

**GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES
OF EXPEDITIONS IN
CENTRAL AFRICA, BY
THREE DUTCH LADIES**

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Geographical Notes of Expeditions in Central Africa, by Three Dutch Ladies by John A. Tinne

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JOHN A. TINNE, ESQ., F.R.G.S.

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CENTRAL AFRICA, BY THREE DUTCH LADIES.

By John A. Tinne, Esq., F.R.G.S.

IN the month of July, 1861, the three Dutch ladies, my relations, whose adventures I am about to relate, left their home at the Hague and arrived at Alexandria in August, to commence their third journey in Egypt—having previously visited it in 1856 and 1858—and to proceed through it to other countries adjacent to the Nile.

They wintered in the outskirts of Cairo, at a charming country seat, a pretty little palace of white marble, surrounded with gardens, full of roses, jessamine and other sweet-scented flowers in full bloom. Their time was fully occupied in making preparations and laying in stores for their expedition.*

Quitting their pretty villa with regret, they embarked on the 9th of January, 1862. They were obliged to hire three boats. No. 1 contained themselves, four European servants, a Syrian cook with two assistants, five dogs, the necessary articles of toilet for the ladies, canteens, guns, including an elephant-rifle and several fowling-pieces, ammunition, provisions for a year and, as it was impossible in those parts to procure change, £800 worth of small copper

* They made the acquaintance at Cairo of Dr. Krapf, a German Protestant Missionary, an agreeable old man, who had twice before travelled in Abyssinia, and for which he was again on the point of starting. At one time they felt inclined to accede to his proposition and spend the rainy season at Gondar, the capital of that country, but subsequent circumstances induced them to decide otherwise.

coin—a load of itself for ten camels. No. 2 carried camels, a horse and donkey, with their grooms, a janissary and a Nubian huntsman, four donkey-saddles, ropes and other harness, panniers, a palanquin, saddle bags, six tents, iron bedsteads and bedding and casks for carrying water across the desert. No. 3 contained thirty-two trunks and packages, with furniture, books, engravings &c. &c.

We will not refer to their travels over beaten ground, already often described, but, passing by Assouan, where the first Cataract occurs, and all the usual places of resort, we commence with their leaving Korosko, where they parted with their boats, or, to use their own words, "left the Nile, Tourists "and Civilization," and began their journey across the Nubian Desert. Between the last-named place and Abu-Hammed the river makes a considerable bend, and the navigation is difficult. The distance between these two places is about 300 geographical miles, but by water, following the sinuities of the river, it is more than double that distance. Since, however, every convenience for encampment and all provisions were to be conveyed overland, the retinue was rather formidable. It consisted, in addition to those before mentioned, of an Arab chief, six guides and twenty-five camel-drivers. There were camels for the baggage and provisions and dromedaries for people to ride, 102 in number, besides two milch camels to provide milk in the desert. The camels conveyed chickens in baskets and provisions of every sort—fruit, eggs, potatoes, tea, coffee, flour, wine, beer, brandy; there were also sheep.

They left Korosko on the 26th of February, and reached Abu-Hammed in fifteen days, during two of which they rested in very romantic valleys. They did not find it the horrible desert they expected, but interspersed with rocks and hills, valleys and plains, with many varieties of trees and plants. The camels &c. had herbs to eat every night;

they found water in the clefts of the rocks enough to replenish their barrels; and the camels could often obtain drink. The usual time for crossing the desert is eight or nine days; but the ladies did not feel inclined to travel more than seven or eight hours a-day, so that almost double the time was occupied in the journey.* Above Abu-Hammed they rejoined the river, which, however, is not easily navigable between that place and Berber—the stream being rapid; and one of the Cataracts (the fifth) is situated about 80 or 40 miles below Berber.

One of the ladies was so fatigued with the land journey, that they procured a little boat of the country—which is described as being very much like an old-fashioned piano case—with six boatmen, having paddles like wooden spoons with very long handles; but on the first day, when the rest of the party had travelled some hours by land and pitched their tents, no boat came. They lighted fires by the river side and sent men back by the banks, but no tidings were obtained till the next day, when it was ascertained that the men at sunset were so tired that they had stopped at a village on the river-bank for the night. They found the villagers very hospitable, and rejoined their party at nine o'clock the next morning. After this adventure the servants would not go in the boats again, and so proceeded by land towards Berber, following the course of the river. The ladies, however, were so pleased with the water excursion, that they reverted to it on the two following days; and thus the journey of four days was prolonged to eight. At the end of that period

* They mention their paying a visit, at Gages, near Abu-Hammed, to the tomb of Andrew Melly, a merchant of Liverpool, who, with his wife, their two sons and daughter, travelled as far as Khartim, in the Soudan, in 1851. He was seized with fever on the return journey and, after five days' illness, died in his tent near this spot. The erection of the monument, of white marble (the inscription being in gold), was entrusted by his family to Mr. Consul Petherick, who was aided in the pious task by the Governor, Latif Pasha; and it was gratifying to observe that it was in excellent preservation, and treated with great respect by the Arabs and other inhabitants of the country.

they approached Berber, where they were received by thirty chiefs, who came to meet them two hours' journey from the town. They were mounted on camels and accompanied them to the entrance of the town, where the Governor stood to welcome them and offered them his garden to encamp in, which they describe as a sort of African Paradise. The heat was, however, intense—the thermometer standing at 120. They there took leave of their camels and drivers. The Arabs who had accompanied them appeared very grateful for the presents given to them and for the kindness with which they had been treated during the journey; and the ladies describe them as a very nice people. They had not the least trouble with them. They were very handsome men— not black, but bronze coloured, and most graceful figures.

During the whole of this journey, whenever they passed through a village they received the greatest hospitality. The women came out to invite them to repose, and brought them milk and dates. There were some very graceful young women, who danced before them to amuse them. They all seemed pleased and happy to see them. After remaining a short time at Berber, they engaged three boats, in which they proceeded up the Nile to Khartüm, the capital of the Soudan. The Atbara, or Black River (the Astaboras of the ancients), falls into the Nile about twenty miles above Berber. It rises in Abyssinia and brings down the black mud which enriches the plains of lower Egypt. Passing the sixth Cataract, about eighty miles below Khartüm, they describe the river as being neither interesting nor pretty.

Khartüm is situated on marshy ground on the Blue Nile, near the junction of that river with the White Nile. The town itself is but a collection of ugly mud huts and houses. The population amounts, notwithstanding, to about 40,000. Khartüm is the residence of Consuls of several nations, including, till recently, one of Great Britain, namely, Mr. Petherick,

who was absent in search of Captain Speke during the visit of the ladies. The ladies considered the Blue Nile to be the reverse of a pretty river. They remained on its southern bank till May, encamped in a pleasant garden; but, finding that when the rains set in this would be a very disagreeable residence, they engaged a steamer belonging to one of the Viceroy's relatives, Prince Halim, formerly governor of the Soudan, in which with their boats they proceeded up the White Nile in search of a more suitable residence during the wet season. Their party, thirty-eight in number, consisted of the three ladies, two male and two female European and other servants, a Syrian cook and two assistants, an interpreter, a Janissary, two hunters, a Turkish officer and ten soldiers well armed, a mason and carpenter, the crews, an engineer and stokers;— a horse, donkeys, mules, &c. The interpreter, who acted as captain of the steamer, and the mason were Europeans. It is stated that the price paid for an ox was 8s. 4d., for a sheep 4s. 2d., chickens 6d. a-piece, and so on. The feeding of the party cost £16 a month only. That was moderate enough; but the hire of the boats and camels and the cost of all stores procurable from Europe were dreadfully high.

They were delighted with this part of the White Nile: it was different from the Nile in Egypt. They compare it to a richly ornamented water, like Virginia Water, near Windsor—the banks being finely wooded with the *Soonud** or gum tree, as large as oaks, tamarind trees and various beautiful shrubs—full of the prettiest blue monkeys, playing in the branches—the air full of love-birds and the river abounding with hippopotami, crocodiles and water-flowers. Amongst the latter were some like the large Victoria lily; and at night the river was sparkling with fire-flies covering the lilies.

But there are drawbacks. The shameful slave-trade, though forbidden by the Viceroy, is going on as actively as ever. The

* Pronounced "Soont."