

course, before he arrived, I thought it possible that he might want to pick up a hunter or so, and I asked the men I knew not to sell him anything that was n't the best. But, dear me! the day he arrived he told me that his father had forbidden his buying horses of any kind, and so I never bothered about the matter again; it quite went out of my head." Then she looked at the M. F. H. with the faintest gleam in her eyes. "Please take this thing," she added. He took her wrap and put it on a chair.

"Why, of course," he said; "nothing could be more natural."

They could hear all this from the billiard-room.

"Crawford," called Varick, "are you going to play pool, or do you wish me to telephone for Mrs. Crawford?"

"Coming at once," replied the M. F. H.

"Varick," growled Galloway, who was thinking of Vixen's curb, "let's drop Mr. Tompkins and his popularity. It's your shot—hurry up and play!"

## MY BEDOUIN FRIENDS.

ADVENTURES OF AN ARTIST IN THE EGYPTIAN DESERT.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY R. TALBOT KELLY.

### WHAT A SAND-STORM IS LIKE.



IN a previous number of THE CENTURY (February, 1897) I gave some insight into the character and habits of the Bedouin.

Probably, with the exception of occasional hunger and thirst, a nomadic life will appear to many to be a rather comfortable kind of existence; and once thoroughly acclimatized, and one's appetite reduced to proper subjection, an investigator might find some justification for this view. There are, however, phases of desert life not only intensely disagreeable, but often dangerous.

Many of my readers have been to Egypt, and in Cairo or up the Nile may have experienced the discomforts of the khamsin; but this can give them little idea of what it is to be caught in a sand-storm in the desert.

The air is hot and sulphurous, while the sun becomes lurid and sickly in its glare. At first the hot wind comes in slight puffs, like breaths from a kiln; but each moment it increases in velocity, carrying with it more and more fine drift-sand, which, blinding the eyes and choking the lungs, gradually produces a most distressing feeling of depression and suffocation. By degrees, as the storm gains strength, little splinters of rock and small pebbles are lifted up and hurled at one like hailstones, cutting the skin like knives,

until eyes and ears are full of blood, unless one has been able to protect himself against the blast. The native *cufia*, or silk scarf, wrapped round the head and face, and leaving only the eyes exposed, is the most effective protection; but the heat is suffocating, and quickly reduces one to impotence. As the storm continues perhaps for several days, the sun becomes totally obscured, while the ever-moving sand gradually assumes the appearance of billows, threatening to overwhelm everything. Nothing can be distinctly seen above or around; and the moving sand-drifts, splashing and breaking like surf upon the rocks, are slowly but surely enveloping everything in camp, and piling up tons of drift against tents and baggage.

Camp-equipage is hastily packed and loaded upon the terror-stricken animals, and the party starts to ride obliquely through the storm toward the nearest high ground or mountain spur. To remain still means to be covered and entombed. Even should waterskins not be cracked or dried up, in any attempt to drink the sufferer absorbs as much dust as water, and his plight is worse than before. Eating is out of the question; smoking is equally impossible. Forty-eight hours have I ridden in such circumstances, changing horses from time to time as they became too much distressed for further use, and until I had hardly power to mount. After such a ride as this it may well be imagined how we relished our first halt in the shelter

of a friendly hill, and enjoyed the luxury of a dish of sour milk, and, above all, a smoke.

Fortunately, the khamsin,<sup>1</sup> though supposed to last for fifty days, is intermittent in its energy, three days' blow being usually followed by a few fine days; and, as a rule, its violence is not sufficient to be a source of danger. As showing the velocity of wind sometimes attained, I remember seeing in the Delta a palm-tree, probably sixty feet in height, bent over by the wind until its crest swept the ground and excavated a large hole in the course of the day. Besides the khamsin, there are other forms of sand-storm, which, though of shorter duration, come with a suddenness and vehemence that almost defy protection. The most curious of these is perhaps what is locally called «a devil»—a sudden gust of wind eddying down the mountain gorges, and bursting on the desert like a whirlwind, carrying pillars of sand with it.

Another curious phase of the sand-storm is one that I experienced in the Libyan desert. The weather was perfectly fine, and I was working comfortably at my picture, when suddenly I noticed on the horizon what appeared to be a cloud, black in its upper region, and orange below. Before I had time to realize what was happening, a blast of cold wind whirled away picture and easel, and enveloped me in dust and flying pebbles. A moment later dust had turned to dropping mud, which in turn gave place to torrential rain, drenching me to the skin, and effectually washing the sand out of my system; after that were peace and genial sunshine once more.

#### FALCONRY.

ALL kinds of sport appeal to the Arabs and are eagerly followed by them; and of late years the substitution of breech-loading rifles for the antiquated, though picturesque flintlock and cumbersome spear formerly in use has materially increased the variety of game with which they can now successfully hope to cope. Big game is rare in the deserts I have visited, though hyena, jackal, silver fox, and an occasional wolf, often furnish a day's sport, while among the rocky spurs of the Mokattam Hills ibex and wild goat are occasionally to be found.

The deserts abutting upon Egypt abound in gazelle, the hunting of which is the only kind of desert sport I have enjoyed.

One morning, while sitting in Sheik Saudi-el-Tahowi's lodge preparing for my

day's work, his son came in to say that a herd of gazelles had been seen in the vicinity, and that if I would accompany a hawking party just about to start he could promise me some good sport. The medieval flavor of a «hawking party» proved more enticing than the intended sketch, and eagerly accepting his invitation, I followed the young sheik to his «falconry.» This was a small tent surrounded by a compound of durra stalks, in which was a stand of eight or nine beautiful hawks, all closely hooded. On the ground sat their keeper, a huge negro, busily preparing the embroidered-leather gauntlets worn by the huntsmen as a protection against the birds' claws.

Orders having already been given, we were soon mounted and ready for a start. Most of us were on horseback, though one or two rode *hagein*, or swift dromedaries. Each rider carried a hooded hawk on his wrist, and a number of men and boys with greyhounds in leash accompanied us.

One of the sheik's sons, who was riding a camel, certainly merits a little description. Rejoicing in the name Gamil (which, being interpreted, means «beautiful»), young Tahowi evidently had made up his mind to «dress the part.» On his head was a *cufia* of many-colored silks, fringed with gold tassels, and bound round by the *akal*, or rope of brown camel-hair, always worn by the Bedouin. His *arbiyeh*, or outside cloak, was of a deep maroon color, showing just a glimpse of a vest of bright green beneath. The large white sleeves of the caftan, drawn through the *arbiyeh* well over the hands, sparkled like snow in the sunlight, while below appeared riding-boots of yellow leather. No less magnificent than his master, his milk-white camel, resplendent in gay trappings, went mincingly over his purple shadow through the sea of yellow sand.

Having some little distance to go before reaching our quarry, Tahowi beguiled the time in explaining their method of catching and training the hawks. The birds are caught in snares baited with a live pigeon, and after several days of starvation and intoxication with tobacco-smoke they are usually docile enough to be freely handled and begin their training proper. A dummy made of straw and covered with gazelle hide is placed in position, and a piece of meat firmly fixed over the eyes. The bird, which is secured by a long cord fastened to the legs, is then unhooded and allowed to strike its prey, out of which he can get no satisfaction until the

<sup>1</sup> Arabic for «fifty.»

head is reached. The meat being securely fixed, the hawk is unable to enjoy the anticipated feast, and is then drawn back to its captor's hand, who gives it a piece of flesh, its first meal for many days. This process is repeated over and over again until the hawk has learned its twofold lesson: first, always to strike for the eyes, and, secondly, to return to its master.

Suddenly a sharp cry from one of our party signaled that the herd had been sighted, and

utes elapsed from start to finish; but I have a very vivid recollection of our impetuous race—horses snorting, men shouting, and the rush of air in my face, while a couple of hundred yards ahead, the little herd, with a dancing gait in which they hardly seemed to touch the ground, quickly outdistanced us, until the sudden descent of the hawks speedily put an end to their poor little lives and our mad gallop.

I could not repress a feeling of profound



A SAND-STORM.

immediately hawks were unhooded, hounds slipped, and the whole party was at full gallop over the sand. It was very pretty to see the hawks at work. At first, apparently bewildered by the sudden light, they soared aloft as though uncertain what to do; but quickly catching sight of their game, they followed at an incredible speed until within striking distance, when, with a sudden swoop, each settled upon the head of its gazelle and fiercely attacked its eyes. Distressed and half blinded, the little beasts were soon overtaken and pulled down by the hounds; and a moment later the riders were on the scene, in time to save alive the one least hurt, while the others were quickly despatched with hunting-knives.

So rapid was the whole proceeding that probably not more than three or four min-  
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commiseration for these poor little animals, too delicately made for aught but fondling. However, the meat is good, and our party was sufficiently hungry to enjoy the prospect of our meal. I am glad to say, however, that the one caught alive proved to be but slightly hurt, and a week's gentle treatment sufficed to heal his wounds and make a pet of him; and months afterward I saw this same gazelle gamboling with the children in the tent, and rubbing noses with the very hounds which almost accomplished its destruction.

#### THE ETIQUETTE OF THE DESERT.

SOCIAL etiquette among the Arabs is a factor in life to be considered seriously if you wish to live among them without friction. Its obligations are not to be completely mastered



«WE WERE SOON MOUNTED AND READY FOR A START.»

in a few months. Sometimes when I have had companions with me presumably thoroughly *au fait* with all things Mohammedan, the harmony of the occasion has been seriously endangered by some thoughtlessness or ignorance on their part, which to the Moslem could appear only as a contemptuous want of consideration. Thus, no greater insult could be offered to an Arab than a friendly inquiry as to the welfare of his wife, to us a natural civility, but to him a gross impertinence bitterly resented. On one occasion I nearly made a similar blunder. I was invited by a neighboring sheik to go over to see him, and was on the point of riding up to his tent door and dismounting there. Fortunately, however, I recollected in time that etiquette demanded that I should halt fifty yards off, and call in a loud voice: «Have I your permission to approach?» This gives time to bundle off any of their womenkind who may be about, preparatory to the admission of the stranger. It is curious, also, to notice that in spite of the real affection existing between father and son, the sense of respect dominates all other feelings, and the sons will never sit at meat with their father in the presence of a guest, but will wait upon both until the father, rising, allows them the opportunity of breaking bread with their visitor.

Provided, however, that you recognize their social customs, my experience has

proved the Bedouin to be genuine, warm-hearted friends; and they really become greatly attached to those whom they know and who know them.

#### HOW THE SHEIK GAINED HIS POINT.

I SHALL never forget the ecstasy of affection with which, in the intervals of service, Sheik Mansour-abn-Nasrullah's youngest son used to squeeze my hand and exclaim, «Oh, Mr. Kelly!» He was a lovable boy of fourteen, the Benjamin of his tribe, and, while I was with them, my constant attendant.

This boy's grandfather was a wonderful old man of nearly eighty years, almost bedridden.

He had lived as sheik of his tribe in the troublous times of Said Pasha and Ismail, under whom tribes bordering on Egypt held certain lands as forage-ground, in return for occasional military service as irregular cavalry. Ismail's necessities, however, inspired the idea of imposing a tax upon them in addition. Resenting this attempt upon their freedom, the tribes, having burned their crops and buildings, retired far into the desert. An army under a Turkish general was sent in pursuit, but could not come within touching distance of the tribesmen, who, on their fleet horses, were constantly hovering on the army's flanks, and then suddenly disappear-

ing farther into the sandy waste. Having in this way lured the Egyptian troops far beyond their base of communications, old Nasrullah<sup>1</sup> suddenly surrounded the invaders with hordes of his followers, and rode up to interview the general. A parley ensued, in which, with extreme politeness, the Turkish general «regretted» that he had to demand their return and submission to his highness's decree.

Sweeping the horizon with his spear, the old sheik pointed out that the Egyptians were surrounded, and that escape was impossible, adding: «Go tell your master that but for my clemency you and your army would be eaten up; but now I let you go, that he may know that we are willing to be his *friends*, but never his *servants*.»

Returning to Cairo, the general duly reported events, the result being that the tribes were reinstated in the possession of their lands on the original terms.

This old sheik, though very feeble, mounted his horse and rode out to meet

could have transformed the decrepit old man into the vibrating, enthusiastic warrior I saw before me.

## THE TRIBAL BARD.

SITTING in the tent one night, I asked Sheik Mansour if they had no evening amusements, such as singing or dancing.

«What!» he exclaimed, «is not your excellency tired?»

«Not too tired to be amused,» said I.

«Then, *efendim*, perhaps you would like to hear our poet?»

«Certainly; what does he do?»

«Oh, pasha, he sings like the nightingales; he sings the (Song of the Nephaata.) For generations this gift has been with him and his house. Now he is old, but his son follows in his steps and will perpetuate the poetry of our tribe.»

«Does he sing often?»

«No, *efendim*; only when some occasion such as your excellency's visit inspires him.»



HAWKING IN THE DESERT.

me, brandishing his spear, a formidable weapon about sixteen feet long and very heavy; and when I first saw him careering about on his horse, shouting his family war-cry, and wielding the spear which I could hardly lift in one hand, it seemed incredible that the excitement of the moment

<sup>1</sup> Victory of God.

«Indeed? Then perhaps he will sing for me to-night?»

«*Maaloom*» («Certainly»). And off the sheik went to summon the bard.

I had heard of this man before, and awaited events with some curiosity.

Presently, one by one, the head men of the tribe came in, and silently salaaming,

seated themselves round the fire, and waited, expectation written on every countenance, their gleaming eyes and sigh of satisfaction plainly intended to impress me with a proper sense of the treat in store. Presently the bard appeared, accompanied by his son, and, salaams having been exchanged, sat down and prepared for business.

He was an old man, gray-bearded and sundried; and the look of importance upon his brow was repeated in the expression of reflected glory which animated the countenance of his son. Each carried an instrument called *el kemengeh*, a kind of two-stringed fiddle.

Shutting his eyes, and comfortably rubbing his hands together, the old man began, in a harsh, strident voice, to deliver a panegyric upon the song he was going to sing, calling forth repeated ejaculations of "Aiwa," "Yeuss," and other approving signs, from the assembled crowd. After ten minutes of this I became impatient, and exclaimed: "*Idrub el kemengeh ya usta*" ("Play your fiddle, O my master"), whereupon, with sympathetic grunts from all, he began the

overture, a weird, wailing melody, to which the son played a kind of second in a minor key which it is impossible to transcribe correctly in our annotation.

Beginning like the sighing of the wind among the palm-trees, it gradually gathered power and volume in a crescendo, then died away again to a breath, playing infinite changes upon the opening theme. The effect was distinctly artistic and quaint, and I was gradually drifting into a state of dreamy imaginings when suddenly the bard broke silence, and in a voice of amazing power and incisiveness began to intone the "*Song of the Nephaata.*"

Going back for generations, the legend described the growing of the parent tribe into a power in Mesopotamia, and how, in course of time, when men and camels and horses were in plenty, the head sheik decided upon

the conquest of Tunis. Admirably accompanied on their instruments, one seemed to hear the hurried riding of messengers despatched to summon distant families; their horses' hoof-strokes gradually dying in the distance until naught was heard but the sighing of the night wind across the desert. Presently from far away was caught the distant thundering of the gathering hordes, gradually approaching nearer and nearer until the volume of sound culminated in a general salutation to the sheik who summoned them. Then came the sheik's exhortation, and the description of their desert

journey, which was to occupy many months.

Incidents by the way—heat, thirst, noise, and dust by day, and the eternal silence of the desert by night, the brightness of the stars, the waxing and waning of the moon, the hardships, excitements, plenty and poverty of condition—were, each in turn, graphically described, to the same weird accompaniment.

Hour after hour this went on, the bard's eye gleaming and his voice growing stronger and

stronger, until I was almost stunned by its thundering monotone. Meanwhile the tribesmen, shifting excitedly in their seats, and uttering quick ejaculations of approval, constituted a scene which kept me spellbound. Eventually, in the narrative, Tunis was reached, and the horde of Arabs encamped beneath its walls.

It was now midnight, and for four long hours I had listened to this wonderful epic; but realizing that I was too thoroughly exhausted for further amusement, I decided to "turn in," and getting up, I left the assembly in the zenith of their excitement and gratification.

As I quietly passed outside, the sheik, hitherto absorbed in the performance, saw me, and suddenly jumping up, exclaimed to the minstrel: "Get out of this, you dog! You have tired the pasha with your pig's bab-



SHEIK MANSOUR-ABN-NASRULLAH.

bling. Get out of this!» And in a moment heroics gave place to humiliation, and I beheld the venerable bard, till then fairly bursting with pride and importance, ignominiously hustled out of the tent and creeping disconsolately homeward.

Taking it altogether, it was a fine performance, and I can give no idea of the effect produced by its apt accompaniment and quick alterations of pitch, both in voice and instrument, as necessity of description demanded.

This position of tribal bard is hereditary, the singer having no other employment, being supported by the tribe, each member of which contributes to his needs, while the sons are from infancy taught to perpetuate the songs and legends.

#### THE THIEF-TRACKERS.

ANOTHER curious profession among the Bedouin is that of the «thief-trackers.» Being without paddocks or stables, and their animals always more or less at liberty, theft of stock would appear to be an easy and frequent matter. Each tribe, however, has its little company of «trackers,» and it would be either a bold or an ignorant man indeed who ventured to interfere with an Arab's live stock. I have heard of one instance in which a camel stolen from a camp near Ismailia was, after weeks of labor, successfully tracked to the Sudan, where the beast was recaptured and summary vengeance wreaked upon the robbers. Selected for natural ability, and trained from boyhood to discriminate between each animal's footprint, this faculty becomes so highly developed that a particular horse's or camel's trail is unerringly picked up from among the thousands of impressions on the dusty highway.

#### CHARMS AND THE EVIL EYE.

LIKE all Mohammedans, the Bedouin are very superstitious, and believe firmly in the power of the «evil eye.» As a protection against this mysterious power, most of them carry charms, usually consisting of passages from the Koran, stitched inside their garments, or similar scrip, inclosed in silver or leather charm-cases, worn round the neck, horses and camels being almost always similarly protected. A horse I was once riding happened to burst the thong by which its charm was suspended, and which was in consequence lost. My Arab friends, much troubled, assured me that the horse was sure to die. Of course I laughed at the idea; but,

sure enough, some days later I heard that the horse *was* dead. The Arabs, of course, attributed its demise to the loss of its sacred protection, though diligent inquiry on my part elicited the fact that it had been cruelly overridden, and had died from exhaustion!

This superstition is one of the many little things to be reckoned with in desert life, as the following experience will show. Sheik Aleywa had a fine black horse, and also a beautiful boy, his youngest son, of whom he was exceedingly fond. This youngster, being a splendid rider, was put upon the fancy horse to give me a «fantasia.» His riding was exceedingly clever, and the horse a beauty; and at the end of the performance I was loud in my praise of both, taking care to add the usual invocation, «Ma'sha'llah,» which, however, the sheik did not hear.

«Take them!» he exclaimed. «Take them both—my son and the horse. They are yours.»

«I cannot, my sheik,» I replied. «I do not want the horse, and could not take your son.»

«You must, efendim,» he urged excitedly; and on my still refusing, he exclaimed in desperation:

«One of you must take them!»

Hereupon one of the bystanders came up and said:

«No evil will befall them, O my father; the pasha said, (Ma'sha'llah.))»

Whereupon the old man, greatly relieved, gave a huge grunt of satisfaction, and led the way to dinner.

I should explain that this expression, «Ma'sha'llah,» may be roughly translated as «May God keep evil from it,» and should always be said after praise of any living thing; otherwise the gift of the animal or being is considered to be the only means of averting the disaster, and perhaps death, sure to result from your omission.

#### HOSPITALITY AND THE GIVING OF PRESENTS.

I HAVE previously spoken of Arab hospitality and the giving of presents. Many people seem to believe that such acts of grace are done with an ulterior motive and in the hope of a return of favors. So far as I am aware, this idea is entirely wrong. Let me give two instances.

I had ridden to a tent one day to ask for some tobacco, my own stock being exhausted; and in answer to my query the occupant replied that he had tobacco, but it was «not fit for your excellency to smoke.» However, I tried it, and certainly it was not very palat-

able, which my host noticed, and, asking me to lodge with him, said he would send for some. I found, later on, that he had immediately sent a man on camel-back to Zagazig (three days' journey), with instructions to buy an *oke*<sup>1</sup> of the best «Turkish» the town provided.

On another occasion I noticed in a tent a rug made of a kind of felt and painted in a curiously barbaric design. I asked where it came from, and was informed that it was Sudanese. Merely remarking that it was curious, and that I had never before seen one, I dropped the matter. Some months later, after my return to England, I received a bale, forwarded from Cairo, containing three of these rugs! It transpired that my generous host, seeing that I was so interested, had straightway despatched a messenger to the Sudan to get the rugs for me, and had sent them after me to Cairo. Here was a case, at any rate, where even thanks were impossible, and I have never seen this particular Arab since. I am extremely sorry to say, however, that the rugs, when they reached me, were so full of moths that they had to be immediately destroyed, so that I have not been

man is sent on camel-back to deliver it to the first railway he may happen upon, often several days' ride, for which service no payment is expected.

Nearly all urgent messages are performed on camel-back, no other animal being able to cover so great a distance in equal time. Young Tahowi rode on his, one day, from Beni-Ayoub to Ismailia and back, a distance of about sixty miles, between sunset and sunrise; and I believe I am correct in saying that in cases of emergency a well-conditioned hagein will average one hundred miles a day for a fortnight, on a small feed and a little water every third day, though at the end of the journey it would be so worn out and emaciated as to require several months of rest and good feeding before it would recover its former vitality and stamina.

#### MIRAGES.

No description of desert life would be complete without some reference to the «mirage,» a phenomenon of almost daily occurrence. As is well known, it usually takes the form of water; and the illusion is so complete that I



THE «SONG OF THE NEPHAATA.»

able to keep this unique example of Arab hospitality.

Another matter in which they give themselves a great amount of trouble is in forwarding your very occasional correspondence. Should you desire to post a letter, a

<sup>1</sup> The oke, or ukkeh, is equal to about 23½ lbs. avoirdupois.

have stood and talked to a man who apparently was standing up to his knees in a lake the ripples of which broke on the sand a few yards from me. The most curious series of mirages I have witnessed, however, occurred when leaving my Arab friends and returning to the Delta. I was being escorted by a party of Hanaardi Arabs, and our destination was





A MIRAGE IN THE «FIELD OF ZOAN.»

San-el-Haga (ancient Tanis).<sup>1</sup> From Sheik Aleywa's tent the mounds of ruined Tanis were clearly seen, and appeared only some five or six miles distant. Our road lay through some miles of salt-marshes, after which we emerged upon the «field of Zoan,» in Abraham's day one of the most fertile and perfectly cultivated spots in Egypt, now a howling wilderness of rotten earth which will scarcely grow the most hardy weeds.

We had ridden for nearly four hours, and still seemed as far from Tanis as ever, the mounds appearing just as distant as at the start, when, suddenly, a curious «twinkle» of light and landscape occurred, most bewildering to the senses, and before I was able to rub my eyes clear we were standing on the mounds themselves! Crossing the Bahr Fakous,<sup>2</sup> a deep canal crossed by a ferry, similar phenomena were repeated. Looking westward toward the sun, the plain appeared to

be one huge inland lake, bordered by palm-groves and villages; so real, indeed, was it that we had a little debate as to whether it were possible that the Bahr Yusef might not have burst its banks and flooded the country, and made a wide detour necessary. While debating the subject, I noticed that several of my companions had disappeared, and with them all signs of the mounds of Tanis and the village of San-el-Haga, only about one mile distant. A few moments later I saw them all upside down in the sky, while the riders, on approaching more closely, suddenly righted themselves and stood upon terra firma once more!

Our flooded plain proved a similar pleasantry of nature, and an hour later we stood upon the banks of the bahr; and as I bade farewell to the friends whose hospitality and kindness had robbed the desert of so much of its hardships, and rendered my life among them one of my happiest experiences, sincere feeling was added to the grace of their adieu: «*Shoof wishuk b'il khare in'sha'llah*» («Till by the will of God I see your face again in health»<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> San-el-Haga, the «Zoan» of Scripture.

<sup>2</sup> Bahr means «river,» a term applied to all the large canals.

<sup>3</sup> Or, «in prosperity.»

