Khartoum, and the Blue and White Niles, Vol. 1 (of 2)

George Melly

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KHARTOUM,

AND

THE BLUE AND WHITE NILES.

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KHARTOUM,

AND

THE BLUE AND WHITE NILES.

BY GEORGE MELLY.

Second Edition.

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PREFACE.

* * * * *

The Work now presented to the public, is nothing more than a transcript from a Journal kept by the Author during a tour in Egypt and Nubia, (undertaken in company with other members of his family) only a few months ago. The peculiarity of the relations of Egypt and the Porte at the present moment, affords the Author the best excuse he can put forward for appearing in print, and he hopes that observations so recently made over a very interesting portion of the dominions of the Pasha of Egypt, by a perfectly disinterested spectator, may be though not unworthy the attention of the reader.

It is only here necessary to add, that we succeeded in penetrating Nubia as far as Khartoum, the place of junction of the Blue and White Niles, where few travellers had preceded us, and to which town no ladies had ever penetrated before.

LONDON, OCTOBER 5, 1851.

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KHARTOUM,

AND

THE BLUE AND WHITE NILES.

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CHAPTER I.

The Adriatic — Alexandria — The Grand Square — Pompey's Pillar — English invaders — Egyptian Cemetery — Cleopatra's Needles — Stroll through the streets — The Great Canal — The first pipe.

After a pleasant journey through Lombardy, and a very agreeable stay at the city of gondolas and palaces, we arrived at Trieste on the 25th of September, 1850, on our way to Egypt. Our party consisted of my father and mother, my brother and sister, and myself. We had all travelled much, and were thus pretty well accustomed to the small annoyances, which those who leave comfortable homes in England to visit other lands, must expect to encounter. But it should be borne in mind that two of our number were ladies, which may show that the journey we contemplated was neither too fatiguing nor too difficult; many may therefore follow in our steps, and enjoy, as we did, a tour full of new and interesting scenes.

We hoped, before returning, to be able to penetrate far into the depths of Nubia; departing from the beaten track of Nile travellers, to reach the 14th degree of north latitude, and add our names to those of the few English who have gazed on the junction of the White and Blue Niles. Some of us might have had wild wishes relative to the undiscovered source of that mighty river: while others might have looked with some degree of apprehension to the task of making a road where none existed, and traversing a country hitherto explored only by men. We all agreed, however, to go as far as it appeared safe and easy; meanwhile to bind ourselves to nothing, but to be ruled entirely by circumstances; which, in fact, are the real guide-books of travellers—more especially in an unknown country.

The morning of the 27th of September, far as the year had advanced,

was a most charming one; for summer, like other visiters, lingers long on the beautiful shores of the Mediterranean—never leaving the southern, and but for a few brief months the northern coast of that blue lake.

In the middle of the harbour of Trieste, gay with Austrian frigates, and Neapolitan corvettes, lay the ‘Europa,’ a large steamer, which was to start for Alexandria at half-past eight. Before that hour we were all on board; soon afterwards we bade adieu to Europe, and doubling the Pirano point, stood down the Adriatic, skirting its rocky shores that were backed by the distant blue hills of Illyria. Up to this moment we had scarcely been able to look round us, so crowded were the decks with shore-people, bidding adieu to Indian passengers, and Alexandria merchants; but when delivered from these intruders, we found ourselves in a large and commodious vessel, about the size of the boats plying between Liverpool and Glasgow. Some thirty persons were walking the deck, a few smoking cigars, and others lighting long chibouques, as if, on weighing anchor to quit Europe, we were already in the East. We might have thought that this was indeed the case; for the thick awning could not protect us from the intense heat of the sun; and the Gulf of Venice, unruffled by a single wave, looked more like a mirror than a sea.

As soon as we were well off, I observed a young Englishman, in a spirit characteristic of our country, attack the captain about the passage—as to whether it was likely to be rough or pleasant, with many similar unanswerable questions as though the weather could be insured for the next five days in the most changeable of waters. The captain—and when does that authority not pretend to know the future movements of the winds and waves?—averred that it would be a dead

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