

greater interest, and Lesseps thought it was quite feasible. Finally the work was commenced about 1860 by "The Universal Suez Canal Company," under the direction of M. Lesseps. Half the capital was found by the Viceroy of Egypt, the other half was taken up in Europe, principally in France.

The canal is about eighty-nine miles long, and is simply a ditch, or artificial strait, about one hundred and eighty feet wide at the water surface, and about eighty feet at the bottom. The Timsah and Bitter Lakes, previous to the letting in of the waters of the Mediterranean, were mere dry depressions in the land, and when flooded saved some thirty miles of excavation. The whole of the excavating was done by about thirty thousand natives, who carried the sand out in baskets on their backs. We were told that about twenty thousand of them died during the time the work was being constructed, from cholera and exposure.

The canal cost one hundred million dollars. In 1875 the Egyptian Government getting into financial difficulties sold a controlling number of shares to the British Government for twenty million dollars. The late Lord Beaconsfield purchased them without consulting Parliament, and all England stood amazed at his audacity; but the wonderful foresight and statesmanship of that great Conservative leader has been fully exemplified, when it is authoritatively stated that those same shares are now worth six times the purchase money; besides giving Great Britain a controlling interest in the canal, an immense influence in Egypt, and a means of reaching her eastern possessions from seven to nine thousand miles less in distance than formerly.

The consequences resulting from the successful completion of this great international work have been, and will continue to be, so momentous upon the political as well as the commercial relations of the world, that it may safely be said no man dares attempt to estimate them.