

**NARRATIVE**  
OF THE  
**OPERATIONS AND RECENT DISCOVERIES**  
WITHIN THE  
PYRAMIDS, TEMPLES, TOMBS, AND EXCAVATIONS,  
IN  
**EGYPT AND NUBIA;**  
AND OF A  
JOURNEY TO THE COAST OF THE RED SEA, IN SEARCH OF  
THE ANCIENT BERENICE;  
AND ANOTHER TO  
THE OASIS OF JUPITER AMMON.

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BY G. BELZONI.

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1820.



G. BELZONI.

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When I recovered, I was presented to Mahomet Ali Bashaw, who received me very civilly. Seeing that I walked lamely, and being told the cause, he said, such accidents could not be avoided where there were troops. I made an arrangement with him, and undertook to erect a machine, which would raise as much water with one ox, as the machines of the country with four. He was much pleased with my proposal, as it would save the labour and expense of many thousands of oxen in the country; a matter of importance, since these animals are scarcely of any other use than working; for, though they are in pretty good condition, they are seldom killed for food, the Turks eating mutton, and the Arabs buffalo's flesh, when they can afford it. The Bashaw was just returned from Arabia, where he had conquered some of the Wahaby tribes, and delivered the holy cities of Mecca and Medina from the Infidels. He himself conducted the war till lately, when his son Ibrahim Bashaw conquered some of the great chiefs, who were taken prisoners, and sent to Constantinople, where they were executed. Notwithstanding this, I am of opinion, that Mecca will be to the Turks, what Jerusalem is to the Christians; for, unless a strong army be kept there, the croisades of Mahomet Ali will have no better effect, than that of our Godfrey of Bouillon.

When all was quiet again, I recommenced my hydraulic preparations. The place, where I was to erect my machine, was in Soubra, at the garden of the Bashaw, on the Nile, three miles from Cairo. We went to reside there, in a small house within the walls of the governor's palace, which was closed at night by large gates, something like the Occales in Alexandria. I had many provoking difficulties to encounter, before I became acquainted with the people of the place, as they supposed, that the introduction of such machines into the country would throw many of them out of work; consequently I was not welcome among them; and the very persons who were to furnish me with what was necessary in wood, iron, carpentry, &c. would be the first to suffer by it, if the machine succeeded. It may, therefore, easily be imagined that I had to contend with many obstacles, besides the prejudice against all strangers, or innovations in the customs of the natives. As a proof of this may be cited the hydraulic machine already in Soubra, sent as a present from England to the Bashaw of Egypt, which is said to have cost ten thousand pounds. It was neatly put up, though the engineer, who was in charge of it, met with many difficulties before he effected it. At last it was set to work; but as it was imagined, that an English machine would inundate the whole country in an hour, the quantity of water raised was not adequate to their expectation, and it has been left useless ever since. For my own

part, I have no doubt, that the machine might have been made to draw up more water, if the person who constructed it could have seen the place and situation in which it was to act. The failure in this instance had given me an early surmise of what might be my own fate; and I was not mistaken.

During my stay at Soubra I became acquainted with many Turks, and in particular with the governor of the palace, as we had our house within his walls. The garden of the Bashaw was under his care, and a guard was kept at the gates. The seraglio is so situated, that the front looks over the hill: at the back of it is the garden, which is under the care of Greeks, who in a few years have brought it to great perfection. There are beautiful alcoves, made in form of cupolas, entirely covered with plants; and the water machines, which are constantly at work, keep up a perpetual verdure. There is a fountain in the European style, and a great quantity of fruit, particularly grapes and peaches; but they never grow to any size like ours, for many get rotten and fall before they are ripe; in consequence, the Turks eat them green.

The Bashaw is in continual motion, being sometimes at his citadel, and sometimes at his seraglio in the Esbakie; but Soubra is his principal residence. His chief amusement is in the evening a little before sunset, when he quits his seraglio, and seats himself on the bank of the Nile, to fire at an earthen pot, with his guards. If any of them hit it, he makes him a present, occasionally of forty or fifty rubies. He is himself an excellent marksman; for I saw him fire at and hit a pot only fifteen inches high, set on the ground on the opposite side of the Nile, though the river at Soubra is considerably wider than the Thames at Westminster Bridge. As soon as it is dark, he retires into the garden, and reposes either in an alcove, or by the margin of a fountain, on an

European chair, with all his attendants round him. Here his numerous buffoons keep him in continual high spirits and good humour. By moonlight the scene was beautiful. I was admitted into the garden whenever I wished, by which means I had an opportunity of observing the domestic life of a man, who from nothing rose to be viceroy of Egypt, and conqueror of the most powerful tribes of Arabia.

From the number of lights I frequently saw through the windows of the seraglio, I supposed the ladies were at such times amusing themselves in some way or other. Dancing women are often brought to divert them, and sometimes the famous Catalani of Egypt was introduced. One of the buffoons of the Bashaw took it into his head one day, for a frolic, to shave his beard; which is no trifle among the Turks; for some of them, I really believe, would sooner have their head cut off than their beard: he borrowed some Franks' clothes of the Bashaw's apothecary, who was from Europe, and, after dressing himself in our costume, presented himself to the Bashaw as a European, who could not speak a single word either of Turkish or Arabic, which is often the case. Being in the dark, the Bashaw took him for what he represented himself to be, and sent immediately for the interpreter, who put some questions to him in Italian, which he did not answer: he was then questioned in French, but no reply; and next in the German and Spanish languages, and still he was silent: at last, when he saw that they were all deceived, the Bashaw not excepted, he burst out in plain Turkish, the only language he was acquainted with, and his well known voice told them who he was; for such was the change of his person, particularly by the cutting off his beard, that otherwise they could scarcely have recognised him. The Bashaw was delighted with the fellow; and, to keep up the frolic, gave him an order on the treasury for an enormous sum of money, and sent

him to the Kaciabay, to present himself as a Frank, to receive it. The Kaciabay started at the immensity of the sum, as it was nearly all that the treasury could furnish : but upon questioning this new European, it was soon perceived who he was. In this attire he went home to his women, who actually thrust him out of the door ; and such was the disgrace of cutting off his beard, that even his fellow buffoons would not eat with him till it was grown again.

The Bashaw seems to be well aware of the benefits that may be derived from his encouraging the arts of Europe in his country, and had already reaped some of the fruits of it. The fabrication of gunpowder, the refining of sugar, the making of fine indigo, and the silk manufacture, are introduced, much to his advantage : he is constantly inquiring after something new, and is delighted with any thing strange to his imagination. Having heard of electricity, he sent to England for two electric machines, one with a plate, the other with a cylinder. The former was broken by the way ; the latter was dismantled. The physician of the Bashaw, an Arminian, did not know, though it was so easy a matter, how to set it up. Happening to be at the garden one evening, when they were attempting it, and could not succeed, I was requested to put the several pieces together ; and, having done so, I made one of the soldiers mount on the insulating stool, charged the machine, and gave the Turk a good shock ; who, expecting no such thing, uttered a loud cry, and jumped off, as much terrified as if he had seen the devil. The Bashaw laughed at the man's jumping off, supposing his fright to be a trick, and not the effect of the machine ; and when told, that it was actually occasioned by the machine, he affirmed positively that it could not be, for the soldier was at such a distance, that it was impossible the small chain he held in his hand could have such power. I then desired the interpreter to inform his Highness, that if he would mount the stool himself, he would be convinced

of the fact. He hesitated for a while whether to believe me or not; however he mounted the stool. I charged well, put the chain into his hand, and gave him a pretty smart shock. He jumped off, like the soldier, on feeling the effect of the electricity; but immediately threw himself on the sofa in a fit of laughter, not being able to conceive how the machine could have such power on the human body.

The governor of Soubra, Zulfur Carcaja, was a Mamelouk of about sixty-five years of age, and an instance of the promotion of one of that body of men, who for so many centuries ruled Egypt. His political conduct towards the Bashaw procured him the place of governor of a village, which contained the residence of the Bashaw himself, and a vast tract of land, the cultivation of which was entirely under his direction. He was a learned man among the Turks, and had a considerable portion of knowledge in agriculture, which I suppose to be the cause of his continuing to enjoy the Bashaw's favour. He had travelled a great deal in the Ottoman dominions, and had acquired much information; which is uncommon for a Turk: but the prejudices of his nation, and the superstitions of his religion, notwithstanding all this, did not quit him an instant. At night I used to go to his divan, or *conversazione*, to chat, drink coffee, and smoke a pipe. We agreed in many points; but on that of the hydraulic machine I could make no impression upon him, as it was against his interest to be convinced. He was one day taken very ill; and as there was no physician nearer than Cairo, he sent to know whether we could not do something for him. As it was only a violent cold, Mrs. Belzoni sent him a negus, which he liked so well, that he continued the medicine for several days.

Some time after this, Mrs. Belzoni had a pain in her side. One evening, I went to his divan; and as he always inquired after the health of his physician, I informed him of the circumstance: upon which he assured me, that it was nothing but what he would



find a remedy for immediately ; and he rose and went into an inner room, from which with all imaginable pomp and devotion he brought out a book. The Sheik of the mosque was present ; and, after turning over and over again the leaves of this book, they concluded on what was to be done. Three pieces of paper were cut in a triangular form, the size of a playing card, and the Sheik wrote on them several words in Arabic. Of these pieces of paper, he told me, that Mrs. Belzoni must fasten one to her forehead by a string, and one to each ear. He then fetched a piece of the skin of a lamb, that had been sacrificed during the feast of Bairam. The Sheik wrote on this also, and it was to be applied to the part affected. I thanked him very much for his kindness, and brought away the amulets, which we keep to this day, as a memorial of the Turkish method of curing pains. It happened, that Mrs. Belzoni was somewhat better a day or two after, and the old Turk exulted in having repaid the obligation he had incurred, when cured by her of his cold.

About this time Mr. Bankes arrived in this country, and proceeded almost immediately to Mount Sinai, and thence to Upper Egypt; but returned in three months, and went to Syria. Mr. Burckhardt had for a long time premeditated the removal of the colossal head, or rather bust, known by the name of Young Memnon, to England, and had often endeavoured to persuade the Bashaw to send it as a present to the Prince Regent; but as it must have appeared to a Turk too trifling an article to send to so great a personage, no steps were taken for this purpose. Mr.

Burckhardt then proposed it to Mr. Bankes ; but the reason why this gentleman did not take it away I am not acquainted with.

By this time the water machine was finished ; and we waited the arrival of the Bashaw from Alexandria, to give his opinion on the advantages which might be derived from introducing it into the country. It was constructed on the principle of a crane with a walking wheel, in which a single ox, by its own weight alone, could effect as much as four oxen employed in the machines of the country. I accomplished this undertaking, notwithstanding the various species of intrigue and difficulty which were incessantly thrown in my way. The Bashaw arrived at Cairo, but did not come to Soubra till some time after.

At this period Mr. Salt, the consul-general from England, arrived in that capital, having business to transact in Cairo. I had frequent interviews with Mr. Burckhardt ; and, knowing the wish he had for the removal of the colossal bust of Memnon, I repeatedly told him that I would undertake its conveyance from Thebes to Alexandria, so that it might be sent to England. On the arrival of Mr. Salt, Mr. Burckhardt proposed it to him ; and shortly after having myself occasion to see that gentleman, I repeated to him, before Mr. Burckhardt, that I should be happy to undertake the removal of the bust, without the smallest view of interest, as it was to go to the British Museum. The consul seemed inclined to comply, but was indecisive for some time, saying he would think about it. A few days after this, he avoided all communication, keeping himself in strict seclusion, as the plague had begun to show itself in the streets of Cairo.

The Bashaw was now come to Soubra, accompanied with several connoisseurs in hydraulics. The machine was set to work ; and, although constructed with bad wood and bad iron, and erected by Arabian carpenters and bricklayers, it was a question whether it did not draw six or seven times as much water as the common machines.

The Bashaw, after long consideration, gave his decision; and declared, that it drew up only four times as much. It is to be observed, that the water produced by this machine was measured by comparison with the water procured by six of their own; and that, at the time of measuring, the Arabs urged their animals at such a rate, that they could not have continued their exertion above an hour; and for the moment they produced nearly double the quantity of water, that was usually obtained. Notwithstanding all this, the calculation of the Bashaw was to my satisfaction, as it decided on the accomplishment of my undertaking. Still Mahommed Ali perceived plainly the prejudice among the Arabs, and some of the Turks, who were concerned in the cultivation of the land; for instead of four hundred people, and four hundred oxen, they would have only to command one hundred of each, which would make a considerable difference in their profits: but, as it happened, an accident occurred, that put an end to all their fears.

The Bashaw took it into his head to have the oxen taken out of the wheel, in order to see, by way of frolic, what effect the machine would have by putting fifteen men into it. James, the Irish lad in my service, entered along with them; but no sooner had the wheel turned once round, than they all jumped out, leaving the lad alone in it. The wheel, of course, overbalanced by the weight of the water, turned back with such velocity, that the catch was unable to stop it. The lad was thrown out, and in the fall broke one of his thighs. I contrived to stop the wheel before it did farther injury, which might have been fatal to him. The Turks have a belief, that, when such accidents happen in the commencement of any new invention, it is a bad omen. In consequence of this, exclusive of the prejudice against the machine itself, the Bashaw had been persuaded to abandon the affair. It had been stated to him, also, that it cost as much as four of the usual machines in making, while nothing was

said of the advantages as to the oxen, that would be saved in the working of it. The business ended in this manner; and all that was due to me from the Bashaw was consigned to oblivion, as well as the stipulation I had made with him.

It was with considerable pain to my feelings, that I reflected on the idea of leaving a country, which has ever been one of the principal points of research among the learned. The fame of its antiquity excited in me the desire of investigation; but, under the circumstances I have mentioned, my purse would not afford the expenses of a journey to any great distance; and having Mrs. Belzoni with me, it required some deliberation, before I could decide, whether I should proceed to the north or to the south. I had been to visit the consul-general, but nothing more was said respecting the colossal head; so that the project of removing it seemed to have been forgotten. After having taken all matters into consideration, and made a proper calculation of the expenses, I found, that in an economical way I could make a voyage as far as Assouan and back again.

From the circumstances that follow, the reader will be able to form a proper idea of the motives by which I was induced to undertake the removal of the Memnion bust, which is now lodged in the British Museum; and for what purpose I made the researches, and accumulated the various remains of antiquity, which will find a place in this volume. There will be no occasion for me to enter into such particulars as would call for the evidence of others to the facts, as I am well assured, that a simple statement of the case will make the reader perfectly acquainted with it.

It has been erroneously stated, that I was regularly employed by Mr. Salt, the consul-general of his Britannic majesty in Egypt, for the purpose of bringing the colossal bust from Thebes to Alexandria. I positively deny that I was ever engaged by him

in any shape whatever, either by words or writing ; as I have proofs of the case being on the contrary. When I ascended the Nile, the first and second time, I had no other idea in my mind, but that I was making researches for antiquities, which were to be placed in the British Museum ; and it is naturally to be supposed that I would not have made these excursions, had I been previously aware, that all I found was for the benefit of a gentleman, whom I never had the pleasure to see before in my life. But what has displeased me above all is, that while occupied in my researches, an advantage has been taken, and a notion promulgated, the very reverse of the real matter of fact ; and I am sorry I cannot be silent on the subject, feeling it an indispensable duty to myself, as well as the public, to bring the truth to light. I am happy, however, to state, that I succeeded in putting all the articles of my discovery on their way to the British Museum, though not in the same manner in which I thought they were to be entered in that place at first, as was the case with the young Memnon head.

The indecision, whether I should go up or down the Nile, came at last to a point. I know not what to call it, whether curiosity, or that enthusiasm for antiquities, which I can trace from my younger days while in Rome, that spurred me on to decide to ascend the Nile.

Agreeably to the resolution I had taken, I hired a boat at a very cheap rate, with four sailors, a boy, and the Reis, or captain. I made provision for the voyage, and every thing was ready for our departure. Any one may ascend the Nile without being interrupted ; but it is better to obtain a firman from the Bashaw, in case of the want of protection from any of his Beys, Cacheffs, or Caimacans, in Upper Egypt ; and Mahomet Ali was always ready to give a firman to any one who asked for it. I communicated my intended departure to Mr. Burckhardt, who, on hearing that nothing more was

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said about taking away the colossal head, seemed to be quite disappointed. Being a native of that part of Italy which had lately come under the Austrian dominions, I might have applied to the Austrian consul, to obtain a firman from the Bashaw: but as I enjoyed the British protection, I applied to the British consul. Going to his house for the purpose, I found Mr. Burckhardt there: it seems he had persuaded the consul to avail himself of the opportunity of my ascending the Nile, by offering to pay half the expense. Accordingly, when I informed the consul of my intended journey, and that I came to request he would do me the favour to obtain a firman for me from the Bashaw, he expressed his joy by exclaiming, "This is a godsend indeed!" and I was then informed, that they had made up their minds to have the colossus conveyed down the Nile, and to offer it as a present to the British Museum, if I would kindly undertake the removal of it. I replied that my capacity was little, but that I would use all my efforts to succeed in the enterprise; adding that I should be happy at all times to increase the British Museum with the product of my exertions. To which the British consul answered, "And I shall be glad to do every thing in my power to promote your wishes." This was all that passed on either side.

As I was unacquainted with the upper country, I received instructions concerning the manner in which I was to proceed, to obtain information, and to provide myself with implements for the purpose in view. The instructions were as follow:

" Boolak, June 28, 1816.

" Mr. Belzoni is requested to prepare the necessary implements, at Boolak, for the purpose of raising the head of the statue of the younger Memnon, and carrying it down the Nile. He will proceed as speedily as circumstances will allow to Siout, there to deliver his letters, prepared for that effect, to Ibrahim Bashaw, or whoever

may be left in the charge of the government; and he will, at that place, consult with Doctor Scotto on the subject of his further proceedings. He will take care to engage a *proper boat* for bringing down the head, and will request Mr. Scotto to provide him with a soldier to go up with him, for the purpose of engaging the Fellahs to work whenever he may require their assistance, as otherwise they are not likely to attend to Mr. Belzoni's orders; and he should on no account leave Siout without an interpreter.

“ Having obtained the necessary permission to hire workmen, &c., Mr. Belzoni will proceed direct to Thebes. He will find the head referred to on the western side of the river, opposite to Carnak, in the vicinity of a village called Gornou, lying on the southern side of a ruined temple, called by the natives Kossar el Dekaki. To the head is still attached a portion of the shoulders, so that altogether it is of large dimensions, and will be recognized,—1st, by the circumstance of its lying on its back with the face uppermost—2dly, by the face being quite perfect, and very beautiful—3dly, by its having, on one of its shoulders, a hole bored artificially, supposed to have been made by the French for separating the fragment of the body—and 4thly, from its being a mixed blackish and reddish granite, and covered with hieroglyphics on its shoulders. It must not be mistaken for another, lying in that neighbourhood, which is *much mutilated*.

“ Mr. Belzoni will spare no expense or trouble in getting it as speedily conveyed to the banks of the river as possible; and he will, if it be necessary, let it wait there till the river shall have attained sufficient height, before he attempts to get it into the boat. But, at the same time, he is requested not to attempt removing it, on any account, if he should judge there would be any serious risk of either injuring the head, of burying the face in the sand, or of losing it in the Nile.



“ If, on arriving at the ground, too, he should perceive that his means are inadequate, or that the difficulties of the undertaking, from the nature of the ground, or other causes, are likely to prove insurmountable, he will, at once, relinquish the enterprise, and not enter into farther expense on that account.

“ Mr. Belzoni will have the goodness to keep a separate account of the expenses incurred in this undertaking, which, as well as his other expenses, will gladly be reimbursed ; as, from the knowledge of Mr. Belzoni’s character, it is confidently believed they will be as reasonable as circumstances will allow.

“ The boat meant to carry the head should be hired for a sufficient time to allow of its being carried *directly* down to Alexandria ; but, on the way, Mr. Belzoni will not fail to stop at Boolak for further instructions.

“ If Mr. Belzoni should ascertain the certainty of his being able to accomplish his purpose, he is requested immediately to despatch an express with the gratifying intelligence to Cairo.

“ HENRY SALT.”

I beg leave to observe, that in the whole of these instructions, though written in an assuming style, not a word is said about any payment to myself, which would certainly have been the case, had I been employed in the way that has been represented.