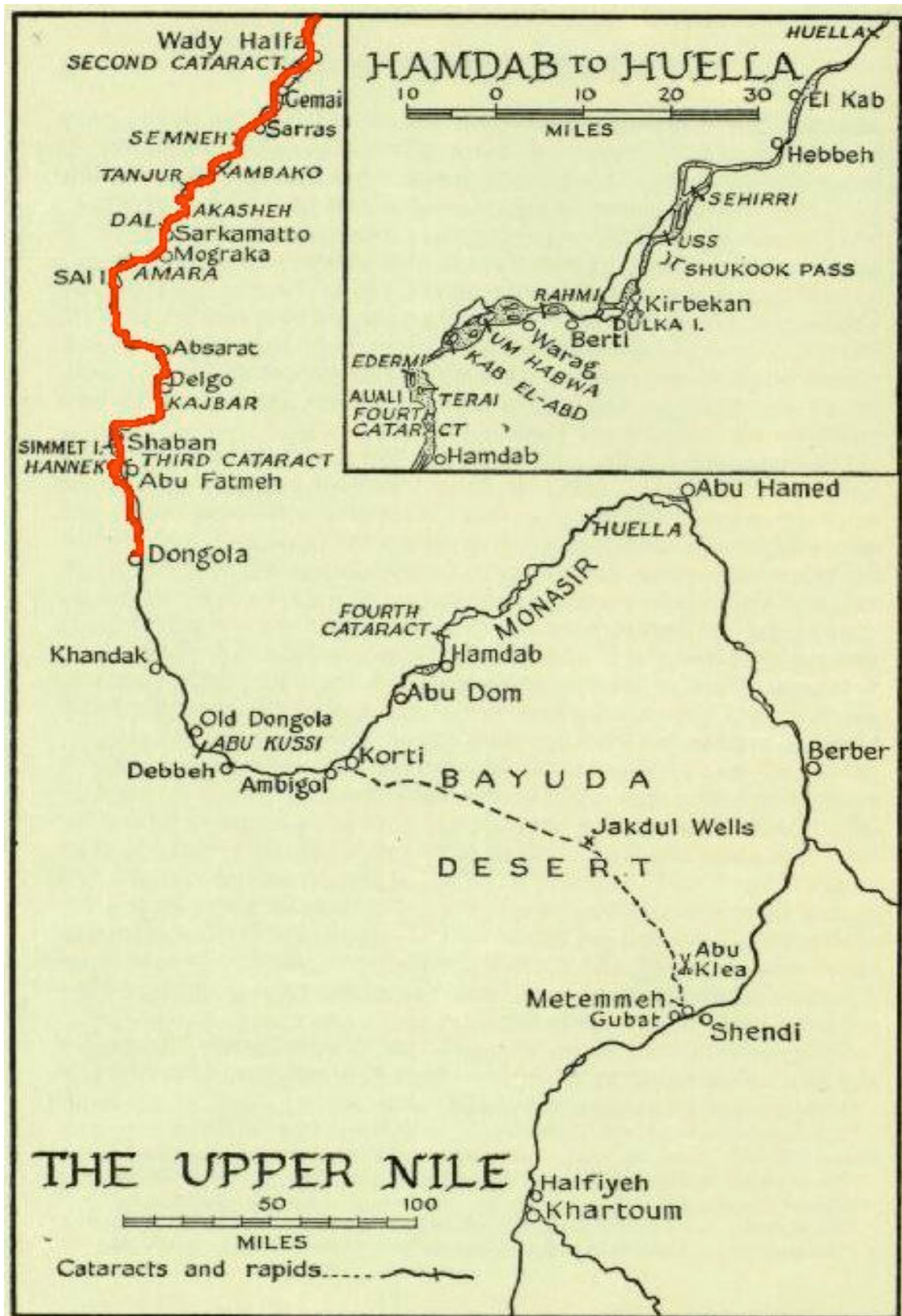


FROM THE OTTAWA *Free Press*, MARCH 21, 1885

HOME FROM THE NILE
Experience of Two Winnipeg Pilots Ascending
the Cataracts

Capt. A. R. Russell and J. J. Seegers [*sic*] were registered at the Windsor House today. These gentlemen were employed by the British government in the arduous task of taking the steel steamers up the Nile, and have just returned after the successful completion of their task. Capt. Russell, in conversation with a *Free Press* reporter this morning gave him the following information: "We were engaged by the British government and left Winnipeg for Egypt on the 8th day of October. When we arrived at Alexandria one of the boats, the *Water Lily*, was nearly completed. They were flat bottomed steel boats with a stern wheel built by Yarrow & Co. England. For a level river they were very good — I mean in model — but it would have been better had some suggestions been taken from the native boats, which were much better fitted for running on such a river as the Nile. They built two boats, the *Water Lily* and *Lotus*, and took them apart and shipped them over in sections. The *Water Lily* was put together at Alexandria, and the *Lotus* above Semneh. When the *Water Lily* was completed we took her up to Wady Halfa, and went on to Semneh, where our second boat was under construction. She made her trial trip on the 1st of January, and on the 2nd we started for Dongolah 250 miles up the river with the pleasant task of taking our boat over seven cataracts, those of Ambigol, Tangour, Akashch, Sarkammatto, Dal, Kayber and Hannock or Aborfatmah. The last cataract is about 14 miles long. The river is the worst that I have ever had the luck to pilot on, and I have been in the business since 1849. Along between rapids former boating experience was of great benefit in helping us judge as to channel &c., but when we struck a cataract we had to take a departure from our usual line and judge from a different standpoint. We had native pilots with us who were used to running the stream in their own boats, but in nearly every instance we had to go in direct opposition to their opinion. Their boats are high bowed and will ride any cataract that they can force them up. When we came to a cataract we would judge from the volume and velocity of the current among the rocks where the channel was, but in almost every case it was impossible to get at the main channel, and we would have to hunt up a channel which did not present the same obstacles. Against a stream of say 3 or 4 miles an hour our boat would make about 8 miles per hour, and when fitted with fuel &c. would draw about 2 feet of water. The worst cataract was Tangour. We were between four and five days getting over it. We hit rocks quite often and sprung a leak now



Route of the Steamboat Lotus, which traveled to Dongola with Segers and Russell

and again, but as the boats were built in air tight compartments there was little danger of our sinking. At one point all our hawsers parted and the boat turned round and started down stream. Had it not been that one stern hawser let go on shore and the whole length dragged on the bottom among the rocks and thus kept the boat straight in the current, we would have been swamped. At the lower end of the rapids there was slack water, and when she struck that some twenty or more niggers plunged in the river and took a line to shore. At Tangour we saw the wreck of the steamer *Geizer* [*? Gizeh*], which was wrecked in November last on the cataract above. She was a large side-wheeler. In trying to pass the cataract she got away from the soldiers who were hauling her and floated back over the rapids and struck against some sharp rocks. At most of the cataracts we unloaded all available stuff and had it portaged up on shore."

The boats [*sic*] were brought safely to Dongola and there left on January 31st, in charge of Capt. Stanhope, and the two pilots left for home. They both brought back with them high recommendations from Brigadier General F. Grenfell, commander of the Nile Expeditionary force, and left for Winnipeg last night.

The entire text for this document can be found at
http://link.library.utoronto.ca/champlain/item_record.cfm?Idno=9_96865&lang=eng&query=9_96865&searchtype=Bibrecord&startrow=1&Limit=All¹

¹ Stacey, C. P. (Charles Perry). Records of the Nile voyageurs, 1884-1885 : the Canadian voyageur contingent in the Gordon Relief Expedition. Toronto : Champlain Society, 1959.