

"Fruit of — ? Well, that is a strange name ! And the others ?"

"Dis one, Obalah ! dat one, Sir Roger-r-r Tichborne ?" This last name was almost too much for the Arabian tongue.

"Where do you get such names ?"

"Oh, gemmeln come in P. and O. boat—give good name—oh, me plenty name—Dr. Kenealy—Champagne Charlee—Wo Emma !"

"You speak English very well, Ahmed." You can safely call any boy in Egypt Ahmed, short for Mohammed.

"Oh yis, me spik Inglis plenty well."

After a moment of thoughtfulness Ahmed made another essay in "Inglis."

"You come in ship of Australie ?"

"Yes, all the way from Australia."

"Plenty gold in Australie ship, I tink." This being an obvious approach to the subject of 'backsheesh,' I took occasion to change the conversation.

Backsheesh—"ahms"—is the first and last word you hear in Egypt. The Egyptians are a nation of beggars, and are not ashamed of it. What they do produce is taxed fearfully to pay the interest on foreign loans, maintain the government, and build palaces for the Khedive. Thousands of people hang about the cities who seem to have no opportunity of labour at all. But they don't appear to be unhappy in their idleness and poverty. They bask all day long in the sun under the almost changeless sky. A little mud makes them an excellent house, a yard or two of cotton a suit of clothes, a handful of dates and rice a meal. Their impudence knows no bounds. We left the railway station at Suez amid the execrations of a gang of sturdy mendicants who claimed that they had rendered us some service, though we had never seen them before. At every station on the road we were besieged by a similar mob, if we dared to shew our heads at the window of the carriage.

I spent one night in Suez, a sleepless night by reason of my anxiety to taste genuine Turkish coffee, which has no milk in it and a great many grounds, and is execrably strong. A cool sweet air blew from the far off Wilderness of the Wanderings, and I passed the night in enjoying its freshness, looking at a brilliant moon, listening to the bray of donkeys, and the occasional call of a watchman or a muezzin, and trying to realize that I was in Egypt. In the morning we took the rail westward.

For some hours the railway journey from Suez to Alexandria lies through a cheerless tract of desert. Sand, piled into drifts and scooped into hollows, surrounds you on every side. The sun glares upon it from a cloudless sky, so that the eye can not rest upon it without pain. The movement of the train whirls the sand into the air to dispose itself in a fine powder in the interior of the railway carriages, and in the eyes, noses and ears of their occupants.

Sometimes you are startled by the sight of the masts and yards of a ship rising above some sand hillock not far off. It is not a mirage but a veritable ship making its way through the canal, near which, for a while, the railway runs. Can life exist in this hopeless waste ? Apparently so, for now and then the train stops at a small collection of clay houses, where people live. And the desert is not hopeless after all. Industry and irrigation may make a garden of this waste, as they have done of other parts of Egypt, and of the valley of the Great Salt Lake. "He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs. And there He maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation, and sow the fields and plant vineyards, which

may yield fruits of increase." The railway journey at present, however, is for a long time next to insupportable, so desolate is the prospect, so hot the sun, so irritating the sand. But at last the tourist catches sight of a palm tree against the distant horizon. Presently another appears, and then another, till the eyes are gladdened by an entire grove. An oasis in the desert ? No, but the outlying districts of the famous delta of the Nile, the old land of Goshen, redeemed from sterility by the waters of the ancient river.

The train is soon passing through a highly cultivated land, intersected by frequent canals of yellow water. In places the soil is rich and dark like the prairies of Nebraska. The whole is flourishing with crops of grain and roots. Men in blue and brown frocks are working in the fields hump-backed cows are toiling at water wheels : strings of camels jog along the roads with great bales on their misshapen backs.

The clusters of sun-baked clay houses, which form the Arab villages, become numerous. Sometimes the train stops at a more important place, where the station is large and cool, and minarets rise above the huts. Sometimes there passes by a car full of women, a harem doubtless, whose blue-black eyes are visible above the long pink face-cloths. As the train proceeds the life grows thicker. Trades-people and country-folk are going home from Tanta, a large town where an annual fair has just been held. They pass along the road, which runs close to the track a stream of movement and colour. They present an array of bright clothes, of turbans and fezzes and robes like the patriarchs', of camels and donkeys, of pedestrians with bundles on their backs, and veiled women with bare-headed children on their shoulders. As the traveller glides smoothly along in the cars the whole thing seems to be a dream. It is a panorama in which gay-looking puppets are worked for his entertainment. Presently the man behind the scenes will decide that you have had the worth of your money and the curtain will fall.

We cross the Nile—muddy like the Mississippi and not to be spoken of in the same breath with the St. Lawrence—and presently the curtain of night does begin to fall. A Franco-Mahometan, who has entered our compartment, entertains my friends with a voluble description of the operas of Alexandria and the ladies of the ballet, whom the Khedive—his friend—greatly esteems. The level rays of the setting sun light dimly a wide expanse of marshy country. In the slowly gathering dusk we glide into Alexandria.

More dragomans—more mendicants—a rattle over stony streets, between tall houses of the Italian stamp, and we are at the Hotel des Messageries. Very sleepy, I follow the Italian waiter up the great stone stairs. He conducts me to my room. He throws open the windows which reach to the floor. A gush of cool air shakes the curtains and wafts in the noise of ocean surf. I step eagerly to the balcony, and there beneath me, on the sandy shore, rolls the long-dreamed of Mediterranean.

The present city of Alexandria is partly built upon a neck of land formed of the rubbish to which time has reduced the ancient city. Under the shops, hotels, cafés, and dwelling-houses of a modern Italian town lies all that is left of the palace where Anthony and Cleopatra drank the Lybian sun to sleep, of the famous Alexandrian library, of the lecture-room of Hypatia, made interesting to us by the genius of Charles Kingsley ; of the halls of learning, where Euclid, and other sages, dear to the undergraduate mind, held high discourse.

Alexandria, once considered the second city in the world