

The Spell of EGYPT

BY ROBERT S. HICHENS



THE PYRAMIDS

Why do you come to Egypt? Do you come to gain a dream, or to regain lost dreams of old; to gild your life with the drowsy gold of romance, to lose a creeping sorrow, to forget that too many of your hours are sullen, grey, bereft? What do you wish of Egypt?

The Sphinx will not ask you, will not care. The Pyramids, lifting their unnumbered stones to the clear and wonderful skies, have held, still hold, their secrets; but they do not seek for yours. The terrific temples, the hot, mysterious tombs, odorous of the dead desires of men, crouching in and under the immeasurable sands, will muck you with their brooding silence, with their dim and sombre repose. The brown children of the Nile, the toilers who sing their antique songs by the shadoof and the sakieh, the dragomans, the smiling goblin merchants, the Bedouins who lead your camel into the pale recesses of the dunes—these will not trouble themselves about your deep desires, your perhaps yearning hunger of the heart and the imagination.

Yet Egypt is not unresponsive.

I came back to her with dread, after fourteen years of absence—years filled for me with the rumors of her changes. And on the very day of my arrival she calmly reassured me. She told me in her supremely magical way that all was well with her. She taught me once more a lesson I had not quite forgotten, but that I was glad to learn again—the lesson that Egypt owes her most subtle, most inner beauty to Kheper, although she owes her marvels to men; that when he created the sun which shines upon her, he gave her the lustre of her life, and that those who

come to her must be sun-worshippers if they would truly and intimately understand the treasure or romance that lies heaped within her bosom.

Thoth, says the old legend, travelled in the Boat of the Sun. If you would love Egypt rightly, you, too, must be a traveller in that bark. You must not fear to steep yourself in the mystery of gold, in the mystery of heat, in the mystery of silence that seems softly showered out of the sun. The sacred white lotus must be your emblem, and Horus, the hawk-headed, merged in Ra, your special deity. Scarcely had I set foot once more in Egypt before Thoth lifted me into the Boat of the sun and soothed my fears to sleep.

I arrived in Cairo. I saw new and vast hotels; I saw crowded streets; brilliant shops; English officials driving importantly in victorias, surely to pay dreadful calls of ceremony; women in gigantic hats, with Niagaras of veil, waving white gloves as they talked of—I guess—the latest Cairene scandal. I perceived on the right hand and on the left waiters created in Switzerland, hall porters made in Germany, Levantine touts, determined Jews holding false antiquities in their lean fingers, an English Baptist minister, in a white helmet, drinking chocolate on a terrace, with a guide-book in one fist, a ticket to visit monuments in the other. I heard Scottish soldiers playing, "I'll be in Scotland before ye!" and something within me, a lurking hope, I suppose, seemed to founder and collapse—but only for a moment. It was after four in the afternoon. Soon day would be declining. And I seemed to remember that the decline of day in Egypt had moved me long ago—moved me as few, rare things have ever done. Within half an hour I was alone, far up the long road—Ismail's road—that leads from the suburbs of Cairo to the Pyramids. And then Egypt took me like a child by the hand and reassured me.

It was the first week of November, high Nile had not subsided, and all the land here, between the river and the sand where the Sphinx keeps watch, was hidden beneath the vast and tranquil waters of what seemed a tideless sea—a sea fringed with dense masses of date-palms, girdled in the far distance by palm-trees that kept the white and the brown houses in their feathery embrace. Above these isolated houses pigeons circled. In the distance the lateen sails of boats glided, sometimes behind the palms, coming into view, vanishing and mysteriously reappearing among their narrow trunks. Here and there a living thing moved slowly, wading homeward through this sea: a camel from the sands of Ghizeh, a buffalo, two donkeys, followed by boys who held with brown hands their dark blue skirts near their faces, a Bedouin leaning forward upon the neck of his quickly stepping horse. At one moment I seemed to look upon the lagoons of Venice, a watery vision full of a glassy calm. Then the palm-trees in the water, and growing to its edge, the pale sands that, far as the eyes could see, from Ghizeh to Sakkara and beyond, fringed it toward the west, made me think of the Pacific, of palmy islands, of a paradise where men grow drowsy in well-being, and dream away the years. And then I looked farther, beyond the pallid line of the sands, and I saw a Pyramid of gold, the wonder Khufu had built. As a golden wonder it saluted me after all my years of absence. Later I was to see it grey as grey sands, sulphur color in the afternoon from very near at hand, black as a monument draped in funereal velvet for a mourning under the stars at night, white as a monstrous marble tomb soon after dawn from the sand-dunes between it and Sakkara. But as a golden thing it greeted me, as a golden miracle I shall remember it.

Slowly the sun went down. The second Pyramid seemed also made of

gold. Drowsily splendid it and its greater brother looked set on the golden sands beneath the golden sky. And now the gold came traveling down from the desert to the water, turning it surely to a wine like the wine of gold that flowed down Midas's throat; then, as the magic grew, to a Pactolus, and at last to a great surface that resembled golden ice, hard, glittering, unbroken by any ruffling wave. The islands rising from this golden ice were jet black, the houses black, the palms and their shadows that fell upon the marvel black. Black were the birds that flew low from roof to roof, black the wading camels, black the meeting leaves of the tall lebbek-trees that formed a tunnel from where I stood to Mena House. And presently a huge black Pyramid lay supine on the gold, and near it a shadowy brother seemed more humble than it, but scarcely less mysterious. The gold deepened, glowed more fiercely. In the sky above the Pyramids hung tiny cloud wreaths of rose red, delicate and airy as the gossamers of Tunis. As I turned, far off in Cairo I saw the first lights glittering across the fields of doura, silvery white, like diamonds. But the silver did not call me. My imagination was held captive by the gold. I was summoned by the gold, and I went on, under the black lebbek-trees, on Ismail's road, toward it. And I dwelt in it many days.

The wonders of Egypt man has made seem to increase in stature before the spirits' eyes as man learns to know them better, to tower up ever higher till the imagination is almost stricken by their looming greatness. Climb the great Pyramid, spend a day with Abou on its summit, come down, penetrate into its recesses, stand in the king's chamber, listen to the silence there, feel it with your hands—is it not tangible in this hot fastness of incorruptible death?—creep, like the surreptitious midget you feel yourself to be, up those long and steep inclines of

polished stone, watching the gloomy darkness of the narrow walls, the far-off pinpoint of light borne by the Bedouin who guides you, hear the twitter of the bats that have their dwelling in this monstrous gloom that man has made to shelter the thing whose ambition could never be embalmed, though that, of all qualities, should have been given here, in the land it dowered, a life perpetual. Now you know the Great Pyramid. You know that you can climb it, that you can enter it. You have seen it from all sides, under all aspects. It is familiar to you.

No, it can never be that. With its more wonderful comrade, the Sphinx, it has the power peculiar, so it seems to me, to certain of the rock and stone monuments of Egypt, of holding itself ever aloof, almost like the soul of man which can retreat at will, like the Bedouin retreating from you into the blackness of the Pyramid, far up, or far down, where the pursuing stranger, unaided, cannot follow.

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THE SPHINX

One day at sunset I saw a bird trying to play with the Sphinx—a bird like a swallow, but with a ruddy brown on its breast, a gleam of blue somewhere on its wings. When I came to the edge of the sand basin where perhaps Khufu saw it lying nearly four thousand years before the birth of Christ, the Sphinx and the bird were quite alone. The bird flew near the Sphinx, whimsically turning this way and that, flying now low, now high, but ever returning to the magnet which drew it, which held it, from which it surely longed to extract some sign of recognition. It twittered, it posed itself in the golden air, with its bright eyes fixed upon those eyes of stone which gazed beyond it, beyond the land of Egypt, beyond the world of men, beyond the centre of the sun to the last verges of eternity. And presently it alighted on the head of the Sphinx, then on its ear, then on its breast; and over the breast it tripped jerkily, with tiny, elastic steps, looking upward, its whole body quivering apparently with a desire for comprehension—a desire for some manifestation of friendship. Then suddenly it spread its wings, and, straight as an arrow, it flew away over the sands and the waters toward the doura-fields and Cairo.

And the sunset waned, and the afterglow flamed and faded, and the clear, soft African night fell. The pilgrims who day by day visit the Sphinx, like the bird, had gone back to Cairo. They had come, as the bird had come; as those who have conquered Egypt came; as the Greeks came, Alexander of Macedon, and the Ptolemies; as the Romans came; as the Mamelukes, the Turks, the French, the English came.

They had come—and gone.

And that enormous face, with the stains of stormy red still adhering to its cheeks, grew dark as the darkness closed in, turned brown as a fellah's face, as the face of that fellah who whispered his secret in the sphinx's ear, but learnt no secret in return; turned black almost as a Nubian's face. The night accentuated its appearance of terrible repose, of super-human indifference to whatever might befall. In the night I seemed to hear the footsteps of the dead—of all the dead warriors and the steeds they rode, defiling over the sand before the unconquerable thing they perhaps thought that they had conquered. At last the footsteps died away. There was a silence. Then, coming down from the Great Pyramid, surely I heard the light patter of a donkey's feet. They went to the Sphinx and ceased. The silence was profound. And I remembered the legend that Mary, Joseph, and the Holy Child once halted here on their long journey, and that Mary laid the tired Christ between the paws of the Sphinx to sleep. Yet even of the Christ the soul within that body could take no heed at all.

It is, I think, one of the most astounding facts in the history of man that a man was able to contain within his mind, to conceive, the conception of the Sphinx. That he could carry it out in the stone is amazing. But how much more amazing it is that before there was the Sphinx he was able to see it with his imagination! One may criticize the Sphinx. One may say impertinent things that are true about it: that seen from behind at a distance its head looks like an enormous mushroom growing in the sand, that its cheeks are swelled inordinately, that its thick-lipped mouth is legal, that from certain places it bears a resemblance to a prize bull-dog. All this does not matter at all. What does matter is that into the conception and execution of the Sphinx has been poured a supreme imaginative

power. He who created it looked beyond Egypt, beyond the life of man. He grasped the conception of Eternity, and realized the nothingness of Time, and he rendered it in stone.

I can imagine the most determined atheist looking at the Sphinx and, in a flash, not merely believing, but feeling that he had before him proof of the life of the soul beyond the grave, of the life of the soul of Khufu beyond the tomb of his Pyramid. Always as you return to the Sphinx you wonder at it more, you adore more strangely its repose, you steep yourself more intimately in the aloof peace that seems to emanate from it as light emanates from the sun. And as you look on it at last perhaps you understand the infinite; you understand where is the bourne to which the finite flows with all its greatness, as the great Nile flows from beyond Victoria Nyanza to the sea.

And as the wonder of the Sphinx takes possession of you gradually, so gradually do you learn to feel the majesty of the Pyramids of Ghizeh. Unlike the Step Pyramid of Sakkara, which, even when one is near it, looks like a small mountain, part of the land on which it rests, the Pyramids of Ghizeh look what they are—artificial excrescences, invented and carried out by man, expressions of man's greatness. Exquisite as they are as features of the drowsy golden landscape at the setting of the sun, I think they look most wonderful at night, when they are black beneath the stars. On many nights I have sat in the sand at a distance and looked at them, and always, and increasingly, they have stirred my imagination. Their profound calm, their classical simplicity, are greatly emphasized when no detail can be seen, when they are but black shapes towering to the stars. They seem to aspire then like prayers prayed by one who has said, "God does not need

any prayers, but I need them." In their simplicity they suggest a crowd of thoughts and of desires. Guy de Maupassant has said that of all the arts architecture is perhaps the most aesthetic, the most mysterious, and the most nourished by ideas. How true this is you feel as you look at the Great Pyramid by night. It seems to breathe out mystery. The immense base recalls to you the labyrinth within; the long descent from the tiny slit that gives you entrance, your uncertain steps in its hot, eternal night, your falls on the ice-like surfaces of its polished blocks of stone, the crushing weight that seemed to lie on your heart as you stole uncertainly on, summoned almost as by the desert; your sensation of being for ever imprisoned, taken and hidden by a monster from Egypt's wonderful light, as you stood in the central chamber, and realized the stone ocean into whose depths, like some intrepid diver, you had dared deliberately to come. And then your eyes travel up the slowly shrinking walls till they reach the dark point which is the top. There you stood with Abou, who spends half his life on the highest stone, hostages of the sun, bathed in light and air that perhaps came to you from the Gold Coast. And you saw men and camels like flies, and Cairo like a grey blur, and the Mokattam hills almost as a higher ridge of the sands. The mosque of Mohammed Ali was like a cup turned over. Far below slept the dead in that graveyard of the Sphinx, with its pale stones, its sand, its palm, its "Sycamores of the South," once worshipped and regarded as Hathor's living body. And beyond them on one side were the sleeping waters, with islands small, surely, as delicate Egyptian hands, and on the other the great desert that stretches, so the Bedouins say, on and on "for a march of a thousand days."

That base and that summit—what suggestion and what mystery in

their contrast! What sober, eternal beauty in the dark line which unites them, now sharply, yet softly, defined against the night, which is purple as the one garment of the fellah! That line leads the soul irresistibly from earth to the stars.

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SAKKARA

It was the "Little Christmas" of the Egyptians as I rode to Sakkara, after seeing a wonderful feat, the ascent and descent of the second Pyramid in nineteen minutes by a young Bedouin called Mohammed Ali who very seriously informed me that the only Roumi who had ever reached the top was an "American gentlemens" called Mark Twain, on his first visit to Egypt. On his second visit, Ali said, Mr. Twain had a bad foot, and declared he could not be bothered with the second Pyramid. He had been up and down without a guide; he had disturbed the jackal which lives near its summit, and which I saw running in the sunshine as Ali drew near its lair, and he was satisfied to rest on his immortal laurels. To the Bedouins of the Pyramids Mark Twain's world-wide celebrity is owing to one fact alone: he is the only Roumi who has climbed the second Pyramid. That is why his name is known to every one.

It was the "Little Christmas," and from the villages in the plain the Egyptians came pouring out to visit their dead in the desert cemeteries as I passed by to visit the dead in the tombs far off on the horizon. Women, swathed in black, gathered in groups and jumped monotonously up and down, to the accompaniment of stained hands clapping, and strange and weary songs. Tiny children blew furiously into tin trumpets, emitting sounds that were terribly European. Men strode seriously by, or stood in knots among the graves, talking vivaciously of the things of this life. As the sun rose higher in the heavens, this visit to the dead became a carnival of the living. Laughter and shrill cries of merriment betokened the resignation of the mourners. The sand-dunes were black with running figures, racing, leaping, chasing one another, rolling over and over in the warm and golden

grains. Some sat among the graves and ate. Some sang. Some danced. I saw no one praying, after the sun was up. The Great Pyramid of Ghizeh was transformed in this morning hour, and gleamed like a marble mountain, or like the hill covered with salt at El-Outaya, in Algeria. As we went on it sank down into the sands, until at last I could see only a small section with its top, which looked almost as pointed as a gigantic needle. Abou was there on the hot stones in the golden eye of the sun—Abou who lives to respect his Pyramid, and to serve Turkish coffee to those who are determined enough to climb it. Before me the Step Pyramid rose, brown almost as bronze, out of the sands here desolate and pallid. Soon I was in the house of Mariette, between the little sphinxes.

Near Cairo, although the desert is real desert, it does not give, to me, at any rate, the immense impression of naked sterility, of almost brassy, sun-baked fierceness, which often strikes one in the Sahara to the south of Algeria, where at midday one sometimes has a feeling of being lost upon a waste of metal, gleaming, angry, tigerish in color. Here, in Egypt, both the people and the desert seem gentler, safer, more amiable. Yet these tombs of Sakkara are hidden in a desolation of the sands, peculiarly blanched and mournful; and as you wander from tomb to tomb, descending and ascending, stealing through great galleries beneath the sands, creeping through tubes of stone, crouching almost on hands and knees in the sultry chambers of the dead, the awfulness of the passing away of dynasties and of race comes, like a cloud, upon your spirit. But this cloud lifts and floats from you in the cheerful tomb of Thi, that royal councillor, that scribe and confidant, whose life must have been passed in a round of serene activities, amid a sneering, though doubtless admiring, population.

Into this tomb of white, vivacious figures, gay almost, though never wholly frivolous—for these men were full of purpose, full of an ardor that seduces even where it seems grotesque—I took with me a child of ten called Ali, from the village of Kafiah; and as I looked from him to the walls around us, rather than the passing away of the races, I realized the persistence of type. For everywhere I saw the face of little Ali, with every feature exactly reproduced. Here he was bending over a sacrifice, leading a sacred bull, feeding geese from a cup, roasting a chicken, pulling a boat, carpentering, polishing, conducting a monkey for a walk, or merely sitting bolt upright and sneering. There were lines of little Alis with their hands held to their breasts, their faces in profile, their knees rigid, in the happy tomb of Thi; but he glanced at them unheeding, did not recognize his ancestors. And he did not care to penetrate into the tombs of Mera and Meri-Ra-anekh, into the Serapeum and the Mestaba of Ptah-hotep. Perhaps he was right. The Serapeum is grand in its vastness, with its long and high galleries and its mighty vaults containing the huge granite sarcophagi of the sacred bulls of Apis; Mera, red and white, welcomes you from an elevated niche benignly; Ptah-hotep, priest of the fifth dynasty, receives you, seated at a table that resembles a rake with long, yellow teeth standing on its handle, and drinking stiffly a cup of wine. You see upon the wall near by, with sympathy, a patient being plied by a naked and evidently an unyielding physician with medicine from a jar that might have been visited by Morgiana, a musician playing upon an instrument like a huge and stringless harp. But it is the happy tomb of Thi that lingers in your memory. In that tomb one sees proclaimed with a marvellous ingenuity and expressiveness the joy and the activity of life. Thi must have loved life; loved prayer and sacrifice, loved sport and war, loved feasting and gaiety, labor of the hands and of the head, loved

the arts, the music of flute and harp, singing by the lingering and plaintive voices which seem to express the essence of the east, loved sweet odors, loved sweet women—do we not see him sitting to receive offerings with his wife beside him?—loved the clear nights and the radiant days that in Egypt make glad the heart of man. He must have loved the splendid gift of life, and used it completely. And so little Ali had very right to make his sole obeisance at Thi's delicious tomb, from which death itself seems banished by the soft and embracing radiance of the almost living walls.

This delicate cheerfulness, a quite airy gaiety of life, is often combined in Egypt, and most beautifully and happily combined, with tremendous solidity, heavy impressiveness, a hugeness that is well-nigh tragic; and it supplies a relief to eye, to mind, to soul, that is sweet and refreshing as the trickle of a tarantella from a reed flute heard under the shadows of a temple of Hercules. Life showers us with contrasts. Art, which gives to us a second and a more withdrawn life, opening to us a door through which we pass to our dreams, may well imitate life in this.

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ABYDOS

Through a long and golden noontide, and on into an afternoon whose opulence of warmth and light it seemed could never wane, I sat alone, or wandered gently quite alone, in the Temple of Seti I. at Abydos. Here again I was in a place of the dead. In Egypt one ever seeks the dead in the sunshine, black vaults in the land of the gold. But here in Abydos I was accompanied by whiteness. The general effect of Seti's mighty temple is that it is a white temple when seen in full sunshine and beneath a sky of blinding blue. In an arid place it stands, just beyond an Egyptian village that is a maze of dust, of children, of animals, and flies. The last blind houses of the village, brown as brown paper, confront it on a mound, and as I came toward it a girl-child swathed in purple with ear-rings, and a twist of orange handkerchief above her eyes, full of cloud and fire, leaned from a roof, sinuously as a young snake, to watch me. On each side, descending, were white, ruined walls, stretched out like defaced white arms of the temple to receive me. I stood still for a moment and looked at the narrow, severely simple doorway, at the twelve broken columns advanced on either side, white and greyish white with their right angles, their once painted figures now almost wholly colorless.

Here lay the Osirians, those blessed dead of the land of Egypt, who worshipped the Judge of the Dead, the Lord of the Underworld, and who hoped for immortality through him—Osiris, husband of Isis, Osiris, receiver of prayers. Osiris the sun who will not be conquered by night, but eternally rises again, and so is the symbol of the resurrection of the soul. It is said that Set, the power of Evil, tore the body of Osiris into fourteen fragments and scattered them over the land. But multitudes of worshippers of Osiris believed him buried near Abydos and, like

those who loved the sweet songs of Hafiz, they desired to be buried near him whom they adored; and so this place became a place of the dead, a place of many prayers, a white place of many longings.

I was glad to be alone there. The guardian left me in perfect peace. I happily forgot him. I sat down in the shadow of a column upon its mighty projecting base. The sky was blinding blue. Great bees hummed, like bourdons, through the silence, deepening the almost heavy calm. These columns, architraves, doorways, how mighty, how grandly strong they were! And yet soon I began to be aware that even here, where surely one should read only the Book of the Dead, or bend down to the hot ground to listen if perchance one might hear the dead themselves murmuring over the chapters of Beatification far down in their hidden tombs, there was a likeness, a gentle gaiety of life, as in the tomb of Thi. The effect of solidity was immense. These columns bulged, almost like great fruits swollen out by their heady strength of blood. They towered up in crowds. The heavy roof, broken in places most mercifully to show squares and oblongs of that perfect, calling blue, was like a frowning brow. And yet I was with grace, with gentleness, with lightness, because in the place of the dead I was again with the happy, living walls. Above me, on the roof, there was a gleam of palest blue, like the blue I have sometimes seen at morning on the Ionian sea just where it meets the shore. The double rows of gigantic columns stretched away, tall almost as forest trees, to right of me and to left, and were shut in by massive walls, strong as the walls of a fortress. And on these columns, and on these walls, dead painters and gravers had breathed the sweet breath of life. Here in the sun, for me alone, as it seemed, a population followed their occupations. Men walked, and kneeled, and

stood, some white and clothed, some nude, some red as the red man's child that leaped beyond the sea. And here was the lotus-flower held in reverent hands, not the rose-lotus, but the blossom that typified the rising again of the sun, and that, worn as an amulet, signified the gift of eternal youth. And here was hawk-faced Horus, and here a priest offering sacrifice to a god, belief in whom has long since passed away. A king revealed himself to me, adoring Ptah, "Father of the beginnings," who established upon earth, my figures thought, the everlasting justice, and again at the knees of Amen burning incense in his honor. Isis and Osiris stood together, and sacrifice was made before their sacred bark. And Seti worshipped them, and Seshta, goddess of learning, wrote in the book of eternity the name of the king.

The great bees hummed, moving slowly in the golden air among the mighty columns, passing slowly among these records of lives long over, but which seemed still to be. And I looked at the lotus-flowers which the little grotesque hands were holding, had been holding for how many years—the flowers that typified the rising again of the sun and the divine gift of eternal youth. And I thought of the bird and the Sphinx, the thing that was whimsical wooing the thing that was mighty. And I gazed at the immense columns and at the light and little figures all about me. Bird and Sphinx, delicate whimsicality, calm and terrific power! In Egypt the dead men have combined them, and the combination has an irresistible fascination, weaves a spell that entrances you in the sunshine and beneath the blinding blue. At Abydos I knew it. And I loved the columns that seemed blown out with exuberant strength, and I loved the delicate white walls that, like the lotus-flower, give to the world a youth that seems eternal—a youth

that is never frivolous, but that is full of the divine, and yet pathetic, animation of happy life.

The great bees hummed more drowsily. I sat quite still in the sun. And then presently, moved by some prompting instinct, I turned my head, and, far off, through the narrow portal of the temple, I saw the girl-child swathed in purple still lying, sinuously as a young snake, upon the palm-wood roof above the brown earth wall to watch me with her eyes of cloud and fire.

And upon me, like cloud and fire—cloud of the tombs and the great temple columns, fire of the brilliant life painted and engraved upon them—there stole the spell of Egypt.

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THE NILE

I do not find in Egypt any more the strangeness that once amazed, and at first almost bewildered me. Stranger by far is Morocco, stranger the country beyond Biskra, near Mogar, round Touggourt, even about El Kantara. There I feel very far away, as a child feels distance from dear, familiar things. I look to the horizon expectant of I know not what magical occurrences, what mysteries. I am aware of the summons to advance to marvellous lands, where marvellous things must happen. I am taken by that sensation of almost trembling magic which came to me when first I saw a mirage far out in the Sahara. But Egypt, though it contains so many marvels, has no longer for me the marvellous atmosphere. Its keynote is seductiveness.

In Egypt one feels very safe. Smiling policemen in clothes of spotless white—emblematic, surely, of their innocence!—seem to be everywhere, standing calmly in the sun. Very gentle, very tender, although perhaps not very true, are the Bedouins at the Pyramids. Up the Nile the fellaheen smile as kindly as the policemen, smile protectingly upon you, as if they would say, "Allah has placed us here to take care of the confiding stranger." No ferocious demands for money fall upon my ears; only an occasional suggestion is subtly conveyed to me that even the poor must live and that I am immensely rich. An amiable, an almost enticing seductiveness seems emanating from the fertile soil, shining in the golden air, gleaming softly in the amber sands, dimpling in the brown, the mauve, the silver eddies of the Nile. It steals upon one. It ripples over one. It laps one as if with warm and scented waves. A sort of lustrous languor overtakes one. In physical well-being one sinks down, and with wide eyes one gazes and listens and enjoys,

and thinks not of the morrow.

The dahabiyeh—her very name, the *Loulia*, has a gentle, seductive, cooing sound—drifts broadside to the current with furled sails, or glides smoothly on before an amiable north wind with sails unfurled. Upon the bloomy banks, rich brown in color, the brown men stoop and straighten themselves, and stoop again, and sing. The sun gleams on their copper skins, which look polished and metallic. Crouched in his net behind the drowsy oxen, the little boy circles the livelong day with the sakieh. And the sakieh raises its wailing, wayward voice and sings to the shadoof; and the shadoof sings to the sakieh; and the lifted water falls and flows away into the green wilderness of doura that, like a miniature forest, spreads on every hand to the low mountains, which do not perturb the spirit, as do the iron mountains of Algeria. And always the sun is shining, and the body is drinking in its warmth, and the soul is drinking in its gold. And always the ears are full of warm and drowsy and monotonous music. And always the eyes see the lines of brown bodies, on the brown river-banks above the brown waters, bending, straightening, bending, straightening, with an exquisitely precise monotony. And always the *Loulia* seems to be drifting, so quietly she slips up, or down, the level waterway.

And one drifts, too; one can but drift, happily, sleepily, forgetting every care. From Abydos to Denderah one drifts, and from Denderah to Karnak, to Luxor, to all the marvels on the western shore; and on to Edfu, to Kom Ombos, to Assuan, and perhaps even into Nubia, to Abu-Simbel, and to Wadi-Halfa. Life on the Nile is a long dream, golden and sweet as honey of Hymettus. For I let the "divine serpent," who at Philae may be seen issuing from her charmed cavern, take

me very quietly to see the abodes of the dead, the halls of the vanished, upon her green and sterile shores. I know nothing of the bustling, shrieking steamer that defies her, churning into angry waves her waters for the edification of those who would "do" Egypt and be gone before they know her.

If you are in a hurry, do not come to Egypt. To hurry in Egypt is as wrong as to fall asleep in Wall street, or to sit in the Greek Theatre at Taormina, reading "How to Make a Fortune with a Capital of Fifty Pounds."

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