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**Donovan Pasha, and Some People  
of Egypt –Volume 3**

Gilbert Parker

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## THE MAN AT THE WHEEL

Wyndham Bimbashi's career in Egypt had been a series of mistakes. In the first place he was opinionated, in the second place he never seemed to have any luck; and, worst of all, he had a little habit of doing grave things on his own lightsome responsibility. This last quality was natural to him, but he added to it a supreme contempt for the native mind and an unhealthy scorn of the native official. He had not that rare quality, constantly found among his fellow-countrymen, of working the native up through his own medium, as it were, through his own customs and predispositions, to the soundness of Western methods of government. Therefore, in due time he made some dangerous mistakes. By virtue of certain high-handed actions he was the cause of several riots in native villages, and he had himself been attacked at more than one village as he rode between the fields of sugar-cane. On these occasions he had behaved very well—certainly no one could possibly doubt his bravery; but that was a small offset to the fact that his want of tact and his overbearing manner had been the means of turning a certain tribe of Arabs loose upon the country, raiding and killing.

But he could not, or would not, see his own vain stupidity. The climax came in a foolish sortie against the Arab tribe he had offended. In that unauthorised melee, in covert disobedience to a general order not to attack, unless at advantage—for the Gippies under him were raw levies—his troop was diminished by half; and, cut off from the Nile by a flank movement of the Arabs, he was obliged to retreat and take refuge in the well-fortified and walled house which had previously been a Coptic monastery.

Here, at last, the truth came home to Wyndham bimbashi. He realised that though in his six years' residence in the land he had acquired a command of Arabic equal to that of others who had been in the country twice that time, he had acquired little else. He awoke to the fact that in his cock-sure schemes for the civil and military life of Egypt there was not one element of sound sense; that he had

been all along an egregious failure. It did not come home to him with clear, accurate conviction— his brain was not a first-rate medium for illumination; but the facts struck him now with a blind sort of force; and he accepted the blank sensation of failure. Also, he read in the faces of those round him an alien spirit, a chasm of black misunderstanding which his knowledge of Arabic could never bridge over.

Here he was, shut up with Gippies who had no real faith in him, in the house of a Sheikh whose servants would cut his throat on no provocation at all; and not an eighth of a mile away was a horde of Arabs—a circle of death through which it was impossible to break with the men in his command. They must all die here, if they were not relieved.

The nearest garrison was at Kerbat, sixty miles away, where five hundred men were stationed. Now that his cup of mistakes was full, Wyndham bimbashi would willingly have made the attempt to carry word to the garrison there. But he had no right to leave his post. He called for a volunteer. No man responded. Panic was upon the Gippies. Though Wyndham's heart sickened within him, his lips did not frame a word of reproach; but a blush of shame came into his face, and crept up to his eyes, dimming them. For there flashed through his mind what men at home would think of him when this thing, such an end to his whole career, was known. As he stood still, upright and confounded, some one touched his arm.

It was Hassan, his Soudanese servant. Hassan was the one person in Egypt who thoroughly believed in him. Wyndham was as a god to Hassan, though this same god had given him a taste of a belt more than once. Hassan had not resented the belt, though once, in a moment of affectionate confidence, he had said to Wyndham that when his master got old and died he would be the servant of an American or a missionary, "which no whack Mahommed."

It was Hassan who now volunteered to carry word to the garrison at Kerbat.

"If I no carry, you whack me with belt, Saadat," said Hassan, whose logic and reason were like his master's, neither better nor worse.

"If you do, you shall have fifty pounds—and the missionary," answered Wyndham, his eyes still cloudy and his voice thick; for it touched him in a tender nerve that this one Soudanese boy should believe in him and do for him what he would give much to do for the men under him. For his own life he did not care—his confusion and shame were so great.

He watched Hassan steal out into the white brilliance of the night.

"Mind you keep a whole skin, Hassan," he said, as the slim lad with the white teeth, oily hair, and legs like ivory, stole along the wall, to drop presently on his belly and make for some palm-trees a hundred yards away.

The minutes went by in silence; an hour went by; the whole night went by;  
Hassan had got beyond the circle of trenchant steel.

They must now abide Hassan's fate; but another peril was upon them.

There was not a goolah of water within the walls!

It was the time of low Nile when all the land is baked like a crust of bread, when the creaking of the shadoofs and the singing croak of the sakkia are heard the night long like untiring crickets with throats of frogs. It was the time succeeding the khamsin, when the skin dries like slaked lime and the face is for ever powdered with dust; and the fellaheen, in the slavery of superstition, strain their eyes day and night for the Sacred Drop, which tells that the flood is flowing fast from the hills of Abyssinia.

It was like the Egyptian that nothing should be said to Wyndham about the dearth of water until it was all gone. The house of the Sheikh, and its garden, where were a pool and a fountain, were supplied from the great Persian wheel at the waterside. On this particular sakkia had been wont to sit all day a patient fellah, driving the blindfolded buffaloes in their turn. It was like the patient

fellah, when the Arabs, in pursuit of Wyndham and his Gippies, suddenly cut in between him and the house, to deliver himself over to the conqueror, with his hand upon his head in sign of obedience.

It was also like the gentle Egyptian that he eagerly showed the besiegers how the water could be cut off from the house by dropping one of the sluice-gates; while, opening another, all the land around the Arab encampments might be well watered, the pools well filled, and the grass kept green for horses and camels. This was the reason that Wyndham bimbashi and his Gippies, and the Sheikh and his household, faced the fact, the morning after Hassan left, that there was scarce a goolah of water for a hundred burning throats. Wyndham understood now why the Arabs sat down and waited, that torture might be added to the oncoming death of the Englishman, his natives, and the "friendlies."

All that day terror and ghastly hate hung like a miasma over the besieged house and garden. Fifty eyes hungered for the blood of Wyndham bimbashi; not because he was Wyndham bimbashi, but because the heathen in these men cried out for sacrifice; and what so agreeable a sacrifice as the Englishman who had led them into this disaster and would die so well — had they ever seen an Englishman who did not die well?

Wyndham was quiet and watchful, and he cudgelled his bullet-head, and looked down his long nose in meditation all the day, while his tongue became dry and thick, and his throat seemed to crack like roasting leather. At length he worked the problem out. Then he took action.

He summoned his troop before him, and said briefly: "Men, we must have water. The question is, who is going to steal out to the sakkia to-night, to shut the one sluice and open the other?"

No one replied. No one understood quite what Wyndham meant. Shutting one sluice and opening the other did not seem to meet the situation. There was the danger of getting to the sakkia, but there was also an after. Would it be possible to shut one sluice and open the other without the man at the wheel knowing? Suppose you killed the man at the wheel — what then?

The Gippies and the friendlies scowled, but did not speak. The bimbashi was responsible for all; he was an Englishman, let him get water for them, or die like the rest of them—perhaps before them!

Wyndham could not travel the sinuosities of their minds, and it would not have affected his purpose if he could have done so. When no man replied, he simply said:

"All right, men. You shall have water before morning. Try and hold out till then." He dismissed them. For a long time he walked up and down the garden of straggling limes, apparently listless, and smoking hard. He reckoned carefully how long it would take Hassan to get to Kerbat, and for relief to come. He was fond of his pipe, and he smoked now as if it were the thing he most enjoyed in the world. He held the bowl in the hollow of his hand almost tenderly. He seemed unconscious of the scowling looks around him. At last he sat down on the ledge of the rude fountain, with his face towards the Gippies and the Arabs squatted on the ground, some playing mankalah, others sucking dry lime leaves, many smoking apathetically.

One man with the flicker of insanity in his eyes suddenly ran forward and threw himself on the ground before Wyndham.

"In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful—water!" he cried.

"Water—I am dying, effendi whom God preserve!"

"Nile water is sweet; you shall drink it before morning, Mahomed," answered Wyndham quietly. "God will preserve your life till the Nile water cools your throat."

"Before dawn, O effendi?" gasped the Arab. "Before dawn, by the mercy of God," answered Wyndham; and for the first time in his life he had a burst of imagination. The Orient had touched him at last.

"Is not the song of the sakkia in thine ear, Mahommed?" he said

"Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left.

The Nile floweth by night and the balasses are filled at dawn—  
The maid of the village shall bear to thy bed the dewy grey  
goolah at dawn

Turn, O Sakkia!"

Wyndham was learning at last the way to the native mind.

The man rose from his knees. A vision of his home in the mirkaz of Minieh passed before him. He stretched out his hands, and sang in the vibrating monotone of his people:

"Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left:

Who will take care of me, if my father dies?

Who will give me water to drink, and the cucumber vine at my door—

Turn, O Sakkia!"

Then he crept back again to the wall of the house, where he huddled between a Berberine playing a darabukkeh and a man of the Fayoum who chanted the fatihah from the Koran.

Wyndham looked at them all and pondered. "If the devils out there would only attack us," he said between his teeth, "or if we could only attack them!" he added, and he nervously hastened his footsteps; for to him this inaction was terrible. "They'd forget their thirst if they were fighting," he muttered, and then he frowned; for the painful neighing of the horses behind the house came to his ear. In desperation he went inside and climbed to the roof, where he could see the circle of the enemy.

It was no use. They were five to one, and his Gippies were demoralised. It would be a fine bit of pluck to try and cut his way through the Arabs to the Nile—but how many would reach it?

No, he had made his full measure of mistakes, he would not add to the list. If Hassan got through to Kerbat his Gippies here would no doubt be relieved, and there would be no more blood on his head. Relieved? And when they were relieved, what of himself, Wyndham bimbashi? He knew what men would say in Cairo, what men would say at the War Office in London town, at "The Rag"—everywhere! He could not look his future in the face. He felt that every man in Egypt, save himself, had known all along that he was a complete failure.

It did not matter while he himself was not conscious of it; but now that the armour-plate of conceit protecting his honest mind had been torn away on the reefs of foolish deeds, it mattered everything. For when his conceit was peeled away, there was left a crimson cuticle of the Wyndham pride. Certainly he could not attack the Arabs—he had had his eternal fill of sorties.

Also he could not wait for the relief party, for his Gippies and the friendlies were famishing, dying of thirst. He prayed for night. How slowly the minutes, the hours passed; and how bright was the moon when it rose! brighter even than it was when Hassan crept out to steal through the Arab lines.

.....

At midnight, Wyndham stole softly out of a gate in the garden wall, and, like Hassan, dropping to the ground, crept towards a patch of maize lying between the house and the river. He was dressed like a fellah, with the long blue yelek, and a poor wool fez, and round the fez was a white cloth, as it were to protect his mouth from the night air, after the manner of the peasant.

The fires of the enemy were dying down, and only here and there Arabs gossiped or drank coffee by the embers. At last Wyndham was able to drop into the narrow channel, now dry, through which, when the sluice was open and the sakkia turned, the water flowed to the house. All went well till he was within a hundred yards of the wheel, though now and again he could hear sentries snoring or talking just above him. Suddenly he heard breathing an arm's length before him, then a figure raised itself and a head turned towards him. The Arab had been asleep, but his hand ran to his knife by instinct—too late, for Wyndham's fingers were at his throat, and he had neither time nor chance to cry Allah! before the breath left him.

Wyndham crept on. The sound of the sakkia was in his ears—the long, creaking, crying song, filling the night. And now there arose the Song of the Sakkia from the man at the wheel:

"Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left;

The heron feeds by the water side—shall I starve in my onion-field!

Shall the Lord of the World withhold his tears that water the land—

Turn, O Sakkia!"

. . . The hard white stars, the cold blue sky, the far-off Libyan hills in a gold and opal glow, the smell of the desert, the deep swish of the Nile, the Song of the Sakkia. . . .

Wyndham's heart beat faster, his blood flowed quicker, he strangled a sigh in his breast. Here, with death on every hand, with immediate and fearful peril before him, out of the smell of the desert and the ghostly glow of the Libyan hills there came a memory—the memory of a mistake he had made years before with a woman. She had never forgiven him for the mistake—he knew it at last. He knew that no woman could ever forgive the blunder he had made—not a blunder of love but a blunder of self-will and an unmanly, unmannerly conceit. It had nearly wrecked her life: and he only realised it now, in the moment of clear-seeing which comes to every being once in a lifetime. Well, it was something to have seen the mistake at last.

He had come to the sluice-gate. It was impossible to open it without the fellah on the water-wheel seeing him.

There was another way. He crept close and closer to the wheel. The breath of the blindfolded buffalo was in his face, he drew himself up lightly and quickly beside the buffalo—he was making no blunder now.

Suddenly he leapt from behind the buffalo upon the fellah and smothered his mouth in the white cloth he had brought. There was a moment's struggle, then, as the wheel went slower and slower, and the patient buffalo stopped, Wyndham dropped the gagged, but living, fellah into a trench by the sakkia and, calling to the buffalo, slid over swiftly, opened the sluice-gate of the channel which fed the house, and closed that leading to the Arab encampment.

Then he sat down where the fellah had sat, and the sakkia droned its mystic music over the river, the desert, and the plain. But the buffalo moved slowly—the fellah's song had been a spur to its travel, as the camel-driver's song is to the caravan in the waste of sands.

Wyndham hesitated an instant, then, as the first trickle of water entered the garden of the house where his Gippies and the friendlies were, his voice rose in the Song of the Sakkia:

"Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left:

Who will take care of me, if my father dies?

Who will give me water to drink, and the cucumber vine at my door

Turn, O Sakkia!"

If he had but one hour longer there would be enough water for men and horses for days, twenty jars of water pouring all the time!

Now and again a figure came towards the wheel, but not close enough to see that the one sluice-gate had been shut and the other opened. A half-hour passed, an hour, and then the end came.

The gagged fellah had managed to free his mouth, and though his feet were bound also and he could not loose them, he gave a loud call for help. From dying fires here and there Arab sentries sprang to their feet with rifles and lances.

Wyndham's work was done. He leapt from the sakkia, and ran towards the house. Shot after shot was fired at him, lances were thrown, and once an Arab barred his way suddenly. He pistoled him and ran on. A lance caught him in the left arm. He tore it out and pushed forward. Stooping once, he caught up a sword from the ground. When he was within fifty yards of the house, four Arabs intercepted him. He slashed through, then turned with his pistol and fired as he ran quickly towards the now open gate. He was within ten yards of it, and had fired his last shot, when a bullet crashed through his jaw.

A dozen Gippies ran out, dragged him in, and closed the gate.

The last thing Wyndham did before he died in the grey of dawn—and this is told of him by the Gippies themselves—was to cough up the bullet from his throat, and spit it out upon the ground. The Gippies thought it a miraculous feat, and that he had done it in scorn of the Arab foe.

Before another sunrise and sunset had come, Wyndham bimbashi's men were relieved by the garrison of Kerbat, after a hard fight.

There are Englishmen in Egypt who still speak slightingly of Wyndham bimbashi, but the British officer who buried him hushed a gossiping dinner-party a few months ago in Cairo by saying:

"Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,  
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him;  
But little he'll reek, if they let him sleep on  
In the grave where his Gippies have laid him."

And he did not apologise for paraphrasing the famous ballad. He has shamed Egypt at last into admiration for Wyndham bimbashi: to the deep satisfaction of Hassan, the Soudanese boy, who received his fifty pounds, and to this day wears the belt which once kept him in the narrow path of duty.

## A TYRANT AND A LADY

When Donovan Pasha discovered the facts for the first time, he found more difficulty in keeping the thing to himself than he had ever found with any other matter in Egypt. He had unearthed one of those paradoxes which make for laughter—and for tears. It gave him both; he laughed till he cried. Then he went to the Khedivial Club and ordered himself four courses, a pint of champagne and a glass of '48 port, his usual dinner being one course, double portion, and a pint of claret. As he sat eating he kept reading a letter over and over, and each time he read he grinned —he did not smile like a well-behaved man of the world, he did not giggle like a well-veneered Egyptian back from Paris, he chuckled like a cabman responding to a liberal fare and a good joke. A more unconventional little man never lived. Simplicity was his very life, and yet he had a gift for following the sinuosities of the Oriental mind; he had a qual-

ity almost clairvoyant, which came, perhaps, from his Irish forebears. The cross-strain of English blood had done him good too; it made him punctilious and kept his impulses within secure bounds. It also made him very polite when he was angry, and very angry when any one tried to impose upon him, or flatter him.

The letter he read so often was from Kingsley Bey, the Englishman, who, coming to Egypt penniless, and leaving estates behind him encumbered beyond release, as it would seem, had made a fortune and a name in a curious way. For years he had done no good for himself, trying his hand at many things—sugar, salt, cotton, cattle, but always just failing to succeed, though he came out of his enterprises owing no one. Yet he had held to his belief that he would make a fortune, and he allowed his estates to become still more encumbered, against the advice of his solicitors, who grew more irritable as interest increased and rents further declined. The only European in Egypt who shared his own belief in himself was Dicky Donovan. Something in the unfailing good-humour, the buoyant energy, the wide imagination of the man seized Dicky, warranted the conviction that he would yet make a success. There were reasons why sugar, salt, cotton, cattle and other things had not done well. Taxes, the corvee, undue influence in favour of pashas who could put his water on their land without compensation, or unearthed old unpaid mortgages on his land, or absorbed his special salt concession in the Government monopoly, or suddenly put a tax on all horses and cattle not of native breed; all these and various other imposts, exactions, or interferences engineered by the wily Mamour, the agent of the mouffetish, or the intriguing Pasha, killed his efforts, in spite of labours unbelievable. The venture before the last had been sugar, and when he arrived in Cairo, having seen his fields and factories absorbed in the Khedive's domains, he had but one ten pounds to his name.

He went to Dicky Donovan and asked the loan of a thousand pounds. It took Dicky's breath away. His own banking account seldom saw a thousand—deposit. Dicky told Kingsley he hadn't got it. Kingsley asked him to get it—he had credit, could borrow it from the bank, from the Khedive himself! The proposal was audacious—Kingsley could offer no security worth having. His enthusiasm and courage were so infectious, however, though his ventures

had been so fruitless, that Dicky laughed in his face. Kingsley's manner then suddenly changed, and he assured Dicky that he would receive five thousand pounds for the thousand within a year. Now, Dicky knew that Kingsley never made a promise to any one that he did not fulfil. He gave Kingsley the thousand pounds. He did more. He went to the Khedive with Kingsley's whole case. He spoke as he had seldom spoken, and he secured a bond from Ismail, which might not be broken. He also secured three thousand pounds of the Khedive's borrowings from Europe, on Kingsley's promise that it should be returned five-fold.

That was how Kingsley got started in the world again, how he went mining in the desert afar, where pashas and mamours could not worry him. The secret of his success was purely Oriental. He became a slave-owner. He built up a city of the desert round him. He was its ruler. Slavery gave him steady untaxed labour. A rifle-magazine gave him security against marauding tribes, his caravans were never over powered; his blacks were his own. He had a way with them; they thought him the greatest man in the world. Now, at last, he was rich enough. His mines were worked out, too, and the market was not so good; he had supplied it too well. Dicky's thousand had brought him five thousand, and Ismail's three thousand had become fifteen thousand, and another twenty thousand besides. For once the Khedive had found a kind of taxation, of which he got the whole proceeds, not divided among many as heretofore. He got it all. He made Kingsley a Bey, and gave him immunity from all other imposts or taxation. Nothing but an Egyptian army could have removed him from his desert-city.

Now, he was coming back—to-night at ten o'clock he would appear at the Khedivial Club, the first time in seven years. But this was not all. He was coming back to be married as soon as might be.

This was the thing which convulsed Dicky.

Upon the Nile at Assiout lived a young English lady whose life was devoted to agitation against slavery in Egypt. Perhaps the Civil War in America, not so many years before, had fired her spirit; perhaps it was pious enthusiasm; perhaps it was some altruistic sentiment in her which must find expression; perhaps, as people said, she had had a love affair in England which had turned out badly. At

any rate she had come over to Egypt with an elderly companion, and, after a short stay at the Consulate, had begun the career of the evangel. She had now and then created international difficulty, and Ismail, tolerant enough, had been tempted to compel her to leave the country, but, with a zeal which took on an aspect of self-opinionated audacity, she had kept on. Perhaps her beauty helped her on her course—perhaps the fact that her superb egotism kept her from being timorous, made her career possible. In any case, there she was at Assiout, and there she had been for years, and no accident had come to her; and, during the three months she was at Cairo every year, pleading against slavery and the corvee, she increased steadily the respect in which she was held; but she was considered mad as Gordon. So delighted had Ismail been by a quiet, personal attack she made upon him, that without malice, and with an obtuse and impulsive kindness, he sent her the next morning a young Circassian slave, as a mark of his esteem, begging her through the swelling rhetoric of his messenger to keep the girl, and more than hinting at her value. It stupefied her, and the laughter of Cairo added to her momentary embarrassment; but she kept the girl, and prepared to send her back to her people.

The girl said she had no people, and would not go; she would stay with "My Lady"—she would stay for ever with "My Lady." It was confusing, but the girl stayed, worshipping the ground "My Lady" walked on. In vain My Lady educated her. Out of hearing, she proudly told whoever would listen that she was "My Lady's slave." It was an Egyptian paradox; it was in line with everything else in the country, part of the moral opera bouffe.

In due course, the lady came to hear of the English slave-owner, who ruled the desert-city and was making a great fortune out of the labours of his slaves. The desert Arabs who came down the long caravan road, white with bleached bones, to Assiout, told her he had a thousand slaves. Against this Englishman her anger, was great. She unceasingly condemned him, and whenever she met Dicky Donovan she delivered her attack with delicate violence. Did Dicky know him? Why did not he, in favour with Ismail, and with great influence, stop this dreadful and humiliating business? It was a disgrace to the English name. How could we preach freedom and a higher civilisation to the Egyptians while an Englishman enriched

himself and ruled a province by slavery? Dicky's invariable reply was that we couldn't, and that things weren't moving very much towards a higher civilisation in Egypt. But he asked her if she ever heard of a slave running away from Kingsley Bey, or had she ever heard of a case of cruelty on his part? Her reply was that he had given slaves the kourbash, and had even shot them. Dicky thereupon suggested that Kingsley Bey was a government, and that the kourbash was not yet abolished in the English navy, for instance; also that men had to be shot sometimes.

At last she had made a direct appeal to Kingsley Bey. She sent an embassy to him—Dicky prevented her from going herself; he said he would have her deported straightway, if she attempted it. She was not in such deadly earnest that she did not know he would keep his word, and that the Consulate could not help her would have no time to do so. So, she confined herself to an elaborate letter, written in admirable English and inspired by most noble sentiments. The beauty that was in her face was in her letter in even a greater degree. It was very adroit, too, very ably argued, and the moral appeal was delicate and touching, put with an eloquence at once direct and arresting. The invocation with which the letter ended was, as Kingsley Bey afterwards put it, "a pitch of poetry and humanity never reached except by a Wagner opera."

Kingsley Bey's response to the appeal was a letter to the lady, brought by a sarraf, a mamour and six slaves, beautifully mounted and armed, saying that he had been deeply moved by her appeal, and as a proof of the effect of her letter, she might free the six slaves of his embassy. This she straightway did joyfully, and when they said they wished to go to Cairo, she saw them and their horses off on the boat with gladness, and she shook them each by the hand and prayed Heaven in their language to give them long plumes of life and happiness. Arrived at Cairo these freemen of Assiout did as they had been ordered by Kingsley—found Donovan Pasha, delivered a certain letter to him, and then proceeded, also as they had been ordered, to a certain place in the city, even to Ismail's stables, to await their master's coming.

This letter was now in Dicky's hand, and his mirth was caused by the statement that Kingsley Bey had declared that he was coming to

marry My Lady — she really was "My Lady," the Lady May Harley; that he was coming by a different route from "his niggers," and would be there the same day. Dicky would find him at ten o'clock at the Khedivial Club.

My Lady hated slavery — and unconsciously she kept a slave; she regarded Kingsley Bey as an enemy to civilisation and to Egypt, she detested him as strongly as an idealistic nature could and should — and he had set out to marry her, the woman who had bitterly arraigned him at the bar of her judgment. All this play was in Dicky's hands for himself to enjoy, in a perfect dress rehearsal ere ever one of the Cairene public or the English world could pay for admission and take their seats. Dicky had in more senses than one got his money's worth out of Kingsley Bey. He wished he might let the Khedive into the secret at once, for he had an opinion of Ismail's sense of humour; had he not said that very day in the presence of the French Consul, "Shut the window, quick! If the consul sneezes, France will demand compensation!" But Dicky was satisfied that things should be as they were. He looked at the clock — it was five minutes to ten. He rose from the table, and went to the smoking-room. In vain it was sought to draw him into the friendly circles of gossiping idlers and officials. He took a chair at the very end of the room and opposite the door, and waited, watching.

Precisely at ten the door opened and a tall, thin, loose-knit figure entered. He glanced quickly round, saw Dicky, and swung down the room, nodding to men who sprang to their feet to greet him. Some of the Egyptians looked darkly at him, but he smiled all round, caught at one or two hands thrust out to him, said: "Business — business first!" in a deep bass voice, and, hastening on, seized both of Dicky's hands in his, then his shoulders, and almost roared: "Well, what do you think of it? Isn't it all right? Am I, or am I not, Dicky Pasha?"

"You very much are," answered Dicky, thrust a cigar at him, and set him down in the deepest chair he could find. He sprawled wide, and lighted his cigar, then lay back and looked down his long nose at his friend.

"I mean it, too," he said after a minute, and reached for a glass of water the waiter brought. "No, thanks, no whiskey — never touch

it—good example to the slaves!" He laughed long and low, and looked at Dicky out of the corner of his eye. "Good-looking lot I sent you, eh?"

"Oosters, every one of 'em. Butter wouldn't melt in their mouths. I learnt their grin, it suits my style of beauty." Dicky fitted the action to the word. "You'll start with me in the morning to Assiout?"

"I can start, but life and time are short."

"You think I can't and won't marry her?"

"This isn't the day of Lochinvar."

"This is the day of Kingsley Bey, Dicky Pasha."

Dicky frowned. He had a rare and fine sense where women were concerned, were they absent or present. "How very artless—and in so short a time, too!" he said tartly.

Kingsley laughed quietly. "Art is long, but tempers are short!" he retorted.

Dicky liked a Roland for his Oliver. "It's good to see you back again," he said, changing the subject.

"How long do you mean to stay?"

"Here?" Dicky nodded. "Till I'm married."

Dicky became very quiet, a little formal, and his voice took on a curious smoothness, through which sharp suggestion pierced.

"So long?—Enter our Kingsley Bey into the underground Levantine world."

This was biting enough. To be swallowed up by Cairo life and all that it involves, was no fate to suggest to an Englishman, whose opinion of the Levantine needs no defining. "Try again, Dicky," said Kingsley, refusing to be drawn. "This is not one huge joke, or one vast impertinence, so far as the lady is concerned. I've come back-b-a-c-k" (he spelled the word out), "with all that it involves. I've come back, Dicky."

He quieted all at once, and leaned over towards his friend. "You know the fight I've had. You know the life I've lived in Egypt. You know what I left behind me in England—nearly all. You've seen the