

**VILLAGE LIFE IN EGYPT:
WITH SKETCHES
OF THE SAÏD, IN
TWO VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Village Life in Egypt: With Sketches of the Saïd, in Two Volumes, Vol. II by Bayle St. John

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VILLAGE LIFE IN EGYPT:

WITH

SKETCHES OF THE SAÏD.

BY

BAYLE ST. JOHN,

AUTHOR OF

'Two Years' Residence in a Levantine Family,'
'Adventures in the Libyan Desert,' 'Views in the Oasis of Siwah,' &c.

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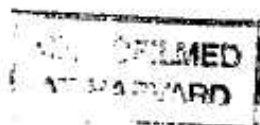
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VILLAGE LIFE IN EGYPT,

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CHAPTER I.

Leave Thebes—Beating for Hares—Mountains of Coal—The Ababde—Ombos—Island of Ghanakh—Arrive at Essouan—Picturesque Scene—Old Cemetery—The Seven and Seventy—Syenite Granite—Environs of Essouan—the Town and People—Elephantine—Common Burying-place—View of the River—Secluded Village of Mahatta—Berberi Children—The Cataracts from the Shore—Splendid Scene—Korore—Cunning Hyenas.

FROM Thebes, still proceeding southward, the rocky desert hugging the river more closely on either hand, we came, in due course, to Esneh and Edfou. At both these places our stay was short; but opposite the latter we spent a pleasant morning in beating for hares, of which we got several. There is an immense space of ground here, almost entirely uncultivated, and partly overgrown by dense thickets, partly by a rank crop of halfé. The mountains in the neighborhood are now called the Mountains of Coal, because that mineral was said to have been found in them by some Frenchman in the Pasha's service. I believe, however, that no such discovery has, in reality, been made; and that in this, as in other similar cases, the will must be taken for the deed. An Ababde village is seen in the dis-

tance, on the borders of the desert. Some say that here are the head-quarters of the tribe, whilst others place them at Redesieh. The principal Sheikh has lately bought a house at Luxor, from a Coptic lady, the mistress of a French traveller.

A little after dark, a good wind had taken us among the shoals that precede Haggar Silsilis; and we moored near the Bedawin establishment of El-Hammam. After a cursory glance at the quarries and temples next morning, we went at a spanking rate through the defile; and the breeze still increasing, passed, with a regular sea on, beneath a precipitous range of hills on the west, and halted, out of respect for our plates and dishes, just below Ombos for dinner. Then away again for the frontiers of Ethiopia—the breeze falling off gradually, until the waters became quite calm. The towering propylon of Ombos soon disappeared in the rear, and a succession of lovely reaches, and slips of sylvan scenery in their usual frame-work of rock, lured us on to where the island of Ghanakh, with its swardy shores and long palm-groves, starts, like a vision, out of the river. The bright lights of sunset were beating, as it were, in waves and foam, on the western horizon. It was a scene of exquisite beauty, and I shall long remember it. We stopped at Akabah.

The rocks on either side of the river now begin to assume more varied forms, and to break up into wilder looking ravines. We proceeded from Akabah with a light wind, and at length reached the term of our voyage at Essouan. The approach to this town is picturesque. The island of Elephantine, green with groves and meadows, and numerous huge bowlders

covered with hieroglyphical tablets, break up the river into narrow channels. On the west, huge sandy hills, becoming precipitous here and there, are crowned with ruined convents. On the east there is a fertile plain, terminating in a jagged range of rocks. But the modern city itself is not visible, being concealed by palm-gardens; whilst, towering above it, the ruins of old Arab Essouan form a very marked feature in the landscape.

We passed between two of the bowlders, round which the water dances in giddy eddies, and found ourselves in a lake-like reach, embraced by the island of Elephantine and the east bank. Soon afterwards we had chosen a berth near half a dozen other European dahabiahs, and considered ourselves settled for some time. The shore was covered with boats — under repair or in construction — with sheds, and with merchandise just brought down the Cataracts. A little below our station stood an old ruin of classical times, jutting out like a mole, but having served evidently as a bath. On some of the stones were hieroglyphics, but these seem to have been fragments of another building.

Our first walk was to the old cemetery, that stretches far out into the desert, from the summit of a hill descending precipitously to the river, opposite the wall of the Nilometer. The way lies through a small grove, and then through an expanse of ruined brick houses, covering the slope of the hill, and mixed here and there with rocks bearing hieroglyphics and figures in relief. On reaching the summit we had a curious view over the valley of tombs, with its thousands of grave-