

hut will be supplied with gas and water. This will be great progress."

Moderation is a virtue—unhappily so rare among Frenchmen, that we cannot help congratulating M. da Camp on possessing such an ample supply. The hope that every Frenchman may have gas and water laid in his house within a *hundred years* does not reveal a very sanguine nature. Let us hope better things of France.

THE SOUDAN RAILWAY EXPEDITION.

(Continued from page 115.)

At Kohé, the site of the proposed bridge for carrying the Soudan Railway across the Nile, that river takes a sharp bend towards the east, and between Kohé and Fakir Bender, a distance of about 35 miles, a camel track makes a chord line to the irregular arc formed here by the Nile.

After the necessary soundings of the river at Kohé had been completed, and the party was ready to continue its southward journey, it was determined to abandon the Noggurs, and strike across the chord-line just mentioned, upon camels, as far as Fakir Bender. This resolution was taken because the duration of the north wind was uncertain, and the obstacles to navigation at the Third Cataract were great.

Leaving the Noggurs, therefore, to proceed as they could up the Nile to Ambukol, where probably their services would be again required, preparations were made for the short desert ride. The caravan formed was quite an imposing spectacle, comprising 60 camels, a few horses, besides a number of more humble quadrupeds carrying a military escort of mounted infantry, who, to their credit be it said, assisted their animals frequently by propelling them, the donkeys being short, the riders tall of stature, and the feet of the latter touching the ground with ease. When not assisting locomotion, the troops curled their legs around their donkey's necks and sought repose. The supreme charge of the caravan was entrusted to an officer of irregular cavalry in the Khedive's army, and who, from the jealous care he bestowed upon the water-skins, received the title of "Turncock Pasha," a dignity in which he much delighted.

There being no wells or other means of obtaining water, except by conveying it, in the desert between Kohé and Fakir Bender, the caravan started half an hour before midnight, and rapidly crossing the track, which is well defined throughout by the bones of camels, it arrived at its destination at four o'clock the following morning. From Fakir Bender the caravan continued its route to Ordeh, or New Dongola, about 60 miles further on. New Dongola is situated on the west bank of the Nile about 955 miles south of Cairo. The district contains a population of about 3000, and is a place of considerable importance. The houses are built principally of sun-burnt bricks, and many of them are comparatively important structures, some with gardens wherein are grown nearly all the fruits common to Lower Egypt. The population consists of many nationalities; the principal foreigners, however, are Greeks, who like Jews in other countries, are for the most part devoted to money-changing and store-keeping in the Bazaars. Until quite recently New Dongola, or El Ordeh, was the principal seat of Government for a considerable district, extending almost to Khartoom. Latterly, however, it has given place to Berber, where laws are now administered by the Bey, who transmits instructions to the Vokeel, or sub-governor, at New Dongola, where a large Government establishment still exists. The amount of trade is considerable, and after Berber it is the most important town upon the Nile in Upper Egypt, north of Khartoom. During high Nile it can be easily approached from the river, which is then about one mile wide at this point. At low Nile, however, the inner or western channel is unnavigable and direct access by water is cut off. As the trade is large a great number of native merchant vessels are generally lying alongside the river bank, increasing the appearance of activity and importance to which New Dongola can, in reality, lay some claim. The bazaar contains many stores in which almost all local requirements can be supplied, and the scene there, as well as in the streets, is striking, enlivened as it is by the strange blending of nationalities, by Nile sailors, Greek merchants, native Dongalese, Nubian soldiers, and most

picturesque of all by the desert Arab, scantily attired with long heavily greased and plaited hair, carrying on his left shoulder the leathern shield, and in his right hand a spear.

The mud huts and scattered villages which are seen at intervals along the banks of the Nile, point out like the mimosas and palm-trees, and patches of cultivated ground, those places where the desert sand has spared the soil, and a fair estimate of the extent of profitable land may be obtained from a glance at the different villages. Where, however, a few towns and some larger villages are situated upon the camel routes, trade has, of course assisted in raising their condition. Handak, two sketches of which are shown on page 134, may be taken as a fair example of a town thus benefited by the desert trade. It is situated on the west bank of the Nile, 45 miles south of New Dongola, and about 1000 miles south of Cairo, and contains a population of some 1500 persons. The most striking feature it possesses are the ruins of some ancient forts, which are situated on an elevated ground and command a wide-spread view of the surrounding country. Handak is, so to speak, a considerable shipping port, as large quantities of the products of the far south, such as gum, ivory, &c. conveyed on camels by way of Khordofan and Khartoom, are unloaded here and placed on Noggurs to be transported down the river to Cairo and Alexandria. The town boasts of several Nubian merchants, whose establishments are based upon a Turkish model, sure sign in Upper Egypt of wealth. It is worth noting that Handak, being on a sandstone formation, and having but little ground in the vicinity that can be cultivated, owes what importance and prosperity it does possess entirely to commerce.

As a rule the route taken is within sight of the Nile and often passes through plots of cultivated ground beside the bank. Short rests were always made by the caravans at mid-day under the shade of palm-trees, and whenever possible near villages the chiefs of which were always eager to do honour to the staff, and the representatives of their sovereign, the Khedive, by presents of water, dates, and the loan of easy chairs. At night the tents were pitched near the river, and thus progressing the party arrived at New Dongola. At this place, however, the authorities found it impossible to provide the necessary means for carrying the party forward, and all the inhabitants available were despatched to bring up the Noggurs which were lying becalmed some distance down the river. As soon as they arrived the New Dongola party and stores were got on board, and after six days of sailing and towing, Ambukol, the farthest point at which navigation could be made available for the expedition, was reached. Here the second division of the party was left behind to work their way back to Kohé, where their survey would join with that of the first division, who had charge of the section from Wady Halfa to the river crossing.

At Ambukol, then, the whole of the stores, &c., were taken out of the Noggurs, and that part belonging to divisions three and four, were transferred to camels, and transported to their respective destination at Abou Halfa and El Metemneh, a distance by camel route of 180 miles from Ambukol, and where the river is again met. The view seen from Mount Fog, a granite rock some distance north of Ambukol, gives an excellent idea of the serpentine course taken by the Nile through the desert. In the flat unbroken expanse of sand, of course the river is invisible almost until it is reached, and the groups of palm trees which grow upon the river banks, serve as beacons to the Arab, guiding him in his course across the desert.

The caravan comprised about 70 camels, horses being now useless, as the wells in the desert about to be traversed were several days journey apart, a circumstance which of course necessitated the employment of a large number of camels as water carriers. The march through was conducted in the usual manner. The baggage camels and the camel laden with the water skins continued their march steadily without a halt until the night's resting place was reached; on the other hand the riding camels were urged forward with variable speeds, before and after the mid-day rest, thus enabling the travellers to enjoy as long as possible the grateful shade of the desert trees during the hottest part of the day. In order to facilitate the subsequent studies which were to be undertaken in their return journey by the third division of the expedition, several of the party were occupied during the desert crossing, in making sketch surveys of the country, the distances being estimated by the rate at which the camels travelled, and the