

**OUR
CAUGHNAWAGAS
IN EGYPT**

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Our Caughnawagas in Egypt by Louis Jackson

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CAUGHNAWAGAS
IN EGYPT**

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A narrative of what was seen and accomplished by the Contingent of North American Indian Voyageurs who led the British Boat Expedition for the Relief of KHARTOUM up the Cataracts of the NILE.



—BY—

LOUIS JACKSON

OF CAUGHNAWAGA.

CAPTAIN OF THE CONTINGENT,

With an introductory Preface

By T. S. BROWN, Esq.

OUR CAUGHNAWAGAS IN EGYPT.

Montreal :

WM. DRYSDALE & CO.,
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232 ST. JAMES STREET.

1885.





LOUIS JACKSON, Captain of the Contingent.

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PREFACE.

THE Indians of Caughnawaga are an offshoot from the Mohawks, one of the divisions of the Six Nations, formerly in pseudo occupation of western New York, and known to the French by the general name of Iroquois. Long before the cession of this Province to Great Britain, they were settled at the head of the rapids of the St. Lawrence opposite Lachine, on a tract of land ten miles square, or 64,000 acres held in common, but lately separated into lots to be divided among the people as individual property.

Contrary to what has been the too common fate of aborigines brought into close contact with foreigners, the Caughnawagas, with some mixture of white blood, have maintained throughout, their Indian customs, manners and language, with the manhood of their ancestors, in an alertness, strength and power of endurance wherever these qualities have been required: in the boating or rafting on our larger rivers and the hardships of *Voyageurs* in the North-West.

As a high tribute to this known excellence, the call for Canadian *Voyageurs* to assist in the boat navigation of the Nile was accompanied by a special requirement that there should be a contingent of fifty Caughnawagas. They responded quickly to the call, performed the task committed to them in a manner most satisfactory as described in these pages, and returned to their homes at the end of six months, after a voyage of more than 12,000 miles, sound and resolute as when they started, with the loss of but two men.

There is something unique in the idea of the aborigines of the New World being sent for to teach the Egyptians how to pass the Cataracts of the Nile, which has been navigated in some way by them for thousands of years, that should make this little book attractive to all readers, especially as it is written by one born and bred in Caughnawaga, who, with the quick eye of an Indian, has noticed many things unnoticed by ordinary tourists and travellers.

It is written in a most excellent spirit that might wisely be imitated by other travellers. The writer finds no faults, blames nobody, and always content, is generous in his acknowledgments for every act of kindness and proper consideration shown to him and his party, by Her Majesty's Officers of all ranks in command of the expedition. It was written off-hand and goes forth to the public as it came from the pen of the writer, to be judged in its style and the matter contained, by no standard but its own.

MONTREAL, April, 1885.

OUR CAUGHNAWAGAS IN EGYPT.

When it was made known by Lord Melgund in the early part of September, 1884, that it was the express desire of General Lord Wolseley to have Caughnawaga Indians form part of the Canadian Contingent, the required number was soon obtained, in spite of discouraging talk and groundless fears. Having been introduced to Lord Melgund, I agreed to go and look after the Caughnawaga boys, although then busily engaged in securing my crops. I, with a number of others reached the "Ocean King" at Quebec, having been left behind in Montreal through incorrect information given me by one of the ship's officers as to the time of sailing. We received the farewell of the Governor General on board the "Ocean King," and His Excellency's very kind words had an especially encouraging effect upon my boys.

On reaching Sidney, C. B., and while taking in coal, some funny tricks were played by voyageurs which I must not omit. To get ashore in spite of the officers who kept watch on the wharf, some daring fellows jumped from the vessel's rigging into the empty coal cars returning to the wharf, coming back in the dark and the vessel being a few feet off the wharf, the men had to climb aboard by a rope. Now it happened, that of two friends, one was able to get up, the other was not, neither could his friend help him, they however, contrived a plan, which they

carried out to perfection. The one on the wharf laid quietly down, while his friend climbed aboard and there informed our officers that a man had hurt himself by falling off the coal shoot, immediately there was great alarm, lamps were hung over the side and the man discovered by his clothes to be one of the voyageurs, a plank was shoved out over the ship's rail, standing nearly upright and a line hove, (some suggested to put the line around his neck.) However, he was hoisted aboard and carried towards the cabin. While being carried, the apparently lifeless one was seen to open his eyes three or four times, but too many hands evidently had hold of him and so he was brought before the doctor, who eagerly examined him, but soon pronounced him dead, "dead drunk" and ordered him to be taken to his bunk, where he soon sat up laughing and feeling good, to escape so easily.

On arriving in Alexandria, after a fine passage and good treatment we saw our boats, which at the first sight and from a distance, were condemned by the boys, but later experience changed our first impression.

We left the wharf at Alexandria on the 8th of October, at 11 a. m. by train. The first-class carriages were after the English style, but the troop cars in which we were transported were less comfortable, they had four benches placed fore and aft, two in the centre back to back and one on each side with back to outside, lacking the usual conveniences of our Canadian cars. The sides of the car were about four feet high, then open to the roof. We were fifty-six in a car which made it uncomfortably crowded. After leaving Alexandria I was surprised to see