CROCODILE PITS.

A TRIP THROUGH SOME ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CAVERNS.

Thousands of Gilded and Torn Fragments of Ancient People—The Sarcophagus of the Priests and Sacred Animals.

The sudden demand for mummied cats reminds me of a visit paid many years ago to the famous crocodile pits of Maabdeh. It may safely be assumed that those who have visited Maabdeh are very few. It lies some distance from the Nile, behind Manfaloot, where no one stopped in the good old dabeeh days, and the modern steamers only touch; moreover, the pits are in the desert itself, some hours' ride. "Murray," prudent as usual, does not encourage the adventurous.

The entrance of the pits is an oblong fissure in the middle of a small plateau among the mountains—that is, no other entrance was known in 1863. There are facilities for descent. One may let one's self fall sheer a matter of nine or ten feet, and clamber up again with the help of a donkey-boy's cumberbund. I do not recollect that the ugly possibilities of this situation struck us all, but perhaps some measures had been taken to make sure that the boys did not desert. One of them, indeed, headed the advance; our dragoman had never been down before. The Arab began by stripping completely, and he advised us to do the same. Then we lighted a candle each, and in single file dived into the bowels of the rock. At a few feet distance the passage narrowed rapidly until there was only room to crawl along on one's stomach. This first gallery may be some fifty yards long; it opens on a chamber spacious enough, but a natural cavern evidently. On the further side runs another gallery as cramped as the last, heated like a furnace, reeking with foul air, vile stench of bats, and pungent fumes of bitumen. Then we understood why the Arab had stripped. This frightful passage may be one hundred yards long, or the double of that or more—one is unused to measure distances crawling like a snake on one's stomach. At the end lies another chamber, of good height, apparently, if the floor were cleared; but the whole area is blocked with enormous masses of stone packed as close as they will stand, over which one has to clamber stooping. Here myriads of bats assail the explorer, blowing out his candle instantly, clinging to his hair and beard in ropes. A moment more and they vanish with a soft rustle of countless wings, such as I have heard in other climes when the sand grouse fly overhead at dawn and evening. On the opposite side of this vault the first trace of handiwork is observed—a square doorway. I myself would have been quite satisfied to drop the track of Mr. Leigh's footsteps at this point, but the dragoman was interested now—taking, perhaps, a professional pride in putting the business through successfully. He could speak to the guide only.

So we went on, still upon our stomachs, for an indefinite time, in an atmosphere beyond analysis and heat beyond example in the upper air. It was here, probably, that Mr. Leigh's party broke down, for I think they did not reach the end. We did. After some hundreds of yards, as it seemed, slowly the passage heightened—one could get upon one's knees; and then the flooring changed from smooth granite to soft, uneven compost. I lowered my candle to observe. We were crouching along over kneaded human forms.

A very strange spectacle, which seemed to us an embodied nightmare under the excitement of that awful journey. I think I was almost delirious. No scene recurs to my memory now more fresh and striking than that black cave, with a slender glow of candle-light here and there and the half-naked figures glistening with perspiration stretched out above a pavement of heads and limbs. Many of the faces had been gilt, and they shone flickering, here and there, upon the dusky mass. We could not get any explanation of the extraordinary mangling. The Arab said things had been so ever since he could recollect. It must be supposed that these were mummies of priests and attendants buried with the sacred reptiles in their charge—great personages, some of them, evidently. Their families had been laid with them, for there were as many women, perhaps, as men, and a great many children. Every one had been stripped and torn to pieces, all of those on the surface at least, for a hurried examination failed to show how deep the serried pile of bodies lay. Mingled with them were sheets and strips of cloth, fragments of sarcophagi and quantities of women's hair in scalps—wigs possibly. On the other side of this vault lie the hindmost battalions of the crocodile host—innumerable. Standing on the human pavement there is just space enough above and in front to observe the manner of their disposal, for the topmost layer or two have been pulled down. If it were not certain for other reasons that the present entrance is not that formerly used, the arrangement of these crocodile mummies would prove it. They filled the space completely from floor to arch and side to side until the upper ones were removed—neatly aligned, tail to head, head to tail, with palm leaves laid between and the interstices filled up with countless multitudes of young and eggs, these latter tied in bundles and wrapped each one in a strip of cloth. Since every layer was piled to the roof, it is manifest that those who arranged them must have worked backward; and since it would be as easy to drag an elephant through those passages as to drag the superb specimens here—unequaled in my experience—of alligators and crocodiles, they must needs have been brought from the other side. The demonstration is complete, for we had extremest difficulty in drawing behind us two heads chosen among the smaller ones. Moreover, it is unlikely that the bats used that long subterranean outlet; they are probably acquainted with a better and nearer route. I fancy that the enormous blocks of stone upon the floor of the second chamber had been put there after excavation, out of the way. No one can form an idea how far the caverns extend. Removing the top layers as they went, and crawling beneath the roof, Arabs, we were told, had explored a vault beyond this and found more crocodiles still on the further side. The mountain, they said, was stuffed with them; and it is possible. Assuredly the pits are a mine of nitrate; and this exportation of mummies for manure may effect one good thing at least by causing them to be emptied. Treasures may lie beyond the vaults where those myriads of crocodiles are stored.—[St. James Gazette.

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD.

Experiences of French Prisoners in Central Asia.

At a recent meeting of the Paris Geographical Society, Dr. William Capus, who has been the fellow-traveler of M M. Bonvalot and Pepin in their Central Asian tours, gave an interesting account of the Pamir, or "the roof of the world." In the course of the lecture he described an incident which occurred to the French travelers in Chitral. He said:

"After the Afghans at Sarhad had endeavored in vain to detain us, partly by persuasion and partly by force, we crossed the Hindoo Koosh by the Baroghil Pass, which is only 10,800 feet high. Without guides, pack-horses, and almost without food, we reached the Fort of Mastuj, where the Chitralis opposed our going further in the direction of India. While Bonvalot remained at Mastuj I went with Pepin to Chitral, the capital of the country, situated three or four days' march to the southwest. The King of Mehtar, named Amman ul Mulk, made us prisoners the very moment we entered his town, and he thus explained his action: 'You wear Russian boots, Russian money, you speak Russian with your servant and you come from Russian territory—you must be Russian spies.' And he caused us to be closely watched, stopped our correspondence and sent for instructions to Lord Dufferin, for the English make use of this chief as a sentinel in the direction of the Pamir.

"During the long days of our incarceration, when we could only walk on the grass in front of our tent under the eyes of our guard, we saw the king pass daily to take part in the much-loved game of polo, accompanied by a grotesque cavalcade, and placed in the midst of his courtiers, who surrounded his horse, and whose heads he made use of to support himself, as we do a cane. The king has thirty wives and sixty children. He is sixty-five years old. I acquired a great medical reputation by extracting a wasp from a boy's ear, and the king sent to consult me about his favorite wife. She had broken her leg, but the king would not let me see it, asserting that the European tabib, or doctor, had powders that cured everything. To give him pleasure, if not his wife, I gave him some quinine and mercurial ointment."

Range of Modern Rifled Guns.

The distance that modern rifled guns can cover is approximately one mile for each inch of calibre. It is generally assumed, owing to the navy mounts not being arranged so as to attain the extreme ranges, that even the sixty-seven ton guns of 13.5 inch calibre could not be depended upon for a range above ten miles, and that the range of smaller guns would be proportionately reduced. It is said not only that the deck beams of ships carrying guns of ten-inch calibre and upward would not stand the strain of firing at extreme elevations, but also that the guns could not be normally elevated more than fifteen degrees, while at least thirty degrees would be necessary for the farthest effect. Commander Folger shows that neither of these objections is well taken. The sixty-seven ton gun throws a shell weighing 1,250 pounds and containing a bursting charge of fifty pounds of powder, enough to destroy two-thirds of the largest building in the city if exploded therein. Few people realize what such a missile is. It is about as large as the largest hot water boiler usually attached to the range in a private house. It is more than a foot in diameter, and when standing on end it would come up as high as the average man's chin. The powder for this class of guns comes in blocks. The cartridge is not dissimilar in shape to a bed bolster and is about as large.—[New York Herald.

Fun in the Ranks.

A Maine paper tells a good story of the late Cyp Whitman, who had a very peculiar voice. Cyp was a member of the Twelfth Maine in the Department of the Gulfs. One day the regiment was out on dress parade, when a short, stumpy officer, with short legs and a broad expanse of abdomen, came riding past. Cyp allowed his astonishment to overcome his discretion. "What is that?" he asked in his inimitable voice. Instantly discipline was lost; laughter ruled supreme. Cyp was arrested and taken to the guard house and finally before the regimental officers, and was asked, "Did you not know that military discipline forbids you to speak disrespectfully of an officer?" And again was heard that thin drawl, "Was that an officer?" And now it was the officers' turn to roar, and Cyp was dismissed without punishment or reprimand.—[Chicago Herald.

NEWS AND NOTES FOR WOMEN.

Bodices are made full.

Paniers have appeared in Paris.

Sleeves are full and often fantastic in shape.

Blouses are too comfortable to be discarded.

Ginghams come in beautiful checks and quality.

Women are now permitted to practice medicine in Canada.

Plaid silks are used to make up with black grenadines silks, etc.

There are said to be more widows in France than in any other country.

A new woman's club in London, the Somerville, has already 800 members.

Alpacas, mohairs and serges are very popular for traveling gowns and general service.

The leading enameled flower pin at the moment is the orchid in all its multiform varieties. In the heart of each flower a solitaire of one or another kind is buried.

Hortense Bertrand, daughter of Count Bertrand, the most faithful of Napoleon's generals, is still living in Paris. She accompanied her father and mother to St. Helena in 1815.

The gleam of gold on white gowns is not confined to evening wear. White cloth gowns braided with gold will be worn in the afternoon, and in the street, at that, as well.

Colored shoes are much worn at weddings in London. A pair of heliotrope morocco were recently made for an English belle to wear at a wedding with a heliotrope gown.

The big black gauze-winged butterfly, flecked with gold, silver or steel spangles, soars triumphant over large numbers of black lace and black tulle toques, turbans, hats and capotes.

This will long be remembered as the big buckle season. They fasten the surplices and sash belts of nearly every swagger gown that walks along the fashionable thoroughfares.

Miss Nellie Hunt, daughter of the late William H. Hunt, of Louisiana, ex-Minister to Russia and a member of Garfield's Cabinet, has been chosen Private Secretary to Mrs. Levi P. Morton.

Mrs. Florence Finch-Kelly, the well-known Boston journalist, has just completed her second novel. It is called "On the Inside," and gives a complete picture of Bohemian life of the higher class in New York.

Miss Susan Rhoda Cutter, who has accepted a professorship in Biddle College, Charlotte, N. C., took all the honors—Latin poem, oration and valedictory—and then studied modern languages for two years in Europe.

The lace owned by the feminine members of the Astor family is said to be worth at least $300,000. That which the late Mrs. Astor bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art was valued at from $40,000 to $50,000.

Christian Reid, one of the most popular of Southern novelists, is the daughter of Colonel Fisher, of North Carolina, after whom Fort Fisher was named. He was one of the first Confederate officers killed during the Civil War.

Those pretty little jet beaded and fringed black wraps, that look like decorations on a plain black silk dress, are sold by the thousands in all the departments for such garments in the great retail, fancy and dry goods houses.

White undressed kid gloves, white slippers to match, and white silk or lace-clocked lisle thread stockings will be worn by sweet girl graduates this year. Other commencement toilets will permit the use of tan suede gloves and tan or black kid slippers.

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The widow of the late General Crook has determined to make her permanent residence at Oakland, Md.

J. C. Simpson, Marquess, W. Va., says: "Hall's Catarrh Cure cured me of a very bad case of catarrh." Druggists sell it, 75c.

Miss Louise Imogene Guiney, the Boston poetess, thinks nothing of walking twenty miles.

Crying all the time. Poor child, I know what makes you so peevish and cross. Mother must get you a box of those sweet little candies called Dr. Bull's Worm Destroyers.

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