

## AT THE GATES OF THE EAST.

THE Mediterranean still divides the East from the West.

Ages of traffic and intercourse across its waters have not changed this fact; neither the going of armies nor that of embassies, Northmen forays nor Saracenic maraudings, Christian crusades nor Turkish invasions, neither the borrowing from Egypt of its philosophy and science nor the stealing of its precious monuments of antiquity down to its bones, not all the love-making, slave-trading, war-waging, not all the commerce of four thousand years, by oar and sail and steam, have sufficed to make the East like the West.

Half the world was lost at Actium, they like to say, for the sake of a woman; but it was the half that I am convinced we never shall gain; for though the Romans did win it they did not keep it long, and they made no impression on it that is not as stucco to granite compared with its own individuality. And I suppose there is not now and never will be another woman in the East handsome enough to risk a world for.

There, across the most fascinating and fickle sea in the world, — a feminine sea, inconstant as lovely, all sunshine and tears in a moment, reflecting in its quick mirror in rapid succession the skies of gray and of blue, the weather of Europe and of Africa, a sea of romance and nausea, — lies a world in everything unlike our own, a world perfectly known, yet never familiar and never otherwise than strange to the European and American. I had believed it not to be so; I had been led to think that modern civilization had more or less transformed the East to its own likeness; that, for instance, the railway up the Nile had practically done for that historic stream. They say that if you run a red-hot nail through an orange, the fruit will keep its freshness and remain unchanged a long time. The thrusting of the iron into Egypt may

arrest decay, but it does not appear to change the country.

There is still an Orient, and I believe there would be if it were all canaled and railwayed and converted; for I have great faith in habits that have withstood the influence of six or seven thousand years of changing dynasties and religions. Would you like to go a little way with me into this Orient?

The old-fashioned travelers had a formal manner of setting before the reader the reasons that induced them to take the journey they described; and they not unfrequently made poor health an apology for their wanderings, judging that that excuse would be most readily accepted for their eccentric conduct. "Worn out in body and mind we set sail," etc.; and the reader was invited to launch in a sort of funereal bark upon the Mediterranean, and accompany an invalid in search of his last resting-place.

There was in fact no reason why we should go to Egypt, — a remark that the reader will notice is made before he has a chance to make it, — and there is no reason why any one indisposed to do so should accompany us. If information is desired, there are whole libraries of excellent books about the land of the Pharaohs, ancient and modern, historical, archæological, statistical, theoretical, geographical; if amusement is wanted, there are also excellent books, facetious and sentimental. I suppose that volumes enough have been written about Egypt to cover every foot of its arable soil if they were spread out, or to dam the Nile if they were dumped into it, and to cause a drought in either case if they were not all interesting and the reverse of dry. There is therefore no *onus* upon the traveler in the East to-day to write otherwise than suits his humor; he may describe only what he chooses. With this distinct understanding I should like the reader to go with

me through a winter in the Orient. Let us say that we go to escape winter.

It is the last of November, 1874, — the beginning of what proved to be the bitterest winter ever known in America and Europe, and I doubt not it was the first nip of the return of the rotary glacial period, — when we go on board a little Italian steamer in the harbor of Naples, reaching it in a row-boat and in a cold rain. The deck is wet and dismal; Vesuvius is invisible, and the whole sweep of the bay is hid by slanting mist. Italy has been in a shiver for a month; snow on the Alban hills and in the Tusculum theatre; Rome was as chilly as a stone tomb with the door left open. Naples is little better; Boston, at any season, is better than Naples — now.

We steam slowly down the harbor amid dripping ships, losing all sight of villages and the lovely coast; only Capri comes out comely in the haze, an island cut like an antique cameo. Long after dark we see the light on it, and also that of the Punta della Campanella opposite, friendly beams following us down the coast. We are off Pæstum, and I can feel that its noble temple is looming there in the darkness. This ruin is in some sort a door into an introduction to, the East.

When I looked out of the port-hole of the steamer early in the morning, we were near the volcanic Lipari islands and islets, a group of seventeen altogether, which serve as chimneys and safety-valves to this part of the world. One of the small ones is of recent creation, at least it was heaved up about two thousand years ago, and I fancy that a new one may pop up here, any time. From the epoch of the Trojan war all sorts of races and adventurers have fought for the possession of these coveted islands, and the impartial earthquake has shaken them all off in turn. But for the mist we should have clearly seen Stromboli, the ever active volcano, but now we can only say we saw it. We are near it, however, and catch its outline, and listen for the groans of lost souls which the credulous crusaders used to hear issuing from its depths. It was

at that time the entrance of purgatory; we read in the guide-book that the crusaders implored the monks of Cluny to intercede for the deliverance of those confined there, and that therefore Odilo of Cluny instituted the observance of All Souls' Day.

The climate of Europe still attends us, and our first view of Sicily is through the rain. Clouds hide the coast and obscure the base of Ætna (which is oddly celebrated in America as an insurance against loss by fire); but its wide fields of snow, banked up high above the clouds, gleam like molten silver — treasure laid up in heaven — and give us the light of rosy morning.

Rounding the point of Faro, the *locale* of Charybdis and Scylla, we come into the harbor of Messina and take shelter behind the long, curved horn of its mole. Whoever shunned the beautiful Scylla was liable to be sucked into the strong tide Charybdis; but the rock has lost its terror for moderns, and the current is no longer dangerous. We get our last dash of rain in this strait, and there is sunny weather and blue sky at the south. The situation of Messina is picturesque; the shores of both Calabria and Sicily are mountainous, precipitous, and very rocky; there seems to be no place for vegetation except by terracing. The town is backed by lofty, circling mountains, which form a dark setting for its white houses and the string of outlying villages. Mediæval forts cling to the slopes above it.

No sooner is the anchor down than a fleet of boats surrounds the steamer, and a crowd of noisy men and boys swarms on board, to sell us mussels, oranges, and all sorts of merchandise, from a hair-brush to an under-wrapper. The Sunday is hopelessly broken into fragments in a minute. These lively traders use the English language and its pronouns with great freedom. The boot-black smilingly asks, "You black my boot?"

The vendor of under-garments says: "I gif you four franc for dis one. I gif you for dese two a seven franc. No? What you gif?"

Of a bright orange-boy we ask, "How much a dozen?"

"Half franc."

"Too much."

"How much you give? Tast him; he ver good; a sweet orange; you no like, you no buy. Yes, sir. Tak one. This a one, he sweet no more."

And they were sweet no more. They must have been lemons in oranges' clothing. The flattering tongue of that boy and our greed of tropical color made us owners of a lot of them, most of which went overboard before we reached Alexandria, and made fair lemonade of the streak of water we passed through.

At noon we sail away into the warm south. We have before us the beautiful range of Aspromonte, and the village of Reggio, near which in 1862 Garibaldi received one of his wounds, — a sort of inconvenient love-pat of fame. The coast is rugged and steep. High up is an isolated Gothic rock, pinnacled and jagged. Close by the shore we can trace the railway track which winds round the point of Italy, and some of the passengers look at it longingly; for though there is clear sky overhead, the sea has on an ungenerous swell; and what is blue sky to a stomach that knows its own bitterness and feels the world sinking away from under it?

We are long in sight of Italy, but Sicily still sulks in the clouds, and Mount *Ætna* will not show itself. The night is bright and the weather has become milder; it is the prelude to a day calm and uninteresting. Nature rallies at night, however, and gives us a sunset in a pale gold sky, with cloud islands on the horizon and palm groves on them. The stars come out in extraordinary profusion with a soft brilliancy unknown in New England, and the sky is of a tender blue, extremely delicate and not to be enlarged upon. A sunset is something that no one will accept second-hand.

On the morning of December 1st we are off Crete; Greece we have left to the north, and we are going at ten knots an hour toward great, hulking Africa. We sail close to the island and see its long,

high, barren coast till late in the afternoon. There is no road visible on this side, nor any sign of human habitation except a couple of shanties perched high up among the rocks. From this point of view Crete is a mass of naked rock lifted out of the waves. Mount *Ida* crowns it, snow-capped and gigantic. Just below Crete spring up in our geography the little islands of *Gozo* and *Antigozo*, merely vast rocks, with scant patches of low vegetation on the cliffs, a sort of vegetable blush, a few stunted trees on the top of the first, and an appearance of grass which has a reddish color. The weather is more and more delightful, a balmy atmosphere brooding on a smooth sea. The chill which we carried in our bones from New York to Naples finally melts away. Life ceases to be a mere struggle, and becomes a mild enjoyment. The blue tint of the sky is beyond all previous comparison delicate, like the shade of a silk, fading at the horizon into an exquisite gray or nearly white. We are on deck all day and till late at night, for once enjoying, by the help of an awning, real winter weather with the thermometer at seventy-two degrees.

Our passengers are not many, but selected. There are a German baron and his sparkling wife, delightful people, who handle the English language as delicately as if it were glass, and make of it the most *naïve* and interesting form of speech. They are going to Cairo for the winter, and the young baroness has the longing and curiosity regarding the land of the sun which is peculiar to the poetical Germans; she has never seen a black man nor a palm-tree. There is an Italian woman, whose husband lives in Alexandria, who, being in the captain's charge, monopolizes the whole of the ladies' cabin by a league with the slatternly stewardess, and behaves in a manner to make a state of war and wrath between her and the rest of the passengers. There is nothing bitterer than the hatred of people for each other on shipboard. When I afterwards saw this woman in the streets of Alexandria I had scarcely any wish to shorten her days upon this

earth. There were also two tough-fibred and strong-brained dissenting ministers from Australia, who had come round by the Sandwich Islands and the United States, and were booked for Palestine, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea. Speaking of Aden, which has the reputation of being as hot as Constantinople is wicked, one of them told the story of an American (the English have a habit of fathering all their dubious anecdotes upon "an American") who said that if he owned two places, one in Aden and the other in H——, he would sell the one in Aden. These ministers are distinguished lecturers at home—a solemn thought, that even the most distant land is subjected to the blessing of the popular lecture.

Our own country is well represented, as it usually is abroad, whether by appointment or by self-selection. It is said that the oddest people in the world go up the Nile and make the pilgrimage of Palestine. I have even heard that one must be a little cracked who will give a whole winter to high Egypt; but this is doubtless said by those who cannot afford to go. Notwithstanding the peculiarities of so many of those one meets drifting around the East (as eccentric as the English who frequent Italian *pensions*), it must be admitted that a great many estimable and apparently sane people go up the Nile, and that such are even found among Cook's "personally conducted."

There is on board an American, or a sort of Irish-American, more or less naturalized, from Nebraska, — a raw-boned, hard-featured farmer, abroad for a two years' tour; a man who has no guide-book nor any literature except his Bible, which he diligently reads. He had spent twenty or thirty years in acquiring and subduing land in the new country, and without any time or taste for reading there had come with his possessions a desire to see that Old World about which he cared nothing before he breathed the vitalizing air of the West. That he knew absolutely nothing of Europe, Asia, or Africa, except the little patch called Palestine, and found a day in Rome too

much for a place so run down, was actually none of our business. He was a good, patriotic American, and the only wonder was that with his qualifications he had not been made consul somewhere.

But a more interesting person, in his way, was a slender, no-blooded, youngish, married man, of the vegetarian and vegetable school, also alone, and bound for the Holy Land, who was sick of the sea and otherwise. He also was without books of travel and knew nothing of what he was going to see or how to see it. What Egypt was he had the dimmest notion, and why we or he or any one else should go there. "What do you go up the Nile for?" we asked. The reply was that the Spirit had called him to go through Egypt to Palestine. He had been a dentist, but now he called himself an evangelist. I made the mistake of supposing that he was one of those persons who have a call to go about and convince people that religion is one part milk (skimmed) and three parts water—harmless, however, unless you see too much of them. Twice is too much. But I gauged him inadequately. He is one of those few who comprehend the future, and, guided wholly by the Spirit and not by any scripture or tradition, his mission is to prepare the world for its impending change. He is *en rapport* with the vast uneasiness, which I do not know how to name, that pervades all lands. He had felt our war in advance. He now feels a great change in the air; he is illuminated by an inner light that makes him clairvoyant. America is riper than it knows for this change. I tried to have him accurately define it, so that I could write home to my friends and the newspapers and the insurance companies; but I could only get a vague notion that there was about to be an end of armies and navies and police, of all forms of religion, of government, of property, and that universal brotherhood was to set in.

The evangelist had come abroad on an important and rather secret mission: to observe the progress of things in Europe, and to publish his observations in a book. Spiritualized as he was, he had no need of any language except the Amer-

ican; he felt the political and religious atmosphere of all the cities he visited, without speaking to any one. When he entered a picture-gallery, although he knew nothing of pictures, he saw more than any one else. I suppose he saw more than Mr. Ruskin sees. He told me, among other valuable information, that he found Europe not so well prepared for the great movement as America, but that I would be surprised at the number who were in sympathy with it, especially those in high places in society and in government. The Roman Catholic church was going to pieces; not that he cared any more for this than for the Presbyterian; he, personally, took what was good in any church, but he had got beyond them all; he was now working only for the establishment of the truth, and it was because he had more of the truth than others that he could see further. He expected that America would be surprised when he published his observations. "I can give you a little idea," he said, "of how things are working." This talk was late at night, and by the dim cabin-lamp. "When I was in Rome I went to see the head man of the Pope. I talked with him over an hour, and I found that he knew all about it!"

"Good gracious! You don't say so!"

"Yes, sir. And he is in full sympathy. But he dare not say anything. He knows that his church is on its last legs. I told him that I did not care to see the Pope, but if he wanted to meet me, and discuss the infallibility question, I was ready for him."

"What did the Pope's head man say to that?"

"He said that he would see the Pope, and see if he could arrange an interview; and would let me know. I waited a week in Rome, but no notice came. I tell you the Pope don't dare discuss it."

"Then he did n't see you?"

"No, sir. But I wrote him a letter from Naples."

"Perhaps he won't answer it."

"Well, if he does n't, that is a confession that he can't. He leaves me the field. That will satisfy me."

I said I thought he would be satisfied.

The Mediterranean enlarges on acquaintance. On the fourth day we are still without sight of Africa, though the industrious screw brings us nearer every moment. We talk of Carthage and think we can see the color of the Libyan sand in the yellow clouds at night. It is two o'clock on the morning of December 3d when we make the Pharos of Alexandria, and wait for a pilot.

Eagerness to see Africa brings us on deck at dawn. The low coast is not yet visible. Africa, as we had been taught, lies in heathen darkness. It is the policy of the Egyptian government to make the harbor difficult of access to hostile men-of-war, and we, who are peacefully inclined, cannot come in till daylight, and then with a pilot.

The day breaks beautifully, and the Pharos is set like a star in the bright streak of the east. Before we can distinguish land we see the so-called Pompey's Pillar and the light-house, the palms, the minarets, and the outline of the domes painted on the straw-color of the sky, a dream-like picture. The curtain draws up with Eastern leisure—the sun appears to rise more deliberately in the Orient than elsewhere; the sky grows more brilliant; there are long lines of clouds, golden and crimson, and we seem to be looking miles and miles into an enchanted country. Then ships and boats, a vast number of them, become visible in the harbor, and as the light grows stronger, the city and land lose something of their beauty; but the sky grows more softly fiery till the sun breaks through. The city lies low along the flat coast, and seems at first like a brownish-white streak, with fine lines of masts, palm-trees, and minarets above it.

The excitement of the arrival in Alexandria, and the novelty of everything connected with the landing, can never be repeated. In one moment the Orient flashes upon the bewildered traveler; and though he may travel far and see stranger sights, and penetrate the hollow shell of Eastern mystery, he never will see again, at once, such a complete contrast to all his previous experience. One strange, unfamiliar form takes the place of another

so rapidly that there is no time to fix an impression, and everything is so bizarre that the new-comer has no points of comparison. He is launched into a new world, and has no time to adjust the focus of his observation. For myself, I wished the Orient would stand off a little and stand still, so that I could try to comprehend it. But it would not; a revolving kaleidoscope never presented more bewildering figures and colors to a child than the port of Alexandria to us.

Our first sight of strange dress is that of the pilot and the crew who bring him off; they are Nubians, he is a swarthy Egyptian. "How black they are," says the baroness; "I don't like it." As the pilot steps on deck, in his white turban, loose robe of cotton, and red slippers, he brings the East with him; we pass into the influence of the Moslem spirit. Coming into the harbor we have pointed out to us the batteries, the palace and harem of the Pasha (more curiosity is always felt about a harem than about any other building, except perhaps a lunatic asylum), and the new villas along the curve of the shore. It is difficult to see any ingress on account of the crowd of shipping.

The anchor is not down before we are surrounded by row-boats, six or eight deep on both sides, with a mob of boatmen and guides, all standing up and shouting at us in all the broken languages of three continents. They are soon up the sides and on deck, black, brown, yellow, in turbans, in tarbooshes, in robes of white, blue, brown, in brilliant waist-shawls, slippered and bare-legged, bare-footed, half-naked, with little on except a pair of cotton drawers and a red fez; eager, big-eyed, pushing, yelling, gesticulating, seizing hold of passengers and baggage, and fighting for the possession of the traveler's goods, which seem to him about to be shared among a lot of pirates. I saw a dazed traveler start to land, with some of his traveling bags in one boat, his trunk in a second, and himself in yet a third, and a *commissionaire* at each arm attempting to drag him into two others. He evidently could not make up his mind, or his body, which to take.

We have decided upon our hotel, and ask for the *commissionaire* of it. He appears. In fact there are twenty or thirty of him. The first one is a tall, persuasive, nearly naked Ethiop, who declares that he is the only Simon Pure, and grasps our handbags. Instantly a fluent, business-like Alexandrian pushes him aside: "I am the *commissionaire*!" and is about to take possession of us. But a dozen others are of like mind, and Babel begins. We rescue our property, and for ten minutes a lively and most amusing altercation goes on as to which is the representative of the hotel. They all look like pirates from the Barbary coast, instead of guardians of peaceful travelers. Quartering an orange, I stand in the centre of an interesting group engaged in the most lively discussion, pushing, hauling, and fiery gesticulation. The dispute is finally between two.

"I, hotel Europe!"

"I, hotel Europe; he no hotel."

"He my brother; all same we."

"He! I never see he before," with a shrug of the utmost contempt.

As soon as we select one of them, the tumult subsides; the enemies become friends, and cordially join in loading our luggage. In the first five minutes of his stay in Egypt the traveler learns that he is to trust and be served by people who have not the least idea that lying is not a perfectly legitimate means of attaining any desired end. And he begins to lose any prejudice he may have in favor of a white complexion and of clothes. In a decent climate he sees how little clothing is needed for comfort, and how much artificial nations are accustomed to put on from false modesty.

We begin to thread our way through a maze of shipping, and hundreds of small boats and barges; the scene is gay and exciting beyond expression. The first sight of the colored, pictured, lounging, waiting Orient is enough to drive an impressionable person wild; so much that is novel and picturesque is crowded into a few minutes; so many colors and flying robes, such a display of bare legs and swarthy figures. We meet flat-boats coming down the harbor loaded

with laborers, dark, immobile groups in turbans and gowns, squatting on deck in the attitude which is the most characteristic of the East; no one stands or sits; everybody squats or reposes cross-legged. Soldiers are on the move; smart Turkish officers dart by in light boats with half a dozen rowers; the crew of an English man-of-war pull past; in all directions the swift boats fly, and with their freight of color it is like the thrusting of quick shuttles in the weaving of a brilliant carpet, before our eyes.

We step on shore at the custom-house. I have heard travelers complain of the delay in getting through it. I feel that I want to go slowly; that I would like to be all day in getting through; that I am hurried along like a person who is dragged hastily through a gallery, past striking pictures, of which he gets only glimpses. What a group this is on shore: importunate guides, porters, coolies! They seize hold of us. We want to stay and look at them. Did ever any civilized men dress so gayly, so little, or so much in the wrong place? If that fellow would untwist the folds of his gigantic turban he would have cloth enough to clothe himself perfectly. Look! that's an East Indian, that's a Greek, that's a Turk, that's a Syrian. A Jew? No, he's Egyptian; the crook nose is not uncommon to Egyptians; that tall round hat is Persian; that one is from Abyss—there they go, we have n't half seen them! We leave our passports at the entrance, and are whisked through into the baggage-room, where our guide pays a noble official three francs for the pleasure of his chance acquaintance; some nearly naked coolie porters, who bear long cords, carry off our luggage; and before we know it we are in a carriage, and a rascally guide and interpreter—Heaven knows how he fastened himself upon us in the last five minutes—is on the box and apparently owns us. (It cost us half a day and liberal backsheesh to get rid of the evil-eyed fellow.) We have gone only a little distance when a half dozen of the naked coolies rush after us, running by the carriage and laying hold of it,

demanding backsheesh. It appears that either the boatman has cheated them, or they think he will, or they have n't had enough. Nobody trusts anybody else, and nobody is ever satisfied with what he gets, in Egypt. These blacks, in their dirty white gowns, swinging their porter's ropes and howling like madmen, pursue us a long way and look as if they would tear us in pieces. But nothing comes of it. We drive to the Place Mehemet Ali, the European square, having nothing Oriental about it; a square with an equestrian statue of Mehemet Ali, some trees, and a fountain—surrounded by hotels, bankers' offices, and Frank shops.

There is not much in Alexandria to look at except the people and the dirty bazars. We never before had seen so much nakedness, filth, and dirt, so much poverty, and such enjoyment of it, or at least indifference to it. We were forced to adopt a new scale of estimating poverty and wretchedness. People are poor in proportion as their wants are not gratified. And here were thousands who have few of the wants that we have, and perhaps less poverty. It is difficult to estimate the poverty of those fortunate children to whom the generous sun gives a warm color for clothing, who have no occupation but to sit in the sand all day in some noisy and picturesque thoroughfare, and stretch out the hand for the few paras sufficient to buy their food, who drink at the public fountain, wash in the tank of the mosque, sleep in street corners, and feel sure of their salvation if they know the direction of Mecca. And the Mohammedan religion seems to be a sort of soul-compass, by which the most ignorant believer can always Orient himself. The best dressed Christian may feel certain of one thing, that he is the object of the cool contempt of the most naked, half-blind, flea-attended, wretched Moslem he meets. The Oriental conceit is a peg above ours—it is not self-conscious.

In a fifteen minutes' walk in the streets the stranger finds all the pictures that he remembers in his illustrated books of Eastern life. There is turbaned Ali

Baba, seated on the hind-quarters of his sorry donkey, swinging his big feet in a constant effort to urge the beast forward; there is the one-eyed Calender, who may have arrived last night from Bagdad; there is the water-carrier with a cloth about his loins, staggering under a full goat-skin, the skin, legs, head, and all the members of the brute distended, so that the man seems to be carrying a drowned and water-soaked animal; there is the veiled sister of Zobeida riding a gray donkey astride, with her knees drawn up (as all women ride in the East), entirely enveloped in a white garment which covers her head and puffs out about her like a balloon; all that can be seen of the woman are the toes of her pointed yellow slippers, and two black eyes; there is the seller of sherbet, a waterish, feeble, insipid drink, clinking his glasses; and the veiled woman in black, with hungry eyes, is gliding about everywhere. The veil is in two parts, a band about the forehead, and a strip of black which hangs underneath the eyes and terminates in a point at the waist; the two parts are connected by an ornamented cylinder of brass, or silver, if the wearer can afford it, two and a half inches long and an inch in diameter. This ugly cylinder between the restless eyes gives the woman an imprisoned, frightened look. Across the street from the hotel, upon the stone coping of the public square, are squatting, hour after hour, in the sun, a row of these forlorn creatures in black, impassible and patient. We are told that they are washer-women waiting for a job. I never can remove the impression that these women are half stifled behind their veils and the shawls which they draw over the head; when they move their heads, it is like the piteous dumb movement of an uncomplaining animal.

But the impatient reader is waiting for Pompey's Pillar. We drive outside the walls, through a thronged gateway, through streets and among people wretched and picturesque to the last degree. This is the road to the large Moslem cemetery, and to-day is Thursday, the day for visiting the graves. The way is

lined with coffee-shops, where men are smoking and playing at draughts; with stands and booths for the sale of fried cakes and confections; and all along, under foot, so that it is difficult not to tread on them, are private markets for the sale of dates, nuts, raisins, wheat, and doora; the bare-legged owner sits on the ground and spreads his dust-covered, untempting fare on a straw mat before him. It is more wretched and forlorn outside the gate than within. We are amid heaps of rubbish, small mountains of it, perhaps the ruins of old Alexandria, perhaps only the accumulated sweepings of the city for ages, piles of dust and broken pottery. Every Egyptian town of any size is surrounded by these, the refuse of ages of weary civilization. What a number of old men, of blind men, ragged men!—though rags are no disgrace. What a lot of scrawny old women!—lean old hags, some of them without their faces covered; even the veiled ones you can see are only bags of bones. There is a dervish, a naked holy man, seated in the dirt by the wall, reading the Koran. He has no book, but he recites the sacred text in a loud voice, swaying his body backwards and forwards. Now and then we see a shrill-voiced, handsome boy also reading the Koran with all his might, and keeping a longing eye upon the passing world. Here comes a novel turnout. It is a long truck-wagon drawn by one bony horse. Upon it are a dozen women, squatting about the edges, facing each other, veiled, in black, silent, jolting along like so many bags of meal. A black imp stands in front, driving. They carry baskets of food and flowers, and are going to the cemetery to spend the day.

We pass the cemetery, for the pillar is on a little hillock overlooking it. Nothing can be drearier than this burying-ground, unless it may be some other Moslem cemetery. It is an uneven plain of sand, without a spear of grass or a green thing. It is dotted thickly with ugly stucco, oven-like tombs, the whole inconceivably shabby and dust-covered; the tombs of the men have head-stones



to distinguish them from those of the women. Yet shabby as all the details of this crumbling, cheap place of sepulture are, nothing could be gayer or more festive than the scene before us. Although the women are in the majority, there are enough men and children present, in colored turbans, fezes, and gowns, and shawls of Persian dye, to transform the grave-yard into the semblance of a pasture of flowers. About hundreds of the tombs are seated in a circle groups of women, with their food before them and the flowers laid upon the tomb, wailing and howling in the very excess of dry-eyed grief. Here and there a group has employed a "welee," or holy man, or a boy, to read the Koran for it; and these Koran readers turn an honest para by their vocation. The women spend nearly the entire day in this sympathetic visit to their departed friends; it is a custom as old as history, and the Egyptians used to build their tombs with a visiting antechamber for the accommodation of the living. I should think that the knowledge that such a group of women were to eat their luncheon wailing and roosting about one's tomb every week would add a new terror to death.

The pillar, which was no doubt erected by Diocletian to his own honor, after the modest fashion of Romans as well as Egyptians, is in its present surroundings not an object of enthusiasm, though it is almost a hundred feet high, and the monolith shaft was, before age affected it, a fine piece of polished syenite. It was no doubt a few thousand years older than Diocletian, and a remnant of that oldest civilization; the base and capital he gave it are not worthy of it. Its principal use now is as a surface for the paint-brushes and chisels of distinguished travelers, who have covered it with their precious names. I cannot sufficiently admire the *naïveté* and self-depreciation of those travelers who paint and cut their names on such monuments, knowing as they must that the first sensible person who reads the same will say, "This is an ass."

We drive, still outside the walls, towards the Mahmoodecah canal, passing amid mounds of rubbish, and getting a

view of the desert-like country beyond. And now heaves in sight the unchanged quintessence of Orientalism; there is our first camel, a camel in use, in his native setting, and not in a menagerie. An entire line of them, loaded with building stones, are wearily shambling along. The long, bended neck apes humility, but the supercilious nose in the air expresses perfect contempt for all modern life. The contrast of this haughty "stuck-up-ative-ness" (it is necessary to coin this word to express the camel's ancient conceit) with the royal ugliness of the brute is both awe-inspiring and amusing. No human royal family dare be uglier than the camel. He is a mass of bones, faded tufts, humps, lumps, splay joints, and callosities. His tail is a ridiculous wisp, and a failure as an ornament or a fly-brush. His feet are simply big sponges. For skin covering he has patches of old buffalo robes, faded and with the hair worn off. His voice is more disagreeable than his appearance. With a reputation for patience, he is snappish and vindictive. His endurance is overrated; that is to say, he dies like a sheep on an expedition of any length, if he is not well fed. His gait racks muscles like an ague. And yet this ungainly creature carries his head in the air, and regards the world out of his great brown eyes with disdain. The Sphinx is not more placid. He reminds me, I don't know why, of a pyramid. He has a resemblance to a palm-tree. It is impossible to make an Egyptian picture without him. What a Hapsburg lip he has! Ancient? royal? The very poise of his head says plainly, "I have come out of the dim past, before history was; the deluge did not touch me; I saw Menes come and go; I helped Shoofoo build the great pyramid; I knew Egypt when it had n't an obelisk nor a temple; I watched the slow building of the old pyramid at Sakkara. Did I not transport the fathers of your race across the desert? There are three of us: the date-palm, the pyramid, and myself. Everything else is modern. Go to!"

Along the canal, where lie dahabeeahs that will by and by make their way up the Nile, are some handsome villas, pal-

aces, and gardens. This is the favorite drive and promenade. In the gardens which are open to the public we find a profusion of tropical trees and flowering shrubs; roses are decaying, but the blossoms of the yellow acacia scent the air; there are Egyptian lilies; the plant, with crimson leaves, not native here, grows as high as the abutilon-tree; the red passion-flower is in bloom, and morning-glories cover with their running vine the tall and slender cypresses. The finest tree is the sycamore, with great gnarled trunk and down-dropping branches. Its fruit, the sycamore fig, grows directly on the branch, without stem. It is an insipid, sawdusty fruit, but the Arabs like it, and have a saying that he who eats one is sure to return to Egypt. After we had tried to eat one, we thought we should not care to return. The interior was filled with lively little flies, and the priest attending a school of boys taking a holiday in the grove assured us that each fig had to be pierced when it was green, to let the flies out, in order to make it eatable. But the Egyptians eat flies and all.

The splendors of Alexandria must be sought in books. The traveler will see scarcely any remains of a magnificence which dazzled the world in the beginning of our era. He may like to see the mosque that covers the site of the church of Saint Mark, and he may care to look into the Coptic convent whence the Venetians stole the body of the saint, about a thousand years ago. Of course we go to see that wonder of our childhood, Cleopatra's Needles. Only one is standing; the other, mutilated, lies prone beneath the soil. The erect one stands near the shore, and in the midst of hovels and incredible filth. The name of the earliest king it bears is that of Thothmes III., the great man of Egypt, whose era of conquest was about fifteen hundred years before Saint Mark came on his mission to Alexandria. The city, which has had as many vicissitudes as most cities, boasting under the Cæsars a population of half a million, that had decreased to six thousand in 1800, and has now again grown to over two hundred thousand,

seems to be at a waiting point; the merchants complain that the Suez canal has killed its trade. Yet its preëminence for noise, dirt, and shabbiness will hardly be disputed; and its bazars and streets are much more interesting, perhaps because it is the meeting place of all races, than travelers usually admit.

We had scarcely set foot in our hotel when we were saluted and waited for by dragomans of all sorts. They knocked at our doors, they waylaid us in the passages; whenever we emerged from our rooms half a dozen rose up, bowing low; it was like being a small king, with obsequious attendants watching every motion. They presented their cards, they begged we would step aside privately for a moment and look at the bundle of recommendations they produced; they would not press themselves, but if we desired a dragoman for the Nile they were at our service. They were of all shades of color, except white, and of all degrees of Oriental splendor in their costume. There were Egyptians, Nubians, Maltese, Greeks, Syrians. They speak well all the languages of the Levant and of Europe, except the one in which you attempt to converse with them. I never made the acquaintance of so many fine fellows in the same space of time. All had the strongest letters of commendation from travelers whom they had served, well-known men of letters and of affairs. Travelers give these indorsements as freely as they sign applications for government appointments at home.

The name of the handsome dragoman who walked with us through the bazars was, naturally enough, Ahmed Abdallah. He wore the red fez (tarboosh), with a gay kuffia bound about it; an embroidered shirt without collar or cravat; a long shawl of checked and bright-colored Beyrout silk girding the loins, in which was carried his watch and heavy chain; a cloth coat, and baggy silk trousers that would be a gown if they were not split enough to gather about each ankle. The costume is rather Syrian than Egyptian, and very elegant when the materials are fine, with a suggestion of effeminacy to Western eyes.

The native bazars, which are better at Cairo, reveal to the traveler, at a glance, the character of the Orient; its cheap tinsel, its squalor and occasional richness and gorgeousness. The shops on each side of the narrow street are little more than good-sized wardrobes, with room for shelves of goods in the rear, and for the merchant to sit cross-legged in front. There is usually space for a customer to sit with him, and indeed two or three can rest on the edge of the platform. Upon cords stretched across the front hang specimens of the wares for sale. Wooden shutters close the front at night. These little cubbies are not places of sale only but of manufacture of goods. Everything goes on in the view of all the world. The tailor is stitching, the goldsmith is blowing the bellows of his tiny forge, the saddler is repairing the old donkey saddles, the shoe-maker is cutting red leather, the brazier is hammering, the weaver sits at his little loom with the treadle in the ground,—every trade goes on, adding its own clatter to the uproar.

What impresses us most is the good-nature of the throng under trying circumstances. The street is so narrow that three or four people abreast make a jam, and it is packed with those moving in two opposing currents. Through this mass comes a donkey with a couple of panniers of soil or of bricks, or bundles of scraggly sticks; or a camel surges in, loaded with building-joists or with lime, or a Turkish officer with a gayly-caparisoned horse impatiently stamping; a porter slams along with a heavy box on his back; the water-carrier with his nasty skin rubs through; the vender of sweetmeats finds room for his broad tray; the orange man pushes his cart into the throng; the Jew auctioneer cries his antique brasses and more antique raiment. Everybody is jostled and pushed and jammed; but everybody is in an imperturbable good-humor, for no one is really in a hurry, and whatever is, is as it always has been and will be. And what a cosmopolitan place it is! We meet Turks, Greeks, Copts, Egyptians, Nubians, Syrians,

Armenians, Italians; tattered dervishes, "welees," or holy Moslems, nearly naked, presenting the appearance of men who have been buried a long time and recently dug up; Greek priests, Jews, Persian Parsees, Algerines, Hindoos, negroes from Darfour, and flat-nosed blacks from beyond Kartoom.

The traveler has come into a country of holiday which is perpetual. Under this sun and in this air there is nothing to do but to enjoy life and attend to religion five times a day. We look into a mosque; in the cool court is a fountain for washing; the mosque is sweet and quiet, and upon its clean matting a row of Arabs are prostrating themselves in prayer toward the niche that indicates the direction of Mecca. We stroll along the open streets, encountering a novelty at every step. Here is a musician, a Nubian, playing upon a sort of tambour on a frame; a picking, feeble noise he produces, but he is accompanied by the oddest character we have seen yet. This is a stalwart, wild-eyed son of the sand, coal black, with a great mass of uncombed, disordered hair hanging about his shoulders. His only clothing is a breech-cloth, and a round shaving-glass bound upon his forehead; but he has hung about his waist heavy strings of goats' hoofs, and these he shakes, in time to the tambour, by a tremulous motion of his big hips as he minces about. He seems so vastly pleased with himself that I covet knowledge of his language in order to tell him that he looks like an idiot.

Near the Fort Napoleon, a hill by the harbor, we encounter another scene peculiar to the East. A yellow-skinned, cunning-eyed conjurer has attracted a ring of idlers about him, who squat in the blowing dust under the blazing sun, and patiently watch his antics. The conjurer himself performs no wonders, but the spectators are a study of color and feature. The costumes are brilliant red, yellow, and white. The complexions exhaust the possibilities of human color. I thought I had seen black people in South Carolina; I saw a boy just now standing in a doorway who would have

been invisible but for his white shirt; but here is a fat negress in a bright yellow gown and kerchief, whose jet face has taken an incredible polish; only the most accomplished boot-black could raise such a shine on a shoe. Tranquil enjoyment oozes out of her. The conjurer is assisted by two mites of children, a girl and a boy (no clothing wasted on them), and between the three a great deal of jabber and whacking with cane sticks is going on, but nothing is performed except the taking of a long snake from a bag and tying it round the little girl's neck. Paras are collected, however, and that is the main object of all performances.

A little farther on another group is gathered around a story-teller, who is reeling off one of the endless tales in which the Arabs delight; love-adventures, not always the most delicate but none the less enjoyed for that, or the story of some poor lad who has had a wonderful career and finally married the Sultan's daughter. He is accompanied in his narrative by two men thumping upon darabooka drums in a monotonous, sleepy fashion, quite in accordance, however, with the everlasting leisure that pervades the air. Walking about are the venders of greasy cakes, who carry tripods on which to rest their brass trays, and who split the air with their cries.

It is color, color, color, that makes all this shifting panorama so fascinating, and hides the nakedness, the squalor, the wretchedness of all this unconcealed poverty; color in flowing garments, color in the shops, color in the sky. We have come to the land of the sun.

At night, when we walk around the square, we stumble over bundles of rags containing men, who are asleep in all the corners, stretched on doorsteps, and laid away on the edge of the sidewalk. Opposite the hotel is a *casino*, which is more Frank than Egyptian. The musicians are all women, — Germans or Bohemians; the waiter-girls are mostly Italian; one of them says she comes from Bohemia, and has been in India, to which she proposes to return. The *habitués* are mostly young Egyptians in Frank dress except the tarboosh, and Italians, all effeminate fellows. All the world of loose living and wandering meets here. Italian is much spoken. There is little that is Oriental though, except it be a complaisance toward anything enervating and languidly wicked that Europe has to offer. This cheap concert is, we are told, the sole amusement at night that can be offered the traveler by the once pleasure-loving city of Cleopatra, in the once brilliant Greek capital wherein Hypatia was a star.

Charles Dudley Warner.

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#### TO A CRITIC.

Hold this sea-shell to your ear,  
And you shall hear  
Not the andante of the sea,  
Not the wild wind's symphony,  
But your own heart's minstrelsy.

You do poets and their song  
A grievous wrong,  
If your own heart does not bring  
To their deep imagining  
As much beauty as they sing.

T. B. Aldrich.