

Street Sellers by the Nile

They came out from the shade of the garden on to a dusty stretch of road bordered by the river. Five watchful bead sellers, two vendors of postcards, three sellers of plaster scarabs, a couple of donkey boys and some detached but hopeful infantile riff-raft closed in upon them.

"You want beads, sir? Very good, sir. Very cheap "

"Lady, you want scarab. Look---great queen--very lucky ."

"You look, sir--real lapis. Very good, very cheap .

"You want ride donkey, sir? This very good donkey. This donkey Whisky and Soda, sir " "You want to go granite' quarries, sir? This very good donkey. Other donkey very bad, sir, that donkey fall down"

"You want postcard--very cheap--very nice "

"Look, lady Only ten piastres--very cheap--lapis--this ivory "

"This very good fly whisk---this all amber "

"You go out in boat, sir? I got very good boat, sir "

"You ride back to hotel, lady? This first-class donkey " Hercule Poirot made vague gestures to rid himself of this **human cluster of flies**. Rosalie stalked through them like a sleep walker.

"It's best to pretend to be deaf and blind," she remarked.

The infantile riff-raft ran alongside murmuring plaintively.

"Bakshish? Bakshish? Hip, hip, hurrah--very good, very nice " Their gaily coloured rags trailed picturesquely and the flies lay in clusters on their eyelids.

They were the most persistent. The others fell back and launched a fresh attack on the next corner.

Now Poirot and Rosalie only ran the gauntlet of the shops--suave persuasive accents here.

"You visit my shop to-day, sir?" "You want that ivory crocodile, sir?" "You not been in my shop yet, sir?

I show you very beautiful things." They turned into the fifth shop and Rosalie handed over several rolls of films--the object of the walk.

Then they came out again and walked towards the river's edge.

One of the Nile steamers was just mooring. Poirot and Rosalie looked interestedly at the passengers.

"Quite a lot, aren't there?" commented Rosalie.

She turned her head as Tim Allerton came up and joined them. He was a little out of breath as though he had been walking fast.

They stood there for a moment or two and then Tim spoke: "An awful crowd as usual, I suppose," he remarked disparagingly, indicating the disembarking passengers.

"They're usually quite terrible," agreed Rosalie.

All three wore the air of superiority assumed by people who are already in a place when studying new arrivals.