

Miss Van Stetter (aside).—I'm even with him now. (Sweetly) *Captain Brandling*, I positively adore the English army, as a whole, you know; won't you tell me some of your adventures?

Captain Brandling (suddenly embarrassed).—Well—aw—really now.

Miss Van Stetter.—I know you must have lots to tell. Have you ever seen a shot fired in anger?

Captain Brandling.—Don't know about the anger; fellers don't usually get particularly angry exactly, don't you know.

Miss Van Stetter.—Oh, you know what I mean. Have you ever been in a real battle? (Aside) How hideously commonplace a really good-looking man can be sometimes.

Captain Brandling (rather surprised at the question).—Well, yes, rather. One or two little ones.

Miss Van Stetter.—And did you feel very lonesome and homesick?

Captain Brandling (smiling for the first time).—You've hit it exactly, *Miss Van Stetter*.

Miss Van Stetter (aside).—I'm sure he's brave at any rate, even if he is rather stupid, or he wouldn't have said that. He looked rather nice too, when he smiled, and his teeth are lovely. (Aloud) Do tell me, did any one in your regiment ever win the Victoria Cross?

Captain Brandling (uneasily).—Ye-es. One feller's got it. Didn't do much to deserve it though.

Miss Van Stetter.—Now, I think that's real mean and envious of you. How would you like that to be said of you if you had won it?

Captain Brandling (aside).—Why the dooce didn't I tell her. Thought she knew. Can't very well tell her now.

Miss Van Stetter (with fervour).—You know I am a perfect hero-worshipper. I positively adore bravery. (Sudden lull in the general conversation). If there is any man in the world I could bring myself to marry, it would be a man who had won the Victoria Cross.

Captain Brandling (aside).—Oh, confound it!

Host (slightly deaf, who has only caught the last words).—That's right *Miss Van Stetter*, *Brandling's* far too modest. Make him tell you the story of how he brought the sergeant in under fire, and won the right to put V.C. after his name.

(A smile goes round the table. *Miss Van Stetter* flames scarlet from brow to chin. *Captain Brandling* utters frightful curses under cover of his moustache. Curtain falls.)

EPILOGUE.

(Extract from *Morning Post*): "We understand that a marriage has been arranged between *Captain Reginald Holko Brandling*, of *Brandling Hall*, *Leicestershire*, late of the —th *Dragoon Guards*, and *Miss Marie Van Stetter*, daughter of *Horatio Van Stetter, Esq.*, the well-known *New York* millionaire. The wedding will take place very shortly."

C. LANGTON CLARK.

Nile Vignettes: II.—From Cairo to Luxor.

SEVEN days may seem but a short little bit of monotony when passed in the seclusion of a sick room, or the uneventfulness of a sea voyage, but seven days can remain an important memory in one's life when so crowded with fresh interest and beauty as were those river days between *Cairo* and *Luxor*.

Seven days of the crisp delight of the morning air, of the white intensity of the noontide light, of the glory of sunset and moonlight; seven days of energetic pleasure or lazy comfort, of riding over the plain, or watching the long panorama of the banks, or the river boats sweeping down with the northerly breeze, piled high with the white porous jugs of *Kenah*, or crowded with a human freight. It is often as well not to begin in too high a key, and one day, after the long *Sakkarah* one was, perhaps, the dreariest and most uneventful of our trip. A high, cold south wind was blowing, and, together with the strong *January* current, made our progress so slow that our day's run was not finished until nearly bed-time. This, of course, prevented our canvas walls being put up at the usual sunset hour, the wind whistled about the open deck, and a dreary afternoon was followed by a dreary evening.

We did not land at all, not that we much regretted that,

for aching bones were content to rest after yesterday's work.

If we looked ashore, the low desolate sand-banks that mark this part of the Nile lay pale under the grey sky, while the fierce wind swept up wreaths and columns of sand into the air. Sand was everywhere—in our hair, our eyes, and mouths, and the Arabs kept on their fruitless labour of brushing it up from the deck, and dusting it off the piano and tables. It was this day that the diary fiend showed its full vigour. Americans appeared to be the chief delinquents, and I wondered then, as I have often wondered since, what can become of the endless diaries which American travellers write. Do they drift to family attics and subsequent rubbish heaps, and are they ever, at any period of their existence, read by any one, even by their compilers?

The great resource on such inactive Nile days is the library which *T.C.* and *S.* have placed on board each boat. A remarkably well chosen library it is, with *Brusch* and *Wilkinson* and other authorities of old Egypt, and *Amelia Edward's* and other Nile travellers' experiences. Besides these there are books on Arab life and history, as well as all the most important accounts of the Egyptian and Soudanese wars. Then there is the never-failing object of tracing out our route in *Murray* or *Baedecker*, identifying the name of Coptic convent or church, of some sharp bend of the river, or one of the endless towns or villages on the banks. But stormy days wear by, and these occupations are quickly dropped when at noon of our third day, with the wind gone down and a bright sky overhead, we find ourselves stopping at *Beni Hassan*. "Give a dog a bad name and hang him." The guide-book describes *Beni Hassan* as a nest of thieves, a karki clad policeman is waiting to form a solitary escort to our seventy or so, and every one of the seventy is nervously on the lookout for robbery and violence. Poor children of *Hassan*! A sorry looking group they are in their rags and tatters, and one thinks that perhaps *Mohammed Ali* had done better when he rooted out their village to have exterminated them altogether.

Sorry looking, too, are their donkeys, but I had luck, and mine was a sturdy hearted little beast, and instead of a full grown specimen of human misery, and depravity, I had two small brown boys whose ragged blue shirts scarcely held together over their shoulders. Poor little mites! They pathetically whispered entreaties for their backsheesh before we were half way back; and I saw the reason of it, when I had scarcely dismounted before they were seized upon and cuffed and shaken into giving up their small gain.

But the bark of the children of *Hassan* is worse than their bite, and we were in no ways molested as we rode up the hillside to the tombs.

Of all places of burial that I have ever seen these *Beni Hassan* tombs strike me as the most desirable. Hewn out of the stone of the hillside, with wide doorways, and dry, light rooms whose walls are covered with pictures of the same cheerful everyday life as at *Sakkarah*, with a prospect that one cannot but feel that even the dead might have come forth to enjoy, a prospect over the ever-smiling Nile valley, bright sheets of water in the late summer months, green or golden stretches of wheat in winter and spring.

Mighty rulers they were this family of feudal lords of the XII. dynasty, and one of them *Ameni*, announces his virtues with a cheerful self-complacency which let us trust did not fail him in his need. "I have never made a child grieve. I have never robbed the widow," is not an ignoble boast, and shows an ideal of good that many a stern Roman or mediæval lord might well enjoy. In these tombs we see the very germ and proto-type of all future Doric pillars, which is generally the guiltless cause of starting the old argument as to what and how much the Etruscans and Greeks learned of their civilization from the Egyptians. The next afternoon at four o'clock we were at *Asyut*—*Asyut*, that cheerful white town, forever smiling under its blue sky, among its palm groves and gardens.

From beginning to end *Asyut* is a pleasant memory. Even when one stayed on board there was enough amusement to be derived from the groups on the landing stage and bank. Sleek Hindoo merchants spread out their draperies of the most ordinary Indian type, solemnly swearing to any inquirer that they were made in the Soudan. Peddlers from the Bazaars set forth all manner of quaint jars in the red pottery for which *Asyut* is known, as well as inlaid work in ivory and ebony, and sticks of rhinoceros hide, and imita-