

when the junks cast anchor, we laboured on, cutting ruthlessly and recklessly through the waters of that glancing and startled river, which, until the last few weeks, no stranger keel had ever furrowed."

VISIT TO THE PYRAMIDS.—May 9th, 1860.

"Our row across the river to the chant of the boatman invoking the aid of a sainted Dervish, and our ride through the fertile border of the Nile, covered with crops and palm trees, were very lovely, and after about an hour and a half from Cairo, we emerged into the Desert. The Pyramids seemed there almost within reach of our arms; but, lo! they were in fact some miles distant.

"We kept moving on at a sort of ambling walk, and the first sign of our near approach was the appearance of a crowd of Arabs. We pushed on over the heap of sand and debris, or probably covered-up tombs, which surround the base of the Pyramids, when we suddenly came on the most remarkable object on which my eye ever lighted. Somehow or other I had not thought of the Sphinx till I saw her before me. There she was in all her imposing magnitude, crouched on the margin of the Desert, looking on the fertile valley of the Nile, and her gaze fixed on the East, as if in earnest expectation of the sun rising—but such a gaze! The mystical light and deep shadows cast by the moon gave to it an intensity which I cannot describe. To me it seemed a look earnest, searching, but unsatisfied. For a long time I remained transfixed, endeavouring to read the meaning conveyed by that wonderful eye. I was struck after a while by what seemed a contradiction in the expression of the eye and mouth. There was a singular gentleness and hopefulness in the lines of the mouth which appeared to be in contrast with the anxious eye. Mr. Bowly* agreed with me in thinking that the upper part of the face spoke of the intellect striving vainly to solve the mystery (what mystery? the mystery shall we say of God's universe, or of man's destiny?) while the lower indicated a moral conviction that all must be well, and that this truth would in good time be made manifest. We could hardly tear ourselves away from this fascinating spectacle, to draw near to the great Pyramid which stood beside us, its outline sharply traced in the clear atmosphere. We walked round and round it, thinking of the strange men whose ambition to secure immortality for themselves had expressed itself in this giant creation. The enormous blocks of granite brought from, one knows not where, built up, one knows not how—the form selected, solely for the purpose of defying the assaults of time—the contrast between the conception embodied in their construction, and the talk of the frivolous race by whom we were surrounded, all this seen and felt under the influence of the dim moonlight, was very striking and impressive. We spent some time in moving from place to place along the shadow cast by the Pyramid on the sand; and observing the effect produced by bringing the moon sometimes to its apex, and sometimes to other points on its outline. I felt no disposition to exchange for sleep the state of dreamy half-consciousness in which I was wandering about, but at length I lay down on the shingly sand with a block of granite for a pillow, and passed an hour or two sometimes dozing, sometimes wakeful.

When we reached the summit at sunrise we had a horizon all around tinted very much like Turner's early pictures, and becoming brighter and brighter till it melted into day. Behind and on two sides of us was the barren and treeless desert stretching out as far as the eye could reach. Before us the fertile valley of the Nile, and the river meandering through it, and in the distance Cairo, with its mosques and minarets, the highest, the Citadel mosque, standing out boldly on the horizon. It was a fine view, and had a character of its own, but still it does not stand out among my recollections as a spectacle unique and never to be forgotten, as that of the night before does. I confess that it was with something of fear and trembling that I returned to the Sphinx that morning. I feared that the impressions received the night before might be effaced by the light of day—but it was not so. The lines were fainter and less deeply marked, but I found, or thought I found, the same meaning in them still."

But this elevation of sentiment was not merely one of outward form or expression. Varied, eventful, as was his course,—wrapt up in the intricacies of diplomacy,—entangled in disputes with Canadian factions and Oriental follies, he still kept steadily before him, as steadily as any great philanthropist, or missionary, or reformer that ever lived, those principles of truth and justice and benevolence, to maintain which was his sufficient reward for months and years of long and patient waiting, for storms of obloquy and misunderstanding. Philosophical or religious truth, in the highest sense, he had not the leisure to follow. Yet even here his memoranda, his speeches, we believe his conversation, constantly showed how

open his mind was to receive profound impressions from the most opposite quarters; how firm a hold was laid upon it by any truth or fact which it had touched in his passage through the many strange vicissitudes of life. "If public writers think that they cannot argue with eloquence without showing feeling" (so he spoke at a meeting in Calcutta on the mode in which the Lancashire distress was to be discussed, but how far beyond any such immediate occasion does the wisdom of his words extend!) "then, for God's sake, let them give utterance to their opinions. It would be much better than to deprive us of the spark which concussion with flint may kindle. I would rather myself swallow a whole bushel of chaff than lose the precious grains of truth which may somewhere or other be scattered in it." How exactly the opposite of the vulgar, unreasoning timidity and fastidiousness of the mass of statesmen and teachers and preachers, whose first thought is to suppress all eloquence and enthusiasm from apprehension of its possible accompaniments,—who would willingly throw away whole bushels of truth lest they should accidentally swallow a few grains of chaff. How entirely is the sentiment worthy of those noble treatises which, we have been assured, were his constant companions wherever he travelled, and from which he delighted to read the soul-stirring calls to freedom of inquiry, and resolute faith in truth—the *Prose Works of Milton*.

But it was in practical life that those qualities came forth in their full energy. Politics, statesmanship, government, were to him a profession, a science, of which he discussed the problems as a philosopher or a scholar would discuss the difficulties of astronomy or of philology. It was thus that he would take upon himself the responsibility of great acts, not merely from motives of passing expediency, but as parts of a system, which appeared to him to impose such a general duty upon him. On two memorable occasions his "political courage" (to use the French expression) reached a point of almost heroic magnitude. One was the determination adopted, with hardly any hesitation, to send back the troops to India, although it was the greatest personal sacrifice which he could have made, for, by depriving himself of his military force, he ran the risk of rendering his mission in China almost powerless. The other was the resolve, executed against all his natural tastes and feelings, and with the full anticipation of the obloquy which it would bring down upon him in Europe, of burning the Summer Palace at Peking, as the only means, under the extraordinary difficulties which surrounded him, of impressing the Chinese nation with a sense of the atrocity of the outrages perpetrated against their European prisoners.

"Having, to the best of my judgment, examined the question in all its bearings, I come to the conclusion, that the destruction of Yaen-ming-yaen (the Summer Palace) was the least objectionable of the several courses open to me, unless I could have reconciled it to my sense of duty to suffer the crime which had been committed to pass practically unavenged. I had reason, moreover, to believe that it was an act which was calculated to produce a greater effect in China, and on the Emperor, than persons who look on from a distance may suppose. It was the Emperor's favourite residence, and its destruction could not fail to be a blow to his pride as well as to his feelings. To this place he brought our hapless countrymen, in order that they might undergo their severest tortures within its precincts. There had been found the horses and accoutrements of the troopers seized, the decorations torn from the breast of a gallant French officer, and other effects belonging to the prisoners. As almost all the valuables had been already taken from the palace, the army would go thus, not to pillage, but to mark by a solemn act of retribution, the horror and indignation with which we were inspired by the perpetration of a great crime. The punishment was one which would fall not on the people, who may be comparatively innocent, but on the Emperor, whose direct personal responsibility for the crime committed is established beyond all question."

This statement, which forms the close of an able and elaborate argument, which must be read in the original document* to be fully appreciated, is perhaps still more forcibly and concisely put in the following private letter:—

"We had only a fortnight to make peace in after the armies obtained the gate of Peking. It was absolutely necessary, before peace was concluded, to mark our sense of the barbarous treatment to which the prisoners had been subjected. The burning of the palace was an expeditious mode of marking our sense of this crime, and therefore consistent with the speedy conclusion of peace. It was appropriate, because the palace was the place at which the first cruelties to the prisoners were perpetrated, under the immediate direction of the Emperor and his advisors. It was humane, because it involved no sacrifice of human life; no great destruction of pro-

* The lamented *Times* correspondent, who perished in China, amongst the prisoners captured in 1860.—See Lord Elgin's despatch to Lord John Russell, dated October 26, 1860. *Correspondence on the affairs of China*, 1859–60, p. 22.

* Lord Elgin's despatch to Lord J. Russell, Dated October 25, 1860.—*Correspondence respecting the Affairs in China*, 1859–1860, p. 203.