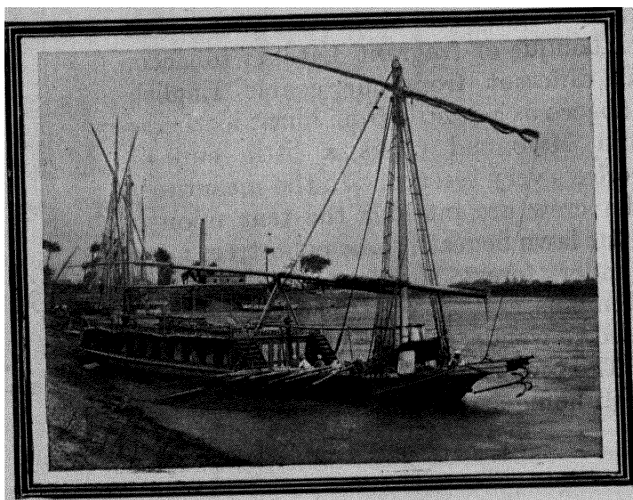
The tent is pitched, and in the East there is no such home as the tent supplies.

Make the divan—the carpets spread—
 The ready cushions pile:
 Rest, weary heart! rest, weary head
 From pain and pride awhile.
 And all your happiest memories woo,
 And mingle with your dreams,
 The yellow desert glimmering through
 The subtle veil of beams.

Then fold the tent—then on again;
 One spot of ashen black,
 The only sign that there has lain
 The traveller's recent track;
 And gladly forward,—safe to find
 At noon and eve a home,
 Till we have left our tent behind
 The homeless ocean-foam.

¹ The sacred book of the Mahommedans.

In Syria the tent was my only home; but on the Nile we seldom used it, as we were generally sailing at night, and slept on board the boat. My boat was about fifty feet long, with a mast amidships, and another at the bow, raking forward. From these masts sprang two spars of immense



A NILE BOAT

length, to which were bent lateen sails in proportion: these are very difficult to handle, especially in the gusty parts of the river, which the mountains overhang. The Arabs are miserable sailors and excellent swimmers, so that Europeans should keep a good look-out.

Close to the bows of the boat a complicated fireplace, with oven, etc., is *built* of brick and mortar; and on this, little charcoal fireplaces,

like the holes in a bagatelle-table, are for ever sparkling under coffee, or some other Egyptian condiment. The crew sit two and two along the thwarts, or sleep between them; and where these end there is a small carpeted space, generally covered with an awning. Then comes a little cabin, open in front, not unlike the boxes at Vauxhall Gardens.¹ In this we dined, and kept our books and guns. Within was our sleeping apartment, with a berth on each side; and beyond this was a luggage-room, and one or two smaller apartments. Such was our river-home for two months, and a very comfortable one we found it, with a few trifling exceptions.

While I was at Memphis, the boat was unloaded and sunk, to clear her of rats, of which there was great slaughter.

The next day I was sitting at the door of my tent, towards sunset, enjoying, under the rose-colouring influence of the chibouque, the mood of mind that my situation naturally produced. At my feet flowed the Nile, reflecting the lofty spars of our gaily-painted boat; beyond the river was a narrow strip of vegetation, some palm and acacia-trees; then a tract of desert, bounded by the Arabian hills, all purple with the setting sunlight. Far away on the horizon, the minarets and citadel of Cairo were faintly sketched against the sky; around me lay fields of corn, beneath which old Memphis, with all its wonders, lay buried; and further on, a long succession of

¹ Pleasure gardens, something like the grounds of the "White City," abolished many years ago.

pyramids towered over the dark belt of forest that led along the river. •

Suddenly the sleeping sailors started to their feet; a shout was heard from the wood, and I saw my friend slowly emerging from its shade, accompanied by some India-bound friends of his, who were escorting him so far upon his desert way. We passed the evening together, and something more, for morning blushed at finding the party only then separating—our friends for India, we for Ethiopia—away!

* * * * *

It was just daylight on the 8th of February, when we really began our voyage; the capacious tent shrinks into a little bag; its furniture resumes its duties in the cabins of the boat: and then we are off.

Eight Arabs towed us along, for there was not a breath of wind: they went capering, singing, and laughing, as if labour was their sport: a red skull-cap, a loose blue shirt, and red slippers, were their only dress. Sometimes the breeze would freshen suddenly, and the boat shoot ahead; then they swam on board, let fall the sails, and with tambourine and pipe struck up their everlasting song. Generally, however, in the day-time, they were towing from morning until sunset; the pilot squatted motionless on the poop; the captain reclining at the bow, now and then exchanging a joke with the two servants, who alone busied about, in the constant preparation of pipes, coffee, dinner, and other refreshment.

Keenly we enjoyed this, our first essay at Nile

navigation. Reclined on cushions, under a thick awning that made twilight of the blazing sunshine; surrounded by the strange African scenery, every change of which had so much interest for us; our books and maps lay beside us, ever ready to explain or illustrate what we saw; and our guns, lying close at hand, were in at least as frequent exercise.

Along our left ran the chain of the Mokattam, or Arabian hills; now receding, now approaching to the river with an interval of level ground, varying from three to nine miles. This is, for the most part, desert, and utterly barren are those hills; but a rich green strip of vegetation runs along the banks, parked off from the sandy track by groups, or forests of palm-trees. On the right is a wider tract of cultivation, millet, bearded wheat, lupines, etc.; and this plain is bounded by the Lybian desert and its hills. The banks are enlivened by frequent villages, always sheltered by palm-groves; and now and then, in some lonely spot, appear the ruins of some city of the olden time, or column skeletons of a temple; and, far as the eye can reach, pyramids peer at intervals over the sand-hill, or the forest.

In the desert there is no sign of life; along the Nile it seems to swarm under every aspect. The waters themselves are thronged by huge, strange-looking fishes; myriads of flies and gnats buzz in chorus to the ripple of the waters: on the bank innumerable lizards are glancing, snakes are twining, and countless insects of unimaginable forms are crawling. The rank vegetation teems with insects, and the low spits of sand, that run

occasionally into the river, are all a-quiver with wild-fowl : could one throw a net over

“Those rich, restless wings that gleam
Variously in the sun's bright beam,”

one would enclose a rare aviary; snow-white pelicans, purple Nile geese, herons, ibis, lapwings,



SACRED IBIS

and a crowd of nameless birds, seem masquerading there.

The very air is darkened, and rustling with flocks of beautiful turtle-doves, birds of paradise, hoopoes, and strange swallows; and, high over all, soar the eagle and the hawk on watch for the living, and the vulture scenting

for the dead. Flocks of sheep and goats are browsing about each village; troops of wild dogs prowling, camels stalking along the footpath, and buffaloes making their eternal rounds in the water-wheels that irrigate the land.

Amidst all this exuberance of life, man only languishes. Vainly do the fish prey on the insects, and the eagle and the hawk on the feathered tribes; they multiply notwithstanding; but man has *his* tyrant, whose influence is deadlier far; and five hundred thousand souls have withered from Egypt, within the last ten years, under the blight

of conscription and oppression.¹ It is not only the loss of men that is caused by enrolment, battle, and disease; but, when the Pasha's pressgangs are out recruiting, whole villages become deserted. The men fly to the deserts, to escape his odious service, and their wives and children dare not remain behind them, to meet the vengeance of the baffled pursuer. In the desert they perish by thousands; and when pursuit has passed by, and the man-catchers have returned to their camp, many a roof remains deserted, for those who made a home there lie with bleached bones upon the desert.

The dread of conscription is painfully illustrated in the number of maimed you meet everywhere. At least two-thirds of the male population of Egypt have deprived themselves of the right eye, or of the fore-finger of the right hand. There are even professional persons who go about to poison the eye, or sew it up altogether. Our equipment consisted of twelve men; of these only ten were liable to conscription, and seven of them were either one-eyed or fore-fingerless.

There is something very time-stealing in the pleasant monotony of Nile travel: evening comes on so softly, morning rises with such unvarying brightness; the occupations of each day are so similar, that days become weeks, and weeks months, almost imperceptibly. We rise early for the sake of the cool: on emerging from our cabin, a cup of coffee and a pipe meet us on the threshold; we take our guns, and walk along the edge of the cultivated land, in pursuit of quail or red-legged partridge, or unknown birds.

¹ This was, of course, before the English occupation of Egypt.

Manmoud, at the same time (while the sailors are towing), pays a morning visit to the villages, in search of poultry, eggs, butter, and milk: sometimes we accompany him to explore; and sometimes visit a temple or a jungle with Abdallah. About nine, we take a breakfast—and Mahmoud is a first-rate cook; and then the unfailing pipe promotes thought, and conversation, and repose of mind and body; for the noonday sun is blazing fiercely, and the very Arabs move languidly along.

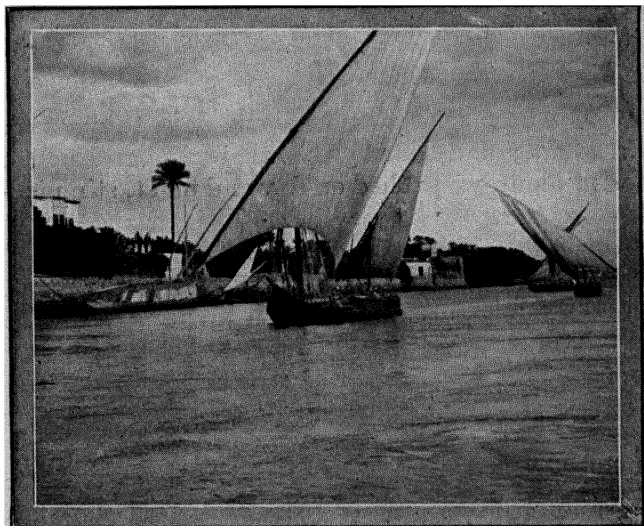
It is passing pleasant, with a pleasant companion (and such was my rare lot) to find oneself, for the first and only time in life, in the enjoyment of perfect, unbroken, unreprouchful leisure. The calm life we lead, the calm climate that we breathe, the absence of all disturbance, of anxiety, or care, or hope, or fear—all this presents such a contrast to the life we have left, and must soon return to, that we can scarcely believe in our own identity.

This sense of enjoyment, however, lasts only for a season, and we were long enough upon the Nile to wear it out; the instinct of action, the force of habit, and Northern restlessness soon returned. Long before our voyage was concluded, we pined for Europe and its working world, with all its wear and tear, and struggles and distractions.

At sunset, if there is no wind, we moor for the night alongside the bank, and then there is always time for a pleasant stroll by starlight, with good promise of adventure. Then coffee, pipes, books, and bed.

Thus we lived a pleasant week, and arrived at the prettiest city on the Nile, called Mineyeh.

The next morning we reached the village and factory of Rhoda, where is a sugar plantation of the Pasha's. Its superintendent is an intelligent and hospitable Irishman, who left the West Indies on the emancipation of the slaves, and who has been here ever since. The West Indian sugar-cane



ISLE OF RHODA

thrives here; its juice is expressed by two English steam-engines.

This is one of the Pasha's monopolies; it occupies three hundred labourers, who are all conscripts; they nominally receive a *piastre* a day (about twopence-halfpenny) for their labour; but this is always a year in arrear, and, when paid, is paid half in kind.

Every boat ascending the Nile hoists the flag of

the country to which its proprietor belongs. Besides this, each traveller, before leaving Cairo, adopts a private flag, and registers it at the hotels with his own name and that of his boat. Thus, every stranger, on arriving at Cairo, learns who is "up" the river, and for what flag to look.

II

I had been expecting for some days to meet an old friend; and hearing that there was an English flag at Siout, we pushed on day and night, stimulating our crew by bribes, till we arrived at its port—the little village of El Hamra.

We were disappointed in meeting our friend; but, as our crew had stipulated to remain one day here to bake bread for the remainder of the voyage, we mounted donkeys, and, accompanied by Mahmoud and one of the crew carrying provisions, started for Siout.

This is the capital of *The Said*, or Upper Egypt: it is approached from the river by a road that runs along a causeway, under an avenue of plane-trees, about a mile in length. The city itself possesses baths, bazaars, rope-walks, and a cotton-factory, a slave-market, and the best pipe-manufactory in the East; but, notwithstanding all these advantages, it is dirty, unpaved, and poverty-stricken. I visited the slave-market, where the proprietor at first refused me admittance, but I understood enough of Arabic manners by this time to pass him by unnoticed; whereupon he attended me very civilly over his establishment. A brace

of pistols in one's girdle, and a hippopotamus-whip in one's hand, does more in the East towards the promotion of courtesy, good-humour, and good-fellowship, than all the smiles and eloquence that ever were exerted. The slaves here looked miserable enough, just arrived from Darfür, across the desert. The slave-merchant had lost great numbers of them from hunger and fatigue, and said that those remaining would not repay him for his outlay.

Passing out of the city towards the mountains, we met numbers of women-slaves, washing and filling water-jars in the canal.

After about an hour's ride, our donkeys clambered actively up the sides of the crumbling mountain, and at length we stood on a platform in front of the wonderful old tomb-temple called Stabl d'Antar, commanding a view of about a hundred miles of the valley of the Nile. A vast level panorama, bounded by the chains of the Arabian and Lybian hills, lay spread before us, diversified with every shade of green, and watered by the Nile, creeping like a silvery serpent through the green savannahs. This wide plain was intersected by numerous dykes, or canals, which regulate the inundation of the Nile; and, as these are generally planted with trees, they help to give character to the somewhat monotonous landscape. Here and there, a few tents were pitched in a green meadow, in which horses grazed, but generally it was under agriculture of exuberant fertility; wheat, and flax, and Indian corn, with here and there a sugar-cane plantation, or a grove of acacias or palm-trees.

The sun was high and burning hot, without one cloud in all the sky, when we took refuge in the Stabl d'Antar. The portal of this splendid charnel-house is about thirty feet high, hewn out of the rock. The roof, here and there, displayed traces of beautiful designs, in blue and yellow that once was gold. Within this were lofty halls, and many chambers, with hieroglyphics,¹ and some fine human figures on the walls. There are many tomb temples of large size cut into this mountain, but the smaller burying-places are so numerous that they present the appearance of a huge rabbit-warren.

I looked down from the habitations of the ancient dead, on the rich, luxuriant plains and swarming city of the living; perishable flowers were blooming round me, fresh and perfect as when, three thousand years ago, they were gathered by those mummy hands as a wreath wherewith to adorn that mummy brow—and gossiping Arabs were irreverently kicking the shins of the powerful dead.

Who *were* these mighty dead, who have left such monuments behind them, to awe the thoughtful and puzzle the frivolous? Here is a tomb as large as the throne-room at St. James's, and once as elaborately adorned with carving and gilding, and delicate art: part of it is incomplete—the mark of the chisel and each line of work are still, as it were, freshly left. What then caused the sudden arrest of life and labour here? None can ever tell. One hour, a realm alive with strength and energy, and mighty projects such as the world

¹ *i. e.* ancient Egyptian *writing*, in which the figure of an object stands for a word, a syllable, or a sound.

has never conceived before or since : the next, and all seems changed. That mighty race is gone for ever, and another, heavy with the curse of their great patriarch, arises ; crushed and degraded, tyrant after tyrant has trodden them down for two thousand years till now.

Now to the Nile again.

The same river is ever murmuring round us ; each clay-built village, buried in its graceful grove of palms, appears but a recurrence of the last ; the same range of the Arabian mountains, unvarying in form, runs along our left ; here and there, the Lybian chain of hills advances and retires on our left, but it seems always the same hill or glen that lies before us ; there are ever the same cloudless sky and delicious temperature (how welcome would be a storm !) ; the same gorgeous sunsets and nightly blue, starry with constellations by which Abraham steered his course from the land of Chaldea ; day by day, and week by week, we are tranquilly floating by colossal temples, mountain pyramids, excavated hills, man-made rivers, and monk-made hermitages, in which a hyæna might feel lonely.

Now we glide under a cliff too steep for even the bold hermit to find footing ; but a convent crowns it, and some friars now conspire in the cause which the hermit worked out in solitude. Hark ! a cry rises from the water, "*For the Love of God ! Christian, have mercy upon us !*" and half a dozen aquatic monks are begging alms round the boat as they swim. The Moslem crew show little disposition to befriend these beggars : our dragoman hands over some coins, with a very different grace ;

and the floating friars return to their cliffs, on which, some weeks later, I fired at two crocodiles.

The first time a man fires at a crocodile is an epoch in his life. We had only now arrived in the waters where they abound, for it is a curious fact that none are ever seen below Mineyeh; though Herodotus speaks of them as fighting with the dolphins at the mouths of the Nile. A prize had been offered for the first man who detected a crocodile, and the crew had been for two days on the alert in search of them. Buoyed up with the expectation of such game, we had latterly reserved our fire for them exclusively; and the wild duck and turtle—nay, even the vulture and the eagle, had swept past, or soared above us in security.

At length, the cry of "Timseach, timseach!" was heard from half a dozen claimants of the proffered prize, and half a dozen black fingers were eagerly pointed to a spit of sand, on which were strewn apparently some logs of trees. It was a covey of crocodiles! Hastily and silently the boat was run in shore, and I anxiously clambered up the steep bank that commanded the gigantic game.

As I approached my intended victims, there seemed to be a sneer on their ghastly mouths and winking eyes. Slowly they rose, one after the other, and waddled to the water, all but one—the most gallant or most gorged of the party. He lay still until I was within a hundred yards of him; then, slowly rising on his fin-like legs, he lumbered towards the river, looking askance at me with an expression of countenance that seemed to say, "He can do me no harm; but we may as well have a swim."

I took aim at the throat of the brute, and, as soon as my hand steadied, the very pulsation of my finger pulled the trigger: forth flew the bullet; and my excited ear could catch the *thud* with which it plunged into the scaly leather of his neck: his waddle became a plunge, the waves closed over him, and the sun shone upon calm water as I reached the brink of the shore that was still indented by the waving of his gigantic tail. But there is blood upon the water, and he rises for a moment to the surface: "A hundred piastres for him!" shouted I, and half a dozen Arabs plunged into the stream. There! he rises again, and the Blacks dash at him as if he hadn't a tooth in his head—now he is gone, the waters close over him, and I never saw him since.

From that time we saw hundreds of crocodiles of all sizes, and fired shots enough at them for a Spanish revolution; but we never could get possession of any, even if we hit them, which to this day remains uncertain. I believe, most travellers, who are honest enough, will make nearly the same confession.

Crocodiles stuffed were often brought to us to buy; but the Arabs take a great deal of trouble to get them, making an ambush in the sands where they resort, and taking aim when within a few yards of their foe; for as such they regard these monsters, though they seldom suffer from them. Above the cataracts, a Greek officer in the Pasha's service told me they are very fierce, and the troops at Sennaar lost numbers of men by them and the hippopotamus, when bathing; but I heard of only one death occurring below the cataracts this year.

This was of an old woman, who was drawing water: a crocodile encircled her with his tail, brushed her into the water, and then, seizing her by the waist, held her under the water as long as she continued to move. When lifeless, he swam with the corpse, across the river, to the opposite bank; and the villagers, now assembled, saw him quietly feeding on their old friend, as an otter might upon a salmon. The Egyptian, who narrated this circumstance, told us with a grin that the woman was his grandmother; that he had shot the assassin three days afterwards, and sold him to an Englishman for seven and sixpence.

The king of the crocodiles is said to reside at Denderah, and the queen some forty miles higher up the river. This separation of the royal family does not appear to have any injurious effect on the interests of the rest of the grim community: there was scarcely a sunny bank between these regal residences, whereon a crowd of crocodiles was not to be seen, hatching eggs, or plots against passengers.

The parent crocodile deposits her eggs, to the number of from 80 to 100, in the sand, which is a sort of foundling hospital for her race: even hens won't hatch in Egypt, so it could scarcely be expected that crocodiles would set the example. The sun, then, is the foster-mother, and the only watchers by the egg-shell cradle are the fishes and the birds of prey. Imagine a nest of crocodile-eggs, when the embryos feel that it is time to make a start of it, and roll about the shells, attempting to emancipate themselves. Out they come, and make a rush for the river; a flock of hawks and kites is on the wing for them, fishes gape for them; yet

enough escape to make one rather squeamish about bathing in the neighbourhood, until all-powerful habit reconciles one to their society.

In the month of March the north wind is rare, and the principal progress made up the river is by towing. As the Arabs cannot walk with such a drawback more than two miles an hour, the



STRIPED HYÆNA

traveller has abundant opportunities for excursions on foot. The corn-fields afford a fair quantity of red-legged partridges and abundance of quails towards the end of March. About the gloaming of the evening, you occasionally, but rarely, get a shot at a jackal or hyæna; and in Nubia your hopes are excited by tales of gazelles, and even of lions.

At one time we took to fishing; and though we

had only twine and crooked pins for tackle, we met with the most signal success. It is true, the fish were strange and hideous to the eye, and detestable to the palate; but it was gratifying to our vanity to catch fish that were once deified by the men who built Thebes.

Our botanical researches were very limited, not only by our want of science, but of subjects. There may have been a great variety of weeds; but, as children only open a book for pictures, we only sought for flowers, and these were very few and far between. The cotton-flower, for the sake of its novelty; the meadow-saffron, the convolvulus, the buttercup, and the orchis, for the sake of home, were often pressed into our service, and adorned our breakfast-table.

We are now in Upper Egypt, the country of the Doumpalm, which resembles a gigantic gooseberry-bush, stuck over with dark green fans in full flirt, instead of leaves. It is very quaint, but not to be compared in beauty to the common palm, or date-tree.

This noble tree (the palm) is a native of Egypt, and seems at home in the desert. Its tall, straight trunk and luxuriant head must have given the idea to the early architect of the column and the capital, long before the acanthus, clustering round the block of marble, taught the Greek. Its produce, when cultivated, is very great, and forms the staple article of food to the poor Egyptians. Every palm in the country is registered, and pays a tax of from twopence to fourpence each. The fruit is not the only useful part, however: of its fibres, ropes are manufactured; of its leaves, baskets:

of its lighter wood, hencoops and light bedsteads; of its timber, with the addition of some mud, houses



DATE PALMS

and boats; and even the kernels of its fruit are bruised for the food of camels.

The forests that it forms are very picturesque, though solemn, from the deep shadow that its foliage casts over the arcades of columnar trunks.

It harmonises beautifully with the ruins of the tombs and temples; but, most of all, it appears to advantage when standing alone in the desert, waving aloft its verdant plume, "the banner of the climate."

At each village where we halt for supplies, a little market is improvised round about us. The old men squat in a circle in the front places, smoking their pipes, and discussing us coolly and gravely. The men offer spears, or crocodiles, or antiquities, for sale; the women, butter, eggs, milk, and poultry—the latter cost about twopence each; eggs about threepence a hundred; butter, sevenpence a pound; a sheep costs about four and sixpence.

On arriving at Keneh, we gave the crew a feast, consisting of an old ram, which was preferred to younger mutton, because it "stood more chewing." The creature was alive, killed, skinned, cut up, boiled, and devoured, within an hour: his very eyes, feet, intestines, and, I do believe, his horns were swallowed; nothing remained but his skin.

Sometimes we met a raft, formed of earthen vessels manufactured at Keneh, and tied together on a slight raft of palm wood; mugs, jugs, pitchers, and pipkins, formed into a floating island, on which lived its navigators with their wives and children; sometimes a number of bees taking a cruise for change of air and flowery pasture.

The Egyptians are very curious in honey; and they say that the greater the variety the bee feeds on, the better is his produce; therefore, they take their hives up and down the river: true to the wandering instinct of their ancestors, the locality is as much a matter of indifference to them as to

their murmuring flocks. The instinct with which the bee finds his way back to the boat, floated perhaps miles away since his last excursion, would argue the possession of some extra sense.

Sometimes, again, we met a boat crowded with slaves from Abyssinia and Darfür, on their way to the man-markets at Siout and Cairo; numbers, both boys and girls, are said to drown themselves on every passage, to avoid the brutality of their owners; once arrived at their place of destination and sold, however, their lot is happier, as I have before observed, or rather less wretched than that of the free Egyptian. While our boat passed by with song and music, as if its progress were all one festival, these poor exiled creatures would turn round to gaze after us, and grin till their faces seemed all teeth.

When we anchored for the night near a town, the Turkish governor generally came on board to visit us, accompanied by his janissary ¹ and pipe-bearer. We rose as he entered, and made room for him on the divan; ² then he would lay his hand on his heart, and pray that peace might be upon us; the pipe from our lips was then passed to his, of which he took one whiff; then he returned it with a salute, and his own pipe was furnished by a submissive slave. There was little variety in the conversation: "English very good; very fond of travelling; know great deal; have very good brandy." This last hint was always complied with, Mahmoud assuring the scrupulous Turk ³ that it was made of roses, or of anything else that

¹ Turkish soldier.

² The *long seat* of the Turks.

³ Mahommedans are forbidden to drink intoxicating liquors.

occurred to him. Sometimes, the curtain of the cabin was to be drawn before he would taste the forbidden draught; and sometimes he carried off the bottle bodily, "for a daughter or a friend who was sick."

We invariably found these authorities extremely courteous, complimentary, and willing to oblige us.

CHAPTER V

THE NILE UP TO THE FIRST CATARACT

IN a constant yet varying succession of such scenes, we advance hourly toward the south. Brighter suns, and starrier skies, and stranger scenery—wilder, lonelier—more silent—receive us :—sometimes we travel for hours and even days through the desert, where nothing but a narrow band of green, that feeds itself from the river exhalations, is visible besides. Then we enter tracts of richly green meadows, flushed with flowers, or wide fields of the blossoming bean that fill the air with their delicious and delicate perfume. Here are gardens of cucumbers, fenced round with twigs and stalks of Indian corn ; there, fields of the Indian corn itself, a very forest of yellow grain ; there, are little farms of lupines, millet, and sweet pea ; banks, gold-speckled with melons ; and, haply, a crocodile or two basking beneath them on the sands.

All this produce and luxuriance is pumped out from the Nile, whose scattered waters are returned with rich usury from the grateful soil that has so unexpectedly received them, in shape of every green thing that the heart of (Egyptian) man or beast can desire. At intervals, all along the river, are to be seen little bowers, or sheds, like those that

shelter the swans' nests upon the Thames, and under these the Arab and the buffalo are ceaselessly employed in irrigating the land.

We passed an evening at Keneh, to collect some stores and write letters, before leaving the last African town that has any connection with the world of Europe. A Greek merchant from Sennaar, seeing lights in our cabin, came on board to claim the hospitality of pipes and coffee. He spoke Italian very fluently, and gave us an animated and interesting account of his desert journeys, and his trade, which lay in ivory, precious stones, gums, slaves, and other tropical luxuries. He inveighed against the unjust restrictions laid on the slave trade. "Would you believe it," he exclaimed in a tone of the most virtuous indignation, "the Pasha has levied a tax of five dollars on each slave imported into Egypt! Why, sir, it amounts to a prohibition, and will be the ruin of the trade!"

Our impatience to proceed became greater every day, until we should reach Thebes, but the evening fell dead calm, and we lay moored to the bank; as the Arab sailors cannot or will not tow the boat at night. About midnight I was awakened by a faint ripple against the bank; then came a breeze, sighing through the rigging, which was immediately followed by poking Mahmoud on the ribs through the window. Up sprung that indefatigable dragoon. "Yalough!" shouted he, in a voice that made the crew spring from their dreams: "Yalough!" echoed they; the hawser was loosed, the sails were spread, and our little boat darted away over the star-spangled stream, tottering and bending under the pressure of the brisk breeze on

her enormous sails. Soon the crew subsided into their respective holes; the men at the sheets affected some semblance of attention, but their sleep was only the more rigid; the faithful Bacheet, our pilot, alone watched through that night with me. I did not sleep, for some of the romance of youth came back upon my spirit, as we approached *the mighty Thebes*—unequalled amid all the world's wonders.

On these waters of Thebes, this Portsmouth of the Pharaohs, the armaments of Sesostris¹ once swarmed, and their anxious crews hurried, and strove, and thought that *their* present moment was the only critical point of all time. Now they lie mummied, monarch and minion; the manly bosoms that beat for glory, and the gentle hearts that beat for them alone—all lie now at peace, although the traveller from regions unknown to them may bear away their dusty effigies for northern eyes to stare at.

One glimpse at Luxor,² one gallop over the plain of Carnak,² and away! The wind is fair for the regions of the far south; the Mountains of the Moon³ lie before us, and we must reach our goal, wherever it may be, before the terrible khampseen (hot wind) comes on—before we pause to examine those marvels, the first of which is enough for a month's memory.

A favouring breeze soon bore us out of sight of Thebes, and we soon passed the governor of Upper Egypt on the river: he was sitting under a canopy

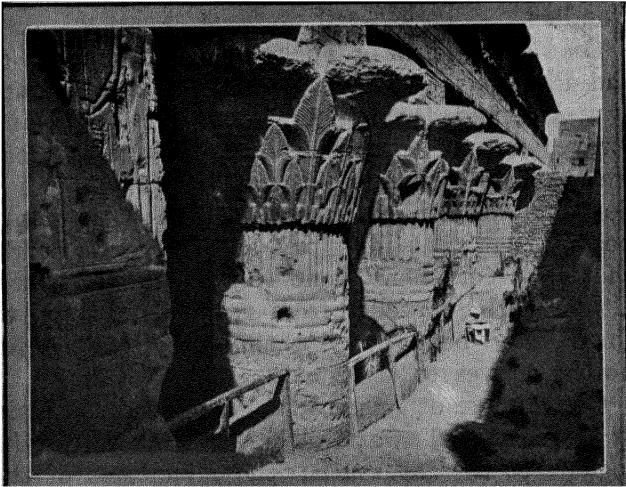
¹ An ancient Egyptian king.

² These are described in the later chapter on "Thebes."

³ The source of the Nile.

in a neat galley pulled by ten half-naked Arabs, an escort of four or five boats filled with officers and soldiers attending him.

Strange is the power of discipline! these very soldiers, a few months ago, were peasants, shuddering at the name of conscription, and ready to resist it to the death. They had been caught, however,



PORTICO OF THE TEMPLE OF ESNEH

and sent, as usual, in chains to Cairo: there, under the lash of the drill serjeant, they had contracted such a taste for military service, that they were now guarding the tyrant of their former friends, and enabling him to enforce the dreaded conscription among their fellow-countrymen.

We traversed a good deal of desert scenery: and, towards evening of the second day after leaving Thebes, reached Esneh, the most picturesque and

amusing city on the Upper Nile. Leaving the interior to be explored on our return, we pressed onwards with a favouring wind. The next day, the mountains on both sides of the river ran down in very picturesque disorder to the water's edge, then suddenly ceased, and for many miles the country on either side was level as the Delta, and the eye ached in search of horizons which the clearness of the atmosphere rendered so indefinitely distant.

This being an idle day among the crew, owing to the steady breeze that blew over the level country, some of the sailors recollected that they had the *ophthalmia* (disease of the eye), and came to beg me to cure it. Every Englishman is supposed to possess unbounded medical skill, besides a knowledge of where lies all that buried treasure for which we so often risk our lives in tombs and desert places.

Being determined to try my skill, I began with a fellow who had two eyes, knowing that, if I extinguished one it would be doing the proprietor a favour (most of the party, as I have observed, possessing only one eye each—that is, our crew of twelve had only seventeen eyes among them). Into one of these seventeen, which was coated with a dull, gray film, I poured a solution of sulphate of zinc, that made him yell with agony; he ran dancing about the deck, amid the laughter of the crew, one of whom with great presence of mind, snatching up the reed-pipe, played an Egyptian jig, which redoubled the amusement of the by-sitters.

Notwithstanding this demonstration of suffering, another ophthalmist lay down immediately on the deck, opening his solitary eye for the burning drop.

I applied a weaker solution in his instance; and this, as it gave the patient less pain, induced him to consider himself ill used.

Every morning and evening, for a week, I had half a score of anxious eyes gazing through their films at my 'prentice hand, as it applied the magic drop. Strange to say, it cured them—and that effectually in most cases; and what is more remarkable, it did not blind any of them.

Thenceforward, my practice became widely extended; not only was I applied to if any of the crew got a kick on his shins, or a bruise, however slight, on his fingers; but wherever the boat touched the shore, the halt, and maimed, and blind, swarmed around me, and were only too happy to get a bit of sticking-plaster for a consumption, or a rhubarb pill for a broken limb.

We passed Edfou in the night, and awoke to the view of scenery altogether differing from that which had accompanied us so long. A low line of hills had started up from the level land, here and there pinnacled by a ruined tower, a sole survivor and testimony of nameless cities. These hills open into glens, once gardens, perhaps, or populous thoroughfares; but now the lonely Arab goatherd, or the wolf, is the only disturber of their silence. Not a village is in sight, but a belt of the richest vegetation borders the river; waving corn, some green, some golden; lupines in flower, beans, and other fragrant blossoms. This is bordered by a line of rushes, and then the desert spreads abroad its interminable tracts of low sandy undulations.

We are now approaching the utmost boundary of ancient Egypt, beyond which lies Æthiopia.

As we approach the ancient Syene, the hills grow loftier and darker. Palm groves again ornament the valleys, enormous masses of granite shoot up from the river, a pretty villa appears on the left, a ruined castle on the right, and we come into sight of the most romantic spot of Egypt, which seems to keep its best scene for its last.

Assouan, called in Coptic *Souan*, which means "an opening," stands at the entrance of the Valley of the Nile. Here the river, narrowed into a rocky channel, displays a sportiveness and activity elsewhere unknown to it, except among the cataracts. The island of Elephantina, very rich in broken ruins, divides the river opposite the town; shaded with palm-trees, and carpeted with gay weeds, it seems still to lay claim to its ancient epithet of the "*Isle of Flowers*." A grove of palms stands between the modern town and the river; and above and beyond this grove tower dark red granite cliffs, crowned with ruins, that give it a very picturesque appearance. Beyond this lie traces of the ancient Syene; and, among the rocky eminences, the track of wheels still points out where ran the ancient streets.

The denunciation of Ezekiel is indeed fulfilled—"The tower of Syene has fallen from her pride of power"; and nothing can be imagined more utterly lonely than this deserted city. Not a sound was to be heard, except the roar of the cataract and (in faint contrast) the twitter of the solitary sparrow.

Many inscriptions and some hieroglyphics are visible on these rock-ruins; and in the quarries the mark of the chisel is as fresh as if the workmen were at dinner round the corner there, whilst a huge obelisk stands out from its quarry ready for

removal. There is a cemetery, too, in the neighbourhood, which seems less lonely in its silence than the city to whose millions it once afforded their only real rest; and, that nothing might be wanted to the desolation of the scene, a vaguely-wailing wind came over the desert as we watched the sun go down, and seemed full at once of foreboding and of mournful memories.

Immediately on our landing, a crowd came down from the village to sell their little commodities, or to stare at the white strangers. Darker, but more regular features, and smooth, shining hair, bespoke a change of population. These are, for the most part, Nubians.

A slave-caravan had just arrived from the interior; and we found numerous groups of slaves, apparently unguarded, strewn about among the palm-groves. Some of the old women were making bread of millet-flour on a smooth stone, but the greater part were either sleeping, or chatting under the shadow of their familiar palm.

We had now traversed Egypt in all its length (which includes its breadth), and had left only sufficient objects of interest unexplored to occupy the pauses in our homeward way.

Standing on the borders of old Cush and Æthiopia, we now looked forward to penetrating *the wilds of Africa*, and prepared to plunge into the interior with as fresh a hope as when we entered Egypt: we then looked forward to reaching Dongola, and, if possible, to penetrating into Abyssinia. But it was not our fate to accomplish this design of reaching Abyssinia, as our voyage found its limit at the Second Cataract.

CHAPTER VI

THE CATARACT

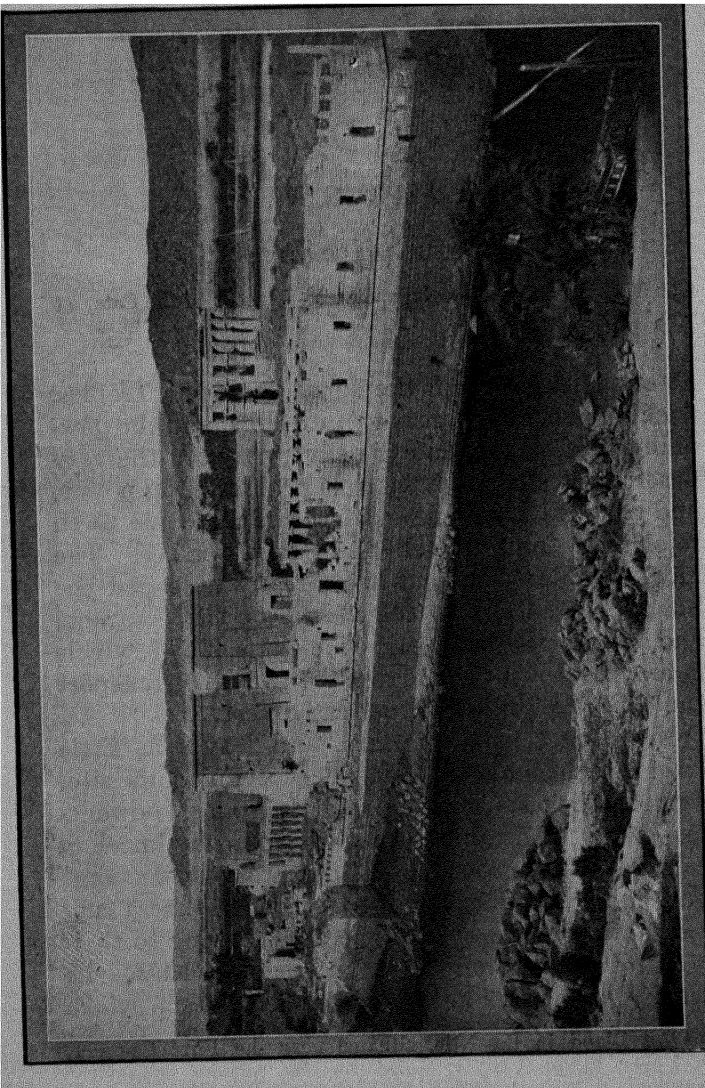
Chiefs of the Cataract—Hippopotamus—Ascent of the Cataract

I

THERE ! flames forth the sunshine of the Tropics, dashing over the roseate granite cliffs, and the dew-diamonded palms, and the silvery river : the very desert smiles beneath that magical morning power, and all who have survived the night come forth rejoicing, from hovel and from palace. The indefatigable Mahmoud has already unloaded the boat, preparatory to the ascent of the cataract ; and by his provident arrangement a file of camels is moving down the narrow pathway, to transport the cargo to *Philæ*,¹ across the desert.

Now the tent disappears, and leaves as little trace as the palaces that once occupied its site. Trunks, boxes, hen-coops, frying-pans, powder-magazines, and tables, are piled upon the kneeling camels. They growl a little to express those savage but servile feelings that pass for meekness and resignation in the eyes of the world, owing to their resigned expression of countenance. Now, the black driver gives an angry shriek at them, which

¹ An island in the Nile, situated near the First Cataract, in Upper Egypt. It is famed for its remains of ancient temples.



REMAINS OF PHILAE. NOW PARTLY SUBMERGED

means, "Get up, you brute"; and there they go, majestically towering along, as if they were doing it all for show; while cocks are crowing on the top of them from the hen-coops, and Abdallah is grinning his teeth out, as he bestrides my saddle, surmounting a pile of kettles and coffee-pots.

The Captain (Rais) of the Cataract and the other river authorities did not make their appearance till towards noon. A report had reached the Pasha's ears that the poor people, who dwell among these rocks, had discovered some means to avert starvation by catching fish in weirs of the rudest kind, built among the rapids. Mehemet Ali,¹ by return of post (which fortunately for the fishermen occupied six weeks), transmitted an order to tax these little fisheries; and the river-chiefs were at this moment occupied in an interview with the tax-gatherer.

At length the river-chiefs arrived; three tall, spare, elderly men, with long beards and large turbans, and such cumbrous drapery that exertion seemed impossible to them. They squatted round us on the deck, and were followed by crowds of their acquaintance, who listened to the bargain, and did not scruple to express their sentiments of satisfaction, or otherwise, on anything that was said. The bargaining was carried on with vehement voices, amounting at important passages to screams, and the most violent gesticulation: we, of course, held our peace; and Mahmoud and the chiefs, after an hour's debate, came to agreement on a price, which each was perfectly well aware of from the beginning. This amounted to the imposing sum

of £2 10s., in consideration of which we and our ship were to be dragged up the cataracts, and let safely down them on our return.

The wind was fair and strong. A new pilot, whom we were obliged to engage for the upper river, here took the place of our faithful Bacheet, as good a man in his way, black or Briton, as ever held a tiller. Our recruit called himself "The Hippopotamus," and a more grim, forbidding-looking negro I never beheld. His face was deeply marked with the small-pox, and frightfully seamed, moreover, with the explosion of gunpowder; he was about six feet and a half high, and his lean black limbs looked like those of a skeleton in mourning. Now, the moorings are loosed, the sails spread to the northern breeze, Egypt recedes, and we glide into Æthiopia!

Our voyage for the next hour was very exciting and picturesque; the river, narrowed between the dark crags, here and there boiled into milk-white foam: sometimes a pyramid of nature-piled rocks towered from the desert plain; and between it and the barren hills, would for a moment smile some spot of vivid verdure, shadowed by acacias, or a palm-tree; sometimes the sandy valleys were of deep yellow contrasted with the gloomy rocks whose shadow they received like water; sometimes these sandy tracts were silvery white, giving the impression of a snowy tract by moonlight. Soon we shot past a beautiful little island, and entered upon more troubled waters.

The breeze was fair and fresh, and our bark breasted the torrent gallantly, flinging the foam from her bows on the black rocks as she struggled

past; at the foot of the second rapid there was a space of calm water over which she rushed as if to charge the fall, but it was too strong for her: for a moment she recoiled, then fairly went about and seemed driving furiously and inevitably against an impending cliff, at whose base the waters weltered fearfully. One of the chiefs of the cataract had, until now, been seated on the deck, tranquilly, but watching with a vivid eye every motion of the admirably steered boat. Now came *his* time.

In a moment more we should have been a wreck against that rugged rock, when suddenly he started to his feet; his cumbrous-looking drapery fell from around him like a veil: one instant, an infirm old man seemed cowering at our feet; the next, a stalwart, sinewy form rose like magic from his place: one moment he stood motionless at the bow, then plunged fearlessly into the torrent, emerged upon the threatening rock, and received upon his naked shoulder a blow that might have felled a palm-tree: the very boat reeled from her collision with that iron man, who turned her aside with dexterous strength, and then she floated round into a quiet bay and was at rest. The hero of a moment ago again looked like a bale of blue-and-white cotton lumbering the deck, except that he resumed his unextinguished pipe.

This was our first day's work. Leaving our boat at the foot of the cataracts, we proceeded overland to Philœ, where our encampment awaited us. It was only about two miles distant, yet never in my life have I seen scenery so wildly strange as that through which we passed. The general effect was one of awful grandeur and sternest solitude: yet

among those menacing cliffs that tower over and around us in the most distorted forms, lay spots of the softest beauty and richest verdure. These increased as we proceeded; and we entered a village of pretty cottages, overshadowed by palm-trees, that gave us the most agreeable surprise: they were as different from the squalid dwellings of Egypt as were their modest, yet unveiled women, from those of the Egyptian peasants.

Old women were sitting in the shade, occupied with some quiet labour; girls were employed amongst the enclosures; little children ran about us, with merry faces and laughing voices, begging us to buy their pebbles, or flowers, or bright green locusts. Some of the attitudes into which these little urchins threw themselves were very amusing; the boys, with one little foot advanced, and one hand upon the hip, looked about them haughtily and erect: the girls, with a timid air that struggled with their merry eyes, wore an appearance of unconscious modesty that veiled their bodies better than all the silks of Hindostan.

Then we came to Birbé, a sort of river-port for the Upper Nile, and, passing through a gorge in the rocky mountain, came suddenly and unexpectedly in view of PHILÆ! the most unearthly, strange, wild, beautiful spot I ever beheld. No dreamer of the mystical old times, when beauty, knowledge, and power were realised on earth, ever pictured to himself a scene of wilder grandeur and more perfect loveliness. All that I had read, or heard, or imagined of this wondrous scene, had left me unprepared for such a realisation; and, if I add my own vain efforts at description to those that have

preceded me, it is not in any hope of conveying a true impression to the reader.

All round us towered up vast masses of gloomy rocks, piled one upon the other in the wildest confusion; some of them, as it were, skeletons of pyramids; others requiring only a few strokes of giant labour to form colossal statues. Here spreads a deep drift of silvery sand, fringed by rich verdure and purple blossoms; there a grove of palms, intermingled with the flowering acacia; and then, through vistas of craggy cliffs and plummy foliage, gleams a calm blue lake; with the Sacred Island in the midst, green to the water's edge, except where the walls of the old temple-city are reflected. Above those shrub-tangled and pillared banks were tall pyramids; columns airy, yet massive in their proportion; palms, and towers, and terraces. Beyond the island, the lake glimmers through the ruins, and the whole scene of peace and beauty is embosomed in a valley frowned over by a girde of rugged mountains, all scathed, and dark, and desolate: withal, there was an air of repose, of awe, and perfect calm over the whole region round, that suited well with its character and with the solemn purposes to which it was once consecrated.

Our tent had been pitched upon the shores of the lake; the fire was blazing, the carpets were spread, and in a few minutes we were seated as tranquilly at gaze on the mystic island, as if we had been at home.

I wandered along the river for hours, by the light of a glorious moon, that shone as brightly over that island as when a thousand worshippers thronged those fanes to keep her festival: and

then we read Isaiah's denunciations; and Ezekiel's prophecies found a voice, as they did a realisation, among the desolations they had foretold.

II

Sunrise, the next morning, found us tramping through the heavy sands, to return to our boat, which we had left below the cataract. The strangely-tossed rocks bore some faint resemblance to those of Glengariff, in Ireland, but were all the colour of dried blood. Even at this early hour, the sun was intensely hot, and the rocks scorched our soles through thick shoes, yet little children were running about with bare feet.

We had time to smoke our pipes on board, and refresh ourselves with coffee, before the Captain of the Cataract made his appearance, accompanied by about fifty followers, all naked but for a napkin round their waists; fine, athletic, intelligent-looking fellows they were; though dark as midnight, except where their white cinctures and turbans relieved the gloom: they all carried heavy clubs, however, which appeared to us an unnecessary part of their equipment, besides the knife, which every Nubian wears in a sheath strapped round his left arm, for want of a girdle, or any article of dress to stick it in.

An animated and angry discussion immediately ensued between the leaders and Mahmoud, while the rest, leaning upon their clubs, looked calmly on; now gazing pensively at the strange boat, now glancing inquiringly towards a gorge in the opposite

end of the valley from that by which we had arrived. The cause of all this soon appeared : the Sheikh (ruler) of a rival village arrived, attended by numerous followers also armed with clubs, and a stormy debate began between the contending parties, as to who was to have the dragging of us up the cataract.

Matters began to look serious ; the women and children disappeared, reinforcements continued to pour in to both parties, and the controversy waxed fiercer than ever. At length, Mahmoud, who had been shouting more than any of them, swore in a solemn voice, by the Prophet's beard, that he would go to the governor, and left the boat apparently for the purpose. Now, this governor was a decrepid old Turk, who might perhaps have half a company of half-starved Egyptian conscripts for his garrison ; but, at the sound of his awful name, there was suddenly a great calm among that stormy crowd, consisting of some two or three hundred athletic savages. " By Allah, no ! " was heard from a dozen voices, and suddenly the black rocks and the white sands seemed to swallow our invaders.

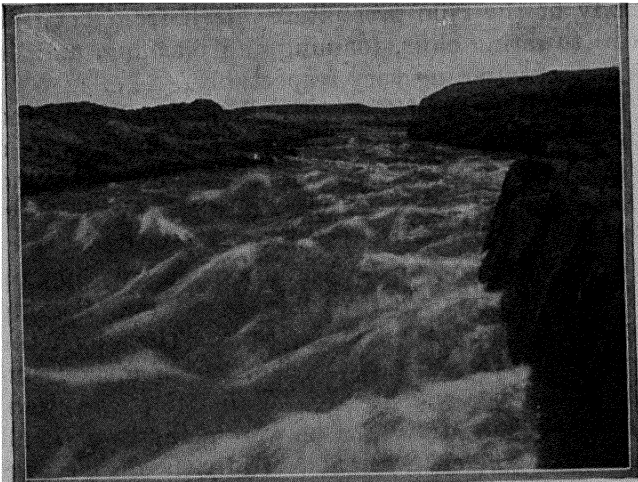
It appeared that these poor people were almost starved, the Pasha having wrung their last coin and almost their last date from them, and they had come to endeavour to obtain some of our purchase-money. This money, divided among the hundred who were to be thus employed, would leave only about threepence for each man for each day's labour, even if the chiefs did not appropriate the lion's portion ; for this pittance they strove as for an independence.

We now made sail to the northerly breeze, which fortunately is almost always blowing, and conveys to the burning tropics the coolness that our part of the world can spare so well. We had smooth water for some time, and the deck was crowded with our new helpers, while the three chiefs sat close to our divan, and one of them in particular was shouting like the chorus of a brass band. I requested he would keep silence, and, in my ignorance of Arabic, applied to him a term which meant something like "Hold your jaw." He *was* silent, as if thunderstruck; then looked at me for a moment fixedly, and pointed to his grey beard. I did not know how I had affronted him, but I felt I *had* done so, and I also felt the force of his appeal. I made a gesticulation of respect, and used some expression of apology, which he accepted with rather a lofty air, and said it was "taib" (very well).

By this time we had arrived at the first rush of water that is called a cataract, and made fast to the rocks while preparations for the ascent were in progress. The scene was now very striking; enormous masses of dark rocks were hanging over, or lying round us in every direction; the foaming river roared and writhed through every fissure and ravine; innumerable dark, demon-like figures flitted about us in every direction, among the rocks, upon the sands, upon the very deck; now they plunge into the water, or shoot across the rapids on a log of wood; now a dozen woolly heads start up under our stern, shouting for "backsheesh" (money). Perfectly naked and amphibious, they seemed to have as little choice of element as so

THE CATARACT

many seals; and what with their shouting, and splashing, and vanishing, added to the thunders of the cataract which the echoes multiplied, and the bewilderment of the strange scene, and all its savages, it became almost impossible to resist joining the universal devilment that seemed going on all round.



FIRST CATARACT ON THE NILE

At length, we proceeded to business. The chiefs had now ascended the rocks, and stood, with their long blue and white robes floating in the wind, giving directions to the eager and fluctuating crowd that swarmed around, and above, and below them. Now an English rope, kept for this purpose, was made fast to the mainmast; and about a hundred Nubians, some on the rocks, some in the stream, laying hold, we were dragged up the hill of water

that foamed fiercely round our boat, and deluged her with its spray. "Yallough! Wallah!" we are on the very ridge where the waters seem heaped up ere they plunge below, and our boat trembles like a pennon in the wind. "Yallough! Wallah!" once more, and we were over it. After a short rest, we moved on over a quiet space of water to the third and greatest fall, where the whole body of the Nile precipitates itself from between two towering cliffs, foaming and plashing, and, in short, cataracting very respectably.

Now every arm is nerved, and every eye is riveted on the Captain of the Cataracts, who stands on a pinnacle of the rock, waving his staff like the wand of an Enchanter who had invoked all that unearthly-looking crew to his assistance. He waited a moment for the wind, which now came rustling up the river, swaying his white beard and floating robes as it filled our straining sails. Then, over the roar of the torrent and the shouting of a thousand men, his voice was heard—"Yallough!" he cried, and made a gesture as if he were going to do it all himself. The cry was answered by the dark crowd in a chorus of "Haylee sah!"¹ as they laid their brawny shoulders to the rope, and made a rush forward. In we plunged, half buried in the cataract, but soon felt ourselves slowly ascending its steep, though every sight and sound were overwhelmed by the rush of waters that foamed and sparkled over and thundered round us. One minute—and another—of convulsive struggle and strained suspense, and there!—we are past the dreaded cataract

¹ God help!

and floating calmly on the river, which is now smooth for two hundred miles.

We paused a little while to take in the crew, and get out the water; and then, with swelling sails, we glided through the portal of gloomy rocks that shuts in Æthiopia from the world. When we emerged from its shadows, the lovely lake and temple-crowned island of Philœ opened on our view. We anchored under a grove of palm-trees close to our encampment; and, leaving the servants and the crew to replace the cargo, we embarked in a sort of wooden tray for the island. Our guide and ferryman was Abou Zeb, a very handsome and intelligent lad of about sixteen, who is called the King of Philœ. This title is accompanied with no idea of derision, but bestowed by the simple people round with as much regard for his prerogative as if it were backed by the power of the Pharaohs. We were glad to find that his sable Majesty had no residence, nor permitted any, on the Sacred Island: though, soon after we landed, some girls swam over with coins, and beads, and other little commodities for sale.

We landed at the small door, a sort of sallyport: and, ascending a dark and narrow staircase, found ourselves in front of a gigantic pyramidal portal, covered with hieroglyphics of colossal dimensions. This opened into a magnificent court of the Great Temple, on each side of which was ranged a noble façade of lofty columns, nearly perfect. The capitals of each were of a different pattern, but all beautifully worked; and, when the varied and vivid painting was entire, the effect of the whole must have been very gorgeous. We passed from this court into a lesser one, whose lofty walls seemed

to narrow upward towards the sky. This gloom, contrasted with the intense sunshine from which we passed, produced a striking effect, as we found ourselves surrounded by gigantic sculptures, whose mystic forms we could scarcely trace.

It would be vain to attempt to convey any impression by mere words of this wondrous labyrinth through which we wandered from darkened tombs to lofty terraces: from haunted chambers to wide courts. Everywhere we found new subjects of interest, and each spot that we explored appeared to be the marvel of the whole. Imagine walls, whose height it wearies the eye to measure, all covered with gigantic hieroglyphics, where gods and warriors seem to move self-supported between earth and sky; then, groves of columns, whose girth and height would rival those of the most corpulent old oak-trees, with capitals luxuriant as a cauliflower, and gleaming with bright enamel of every hue in heaven: every pillar and every wall so thickly covered with hieroglyphics, that they seem clothed with a petrified tapestry.

And then, from the terraces that extend over this assemblage of temples, what a view presents itself! Beneath, lies that verdant and flowery islet, strewn with marble wrought into every beautiful form known to ancient art; over that pile of prostrate pillars, a grove of palms is waving; from between the columns of yon small temple, the acacia's foliage seems to gush, and its blossom stream. Round all the island, flows the clear, bright river; and opposite, lies the old Temple of Osiris,¹ now called Pharaoh's Bed. Beyond the

¹ The Egyptian god.

river are gleams of green, shooting across drifts of desert sands, palms, rocks, villages, and wastes; and, over all, darkly encircling this paradise, rises the rugged chain of the Golden Mountains.

The whole island is not above fifty acres in size, but it is richer perhaps in objects of interest than any spot of similar extent in the world. Here the student might live for years, finding each day some new source of interest, yet the antiquities of the island unexhausted until he became one himself.

CHAPTER VII

NUBIA

Scenery — People—The Tropics—Second Cataract—On the Desert.

I

THE evening breeze found us ready to start with its first breath for Wady Halfa; and as our boat shot away from beautiful Philœ, the dark precipitous cliffs closed gradually round us, and the Sacred Island remained but as a vision. If the days of hermitage were ever to return, the Solitary could find no place on earth like this, wherein to cultivate self-discipline, and to communicate his own high hope of immortality to the gentle and intelligent savages that surrounded him.

Nubia differs very widely in the character of its scenery from the land we have just left. It is true, we had still the palm, the river, and the desert, like those we left behind us, but there are no more forests; the cliffs, dark red, assume wilder forms, and approach nearer to the river; the stream itself is narrower and more rapid; the line of vegetation is more limited, but brighter, and the desert appears more frequently. The inhabitants, also, exhibit a striking change, becoming more savage as their scenery becomes wilder, and darker in complexion as the sun increases in intensity. They are a very

mixed race, even between the cataracts. There are, moreover, several distinct tribes, who have each their settlements, dialects, and peculiar customs.

Generally speaking, the men have laid aside the turban, and rely upon the covering which nature has supplied, in the shape of profuse and thickly-matted hair, falling down on either side of the face, and plentifully impregnated with castor-oil. Few of the young men wear any covering but a napkin round their loins, and none of the girls have any garments, except the leather girdle I have before alluded to, and a blue or white scarf, which hangs down from the back of their heads. The matrons wear a single garment, consisting of a long and very loose blue robe; and the old men use turbans, and voluminous cotton robes, like those of Egypt. Every man we meet with now carries a long spear, ornamented with the skin of serpents or crocodiles, or a heavy club of ebony, which is brought from the interior by the slave-dealers. Many of them also carry a circular shield of hippopotamus' hide, with a boss in the centre, forming a hollow for the hand, which grasps an iron bar.

Great numbers of Nubians, oppressed by hard labour and heavy taxes, leave their country to seek subsistence as servants at Cairo, where they are in great request from their character for honesty and courage. In this particular they resemble the Swiss in Paris; and like them, only strive to amass wealth, in the hope of enjoying it in their own country during the evening of their lives.

The Egyptians call their language, or languages, Barabra, and themselves Berbers; and this is

probably a modification of the term Barbarians, which the Greeks and Romans applied to all foreigners. As a nation, they appear industrious, simple, and much given to war, at least in the shape of feuds. Their principal vice appears to be drunkenness; but I must say that I have this only from hearsay, as I never saw an instance of intoxication, except in our Nubian pilot. Their dram is distilled from rice, and called *Raki*; but they have also a very tempting liquor called *Boozy*, distilled from barley.

The Nubian woman is more free than her Egyptian neighbour; she seldom wears a veil, and, as she bends over the river to fill her water-jar, or walks away, supporting it with one hand, no statuary could imagine a more graceful picture than she presents. Her face is finely oval, and her dark eyes have a gentle and inquiring though somewhat sad expression, that seems to bespeak great intelligence. Her complexion is very dark, but it is of that bronze colour, so familiar to our eyes in statues, that it forms no detraction from the general beauty of this graceful and winning savage.

The voices of these women are very sweet and low, and plaintive; and though their language conveyed to my ear as little meaning as the song of birds, yet there was something in its *tones* that seemed familiar. Often, when our boat lay moored under the shadow of the palm, have I lain and listened to the murmur of their voices with a pleasure such as the richest notes of the Italian music never thrilled me with.

Whilst advancing south, we are driving against

the current at the rate of four or five miles an hour, with an indolent and luxurious sense of motion that is the principal charm of our river navigation in this delicious climate. But, as the sun goes down behind the desert mountains, the breeze falls too; we are fain to anchor under a high bank till morning and, wearied as we are with cataracts, and temples, and walking in the desert, we gladly prepare to rest. But, hark! as the moon rises over yon grove of palms, the sounds of song mingle with the faint rustle of their foliage, and our ears find something strangely attractive in this mysterious music, issuing from invisible lips in a land all strange to us.

And now behold us threading our way through a dark forest, attended by a volunteer escort of four of our crew armed with clubs.

From this we soon emerged upon a tract of snow-white sand, interspersed with dark and lofty piles of granite rock, shadowed here and there by some scattered palms.

In one of the vacant spaces sat a row of women in a semicircle, surrounded by a crowd of men, all standing, and listening attentively to the concert which was entirely composed of female voices. The women were all singing very vehemently, accompanying themselves with tambourines, or marking the time by clapping their hands. The moon, brilliant as she was, could not light up their dark faces, and I could only see the gleaming of their eyes: some few coquettishly turned away their faces as we approached, but soon gave themselves up once more to their absorbing song. It was very wild; but the music was far sweeter and

more varied than any I had yet heard in Africa, and there were passages in the ceaseless chant that I would fain have carried away in my memory.

At first, our appearance was unobserved, owing to the shadow in which we stood, and the deep interest with which they listened; but, when we came forward, a mat was spread for us in front of the performers, some shots were fired in our honour, and all the elders of the village came up to salute us. I shook hands with half a dozen of the greasy savages, and made room upon my mat for him who appeared to be Sheikh. It was a very curious scene, that semicircle of dark women vehemently chanting their wild song, and the wall of fierce-looking figures that surrounded us; the bright moon, shining on the white sand, threw these figures into strong relief, while the shadow of a palm flickered and played about, like some huge spider. The Sheikh, whose white beard flowed freely over his dusky bosom, sat by my side, and it appeared as if we had the run of his house, and were in the *habit* of "looking in of an evening occasionally": the gloomy-looking groups that surrounded us bristled with long spears that appeared to be part of their ball-dress.

After a short time, I distributed some small presents among the women, who received them in silence; and then the men began to gather round us, demanding money and other trifles in a tone that appeared by no means conciliatory, coming from the possessors of spear and shield. We had no choice but to resist at once, briefly and indignantly; whereupon, an ill-looking ruffian demanded why, if we had no money to give them, we came

there. "We have powder," said I, pointing to my pistol. The women now disappeared, and we found ourselves in no very pleasant predicament, standing in the midst of a couple of hundred angry savages, half a mile from our boat at midnight, in the depths of a Nubian forest.

"This comes of dissipation," observed R.; and the laugh that followed his remark probably stood us in better stead than even the dread of English fire-arms. I made a speech about strangers, Englishmen, Pashas, etc., which Mahmoud interpreted to the Sheikh: and we prepared to depart with very menacing gestures, as if we had some serious thoughts of sending the whole assembly in chains to Cairo. The crowd opened to let our little procession pass: our four sailors in advance; and I, who alone had pistols, in the rear. I paused a moment to shake hands with the decent old Sheikh; shook my fist at the jackal-looking robber, and plunged into the wood with the rest of my party.

The last glimpse I caught of the assembly represented the dusky dandies in high debate, which they probably finished by a fight.

The next day we passed within the Tropics, and caught glimpses of some very picturesque glens opening into the desert, as we darted on before a spanking breeze. We came to an anchor in the evening at a commanding-looking town, on the right bank of the river. Its inhabitants bear such a character for courage and determination that neither tax-gatherer nor conscript-catcher has ever ventured within its walls.

As usual, a crowd gathered round our boat as soon as we arrived: they were all armed, but quiet,

civil, and respectful. The young men stood apart, but the old men squatted themselves on the bank and asked for news: the women brought milk, eggs, and poultry to dispose of, and the children produced coins and pebbles.

Leaving the antiquities to be explored on our return, we resumed our voyage.

No words can convey an idea of the beauty and delightfulness of tropical weather, at least while any breeze from the north is blowing. No thought of melancholy ever darkens over us—no painful sense of loneliness, as day after day we pass on through silent deserts, upon the silent and solemn river. One seems, as it were, removed into another state of existence; and all the strifes and struggles of that from which we have emerged seem to fade.

If the day, with all the tyranny of its sunshine and its innumerable insects, be enjoyable in the Tropics, the night is still more so. The stars shine out with diamond brilliancy, and appear as large as if seen through a telescope. Their changing colours, the wake of light they cast upon the water, the distinctness of the Milky Way, and the splendour, above all, of the evening star, give one the impression of being under a different firmament from that to which we have been accustomed; then, the cool, delicious airs of night, with all the strange and stilly sounds they bear from the desert and the forest; the delicate scents they scatter, and the languid breathings with which they make our large white sails appear to pant, as they flutter softly over the water.

Thus we ran along the river, day and night, for many a week. Sometimes the weather was so hot,

that even our sunburnt sailors could move no longer with the towing-rope : we thus lost many hours of noon in idleness, while the sun blazed fiercely on the red desert, that reflected back his rays with interest on the naked cliffs and on the flashing river. This was the real hour of repose ; the silence was intense, and all nature seemed entranced ; happy those who could sleep away that season of importunate sunshine ! to read was impossible ; languid thought refused to act, and would even dream no longer ; the very mosquitos and gnats fell asleep or scorched ; and there was nothing for it but pipes, sherbet, and resignation.

But when the sun begins to sink towards the west, where the clouds seem to grow red-hot at his touch, and glow like bars of iron in a furnace, then all nature, from the mountain-breezes to the mosquitos, begins to revive. The sailors are in motion ; the bull-frog raises his bellowing, the few solitary birds their song ; the river finds its murmur, and we plunge into its waters, and then take a stroll upon the desert with our guns. As night comes on, the moonlight gives the reddish-coloured sands the appearance of a snow-covered world reflecting the glow of some distant conflagration. The sand-hills where we wander are sprinkled with stunted shrubs, on which the gazelle feeds, and among which the lion and the wolf lurk for these desert deer.

At some distance from the river I stood alone upon a naked mountain's side, and the prospect was the wildest, loneliest, and dreariest I had ever witnessed. Far and wide, to the horizon's edge, the trackless, monotonous desert spread its undulations like a sea ; but without a shadow, or a fleck

of foam, or a sail to enliven its dull, sulky-looking wastes. There was not even a tree to relieve the view, nor anything on which to rest the weary eye, but the river winding in blue or silver, as the moon or the shadow fell upon its waters; and on its surface far away floated one small speck, containing the only human hearts that beat within that wide-extended circle of blank desert and unclouded sky.

Sometimes we came to places where the river narrowed like the river Avon under Clifton Downs, and the sailors could often find no footing on the crags; then they would swim in files, drawing the boat-rope in their teeth. After leaving such gorges and deserts, we opened upon a broad, calm river, and a country which appeared to smile with verdure in comparison to that which we had come from.

As the river broadened, there appeared an island that would have been beautiful anywhere, but here was like a glimpse of Paradise. Palm-groves waved over peaceful villages, green lawns were speckled with flocks and herds, luxuriant corn-fields were parked off by light palings, melon gardens ran along the river's verdant border, which was flecked with their golden fruit and flower; groves of the lotus-tree and acacia sheltered the blossoming bean and lupine from the sun, and the whole scene seemed full of peace and gentle prosperity.

As we slowly glided past this Eden, the inhabitants came to the water's edge to gaze upon the strangers; little children, hand in hand, almost too small to grasp the other: an old man, with flowing beard and patriarchal robes, was leaning on a graceful girl: the few other people whom we saw were employed in some light labour, from which

they ran smilingly to watch our boat, as she glided away from a spot that, to this moment, appears to me to have realised all the poets feign of a Golden Age.

In little more than a fortnight we returned, and passed by that little isle again. Hell let loose could scarcely have wrought a more fearful change than that which presented itself; the cottages were blackened and reeking ruins; the palm-trees were cut down, the gardens trampled and strewn with many a corpse, the dry corn burnt to the ground, boats were passing to and fro, busily conveying the little wealth of the islanders to the encampment on the mainland, and returning with the horses and camels of the invaders to eat up the standing crops; the gentle natives all gone, and replaced by a fierce soldiery, who prowled about this harvest of misery as if in search of further gleanings.

And what was become of the inhabitants—those whom I had almost envied as I passed them by upon my desert way? The men were, for the most part, slain, and the less fortunate were outcasts on the desert or the mountain: the children were sold into slavery, the women became, the prey of that ferocious soldiery whose arms now gleamed from every dark rock round: and that graceful girl with her father—where was she? Our blood boiled with indignation; we cursed the Pasha, his cruel policy, and the fiends who ministered to it; and I asked Mahmoud if he did not blush to belong to the same race as the authors of this accursed desolation: he shook his head, and said “it was all *God's will!*”

It seems that one of the slaves of this island had been murdered by one of a neighbouring district,

and that, according to the custom of the country, the friends of the murdered man demanded vengeance, or declared that they would take it. The Governor of Nubia happened to be travelling down the Nile at the time, and, hearing of the circumstance, sent for the chiefs of the respective tribes. The friends of the murderer having sent him a large bribe, he presented a slave (slaves are of no value here) to the injured party, and said, "Here is the man who slew your islander; kill him, and depart in peace." "Nay," replied the injured party, "the slave only acted by the command of his master; we will have that master's life, or else kill the Sheikh of the village." The Turkish governor, in a rage, ordered them to leave his presence, which they did, asserting their rights and defying his power. He proceeded to Dirr, procured a force of three hundred soldiers, descended the river to the island, attacked it in the night-time, and we arrived the morning after this exhibition of Oriental justice.

We encountered few incidents, and never met a boat upon the lonely river but one, which was crowded with slaves from Abyssinia. These captives are for the most part Christians when caught, but they are immediately Moslemised lest Mahomet should lose their souls as well as the dealer their bodies.

II

On the eighth day after leaving Philœ, we arrived at Wady Halfa, about five miles to the south of the Second Cataract, which is impassable to boats; we were now about a thousand miles from the sea

The debate was opened by a disquisition on the savage beauties of Abyssinia, and the giraffe and hippopotamus shooting in the Meadows of Gondar. The confluence of the Blue and White Rivers at Khartoum was *only* twenty-five days' journey across the desert, and then the interesting part of the journey would commence. At present, the thermometer stood at 110° ; what of that! the swinging pace, and the height of the dromedary, would circulate the air about us, and elevate us from the reflection of the desert's burning sands. In vain were arguments! We had been already five weeks in Savagedom, among sands, and deserts, and scorching sunshines, and, to say the truth, we had had enough of it. Hurrah! then, for the cool breezy North—the dashing sea—and the Syrian saddle; enough of this bed-ridden, dreamy life—so charming a few weeks since. Forward! to a life of action, novelty, and newspapers; and let Abyssinia, Meroë, and the Desert, sleep on in their solitudes.

This resolution having been come to, we stood away again up the river as far as the cataract would allow. Then, landing on the Western bank, we set out across the desert to Mount Abousir, a steep and rocky hill which overlooks the whole range of the cataract, and commands a far view into the country beyond.

Soon after we struck into the desert, we came to an altar, sheltered by the only tree which was visible within the horizon: this altar was erected in honour of a santon, or Moslem saint, who, fortunately for the country, had perished here; it was dark-red with dried blood, and clotted with the gore of numberless victims.

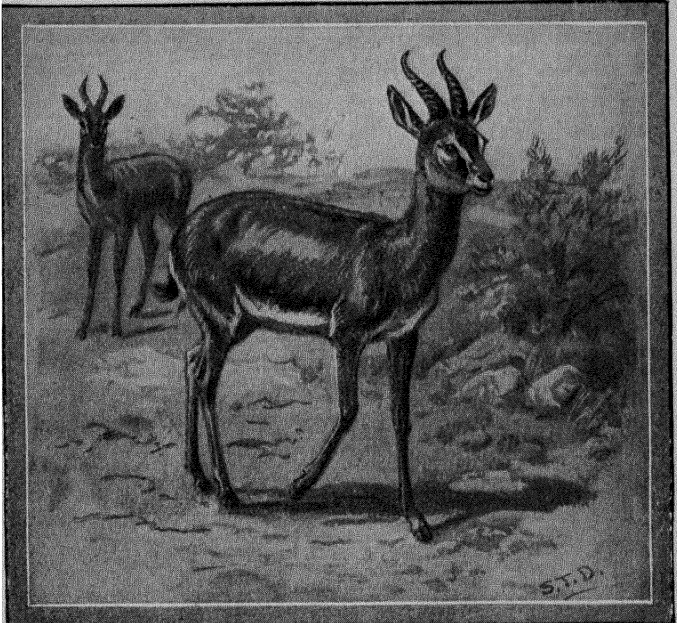
The sun was intensely hot, the wind was high,

and the air occasionally darkened by clouds of sand-dust whirled from the hills. We rode for some miles along the bank of the river, that rushed and foamed amongst a hundred little rocky islands, clothed by the incessant spray with verdure and low shrubs. On resuming our desert path, we picked up some apples of Sodom that lay strewn upon the desert without apparent connection with any stem; they were of a bright gold green, about the size of an orange, but perfectly round and smooth; they gave the idea of being swelled out with the richest juice, that, when bitten, must gush forth to meet the thirsting lip; you crush this plausible rind, however, and a cloud of fetid dust bursts forth, leaving only a few little cinders as a residue.

At length we arrived at the mountain, very hot and very weary; and, what was worse, without any prospect of shelter or refreshment; when, turning a corner of the rock, we found the exemplary Mahmoud had been before us; there the tent spread its cool shade, and the coffee bubbled, and the pipes were only waiting to be lighted. Never did I feel more grateful for kind service: I had been ill for some days; and now, though utterly exhausted, I could lie upon a soft carpet spread upon the glowing sands, and from the shelter of the tent survey at leisure the marvellous prospect that lay spread before us.

There—one wide, wild, desolate waste—lay the once fertile kingdom of Nubia, beneath our view. Except the few shrubs that crawled upon the river islands, and a grove of palms far away over Wady Halfa, there was not an appearance of life or

vegetation under the sky: blank—utterly blank and mournful deserts spread round us on all sides to the very horizon. Far away to the south, the river gleamed blue; but then, entering the falls,



GAZELLE

it became black with shadows, or white with foam, until, after a tortured course of ten or twelve miles, it found rest in the wide levels of Wady Halfa.

When rested, I walked down among the cliffs with our guide, who was an intelligent old Arab, and who spoke like a sportsman of the gazelles that come there to drink on moonlight nights, and the

hyænas that come to watch them. Crocodiles are very numerous below the cataract, but they are never found in lively water. A hippopotamus made great ravages some time ago, near Wady Halfa, but he had not been seen for the last twelve-month. Some few grey swallows flitted about the mountain, and these were the only living things I saw upon that scorching rock.

The moon shone brightly over the desert as we regained our floating home, which presented a very altered appearance: the mainmast had been taken out, and lashed from the foremast to the poop; it supported an awning for the sailors, who were now to row perpetually, all hope of a southerly wind being vain in these regions. But the principal change consisted in her bow being turned northwards, down the stream and towards Christendom. Under these altered circumstances, we went on board with wonderful satisfaction; and, after a prayer to Allah for a prosperous voyage, the sailors took their seats for a month's rowing, and we started.

Our men commenced their homeward voyage with the following song, which I have rudely but faithfully translated. The music was monotonous, but soothing, and their oars kept accurate time to its cadences:—

THE ARAB SAILOR'S SONG

Allah! il Allah! hear our prayer!
 Just Prophet! grant that the winds be fair,
 And the guiding moon her lustre lends,
 To favour the guest whom Allah sends.¹

¹ Mahomet hospitably taught that a stranger was a "God-given guest," which the Arabs naturally consider the best of introductions.

The stranger's home is far away,
'Neath the bright death-bed of the day ;
O'er many horizons,¹ his bark must go
Ere he reach that home. Row, Arabs, row.

Though gentle Nile, for stormy sea,
Though for forest dark, the bright palm-tree
He must change, yet his father's home is there,
And his love's soft eye is gloomed with care.

The pale-faced stranger, lonely here,
In cities afar, where his name is dear,
Your Arab truth and strength shall show
He trusts in us. Row, Arabs, row

And they *did* row, sometimes eighteen hours at a stretch, only pausing to eat their scanty meals, and to drink of their beloved river.

Our crew sang for two months almost without intermission, yet never seemed to tire of their songs. Among the items furnished by our dragoman as necessary to our outfit, were a drum and some Nile flutes. The former consisted of a large earthen bowl, with a skin stretched over it; the latter resembled the double flageolet, and was made of reeds: it seemed capable of a much wider range of notes than their monotonous music required: its sound was shrill, but not unpleasing, and every sailor on board seemed a proficient in its use. I could detect but little variety in the airs, and the words were of the simplest kind. The songs of the Arab sailor are generally of home, of the Nile—never of war, but most of all of love.

¹ In the East, they count distances by horizons.

CHAPTER VIII

NUBIA (PART II)

Audience with Native Chief—Desert Warrior—Whirlwind—
Descent of the Cataract.

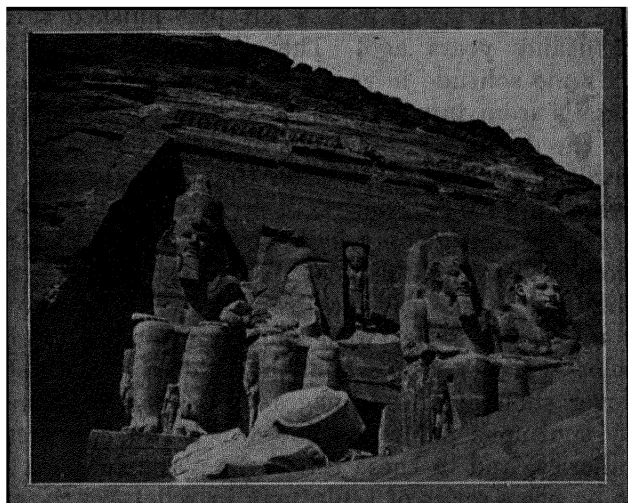
WE rowed all day, and floated all night at the river's will, from the time we commenced our northern course. The reader by this time must be as tired of river scenery, palms, villages, and deserts, as, to say the truth, we began to be ourselves. I shall, therefore, only allude, as we pass, to the architectural marvels that fringe this unique river.

Towards evening on the second day after leaving Wady Halfa, we repassed the extraordinary group of pyramidal and other rocky mountains I have mentioned in ascending the river, and then arrived at the chief wonder of Nubia, if not of all the valley of the Nile—the rock-temple called Ipsamboul.

After sailing for some hours through a country quite level on the eastern bank, we came upon a precipitous rocky mountain, starting up so suddenly from the river's edge that its very summits are reflected in the water. We moored under a sand-bank, and, accompanied by half a dozen of the crew with torches, approached this isolated and stupendous rock.

First we came to a temple, which was, however,

a mere "chapel of ease" to the great temple, excavated from a loftier rock about fifty yards distant. Between these two a deep gorge once ran to the river, but this is now choked up with sand, in whose burning waves we waded knee-deep to the Temple of Osiris (the ancient Egyptian god).



THE TEMPLE OF IPSAMBOUL

(Note the size of the man on the foot of the left-hand figure)

Here, a space of about one hundred feet in height is hewn from the mountain, smooth, except for the reliefs. Four colossal giants seem to guard the portal. They are seated on thrones (which form with themselves part of the living rock), and are about sixty feet high. One is quite perfect, admirably cut, and the proportions accurately preserved; the second is defaced as far as the

knee; the third is buried in sand to the waist, and the fourth has only the face and neck visible above the desert's sandy avalanche. The doorway stands between the two central statues, and is surmounted by a statue of Isis wearing the moon as a turban.

On entering, the traveller finds himself in a temple which a few days' work might restore to the state in which it was left just finished three thousand years ago. The dry climate and its extreme solitude have preserved its most delicate details from injury; besides which, it was sealed by the desert for thousands of years, until Burckhardt discovered it, and Mr. Hay cleared away its protecting sands.

A vast and gloomy hall receives you in passing from the flaming sunshine into that shadowy portal. Gradually there reveals itself, around and above you, a vast aisle, with pillars formed of eight colossal giants upon whom the light of heaven has never shone. These images of Osiris are backed by enormous pillars, behind which run two great galleries, and in these torchlight alone enabled us to peruse a series of sculptures in relief, representing the triumphs of Rameses the Second. The painting is not dimmed, but crumbled away; where it exists, the colours are as vivid as ever.

This unequalled hall is one hundred feet in length; and from it eight lesser chambers, all sculptured, open to the right and left. Straight on, is a low doorway, opening into a second hall of similar height, supported by four square pillars; and within all, is the sanctum, wherein stands a simple altar of the living rock in front of four large figures seated on rocky thrones. This inner shrine is hewn at

least one hundred yards into the rock; and here, in the silent depths of that great mountain, these awful idols, with their mysterious altar of human sacrifice, looked very imposing. They seemed to sit there waiting for some great summons which should awaken and reanimate these "kings of the earth who lie in glory, every one in his own house."

The next morning we moored at Dirr, the chief town of Nubia, and went ashore to visit the king. It is a town of mud-houses, rather better built than any we had previously seen, scattered among gardens of herbs, melons, cucumbers, etc., and every dwelling sheltered by its own palms. Crowds of children collected round us, and accompanied our progress through the mud metropolis; all the women, too, ran to their doors to gaze at the white strangers.

We continued our progress to the palace, which was a mud building of immense extent, including many courts and stables. In front was an open space, shadowed by a noble sycamore; some travellers reclined under its shade on carpets, with two or three camels standing near. His sable majesty had been transacting some business with the Turkish governor, and we now saw him returning to the palace, attended by half a dozen other very old men, all dressed in green or blue robes, and wearing very large, white turbans; this dress, together with their long, grey beards, gave the procession an imposing appearance.

Our Nubian pilot ran up, and, seizing the passive hand of his sovereign, pressed it to his lips, and then placed it on his head. The poor old chief

walked very erect, but listlessly; and his countenance wore an expression of long-suffering and sorrow. He courteously motioned us to follow, and led the way through several enclosures to a hall of audience resembling in most respects a barn. It was a large, dreary-looking room, with two window-places; the only furniture consisted of a divan covered with an old carpet, a few mats spread upon the floor, and a little shelf of unpainted wood, on which lay a rusty brace of pistols, a rude hammer, and some nothings. A few very primitive-looking swords, spears, and shields, were the only attempts at ornament.

Cheerless as was the aspect of the apartment, it seemed to suit the circumstances of the king, whose desolate and state-fallen condition accorded too faithfully with that of his dreary and forlorn kingdom. His sons were all away, scattered over various parts of their father's desert realms; he had recently dismissed all his wives; and his careworn old heart knew nothing of the comfort which cheers the old age that in return sanctifies an English home.

The royal savage received us with that air of lofty, yet gentle courtesy, which long authority seems always to confer; and we seated ourselves respectfully on his ragged carpet.

While we took our seats by his side, in compliance with his invitation, the elders of the village who had accompanied him seated themselves on the mats upon the floor, and the black mob waited outside, filling the doorway with a mass of ivory teeth, and woolly heads, and glittering eyes. After about ten minutes' conversation concerning the history and antiquities of his country, of which

he professed himself profoundly ignorant, he broke up the levee by asking for some powder and a knife, and raisins; and we rose. We thought this was rather a beggarly end of a royal audience, but promised the valuables, and departed. We were followed by a crowd of naked menials, clamouring for "backsheesh," because one had handed coffee, another sugar, and the rest had been present at our presentation.

Proceeding some hours further the next day, we arrived at Korosko, a village situated in a green oasis of a valley, surrounded by dark, lofty precipices, through the gorge of which lies the desert route to Shendy. We found here a caravan and some officers of the Pasha's army going to Sennaar. The scene was rendered very picturesque by the encampment of the latter; their green and white tents scattered among the palms; their horses picketed on a grassy bank near the shore; and, further inland, groups of camels and dromedaries were reposing among the scattered cottages, their swarthy attendants squatted on carpets, or sauntering with their pipes among the groves. The women were gleaning in the corn-fields; the men, nearly naked, with spear and shield, and long black hair, were watching their flocks; and probably presented the same appearance that their father Ishmael wore four thousand years ago.

Wady Sebou, or Valley of the Lions, raised our expectations of seeing some of these animals; but we found them unknown; and books informed us that the valley obtained its name from the sphinxes that form the approach to its rock-hewn temple. Of these only two now remain.

Then we entered again upon a desert country, which continued until we reached Seyala. Here our attention was called to a very singular phenomenon by Mahmoud's exclaiming something and pointing towards the desert, where towered a vast column of sand, increasing as it whirled along to a mountain size. It strode the river and the waste like a flash of lightning, and disappeared over the far horizon. They say it is fatal to every living thing it overtakes unexpectedly, destroying whole caravans as instantaneously as the Assyrian-smiting angel.

The little village of Seyala stands some distance from the river. It is surrounded on all sides by a very wide and lonely desert, which recalled forcibly that sublime expression of Isaiah's, "the burden of the desert of the sea"; and, lo! towering above that sea, comes sailing a ship of the desert, with its pilot Arab.

This traveller presented a fine specimen of the Bedouin warrior: his dromedary careered silently and swiftly over the trackless sands, his white robes fluttered in the breeze, a snowy turban shaded his swarthy visage, and his attitude seemed at once full of energy and repose. The vision was sudden in its appearance and vanishing, and was in such perfect keeping with the desert, that the wastes seemed no longer desolate; though nothing was there visible but the white dromedary, and the dark shadow which alone accompanied it on its solitary way. The equipage of the desert-warrior was very simple: a large bundle of provender for his beast, and a water-skin hung at either side; he was armed with spear and shield, of course; a cumbrous sword swung from his saddle-bow, and

a short knife strapped to his naked arm completed his appointments.

We are now approaching Guerf Hassan, which appeared to me the most striking and characteristic spot in Nubia, even while having Ipsamboul vividly in recollection; it is the strangest, most unearthly place I ever beheld. It was dark when we arrived in its neighbourhood, but this mattered little, as its mysterious recesses were only visible to torchlight in the brightest noon.

We passed through some corn-fields; then came a strip of desert, then a tall cliff, and in it the enormous portico of the temple. This, though built by human hands, stands out from the face of the mountain as if it had formed part of it from creation: four giant statues leaning against square pillars support its massive entablature. The vista of this colossal portico leads to a portal in the living rock some twenty feet in height, and this is the entrance to the temple. The view as we entered was very imposing; a group of swarthy Arabs were waving blazing torches, and looked like officiating demon-priests, to the tall, awful, gigantic idols that towered above us: the temples seemed *full* of these grim statues, though there are only two rows, containing four in each. The massive pedestals on which they stand are but ten feet apart, which adds considerably to the effect of their enormous size. Hence we passed into a lesser hall, and then into the sanctum: numerous torches here gleamed upon walls, shadowily giving out pictured battles, and kneeling priests, and stern deities: and in the centre of the shrine was a rude altar, beyond which sat four gigantic idols, with strange-looking crowns

upon their heads, and mysterious emblems in their hands.

There were many other chambers; but we soon returned to the outer hall, and again reverently traversed its solemn aisles and galleries. Everywhere pillar was thickly encrusted with reliefs, and many a day might be passed in this sculptured library before its vast volumes were exhausted of their interest and meaning.

Once more the torches gleamed over god and warrior, and cavern and shrine; and we returned to our boat.

We soon arrived at Philœ, having been only fifteen days on our journey to the Second Cataract.

Soon after daylight on the following morning, the Captain of the Cataract made his appearance, bringing with him eight athletic Nubians accustomed to the rapids and his voice, to row the boat instead of our own crew. After greetings and pipes, and coffee, we made sail and floated away, surrounded by rafts, and swimmers, and waterlogs, carrying double. We soon left all these behind, and, in a short time more, our beautiful Philœ disappeared behind the tall cliffs for ever.

When we approached the cataract, we stopped near a reef of rocks, to take in the grey old pilot of the falls, and instantly a score of Nubians darted out of the crowd into our boat. Being already very top-heavy, owing to the masts and spars that were lashed to the foremast and poop, we desired Mahmoud to clear the decks in vain: one was a Captain, and had a right to the risk of being

drowned; another was his servant, another his cousin; and we finally shoved off, with five-and-thirty natives crowded on our narrow deck. The celebrated old Captain of all the Cataract is dead, and his rights seem to have descended in various falls to each of his sons, for there were several of these on board looking after their claims. The village Sheikh (ruler) was there for the same purpose, and the Captain of the Lower Cataract also favoured us with his company, in order to ensure *his* share.

“Yallough!” we are off. The Nubian river-guides pull away desperately, shouting a vehement song to which their oars keep rapid time, and we rush on to the calm space where the waters seem to pause before they plunge below. The chief Captain stands at the bow, gesticulating violently, watching eagerly every motion of the boat, and shouting out directions to the pilot, which were drowned in the yell of the rowers, the roar of the torrent, and the shoutings of every one on board, except ourselves and the old pilot; *he* stood erect and silent, watching every wave with a calm but vivid eye.

Now we are in the cataract—the waves foam up over the deck, and the spray renders everything invisible, except where the dark cliffs loom for a moment through its clouds; the boat darts wildly on through the weltering waters—a sharp rock seems to await her—she shuns it like a bird, and plunges down another cataract; then fairly spins round in its eddies, till, urged into way again by the sweeping oars, she seems to hover for a moment over the great fall;—then down she goes, as if

performing a somerset; and we emerge about a hundred yards off from rock, and rapid, an exploit which this last descent certainly deserves the name of.

We were now on the Egyptian Nile once more.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANCIENT CITY OF THEBES

OUR anxiety for English letters and news acquired force, like gravitation, as we descended the river; and we stopped only at Assouan long enough to take in necessary stores, such as charcoal, flour, etc. I may mention here, for the information of travellers, that during the first month of our voyage we had used only the bread of the country, which was often very indifferent; but, on entering Nubia, we could no longer obtain even this, and Mahmoud thenceforth made Arab cakes for us of flour and water, which he baked upon a flat piece of iron; this we found so excellent and wholesome, that we used nothing else until we reached Cairo. Our crew here laid in little stores of merchandise, for presents or for profit, of the Nubian articles most prized in Egypt. The premiums and prizes for work which we had given them from time to time enabled them to do this; and our boat became heavily laden with dates and other southern luxuries.

We found a steamer belonging to the Pasha at Assouan, which he had sent so far with Prince Albert of Prussia, who was now visiting Nubia, and we had here the luxury of reading some newspapers two months old.

Bacheet and another inhabitant of these parts

had obtained leave of absence from Philœ, and we now set forward on our Egyptian voyage with a diminished crew. We stopped about midnight to take in the absent men under a grove of the best date-trees in Egypt. It was bright moonlight, and we found our excellent pilot waiting for us, surrounded by his family. It was interesting to observe the affectionate partings of these poor people, and the old father held up his hands to bless his son, remaining in that attitude till our boat glided out of sight. We offered fifty piastres to the crew if they took us to Esneh by the following evening, and they accomplished the undertaking, having been thirty hours at the oars without a moment's respite, except for meals, and during our visits.

We were now *en route* for mighty Thebes. We moored off the eastern bank of the river, towards evening, leaving the opposite side, with Luxor and Carnak, for the last. We were soon in the saddle, and preceded by an Arab guide with a long spear, went cantering over the level plains, luxuriant with corn-fields, to the temple of Ammon, the Theban Jupiter: this building is about a mile from the river, and contained the Hall of Assembly of ancient Thebes. How curious it was, standing among those silent courts, to think of the eloquence which charmed or persuaded the listening crowds of *three thousand years ago!* There was party spirit even then, no doubt, and place-hunting; where that spirit now is who shall presume to say? but permanent places for the patriots have long since been found in the vast cemeteries that surround us. The front of this building is very perfect, and im-

posing from its simplicity and vast extent. Evening fell as we stood there; and we rode back to our tent by the light of stars, which scarcely enabled us to keep clear of the mummy-pits wherewith the plain was honeycombed.

The next morning, at daybreak, we started for the *Tombs of the Kings*. I was mounted on a fine horse owned by the Sheikh of the village; and the cool air of the morning, the rich prospect before us, and the cloudless sky, all conspired to impart life and pleasure to my relaxed and languid frame. I had been for a month almost confined to my pallet by illness; and now, mounted on a gallant barb, sweeping across the desert, with the mountain breezes breathing round me, I felt a glow of spirits and exhilaration of mind and body to which I had been long a stranger.

For a couple of hours we continued along the plain, which was partially covered with wavy corn, but flecked widely, here and there, with desert tracts. Then we entered the gloomy mountain gorges, through which the Theban monarchs passed to their tombs. Our path lay through a desolate valley, in which no living thing of earth or air ever met our view. The plains below may have been, perhaps, once swarming with life, and covered with palaces; but the gloomy defiles we were now traversing must have ever been, as they now are, lonely, lifeless, desolate—a fit avenue to the tombs for which we were bound.

After five or six miles' travel, our guide stopped at the base of one of the precipices, and laying his long spear against the rock, proceeded to light his torches. There was no entrance apparent at the

distance of a few yards, nor was this great tomb betrayed to the outer world by any visible aperture, until discovered by Belzoni.

We descended by a steep path into this tomb through a doorway covered with hieroglyphics, and entered a corridor, that ran some hundred yards into the mountain. It was about twenty feet square, and painted throughout most elaborately. The doorways were richly ornamented with figures of a larger size. In allusion probably to the wanderings of the freed spirit, almost all the larger emblems on these walls wore wings, however incompatible with their usual vocations; boats, globes, fishes, and suns, all were winged. On one of the corridors there is an allegory of the progress of the sun through the hours, painted with great detail; the God of Day sits in a *boat* (in compliment to the Nile, he lays aside his chariot here), and steers through the hours of day and night, each of the latter being distinguished by a star. The Nile in this, as in all other circumstances of Egyptian life, figures as the most important element; even the blessed souls, for its sake, assume the form of fishes, and swim about with angelic fins in this River of Life.

One gorgeous passage makes way into another more gorgeous still, until you arrive at a steep descent. At the base of this, perhaps four hundred feet from daylight, a doorway opens into a vaulted hall of noble proportions, whose gloom considerably increases its apparent size. Here the body of the father of Rameses the Second was laid about three thousand two hundred years ago in the beautiful alabaster sarcophagus,¹ which Belzoni drew

from hence, the reward of his enterprise.¹ Its poor occupant, who had taken such pains to hide himself, was “undone” for the amusement of London.

In Bruce’s tomb we found paintings and excavations of a similar design; and in one of the numerous chambers, opening off the main passage, the two celebrated figures that have given this the name of the “Harper’s Tomb.” In these there is a great deal of life, though the bodies are a mere bag; but the countenance is full of expression, and the bending arm seems to sweep the strings as gracefully in this lonely tomb of three thousand years ago, as in the drawing-rooms of this year of grace, 1849.

There are numerous other tombs all full of interest. The whole circumstance of ancient Egyptian life may be read in pictures out of these extraordinary tombs, from the birth, through all the joys and sorrows of life, to the death; the lamentation over the corpse, the embalmer’s operations, and, finally, the judgment and the immortality of the soul. In one instance, the Judge is measuring all man’s good actions in a balance against a feather from an angel’s wing; in another, a great serpent is being bound, head and foot, and cast into a pit; and there are many other proofs, equally convincing, of the knowledge that this mysterious people possessed of a future life and judgment.

It was a merry day we passed among those tombs: we had not heard the sound of any

¹ The British Museum, it is said, offered him £12,000 for it. It is now in Sir John Soane’s Museum.

European voice but our own for nearly two months, when, turning into one of these sepulchres, we met a large party exploring like ourselves. We invited them to "our tomb," where Mahmoud was preparing coffee. Mahmoud was at first startled at the unexpected increase of our party, but soon set himself vigorously about preparing dinner for nine out of a luncheon for two. Our new acquaintances consisted of a handsome young Russian Prince,—an antiquary who was residing at Thebes,—a German traveller, two Italians, and two Frenchmen.

Our servants had already made things comfortable in the charnel-house; a fire was lighted, carpets spread, and coffee was already diffusing its fragrance. Prince K.'s wolf-skin, added to our carpets, afforded sitting-room for the whole party, who now gathered round in a circle, comparing their various impressions in as many different languages.

About two o'clock our party broke up; and, notwithstanding threats of sunstroke and brain-fever, we set out once more on our adventures across the mountains: the sun was scorching hot, and his rays, reflected from the cliffs, poured down as in a focus upon our heads, while the hills excluded every breath of air. Nothing but the turban can stand this sort of sun-artillery with impunity; and to the defence which this afforded, our guides added cloaks, carpets, and whatever they could wrap round them.

As we descended a steep path that would have puzzled a European goat, my horse put his foot on the breast of a mummy king;¹ and this once

¹ These are royal cemeteries.

reverenced corpse was trodden into fragments by the rest of the party. ’

What a story that ghastly royal village told of ambition and fallen power, and its vanity! A Pharaoh affording footing to an Arab horse, and trampled on by a stranger from the far north! “Is this the man that made the earth tremble, that did shake kingdoms;—that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”

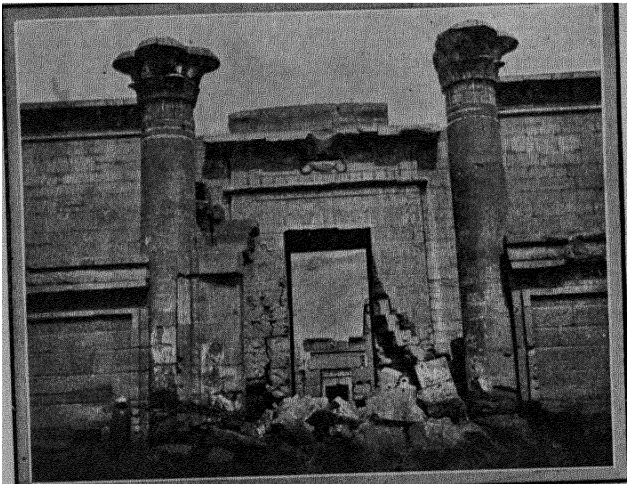
“Is thy pride brought down to the grave, and the sound of thy viols? Is the earth spread under thee, and doth the earthworm cover thee?” (Isaiah xiv.)

As we emerged from the mountains we came in sight of a vast plain, intersected by the Nile, and extending as far as the Arabian hills, a distance of about twenty miles. This plain was strewed with ruins of extinct cities and temples, appropriately intermingled with extensive cemeteries, wherein now slept quietly their once busy populations.

Every one has heard of Thebes, but I suspect very few have any distinct impressions on the subject; and when, in reading some traveller’s journal, they think that they have arrived at this long-sought-for city, they find themselves lost in accounts of Carnak, Luxor, Gournou, etc., but no Thebes. Now I am free to confess that, after having twice visited these localities, I am myself yet ignorant of the site of this renowned Thebes. The epithet is, in fact, a noun of multitude singular, embracing at least five different localities once, probably, forming part of the same great city—in this wise:—

As we look down from these mountains, we dis-

cern, on our far right, the palace of Medinet Abou; before us the palace and temple of Memnonium; on our left, the temples of Gournou. Advanced some distance in front of these, stand two colossal statues, the vocal Memnon and his brother idol. Then a wide green plain, beyond which flows the Nile; and farther still, on the Arabian



MEDINET ABOU : GATEWAY OF SMALL TEMPLE

side the temple of Luxor raises its gigantic columns from the river's edge, and the entrance to the amazing temple of Carnak towers afar off. And this vast view scarcely embraces THEBES.

Descending from the mountains, we traversed the plain, which is everywhere excavated in search of antiquities, found here in such quantities that the Pasha has imposed a tax of 3500 piastres a year on this subterranean harvest. Herds of

wild dogs harbour in these excavations, and, as the stranger passes by, a thousand gaunt, wolfish-looking heads start out from their burrows, till the plain looks mottled with them, and a hungry howl runs along the ground for miles.

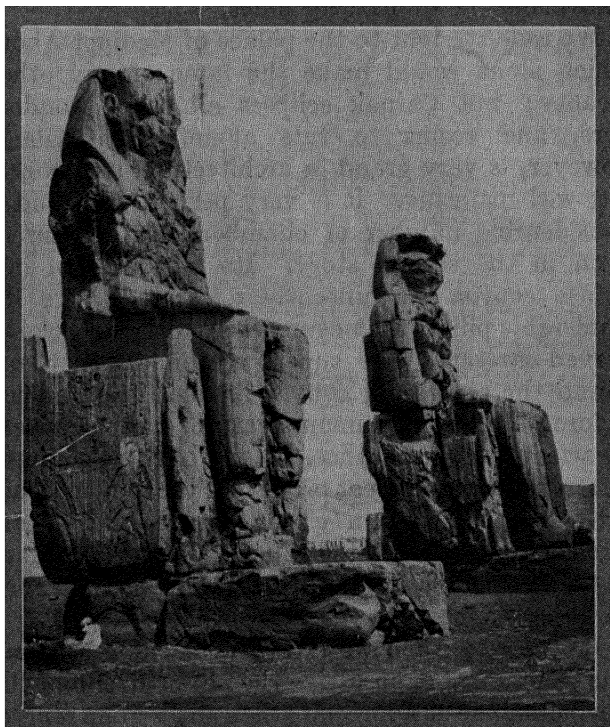
We rode straight to the palace of Medinet Abou, which alone would make the fame of any other locality; but Carnak eclipses all other wonders here, and seems to rule alone. This palace, however, is very grand in architecture, and gorgeous with painting. It is very perfect, too, and a considerable number of chambers are uninjured, even in the second story. Its labyrinth of immense courts, magnificently decorated; the innumerable pillars that everywhere rear their richly carved capitals; the superb colonnades that surround the courts, all convey an idea of grandeur, before which every human creature, except Carnak, dwarfs into insignificance. Many of these columns lie strewn about in great profusion, yet they measure six-and-thirty feet in circumference, and gleam like a cathedral's painted window with every colour in the rainbow, bright and vivid as if the sun shone through them.

It was late when we returned to our tents, and fourteen hours' exposure to the powerful sun of the Thebaid made us appreciate their shelter and repose.

The next morning we started before sunrise to watch the effects of the first smile of Aurora (the dawn upon her son Memnon.¹

¹ The *statues of Memnon* are two huge seated figures; one of them is the famous *vocal* statue of Memnon, which is said to have produced a sound when touched by the rays of the rising sun.

There are two statues here, of similar size and proportion, about twenty yards apart : they stand isolated at present, though once forming the com-



STATUES OF MEMNON AND HIS BROTHER

mencement of an avenue of statues leading to a palace now level with the sands. The most celebrated of these two statues stands to the north ; he is hewn out of a single mass of granite, and measures, though seated, about fifty feet in height,

exclusive of his pedestal, which measures six feet more.

The granite of which Memnon is composed has a musical ring when struck, and it is said that the priests used to produce the sounds which astonished travellers in ancient times. Humboldt, however, in his South American travels, speaks of certain rocks on the river Orinoco, which *he* heard yielding low thrilling tones of music, and accounted for it by the wind passing through the chinks.

Whatever Memnon may have formerly done in the vocal line, much voice can scarcely be expected from him now, as his chest is gone, and replaced by loose stones. He fell down in the year 70 B.C., and was afterwards rebuilt. His pedestal is covered with Greek and other inscriptions, bearing testimony to his musical performances. This Memnon is a corruption of Miamun, "the beloved of Jove"; he reigned one hundred years before Sesostris, or 1430 B.C.

From these statues to the Memnonium, as the palace and temple of Sesostris are called, is about half a mile. The magnificent hall of this temple is entered between two calm and contented-looking giants of rock, each twenty feet high. Within this hall was the library! The ceiling is covered with astronomical figures, which reveal the date of the building, 1322 B.C. On one of the walls, Sesostris is represented as seated under the shadow of the Tree of Life, while gods inscribe his name upon its leaves.

It is impossible to convey any idea of the extent and variety of all these ruins, or of the profusion of sculpture and painting which everywhere adorns

them. A statue of Sesostris lies without the temple in the position which he has occupied unmoved since Cambyses¹ overthrew him; the upper part of his body is broken into two or three vast fragments, and the lower is almost indistinguishable in its brokenness. The breadth of this enormous figure across the breast is twenty-three feet; the whole was cut from a single block of granite, and polished as smooth as marble.

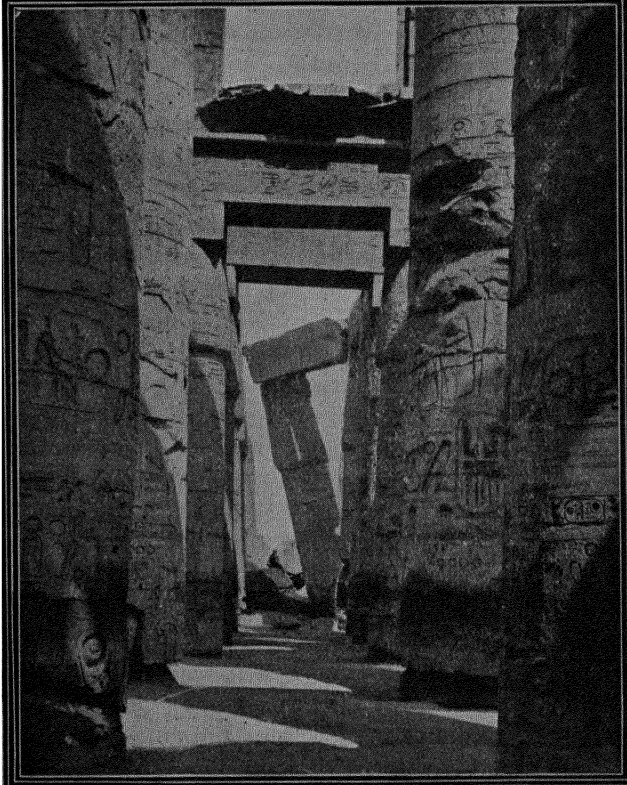
These are the principal objects of interest on the Lybian side of the river: there are many others, which, however they may attract the traveller, would scarcely interest the reader.

Of the temple of Luxor I shall only observe that it forms a fitting approach to Carnak. It presents a splendid confusion of courts, columns, statues, ruins, and a lonely obelisk, whose companion was removed to Paris. We found here the luxury of Arab horses, and rode along a wide plain covered with coarse grass, and varied by some gloomy little lakes and acacia shrubs, when, at the end of an hour, our guide reined in his horse, and pointed with his spear towards the south.

There lay the temple of CARNAK! darkening a whole horizon with its portals, and pyramids, and palaces. We passed under a noble archway, and entered a long avenue of sphinxes: all their heads were broken off, but their pedestals remained unmoved since the time of Joseph. It must have been a noble sight in the palmy days of Thebes—that avenue of two hundred enormous statues, terminated by that temple. Yet this was only

¹ Son of Cyrus the Great of Persia. He conquered Egypt in
525 B.C.

one of many : at least seven others, with similar porticoes and archways, led from this stupendous



CARNAK

edifice. We rode through half a mile of sphinxes, and then arrived at the temple, the splendour of which no words can describe.

crowded with a perfect forest of the most magnificent columns, thirty-six feet in circumference, covered with hieroglyphics, and surmounted by capitals, all of different patterns, and richly painted. No two persons agree on the number of these apparently countless columns : some make it amount to one hundred and thirty-four, others, one hundred and sixty; the central measure sixty-six feet in height, exclusive of the pedestals and abacus. Endless it would be to enter into details of this marvellous pile; suffice it to say, that the temple is about one mile and three-quarters in circumference, the walls eighty feet high, and twenty-five feet thick !

With astonishment, and almost with awe, I rode on through labyrinths of courts, cloisters, and chambers, and only dismounted where a mass of masonry had lately fallen in, owing to its pillars having been removed to build the Pasha's powder manufactory. Among the infinite variety of objects of art that crowd this temple, the obelisks are not the least interesting. Those who have only seen them at Rome, or Paris, can form no conception of their effect where all around is in keeping with them. The eye follows upward the finely tapering shaft, till suddenly it seems, not to terminate, but to melt away and lose itself in the dazzling sunshine of its native skies.

For hours I wandered eagerly and anxiously on, every moment encountering something new, unheard of, and unthought of, until then. The very walls of outer enclosures were deeply sculptured with whole histories of great wars and triumphs, by figures that seemed to live again. In some places, these walls were poured down like an

avalanche, not fallen : no mortar had been ever needed to connect the cliff-like masses of which they were composed : at this hour, the most ignorant mason might direct the replacing of every stone where it once towered, so accurately was each fitted to the place it was destined to occupy.

We rested for a long time on a fallen column, under a beautiful archway that commands a wide view of the temple, and then slowly and lingeringly withdrew. The world contains nothing like it.

We returned to Luxor by a different, yet similar avenue of statues to that by which we had approached : as we proceeded, we could discover other pillars and portals far away upon the horizon, each marking where an entrance to this amazing temple once existed.

From the desert or the river ; from within, or from without ; by sunshine, or by moonlight—however you contemplate Carnak—appears the very aspect in which it shows to most advantage. And when this was all perfect ; when its avenues opened in vista upon the noble temples and palaces of Sesostris, upon Gournou, Medinet Abou, and Luxor ; when its courts were paced by gorgeous priestly pageants, and busy life swarmed on a river flowing between banks of palaces like those of Venice magnified a hundredfold—when all this was in its prime, no wonder that its fame spread even over the barbarian world, and found immortality in Homer's song.

For many a day after I had seen it, and even to this hour, glimpses of Thebes mingle with my reveries and blend them with my dreams, as if that vision had left its impress upon the brain for ever.

CHAPTER X

THE PYRAMIDS

The Tombs—Midnight Exploring.

THE Pyramids had become as familiar to our view as the Grampians to a Highlander, when we suddenly recollected that they still remained unexplored, while the days of our stay at Cairo were already numbered. Our donkeys, which stood at our door, from sunrise to sunset, were put into immediate requisition, and we started about four o'clock in the afternoon of the 11th of April.

We sallied forth, then, from the "City of Victory," mounted on two donkeys; Abdallah and another donkey preceded us, while a sumpter-mule and four Arabs brought up the procession. Arrived at the mouldering quays of Cairo Vecchia, we embarked our donkeys in a large ferry-boat, and we soon landed on the western bank of the river.

The sun had just set in glory over the crimsoned sands of the Lybian desert, throwing the mountain pyramids into fine relief against the gilded sky. Wide tracks of waving corn spread around, and an avenue of acacias concealed all of the distant city, except its minarets, and the silvery mist which rose amongst them. The air was very balmy, and the breeze, which had been exploring the Pyramids, seemed to be whispering its dis-

coveries to the palm-trees and the ruins, which ever and anon we came to and passed by. Suddenly the rich verdure ceased like a shore, and the ocean-like desert received our silent steps, moving over its waves as noiselessly as ships upon the water.

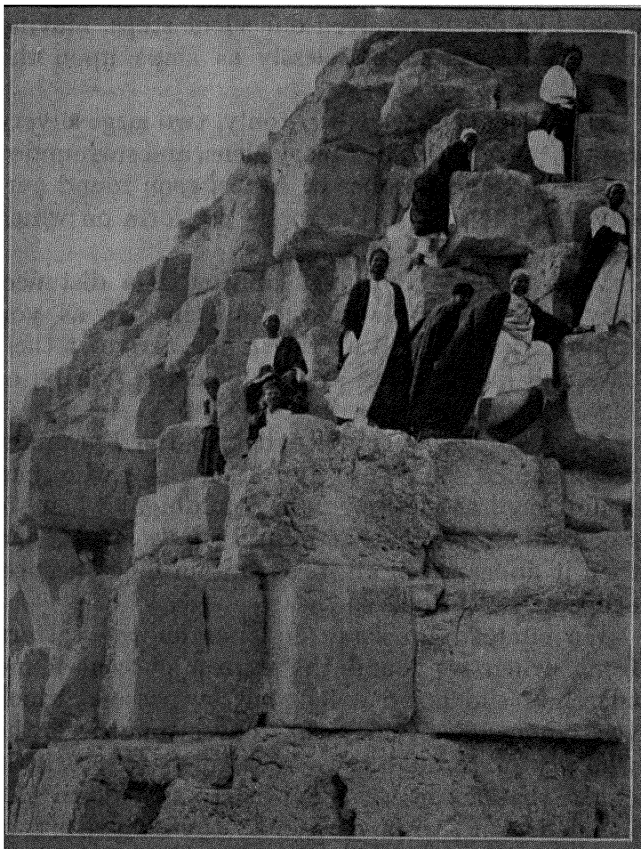
We killed, somewhat wantonly, two large silvery snakes, traversed some dreary glens, and surrounded by an immense number of Arabs, soon found ourselves at the foot of the rocky platform on which stands the Great Pyramid.

Vast as these Pyramids appear at a distance, they do not appear to increase in size as you approach; but, when at length you arrive at their base and look up and around, you feel, verily, as it were, in an awful presence.

After dining, we hurried out to the Pyramids, accompanied only by five Bedouins, who had volunteered as guides. It was midnight when we stood under *the greatest wonder of the world*, and then it appeared in all its mountain magnificence, eclipsing half the sky.

We climbed up some distance on the eastern front, when we found the narrow entrance, and then half slid down a long narrow passage, which was admirably fitted with grooves for wheels the whole way through. There seemed to me little doubt that a car was adapted to run down this inclined plane, to be carried by the momentum of its descent up a circular staircase, now broken, which leads to another downward passage. These steep and smooth passages we traversed with considerable difficulty, the torches and naked Bedouins rendering the heat and other annoyances excessive :

at length we stood in the King's Chamber, in the heart of the Pyramid, lined throughout with



ASCENT OF

GREAT PYRAMID

polished granite, and now quite empty. The body of the king has hitherto escaped the researches of caliphs and antiquaries, but is supposed

by Sir G. Wilkinson to lie beneath a niche which he points out. •

As soon as we entered, the Bedouins set up a shout that made the Pyramid echo again through all its galleries, and then, turning rudely round, they demanded money. We put a fierce face on the matter, and began our difficult ascent with the assistance of the angry guides. When we emerged from the Pyramid, the Arabs turned round again, and declared that we should not stir a step until we gave them money: as I put my hands in my girdle, a gigantic Bedouin drew near to receive the expected tribute, and was not a little startled to feel the cold muzzle of a pistol at his breast instead; he fell back terrified, and humbly begged for pardon. Giving him a kick, we drove our guides before us to the other Pyramids, which we wandered about in the bright moonlight; and then, after a glimpse at the Sphinx, and a shot or two at jackals, returned to our abominable tomb. Here, stretched in our cloaks upon the hard rock, we were soon asleep.

By the first daylight we resumed our investigation of the Pyramids and the Sphinx. The latter is cut out of the solid rock, except the leonine paws, which are *built* of hewn stone. In front of this monster, and enclosed within her arms, is a paved court, about fifty feet in extent, on which sacrifices were offered; and there was a sanctuary in her bosom, wherein the priests worshipped.

Sir Gardner Wilkinson dates the building of the Pyramids about 2160 B.C., or six hundred and twenty-five years before the Exodus of the Israelites. Lord Lindsay ingeniously argues that they were

built by the shepherd kings, who were expelled by the Pharaoh of our Joseph. This would make their date about 1900 B.C. Much has been said to contradict their having been used as sepulchres. If they *were* so used, they were doubtless connected also with the worship of the country, and may have been selected for the former purpose on account of their consecration, as we use Westminster Abbey.

The Great Pyramid covers eight acres, and is eight hundred feet in height, or one-third higher than the cross on St. Paul's. Each Pyramid appears to have stood in a square court, hewn from the rock, in which were small tombs, and perhaps temples. Far away as the eye can follow, a line of Pyramids of various dimensions succeeds, among wavy heaps of tombs and catacombs, that might seem to be a cemetery for the world.

On our return to the tomb, we found the Sheikh of the village, who had heard of the robber-like demands of the Arabs, and had brought his executioner to bastinado¹ them. We refused, perhaps weakly, to permit this; and, distributing some small gratuities that made the whole tribe happy, we took our homeward way, shooting quails, as we passed through the corn-fields.

We visited the island of Rhoda on our return to Cairo, and were very hospitably received by its superintendent, Mr. Trail, who escorted us over the Pasha's extensive gardens: these are watered by innumerable little canals, filled from the river by the perpetual labour of sixty buffaloes at the water-wheels. There are some fine orange and

¹ To cane on the soles of the feet.

pomegranate groves here ; English art has done its utmost to imitate a European garden, but in vain.

The following day I left Cairo without regret, except in being obliged to part from my fellow-traveller, who returned to Europe, while my path lay eastward still.

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