

tical tribunal made up of astronomical students, who were subject to the death penalty in the event of them making a wrong prediction. Mart went further and asserted that eclipses were regularly noted in Ireland as far back as the stone age, and wound up with the remark that though the Vancouver man might understand all about rain, he couldn't come over here and give us points on astronomical lore. While this intensely scientific discussion was in progress, Col. John F. Norris, of the *Colonist*, who has never hitherto been suspected of astronomical tendencies, drew forth from his well-filled pockets a chart by which he attempted to prove that the reason why Victoria was not permitted to witness the eclipse of last week was mainly the fault of the C. P. R., the gigantic monopoly which discriminates against the Queen City on every possible occasion.

Speaking of the claim of Egypt to priority in astronomical discovery, reminds me that there is nothing more enjoyable in the way of travel than life for some months on board a dahabeah on the Nile. The Nile is seldom rough enough to cause discomfort to the most timid, and at the worst the dahabeah can be moored against the bank while the storm lasts. Another great advantage of sailing on the Nile is the steadiness of the wind. From the beginning of winter to the end of spring—that is while the Nile is navigable—the north wind blows steadily up stream with sufficient force to drive sailing boats against the current at a fair pace, while on the other hand the current is strong enough to carry a boat without sails down against the wind except when it blows a gale.

A pleasure dahabeah under full sail is a beautiful sight. It has one great sail, of latteen pattern, attached to a yard of enormous length. Small sails are added as occasion may require. Over the cabins and saloon is a railed high poop, with easy chairs and lounges and gay with plants and flowers. To the east stretches the Arabian, to the west the Lybian desert, each flanked by a range of bare hills, which in a few places touch the river, but lie for the most part two or three miles back on either side. Ages before the pyramids the Nile filled the whole of the valley to the depth of some 200 feet, and the yellow hills, now so bare, were clothed with a luxuriant vegetation, of which the evidence still remains in petrified forests and fossilized plants. It was plainly a period of heavy rainfall and impetuous torrents, carving out vast gorges and pouring their waters into the Nile.

The Nile is a busy river, full of life and movement, dahabeahs, bent on pleasure or on trade, passing up and down its streams with scarcely any intermission, while its banks are full of interest to the lover of the picturesque; crowds of women, with graceful forms and not seldom very comely faces, filling heavy earthen jars with water and carrying them home on their heads; men, with skins of bronze, toiling in relays of three hours each at the shadufs under a burning sun, and singing the while to relieve the monotony of their

daily labor; boatmen floating with the stream or sailing against, and they also singing a weird, wailing chant, like the echo of a hopeless cry wafted across the centuries from hard bondage under Egyptian taskmasters, such as the Israelites endured before the exodus; flocks of pelicans standing on the sand or manœuvring in the air like soldiers on the march; kingfishers, now hovering over the water, now darting beneath its surface in quest of a passing fish.

And then there is the mysterious Nile itself, mysterious still, though its sources have been disclosed and its long meanderings tracked from the uplands of central Africa to the margin of the midland sea. The voyager now, it is true, seldom sees a crocodile unless he goes beyond the second cataract; still less has he a chance of witnessing any of those fierce encounters between crocodiles and hippopotami which are sculptured on the walls of the temple of Edfu. In those ancient days when the shores of the Nile down to Cairo were lined with reeds and papyrus, the river abounded with crocodile and hippopotami, both of which afforded excellent—albeit sometimes perilous—sport to the dwellers on the banks. Firearms and steamers have now driven those fierce monsters of the deep beyond the second cataract.

But, apart from its inhabitants, the Nile itself has a mystic interest of its own. I do not wonder that in the mythology of ancient Egypt it was endowed with life and received some sort of divine honors. Its periodical inundations, while their causes were unknown, placed it outside the category of ordinary rivers and invested it with the atmosphere of mystery. And in the youth of our race, when woods and glades and rivers were believed to own appropriate denizens, it is easy to understand how the Nile came to be regarded as endowed with more than natural life. It is so full of subcurrents and eddies that the amphibious natives, who swim like fish, would not venture to cross it except astride logs of wood. In the stillness of the night these eddies gurgle and murmur past your dahabeah like spirits from "the vasty deep" engaged in confidential talk.

And who can adequately describe those splendid dawns and gorgeous sunsets which are among the common places of Nile scenery? I have often seen the whole sky from the zenith to the horizon become one molten, mantling sea of color and fire, every ripple and wave transfused into un-sullied, shadowless crimson and purple and scarlet and opalescent hues, shading off into colors for which our language supplies no words and previous experience no ideas. This splendor of indescribable intermingling colors appears at sunset on the western horizon and is followed by a soft sheen, as of moonlight, reflected on the hills on the eastern bank of the river. In short, life on a dahabeah is one perpetual picnic. You stop where you please and either enjoy the dolce far niente of remaining on board or making excursions to old temples or tombs, or taking part in a veritable picnic in the desert, and a pic-

nic in the desert under favorable auspices is not likely to be forgotten.

The Legislature has prorogued, and the members have returned to their homes. So far as accomplishing anything of real practical value is considered, many of them might as well never have emerged from the obscurity of their own firesides, and no doubt the electors will take this view of the matter when the said members again offer themselves for election. The sixth Parliament is not likely to find a very conspicuous place in history. Except half-a-dozen members, it would be difficult matter to find a more *cultus* lot than that which has been meeting with the regularity of clockwork once a year over the Bay. True, Mr. Davie has demonstrated his ability to conduct a Government, and at his back were several good men—Mr. Turner was one of them—but taking his party as a whole, it was not composed of the stuff out of which brilliant legislators are made. In the Opposition, if opposition it might be called, there was no material worth mentioning. The public feel relieved to think that very few who were in the last Parliament will ever find seats again. Before prorogation, Mr. Speaker Higgins was the recipient of many well deserved compliments for the manner in which he had performed the duties pertaining to his office.

For the first time in its history, there was a decrease last year in the earnings of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and a loss during the last two months of it. This the directors attribute to the extraordinary decline in the price of wheat and the trade depression on the Pacific coast. President Van Horne is reported to have stated in an interview at Toronto that last year the farmers received little more than the cost of production as the price of their wheat, while in many instances the returns were even smaller than the expenditure. This, he said, could only have one effect—a decrease of the acreage under wheat. On the strength of this, he announced his opinion that wheat would go up with a jump, and that within the next eighteen months the price will go to \$2 per bushel. People will not generally regard the C.P.R. as guiltless in the matter of augmenting the cost of producing and laying Northwest wheat upon the market. Why Mr. Van Horne should have made the statement attributed to him, it is difficult to understand, and there are many who believe that he is altogether reckoning without his host.

I had a very pleasant conversation with Mr. C. Howard-Gibbons, who has just returned from a trip east. Mr. Gibbons, previous to his departure, was authorized by THE HOME JOURNAL to arrange for the extension of its business in the East and also to audit the books of its Eastern agents. The success and encouragement he met with are alike gratifying to that gentleman and the publishers. During his visit to Toronto, he noticed that the weekly papers of that city, in order to acquire patronage, are advertising themselves as "the Home Journal of Eastern Canada;" but, as Mr. Gibbons blandly informed them, "there have been Home