

NUBIANS.

a. *Barabra of the Nile.*

The Barabra found in Lower Egypt, are principally adventurers from the banks of the Nile in Nubia; who seek employment for hire, and after a series of years return to their own country. They are favoured in certain particulars by the government; being “exempted from military duty; and being sometimes employed as task-masters, an occupation in which they particularly excel.” They are extremely clannish; and strong antipathies exist between them and the common Egyptian Arabs. Old residents have assured me, that they have never known in Lower Egypt of an instance of mixed offspring between these two classes. My own servant and interpreter, was from Dongola; and he was considered by eye-witnesses, as a fair example of the people of his native country.

Some of the boats on the Nile, are manned and commanded by Barabra; who, however, hardly form mixed crews, or serve under Arab commanders. These Barabra boatmen, appeared to belong principally to the immediate vicinity of the Cataract; where a fondness for the water is acquired in early life; and they perhaps correspond to the “*Icthyophagi of Elephantine*,” mentioned by Herodotus.

A third class of Barabra, are the ‘Jellab;’ who procure slaves on the upper parts of the Nile, and conduct them in slave-caravans to Cairo and Alexandria. One individual of this class, had the face unusually compressed; a peculiarity noticed by Ledyard; but I did not meet with a second instance.

A fourth class, consists of a large portion of the slaves; those who in Egypt, are termed ‘Abyssinians.’ Such as I saw offered for sale, were nearly all children and half-grown persons; having their hair dressed with much pains, according apparently to their respective national fashions. Some of the children proved to be ‘Galla;’ but through the diversity of dialects, their place of origin could rarely be ascertained; and they perhaps, had not all been derived from the southern border of Abyssinia.

On ascending the Nile, I met with the first instances of mixed descent at Kenneh; the modern capital of the Thebaid, about thirty miles below the site of ancient Thebes. Market-women of the Ethio-