



CALL TO PRAYER.

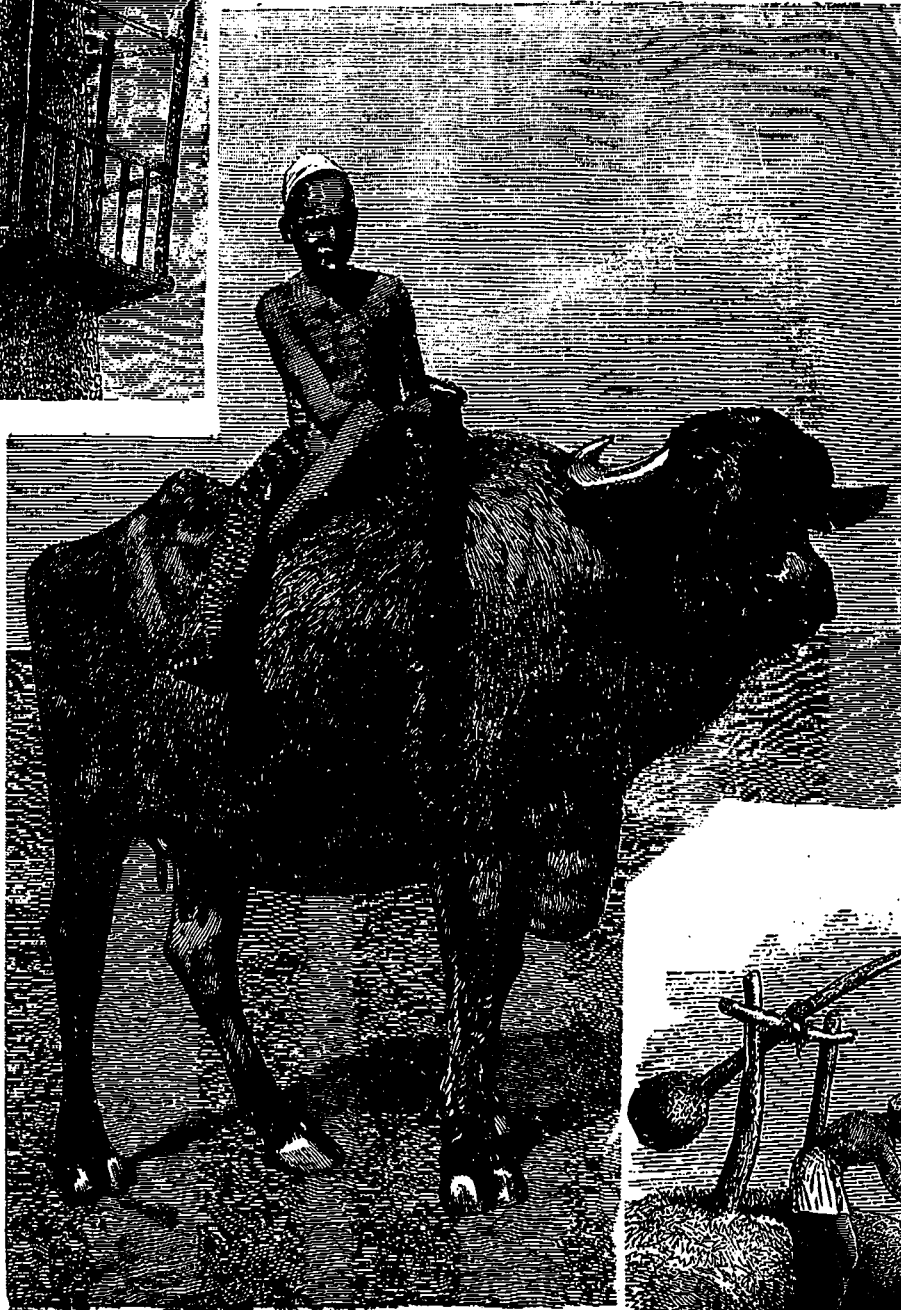
were in the Orient—the old, old world—where now pauperism and primeval ways of living are the most striking characteristics. There is nothing interesting in Suez except as an oriental town. Here we get our first impressions of Arabic life. It is a dirty place, as all Egyptian towns and villages are. The streets, which might better be called alleys, and “back alleys” at that, are narrow and filthy in the extreme. The bazaars or tiny shops are all open and right on the street, and some of the workers in metal, etc., utilize the sidewalk, if there can be said to be one, as a workshop. Their methods of working are much the same as those of Adam and his sons; at least so far as I know how Adam and his sons worked. The buildings are old, tumble-down structures, made chiefly of baked mud. The people are dirty, poorly clad, beggarly, and degraded. There are several Mahomedan mosques and places of worship. We visited the leading one, our first experience in a mosque, though we have been in many since. We removed our shoes, of course, before entering, in accordance with Muslim custom, lest the holy floor should be polluted by the soles of shoes which had trod the ground. On another occasion when in a mosque, a company entered, and we certainly thought that, as far as these particular natives were concerned at least, there would have been less pollution had the feet remained covered, judging from appearances and other distinguishing indications of bare feet. Generally speaking there is nothing worth seeing in a mosque.

The same day we proceeded by rail to Cairo—seven hours' ride—and from the car window were enabled to get a good insight into the life and habits of the people, and also the chief physical features

of the country. Our start was made at 11.30 a.m., and the road, following the canal, at some distance, to Ismailia and thence branching westward, is for miles built on the desert. During the noon hours the heat on the sandy wastes was most intense, and had it not been for a good breeze, which, however, brought plenty of sand with it, we would have suffered. Along the line there were places where the sand had formed drifts like snow. The engineers in constructing the railway over the barren desert found it necessary to use iron ties of peculiar construction with bell or

edibles of various sorts, crying their goods, and a miscellaneous congregation of idle and curious spectators, mostly Egyptian Arabs. The faces and costumes of these groups were very interesting studies. At least half of the journey was through sterile desert land. At first there were occasional patches of vegetation—like little oases in the desert—made by irrigation, the water being taken from the small fresh water canal running to Ismailia.

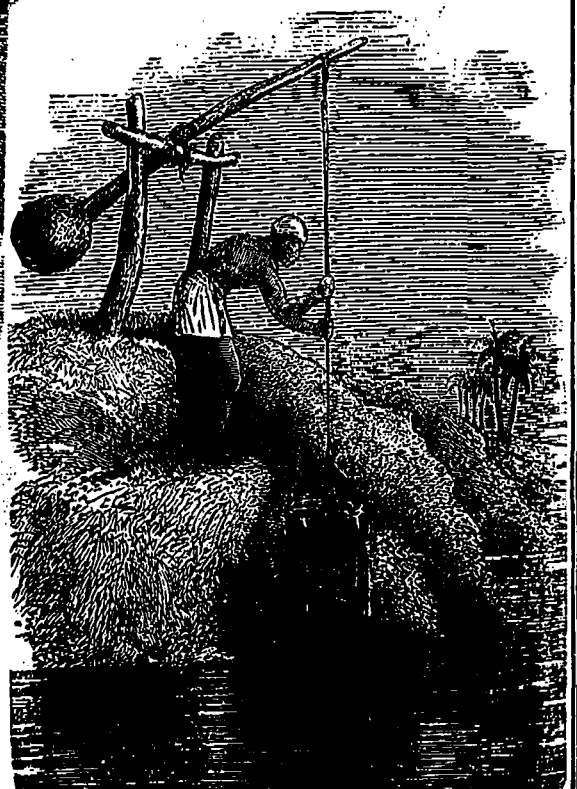
After passing Tel-el-Kebir, a small village, near which the battle of that name was fought in 1882, these oases increased in size and number; the vegetation becoming more profuse and more beautiful as we proceeded, date palms being numerous. And from Zaz-a-zez, which is quite a large place, onward it was one magnificent fertile plain, increasing in luxuriance as the Nile was approached—the fields greener, the crops heavier, and the date palms scattered over the plains more stately and more beautiful. The rich black soil formed by the alluvial deposits of the Nile, and charmingly green fields of the plain were in strong contrast to the sandy desert we had just traversed. These wonderfully fertile tracts yield three crops each season. In some fields ploughing was going on, but in the majority the present crop was two-thirds grown. In this rainless country, during the season, on those parts not watered by the overflowing of the Nile, a system of irrigation has to be resorted to. One who has not visited the country can form little idea of the vast amount of labor it takes to water such a large tract of



AN EGYPTIAN BUFFALO AND DRIVER.

bowl-shaped pieces at each end to get hold in the sand. Arabs are continually employed, too, to shovel the sand off the tracks as we would snow in Canada.

Ismailia is the mid-way stopping place on the Canal and was intended as a resort, in which capacity it was a failure. Here and at all points on the line a curious collection of people had assembled at the station. Noisy crowds awaited the train at every stop—beggars asking for alms (*baksheesh*)—vendors of water, oranges, dates, mandrakes, and



THE “SHADOOF.”