

Where the Desert Meets the Nile

to sleep—a lesson the European never learns. Yet this was no casual adventurer exploiting his folly, but a man who had lived among them for years, who spoke Arabic fluently and could even cipher those hieroglyphics of the dead ages which abound throughout modern Egypt. Hassan, Abdallah and Ali knew this well, for they had accompanied Winston Bey on former expeditions, and heard him translate the ugly signs graven upon the ugly stones into excellent Arabic. It was all very wonderful in its way, but quite useless and impractical, if their opinion were allowed. And the master himself was impractical. He did foolish things at all times, and sacrificed his own comfort and that of his servants in order to accomplish unnecessary objects. Had he not paid well for his whims, Winston Bey might have sought followers in vain; but the Arab will even roast himself upon the Nile on an April afternoon to obtain the much-coveted gold of the European.

At four o'clock a slight breeze arose; but what matter? The journey was nearly done now. They had rounded a curve in the river, and ahead of them, lying close to the east bank, were the low mountains of Gebel Abu Fedah. At the south, where the rocks ended abruptly, lay a small grove of palms. Between the palms and the mountains was the beaten path leading from the Nile to the village of Al-Kusiye, a mile or so inland, which was the particular place the master had come so far and so fast to visit.