

out being curious, new without being novel, dull without being old. Such at least was the view I took of it, as I ate my luncheon disconsolately at the only table available, with a French *commis voyageur* for a neighbour on my left and the bloated manager of a travelling circus on my right. In the afternoon, however, I presented a letter of introduction to an English gentleman, whom I need not mention by name, but whom many will recognise if I merely say of him this—that he is the most influential European in the place, and as hospitable as he is influential. He asked me to dine with him in the evening. His house was a pleasure and a surprise. There were broad stairs, soft luxurious carpets, a superb mummy that eyed me on each landing, a dinner and a dining-room that both might have come from Paris, and a library filled with as much comfort and literature as one would commonly find in a country house in England. He fully sympathised with my annoyance at being delayed on my journey. ‘If I were you,’ he said, ‘I should be off to-morrow to Cairo. A small steamer—a post-boat—starts in the morning for Ismailia, and from thence by rail you will reach Cairo at six.’ The suggestion came like a gleam of the sun through clouds. I resolved to act on it; my whole future brightened; and I leaned that night over the wooden balcony of the hotel in a temper very different from that in which I had made acquaintance with it a few hours ago.

And now in this happier condition, and with the