

**MOSS GATHERED BY A  
ROLLING STONE, OR,  
REMINISCENCES OF  
TRAVEL**

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Moss gathered by a rolling stone, or, Reminiscences of travel by Richard S. Ferguson

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**RICHARD S. FERGUSON**

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*Contains a Guide Book to Thebes and its Ruins.*

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# MOSS GATHERED

BY

A ROLLING STONE;

OR,

REMINISCENCES OF TRAVEL.

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PART I.—EASTWARD HO [EGYPT & UP THE NILE].

PART II.—GUIDE BOOK TO THEBES AND ITS RUINS.

PART III.—ROUND THE WORLD.

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BY

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to the Reform Bill," and other Works.*

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1873.



## PREFACE.

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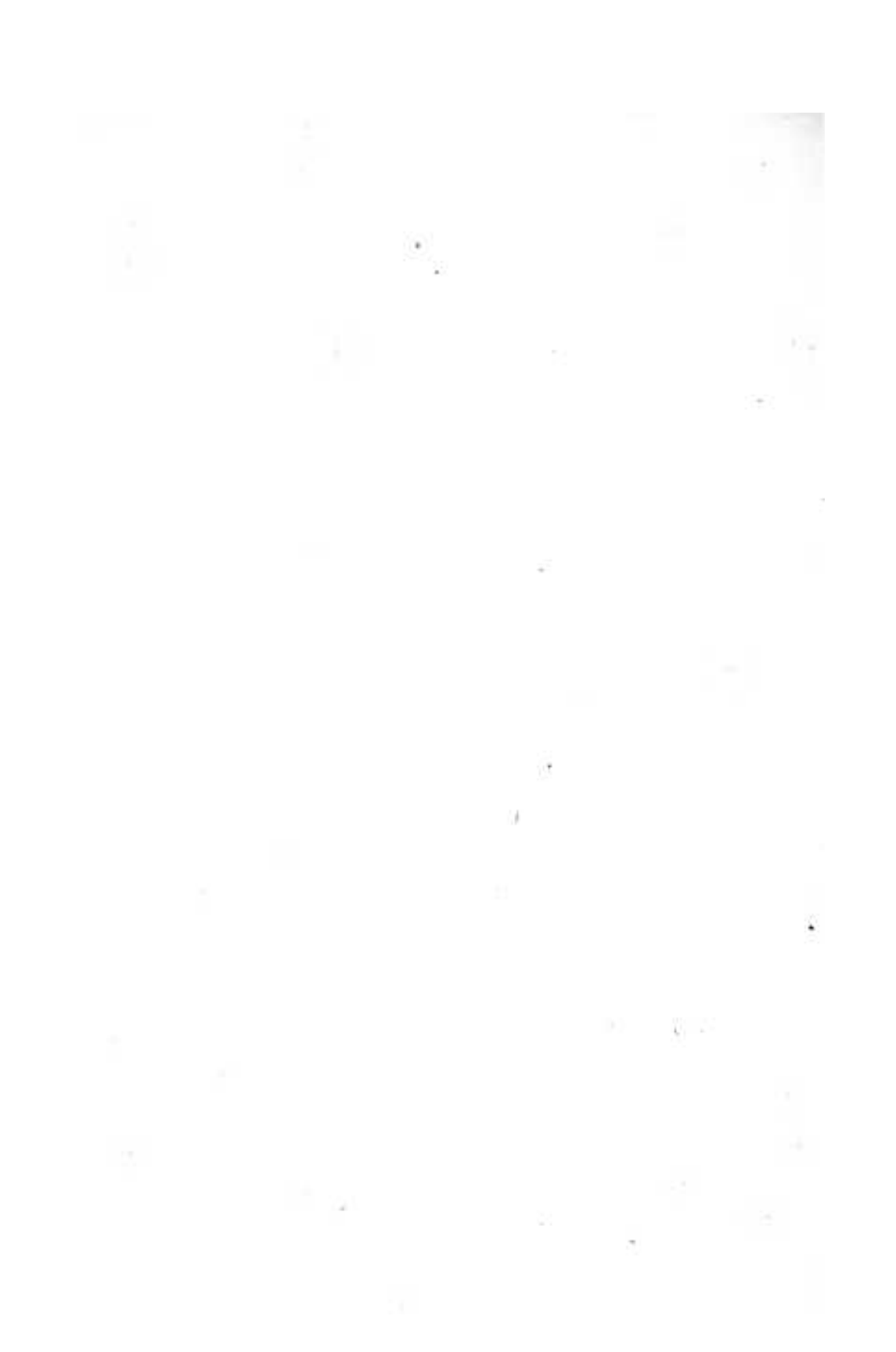
I wrote these letters on board ship to amuse myself. I, under the *nom-de-plume* of "A Roving Cumbrian," sent them to the *Carlisle Patriot* because the editor thought they would amuse other people. I now reprint them because I see a chance of selling them.

PART II.—"Leaves from a Theban Guide Book," is an attempt to supply, what is much wanted, a Guide Book to Thebes, cheaper and less learned than Murray.

R. S. F.

*Carlisle, October 1873.*





## LETTER I.

### EASTWARD HO !

January, 1871.

Doomed to exile by a committee of learned physicians, who gave me no option as to the place of my banishment, but dismissing Italy and Spain as too liable to cold, Algeria as too unsettled, and Ceylon as too damp, dictated Egypt, I found myself on January 21st, 1871, careering down St. George Channel in the fast new steamer *Scotland*, 2,200 tons burden, bound from Liverpool to Calcutta *via* the Suez Canal. For the first day or two we were rather uncomfortable, the weather was raw and cold ; the Bay of Biscay behaved as the Bay of Biscay should, and gave us many a pitch and roll. Dinner was difficult to get down one's mouth ; for it would rather hop into one's lap, or jump on to the floor ; while, spite of fiddles or wooden frames on the table, there was a perpetual crash of falling glass : yet to most this was but scant loss ; few, for the first four or five days, could show up at meals, so that I and one or two tough customers had the long tables and all on them to ourselves. Other miseries were that the sea one midnight came on board, washed out the deck cabins, and then descended with hideous noise into the cuddy ; that there was a leak in the stern from which dribbled over cuddy and cabin floors a perpetual and annoying stream of water, causing captain, carpenter, and engineer ceaseless labour day and night to discover and plug up the *fons origo mali* ; that, the greatest woe of all, the cook had a habit of retiring early to bed, first dousing his fire, and thus, until we learnt his habits, depriving us of hot grog at night. These public ills did not afflict me much ; I was not sea-sick ; I had a fine hunger and thirst upon me, and enjoyed my meals ; I built an island in my cabin, and thus dodged the leak ; I was only bored, for it was too cold for me on deck, and I was reduced, *pour passer le temps*, to take it out in bunk (nautical for bed) between meals. Things soon improved : by 10 p.m. on the 24th we made the light on Cape Finisterre, and thus passed out of the "weary

Bag o' Biscuits," as a nurse-maid on board was heard to mis-cally the Bay of Biscay. Next evening we passed first the Berlings light, and then that on the rock of Lisbon; the weather grew warmer, the sea smoother, the sun brighter, the ship drier, and undreamt-of passengers crawled out from their bunks, and began to develop jovial and social qualities up till now undiscovered; while, as we were running close to the Portuguese coast, its scenery gave us, as yet strangers to each other, a common subject of interest. The coast scenery was fine: high cliffs of slate and red rock, with a lofty range of barren mountain towering up behind them; no sign of cultivation, not a living thing to be seen save vast flocks of gulls and sea-fowl, hovering about the cliffs, and in the distance looking like clouds of midges. About noon on the 26th January we doubled Cape St. Vincent: miles of brilliant-coloured cliff, varying from red to black, stretched right and left far away, glistening brightly under a blue and cloudless sky and burning sun, while a lighthouse of dazzling white was perched on the summit of the cape, beyond which was a lovely little bay with some ruins, either of a castle, chapel, or hermitage; above, again, were a mass of white buildings, formerly a monastery, but now a State prison. With its foreground of blue sea, and frame of blue sky, the Cape, as we saw it, would have well suited Mr. Hook as a subject for a picture. A large Italian steamer passed close by us at this point, and we sighted several ships bearing up for the Straits of Gibraltar. In the previous night we had by the way run through and nearly over a whole fleet of Portuguese fishing vessels, which would not get out of our way, so we had to get out of theirs—a noisy process, by no means conducive to quiet repose; the babies too, (we had a large supply on board) howled largely and loudly at night, and their mothers and nurses being mostly ill, they did not get the attention and whipping they required. Our skipper, an old P. and O. Captain, was the great patron, attendant, and nurse of these children, and seemed most proud of his small friends; in truth, he was a man most marvellously attentive to his passengers and their comforts: his wife was on board, accompanied by a little Maltese dog of great curliness of hair and curiosity of mind, which latter nearly worked him bitter woe. The lazarette hatch was open, and doggie needs must see: the ship lurched, and doggie flew head over heels below on the top of the steward, who was getting up jams and other stores.