

"Six Weeks on a Dahabeah."

A Nile voyage on a Dahabeah is so peculiar, and is really such a delightful method of passing a winter, that it will be well to say a little concerning our boat. It is about 110 feet long and 18 broad in the centre, with a flat bottom and no keel. In the bow is the cook's cubby with a large range open to the weather forward. Behind it stands the mast fifty feet high, and on the top of it is lashed the slender yard, which is a hundred and thirty feet long and hangs obliquely. The enormous, triangular sail stretches the length of the yard, and it's point is hauled down to the deck. When it is shifted, the rope is let go leaving the sail flapping, the end of the yard is carried round the mast, and the sail is hauled round in the opposite direction with an enormous amount of pulling, roaring, jabbering and chousing. The flat, open forward deck is capable of accomodating six rowers on a side. For us it will not be necessary, excepting the last day of our trip. We have had a tug attached all the time, which is of great assistance, especially in a head wind, in fact, under all circumstances making the trip more expedient.

The cabin is divided into a pantry and drago-man's room, a large saloon used as a dining-room, furnished with side-boards, tables, chairs, divans, mirrors, brackets and piano, and lighted by laage curtained-windows close together. Next are rows of bedrooms and bathrooms on either side of a passage, which leads from the mainsaloon to a good-sized stern cabin made comfortable by divans, card-tables, etc., used by us as a reading-room, but could be converted into a large, airy, double bed-room. A door from this opens on to a small stern deck, behind which are tied two boats, one containing our live stock, chickens, pigeons, turkeys and oc-



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asionally a lamb; the other the "felucca," or row-boat, a very useful addition. Over all these rooms runs the deck, mounted by a couple of stairways, which has tables, sofas, chairs and an awning, making an excellent place for exercising. The aft part is devoted to the steersman, and some of the sailors. The steering apparatus is of the rudest, the very long tiller goes into a stern-post, which plays in a hole big enough for four of it and creakingly turns a rude rudder.

The boat is manned by twenty-five sailors, jolly, hard-working and irresponsible, whose appearance in their blue gowns and white turbans, with complexions shading from brown to black, give us a good idea of the features of the natives from Lower Egypt to Nubia. Every evening before sunset they got out their musical instruments, and squatting in a circle on the forward deck, prepare to enjoy themselves. One thumps and shakes the tambourine, one softly beats with his thumb the darabooka drum, and another rattles castanets. The others beat time by a jerky motion of the raised hands, the palms occasionally coming together when the rhythm is properly accented. The leader, who has a very good tenor voice, chants a minor and monotonous love-song, to which the others respond either in applause of the sentiment, or in a burst of enthusiasm which they cannot contain.

The *reis* (captain) Mohammed is a stately Arab in an orange colored gown, covered in cool weather with a full, long-sleeved black cloak, large turban and stocking-feet. The cook, Mah-tuk, is always at his post, and no matter what excitement we may be in, stirs his soup, or bastes his chicken with perfect *sang froid*. The waiter, with his two lieutenants, delight one's eyes in their Oriental costumes, and last but not least, our worthy drago-man, Mohammed Saggar from Alexandria, who wears the full, bright-colored trousers of the East, resembling a divided skirt, gay waistcoat, cashmere belt, European overcoat, red fez ornamented by heavy black silk tassel and scarlet slippers; good-natured, bright, straight-forward, bubbling over with good humor, regaling one from time in his amusing way with experiences and Arabian tales.

Almost as soon as we were on board, the sail was loosed, we heard a chorus of "Halee, halee, halee," and the crew scrambled on deck to haul tight the sail with the cry "Yah Mohammed," and thus commenced our trip from Cairo to Philæ. The tug for the first few days was not the assistance we found it to be later, the wind being in our favor, we skimmed along at a pleasant rate, the trading and cargo boats, before and behind us, looking like winged birds with their double sails. Scenes glide past us on either sides never twice alike the combinations vary; the row, of palms, the green fields, lessening minarets, groups of idlers in flowing raiment, picturesque in any attitude they may assume, the depths of the blue above and the transparent soft air; now the

desert comes near, then recedes, the mountains advance in bold precipices, or fall away, everything seems shifting. Sometimes we pass a dahabeah, long, handsomely painted, with an enormous sail on its yard, a national flag and a long streamer, groups of white people sitting on deck, under the awning, reading or sketching; the usual salute follows, and nearly always an enthusiastic waving of handkerchiefs. Often a steamer rushes past us, panting and palpitating in its hurry, should it be a post-boat and has letters for us, a sign is given, and our felucca, rowed by six men, at once makes for it, the steamer stopping till it is reached, but just as soon as our men have been given whatever it has for us, off it steams. We pass brown villages made of bricks of the Nile mud, many of the roofs covered only with corn-stalks; we stop and take a peep at one of the Khedive's largest sugar factories at Rhoda; sail past a clean white-washed row of almost modern looking houses, flanked by groves of palm trees, men busy at work, women washing clothes in the river, or groups of them filling their goolahs (water-jars). These country women are invariably in black or dark brown; they are not veiled, but draw their head shawl over the face as our boat passes them. Their long gowns are drawn up exposing bare feet and legs as they step into the stream, children, bright and smiling, hoot "backsheesh," (pennies or gifts) after us, while the poor little babies, their eyes plastered with flies, predict for the future more ophthalmic beggars; almost all are poor on these banks, but interesting at every turn. The Nile is no ordinary river. It will lead us thousands of years backwards, in the ages, into the depths of history.

We visit tombs and temples at Beni, Hassen, Assiout, Abydos, Denderah, Tuxor, Esneh, Edfoo, El Kab, Kom Ombos, and Philæ. It would take pages and pages to describe even in the simplest manner the wonders of the pylons, columns, capital, cells, sanctuaries, stairways and crypts, all take you two, three, four and five thousand years back into the mysteries past. We examined the Colossi and obelisks of ancient Thebes (Tuxor), and later on looked upon the ancient quarries of Silsilis and Syene, from which were hewn those huge figures and monuments of the ancient Egyptians. Just at the moment perhaps, when one is meditating, endeavoring to lose identity and get into a proper classical frame of mind, one is interrupted by one of the greatest nuisances of Egypt—the vendor—usually plural, of antiquities. Their presence is destructive to one's peace of mind, especially should it be accompanied by the never ceasing native cry of "Backsheesh, backsheesh!"

Assiout, noted for its tombs in the mountains, is a large city celebrated for its red pottery, mosques and bazaars, but above all the American mission. The mission school was formerly under the Rev. John Hogg and his wife, with assistants. Mr. and Miss Hogg, son and daughter, still continue the work with others. Dr. Alexander is now at the head. The students, Copts, and Mohomedans come from all parts of Upper Egypt, boys and girls, many are boarders. They study English, history, mathematics, etc., but above all learn order and cleanliness, which seems to be an almost unknown accomplishment on the Nile. At Es-neh on our way to the temple we were followed by several boys with books under their arms. Two were anxious to know the difference between "house and home," "bonnet and hat." They like to talk with visitors as it assists them in the language. They were most affable in answering our queries.

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