

afternoon at the Great Pyramids
& the Sphinx, riding about on
Camels.

We left Cairo on March 2d on this
boat for a three weeks trip to the
1st Cataract at Assuan & back,
about 60 passengers - English,
American, Belgian, German,
Swede, French & the Indian Rajah
of the Kowloon, & 10 Africans.
We stop during the night & at
all interesting places, where a
Cavalcade of donkeys & donkey boys
arrives as & we pass ^{into} the
desert to visit tombs ^{& temples} with an
Egyptian soldier on a fine steed
at our head in some places, in
others, only one funeral dirge man
in a fine silken gown & great
^{fan} to guide us & tell us the
history & significance of what we see.

On the Nile above Assuan



S.S. "DAMIETTA."

March 13 1927

Dear Walter,
This is even better than
the Mississippi trip! I can not
imagine anything more interesting
& delightful. It is hard to take one's
eye from the scene long enough to
write a letter. I sit on deck with
my binoculars hung on my neck, a
book of Egyptian history & Ramses's
birds of Europe & North Africa in my
lap, reading a bit when I can, ident-
ifying birds & watching the scene
on the Nile & the banks - the same
kind of boats & the same big houses
& wooden ploughs & cattle ~~and~~ the
same occupations & the same people
of which we are seeing rock paintings
in the tombs thousands of years old!

Our trip from Bombay to Port Said
through the Arabian Gulf, the Red
Sea, the Gulf of Suez & the Canal
in the P & O boat "Kawalpindi" - a
nine days trip - was most interesting
the Sea as calm as a mill pond.
We had a few hours ashore at
Aden & saw the famous "mermaids"
which are ^{badly stuffed} dugongs. The

Company of passengers was a large
one over 400 & mostly
English including some Lords &
Ladies & a Rajah. In got 25
rooms a number of the English &
enjoyed them, but they are not as
free & easy as Americans. I

played deck quoits twice daily
with two Englishmen & an English
lady & took a swim daily in

the tank, the Sea water of
which, even in the Red Sea, was
green in color.

From Port Said - where it took
us three hours to pass through the
various formalities of Customs, phar-
macy &c - we went by rail
from hours through the rich
delta lands to Cairo where
we spent a day & a half before
taking this boat - we shall have
four or five days more on our return.
The day there was well occupied
spending - I have just counted
19 Spar winged Plover, 2 Egyptian
Hillier, an Osprey an Egyptian
Kite & several Egyptian Hooded
Crows on the sand bar -
Spending the morning at the
Museum & enjoying the wonderful
birds from Lutz's tomb & the

a few of the old & infirm ride in carts -
we rode through the village of mud houses
& the irrigated green fields only
about a mile to the edge of the desert
& the temple dedicated to Hathor,
a beautiful temple but much defaced
by the Early Christians who built
houses of mud brick about & over it
& pounded out the beautiful faces of
the people & the gods, including one
of the great Cleopatra & her son
Caesarion. The houses have been de-
stroyed but the damage done to the
mural carvings is beyond repair.
Donkey riding is great fun & the Cairo-Cade
often moves at a brisk rate, urged on
by the donkey boys who run behind.
The men along the river are always
beautiful & the light of the sunset
reflected on the limestone cliffs
makes them glow in yellows & pinks &
then suddenly fade to grey. I can
only hint at the wonderful charm of it all.



S.S. "DAMIETTA."

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We have just passed a sand bar on
which were 6 Commants - P. Carlo Sub-Comandante
Longfoss - 6 Sparrows, fine big birds, 8
Common Herons - like our great Blues - & no
less than 47 Sparrow-like flowers. We are
now passing a compact town of small
square houses of sun baked mud many
which rise several slender minarets in
the tops of date palms. Women in
long black & blue robes - all, when
home, wear robes down to the ground -
are filling their tall earthen jugs into
river water & slowly & very gracefully
walking up with them balanced on their
heads. Men are at work at the boat
building - all the boats are the
same & have always been the same
with upturned prow like a Turkish
sloop of the masts with lateen sails
like great pointed wings - these

are donkeys & camels & many
other interesting things to see
how in a passing fields of grain
& onion & lupines, growing luxuriantly
in the rich black river soil watered by
the Nile ^{water} which is brought up from
stage to stage - three of them - by
shadufs. This is worked like our
well sweeps, a great ball of mud
fastened to one end of the pole,
while a pair of raw hide &
pottery is lowered into the water.
at the other end & raises it up
to the next stage, worked by men
in picturesque dressings in the
cool morning but nearly naked at
the heat of the day.

Beyond
is the desert & the long line
of lime stone cliff in which
there are thousands of tombs. Again
the desert comes right to the

water edge. Now there are herds
of sheep & of goats, of water
buffalo & of ^{Cows} ~~Cattle~~ & now a
herd of Camels. Each with its
shepherd if that term can be
used for other cattle than sheep -
now a row of eight camels, with
draped & turbaned riders, are
drinking water, ^{i.e. the camels are} now the
water is raised by a wheel which
is worked by a blindfolded
cow. I have seen several
aquinodes screws for
raising the water.

The air is fine & clear & cloudless
- it has not rained more than a few
drops for over thirty years - Cool
at morning & night - down to 56°
sometimes & up to 80 or more in
the middle of the day.

Dec 14, 1927. This afternoon we
tied up at Bradwa & on donkeys -

We descended the mountain in part
& reached the rest house where
we went to have lunch & were
soon joined by our fellows of the
Carnages who had come a long
way around. After lunch

we walked to the great Temple
of Queen Hatshepout who
was the sister & wife of Thutmose III. but
this part was so mean as to scratch
out all the mural figures of Hatshepout
except one fine ^{one} where she wears a
slant kilt like a man. There

we walked & trotted & cauterized help
to the Nile & were hailed across to
the boat which we reached at
4 pm. We have two more busy days

here before we sail onward to the
1st Cataract at Assuan - but this
will serve to fix in your mind the
idea of our life. I added a new bird today
to my Egyptian list up to 40.
For all affec. Charles W. Townsend.

3.



S.S. "DAMIETTA."

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from N. 27/28. On returning from
the Valley of the Kings here at Luxor
I found your good letter of Feb 18th in
my box. You had received several
post cards from Singapore & Bangkok &
the letter of Jan 16. written in the Bay
of Bengal. This I hope will reach
you in time for your 80th birthday & with
it I send very best wishes for many
happy returns of the day. Some 60 of us
today the Cooks & Cookesses, embarked
in small boats at 8 am & were rowed
along to the western shore where donkeys
& donkey boys awaited us as well as
Carnages and we rode out to the tomb
of the Kings at first through the rich
and green valley of the Nile & then
through the desert and among the
mountains where not an atom of
vegetation is to be seen. It was dusty

and flegg & the sun had done
on us from a clear & cloudless
sky, but the silhouette of the
scene & the mums which
vicissitudes of our donkeys made
us - a sun of us at least - forget
these discomforts. At last we
reached the ~~Temple~~ of Kurna which
was built by Seti I of the XIX
dynasty, as of course for Kurna, about
1300 B.C. In all the temples there
are beautiful ornithological pictures
& it is possible to identify some of them
then we rode to the Tomb of the
Kings & visited first the famous
one of Seti. It is certainly very
impressive, after seeing the beautiful
objects at the Cairo Museum taken
from his tomb, to look at the
inner golden cover for his mummified
body lying in its great stone coffin.

After that we visited four other
tombs descending in some straight
windy chambers & narrow passages
many feet below the surface. The
mural designs were fresh & beautiful
in many - a moderate relief cut
on the rock - & highly colored
sometimes painted without relief.
The canoes then rolled off in
clouds of dust while we of
the donkeys climbed the mountain
on foot, & then on donkey back,
getting a marvellous view of the
wild & rugged mountains, still
containing many tombs not yet
explored, and of the fertile valley
of the Nile, with the white mips
of the Egyptian boats on its thread
of water. The ruins of Karnak &
the limestone cliffs beyond.



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