

Where the Desert Meets the Nile

A dozen steps and the perspiration started from every pore. But he kept on, doggedly, until he came to the oblong shadow cast by the first palm, and there he squatted in the sand and mopped his face with his handkerchief.

The silence was oppressive. There was no sound of any kind to relieve it. Even the beetles were hidden far under the sand, and there was no habitation near enough for a donkey's bray or a camel's harsh growl to be heard. The Nile flows quietly at this point, and the boat had ceased to puff and rattle its machinery.

Winston brushed aside the top layer of sand with his hands, for that upon the surface was so hot that contact with it was unbearable. Then he extended his body to rest, turning slightly this way and that to catch in his face the faint breath of the breeze that passed between the mountains and the Nile. At the best he was doomed to an uncomfortable hour or two, and he cast longing glances at the other bits of shade to note whether any seemed more inviting than the one he had selected.

During this inspection his eye caught a patch of white some distance away. It was directly over the shadow of the furthest tree of the group, and aroused his curiosity. After a minute he arose in a leisurely fashion and walked over to the spot of white, which on nearer approach proved to be a soiled cotton tunic or burnous. It lay half buried in the sand, and at one end were the folds of a dirty turban, with faded