

Our Foreign Letter.

A HOLIDAY IN UPPER EGYPT.



Ours was to be a short holiday, and we made up our minds to make the most of it; so packing as little luggage as possible we took a midnight train and sped off to Assouan, the southern limit of Egypt, 583 miles from Cairo.

To most of us everything was quite new, and we thoroughly enjoyed the trip up country, with the glorious Nile and its wide, fertile banks on the one side, and long stretches of desert, broken now and again by brown, barren rocks, on the other.

Here and there as the train stopped at some country station, the carriages would be surrounded with native vendors showing their beads and "scarabs" (or sacred beetles, each supposed to have been found in the coffin of a mummy!). Usually commencing at about 10s., they would eventually offer the article on view for 2d. or 3d.

So the time flew by, and at 5 p.m. we reached our destination, "travel-stained and weary," and glad enough to see the inviting door of St. James's Hotel before us. One cannot possibly praise this little hotel too highly. Situated as it is in the most central part of the town, not far from the railway station, but on the bank of the river, and just opposite the pretty little island of Elephantine, it is just the place to spend one's holiday in. After we had rested we strolled round town, seeing the native markets and the quaint Assouan bazaars, where Egyptian curios of all kinds are displayed to the gaze of the tourist. Some of these interesting articles would be offered to us for, say £6, but when the obliging vendor saw we were not anxious to part with so much money he would promptly offer the same for about 18s. or 19s.

At 7 a.m. next morning we were awakened with the news that our donkeys were at the door, so, after a hurried breakfast, we mounted our "gallant steeds" and started in real earnest—"sight seeing."

After a six-mile ride through the desert we first came to the Island of Philæ—a little island situated at the head of the first cataract. Here we dismounted, and taking a boat sailed out to the Temple of Isis. This temple was built by Ptolemy II. (about 248 B.C.), but never really finished until the reign of the Roman Emperors.

There is a path leading to the temple, on each side of which is a corridor; that on the west has thirty pillars, that on the east sixteen. We were, however, fated to see but the tops of these, owing to the fact that it was the time of the annual inundation of the Nile, and one could but wonder how these temples have so withstood centuries of inundation. On the west of the island is a beautiful little temple called "Pharaoh's Bed," and

next to it another small temple built by Ptolemy IX. Philæ was, in ancient times, regarded as one of the burial places of Osiris, and as such was held sacred, only priests being allowed to live there; indeed, the worship of this god flourished on the island as late as A.D. 453.

Next we visited the world-famed Dam, recently raised by the Irrigation Department for the purpose of storing Nile water and regulating its supply to the lower country. We climbed to the top and, looking down, watched the boiling, foaming waters below. Truly this marvellous Dam, a mighty piece of modern workmanship, standing amid the ruins of a glorious past, gives one much food for thought.

But riding across the desert in the heat of an eastern December day, even to see such sights as these is tiring work, so we hailed with delight the suggestion of one of our party to visit Mrs. S—, an English lady living near the Dam.

What she thought when she beheld five dusty donkey-riders making for her bungalow we do not know; but this we know, that as we sat in her delightfully cool and dainty drawing-room, drinking cups of delicious English-brewed tea, and eating real Scotch shortbread, we felt that that was by no means the least enjoyable part of our holiday.

Space would, however, fail one to speak of all the interesting places in Assouan, what with its tombs, its islands, its huge granite quarries, etc. It is a place to spend weeks rather than days.

Through the courtesy of a local doctor we were invited to visit the Government Hospital, an invitation we accepted with pleasure, and arriving at the appointed time were received and kindly shown over the building by the native doctor in charge. Entering the gates one finds oneself in a garden square, around which, in separate blocks, the pretty little hospital (of about 50 beds) is built. The first block on the right contains the out-patients' departments, two large waiting-rooms for the men and the women, and a dressing-room; also an office. Next to these is an ideal dispensary, where the doctor or one of his assistants acts dispenser.

The next block contains the kitchens (which looked spotlessly clean and bright), staffed with native male servants. Then came the well-stocked linen rooms and the little room set apart for patients' clothes. Here (after they have been fumigated) they are labelled and pigeon-holed, there to await their owner's discharge. The laundry, though fitted up with very nice wash-tubs, etc., was full of native "washermen," sitting cross-legged on the floor washing in the usual native fashion, with a round, shallow tin, the doctor explaining they had given up as impossible the attempt to teach them more modern methods. And now at last we found ourselves in the wards. First came those set apart for the "third class" patients, or those who cannot pay. They each contain about eight beds, and were so clean and cool looking. Further on are small, bright rooms for those who can pay. The men's wards were staffed with male nurses, the women's with women, all of whom were in spotless white uniforms. But what we admired most of all, perhaps, was the little block in which the operating rooms were. Here they have two

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