

THE CARBONACEOUS DEPOSITS IN EGYPT

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THE presence of workable coal in Egypt would be of such immense importance to the country that every rumour of the existence of carbonaceous deposits has been received with the deepest interest. Several efforts have been made to test some of the more promising areas by borings, which have, however, led to no tangible result, and it must be regretfully stated that no coal deposits of proved economic value are at present known to exist in Egypt. Lignites and even minute coal-seams are not, however, entirely absent, and their nature and distribution may perhaps deserve mention in a volume devoted to the general distribution of coal deposits.

PLANT DEPOSITS OF OLIGOCENE AND EOCENE AGE

The presence of the trunks of silicified trees in the Petrified Forest east of Cairo probably led Mohamed Ali to seek for coal in that direction, and a boring was made at Bir el Fahm (Well of the Coal) under Figari Bey's direction, of which, unfortunately, no records have been retained.

Fifty miles south-west of Cairo, in the scarped hills to the north of Birket el Qurun (the great lake occupying the deepest part of the Fayum depression), is the Qasr el Saga series of the Middle Eocene. According to Mr. Beadnell* these beds were deposited in fairly shallow water, as witnessed by their lithological character and by the number of land animals' remains, as well as by the frequency of shore-frequenting whales, dugongs, crocodiles and turtles. "The clays, moreover, are found to abound with impressions of plants, and in some cases are highly lignitic, being made up of compressed masses of vegetation, including solid twigs, now found in a state more resembling charcoal than ordinary dense lignites; some bands approximate to an impure brown coal. In certain beds of the series farther to the west, very thin seams of true coal occur; they were, however, never seen to exceed one or two millimetres."

PLANT DEPOSITS IN THE NUBIAN SANDSTONE

The most interesting occurrences are those associated with the Nubian sandstone in Upper Egypt and the Oases. Surface evidence of the presence of

*H. J. L. Beadnell, "Topography and Geology of the Fayum Province of Egypt," p. 53.