

G R I P.

EDITED BY MR. DEMOS MUDGE.

The greatest Beast is the Ass; the greatest Bird is the Owl;
The greatest Fish is the Oyster; the greatest Man is the Fool.

TORONTO, SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 1874.

Letters from Hot Latitudes.

BEIRUT, EGYPT, April 1, 1874.



IT was black as midnight when we got inside, literally "Egyptian darkness," and even after our Arab guides had lit their torches, it was some time before our eyes grew accustomed to the gloom.

We had been "doing" Egypt, had left Cairo, had seen the Sphinx, and the outside of the Pyramids, up which we had been hauled by long, lank and extortionate Bedouins, who had extracted our legs from their sockets, "bucksheesh" from our pockets, and profanity from our lips.

We had "done" everything in short, save the Upper Cataract, when it occurred to GEORDIE, he of chub-catching notoriety, that we should do the *inside* of old CHEOPS' monuments

Dubious as to its practicability, a vote was taken among the party with the following result:

FRITZ went "aye"; "for," said he, "we might find some traces of the Israelites inside; a sample of what they made bricks of after the straw gave out." Reproving him for his levity, for is he not a pillar of the church, and the "Fidus Achates" of the Y. M. C. A., I too voted "aye," but with the misgiving of a man with a new pair of boots, who feels that in truth he has "put his foot in it."

JACK voted "aye," of course; for HATTIE had said she wanted to go, and had it been a trip across the Styx, with old CHARON taking in the dimes, JACK would have gone—had HATTIE led the way.

And GEORDIE, as I said before, had proposed it, so what could his wife do but honour and obey, merely stipulating that GEORDIE should lay in an extra supply of sal volatile, Ready Relief and Compound Syrup, in case any dead and gone Egyptian should be too much for her nerves, while, as for my wife, I verily believe, she, being blessed with more than the share of inquisitiveness usually allotted to woman, was rather anxious to go than otherwise, hoping to gratify and probably resolve certain vague and somewhat unclassical ideas concerning the founders of the Pyramids.

I should premise by stating that she, more than any of us, is ignorant of Arabic, a forcible comment upon the defective system of education pursued in the common schools of to-day, especially when it is remembered that it was taught among the dwellers of the Nile over three thousand years ago.

With an ingenuity worthy of her sex, my wife has endeavoured to compensate for this deficiency by addressing the natives in English, adopting a slow and measured utterance so as to give the Ethiopian mind ample time to embrace and thoroughly grasp the meaning of each word before its successor comes along.

This was the way she let off her history at the unoffending Bedouin who was leading the donkey she was riding:

"Pharaoh! oh, yes! I have—heard—my—husband—tell—of—his—fighting—the—tiger!"

Jud:ce of our amusement at this.

Extraordinary confounding of the lamented Eastern potentate with the innocent Western "game they did play," which they spell it with an "F."

Carried unanimously then that we should explore the interior, and behold us at the commencement of this letter, fairly inside.

After stepping through the narrow opening, so narrow that GEORDIE, the fat man of the party, got so tightly wedged that he had to be pried out with a crowbar, we found ourselves in a small rectangular chamber with a vaulted roof, and about ten feet in diameter. On one side was a small pile of masonry, which the guide informed us was a "Che-bouk" or Altar on which it was customary to sacrifice the mad dog of the period, the unfortunate canine being then, as now, doomed to an untimely end at the hands of his natural protector.

They sacrificed him in these days with many prayers, but now when they see a mad dog they simply spell his name backward and go for him.

Backsheesh being freely rendered to our Ethiopians, we proceeded along a walled passage-way which must have been trodden by the feet

of countless legions of weary Israelites who didn't know enough to go in for strikes and the ten hour movement.

If I had stood where MOSES stood—but, no matter.

And this brought us to a chamber which JACK said was Titanic.

I don't think it was right to reflect in this manner upon Mr. CHEOPS, who had been dead so long, but on JACK's head be it.

The Sheik in charge of our party informed us with Oriental gravity that this was the Chiaro-Seuro or Music Hall, where old PTOLEMY smoked his long pipe, sipped his "Balak-issam" or Egyptian Jewlep, and made the unhappy descendants of ABRAHAM play the latest opera before him on their jews-harps.

Old FRITZ corroborated the statement, and as at home he is such a persistent daller with the truth, we had to believe him when in a foreign land.

Here we agreed to take dinner surrounded by sarcophagi containing all that was mortal, and the stuffing of Egypt's earliest heroes.

It was enough to render contemplative the most unimaginative of beings, kicking your heels on the side of the coffer containing Ethiop's dearest and best, as you put away a pint of Bass with sandwiches in the desert. Now whether it was the heat or whether it was Bass, or the contemplativeness, I don't know.

I do know that I began to feel sleepy, and declined to accompany the party any further in their explorations; all I asked for was a light, one more bottle of Bass and solitude, and then when they were ready they might come for me.

And so they left me, CHEOPS to right of me, CHEOPS to left of me, and I, the undersigned, in that happy frame of mind attendant upon a good dinner and a better digestion.

But why in the name of all that's extraordinary, CHEOPS, PTOLEMY CHEOPS—for so he told me was his name—why, I say, he should have been so forgetful of his royal dignity as to slap me on the back, and, pointing pantomimically to the bottle with one hand as he rubbed his embalmed and somewhat wrinkled stomach with the other, to finish at a gulp the bottle of XX, which, with a profound salaam, I handed him, is more than I can say.

He did it, and this I stick to.

And then, may I be overlastingly sat upon and for ever sarcophagussed if he didn't deliberately light one of my best cigars, and proceeded to unfold his family history to me.

I remonstrated with him; I told him that for a man who had been dead three thousand years it wasn't decent; that life was short, and that thirty centuries of his trouble with his mother-in-law would be too much, but he was deaf to the voice of reason.

Commencing at the time of the PTOLEPHAR scandal, he went into particulars which threw a new light on the whole affair; explained away the mystery of the Sphinx, which he informed was the head of a comet which had struck the earth on the reverse side and gone clean through; expressed his disgust at the present state of American politics, and vowed if ever he got over there to "put a head" on GRANT; in short, became so boisterous and utterly ungovernable, that I had to call his Majesty to order.

He calmed down after a while, but got mad again about the Suez Canal, and was very bitter against Mr. PICKWICK, who had taken his name in vain, coupling it with "tomato sauce;" finally, settling down into a detailed history of Mrs. P. and all the little PIRARONS who had been hatched, matched, and despatched since the year 2000 B. C., all of which, though desirable from an historic point of view, was soporific in the extreme.

At this juncture, and as he was relating to me with much gloom an incident which occurred to PIRARON LECHE, a relative of his, footsteps were heard along the distant corridor, and thanking me for my courtesy PTOLEMY CHEOPS resumed his hat, and bidding me a most polite adieu, retired within his granite resting-place.

Now, will you believe me; JACK, GEORDIE, FRITZ, and *les autres* wouldn't credit my story; they swore I had been asleep and dreamed it, and when I pointed as proof to the empty bottles, they only winked at one another.

So be it; I am not naturally irascible, but I must say in the greatest and most conciliatory manner in the world, that they deserve to date *their* letters from a much hotter latitude than this.

SMILE.

Our Agent-General.

The following works by the author of *Ginx's Baby*, *Lord Bantam*, etc., are about to be issued from the Dundee press:

1. *Emigration and Marmalade, or the juxtaposition of Classes.* A Lampoon.
2. *Beecher-Tilton-Woodhull.* An Essay on Cremation.
3. *Froth.* A speech delivered in the English House of Commons, (dedicated to his constituents.) Second edition.