A PICNIC

FROM

CAIRO

IT took place in January in the Year of Grace one thousand nine hundred and sixteen. The weather was beautiful and tempting for an excursion. That was the first allurement. We had been sightseeing strenuously for days and felt that a restful day out of town would be the most delightful thing in the world. That was the second allurement. A picnic to the Barrage was agreed upon as the most decided change from mosques, bazaars, pyramids and camel riding. That was the third and final allurement which made the event history.

We planned to sail DOWN the Nile to the Barrage in the morning, and sail UP the Nile back to Cairo in the afternoon. Our guide assured us this was a very fine thing to do and quite practicable as a breeze blew up the river every afternoon and there would be no danger of our not getting home in time for dinner. We wanted—who doesn't?—to do very fine things which were eminently practicable, and a happy party of six set off shortly after breakfast. We were well chaperoned, having the assistant Matron of the hotel and another Matron who was staying there in our party. The hotel was situated on the east bank of the Nile near the Kasr-el-Nil Bridge and the felucca and our guide were at the bank just opposite the hotel awaiting us.

We took lunch with us—remember that we intended to have a real picnic. As we sailed along we saw women filling their earthen water jars from the wells; we saw blindfolded oxen plodding around in the eternal circle drawing water with the queer, old, china water buckets; we saw natives ploughing with the old-fashioned, wooden plough just as we had seen them in the Bible picture-books of our childhood days. On the shore we could see our old friends the water wagtails, king-fishers and even pelicans. We passed many feluccas and dohebeahs with their queer shaped high sails, and we took many photos.

Nearing the Barrage we landed, before lunch, at a native village through which we walked, followed by all sizes of children— and dirty, smelly, happy little things they were — and men and women begging. [Why IS the East so