

FROM CAIRO TO KARNAK

BY MRS. JULIA A. SYMINGTON

We often gaze upon a distant landscape, when its robe of azure, with the different lights and shades so nicely blended, would make us imagine that within its limits would be found sylvan retreats and nymph-like bowers, rivaling those beautiful creations of the old classic poets. But when we attempt to explore the beauties of the place it throws off its azure robes, its lights and shades become rugged hills and vales, its leafy bowers become thickets of thorns and brambles and everything shrinks into cold reality. Yet, notwithstanding all this, though pillars and monuments and temples outlive the names of those whom they commemorate, what will not a tourist do and suffer to mark the progress of the world, as in thought we go back to the time of the first great silence when this world was not and chaos held undisputed dominion, and then try to put on paper what we have seen and thought. Great men have frequently paused ere they performed an action which materially affected their reputation or happiness. History affords numerous parallel examples, indeed it is no uncommon occurrence for individuals to feel perplexed as to the course they should pursue, when about to enter upon an important transaction. These considerations have prompted me to endeavor to write an account of my excursion up the Nile from Cairo to Luxor, Karnak, Thebes, Denderah, Abydos, Assiout and Memphis. Ambition prompts me to endeavor to write well, to originate thoughts brilliant and interesting, to give expression to those thoughts in forcible and elegant language, but when I consider the vastness of such an undertaking and my own want of ability, I feel disposed to abandon the attempt in complete despair, but a feeling of gratefulness from the benefits of associated travel induces me to tell in a plain way what I have seen.

After five days of sight seeing in Cairo—a city that has existed from time almost immemorial—when the prospect of a possibility of securing a place for a trip up the Nile, although somewhat regrettably, we decided to take this opportunity of a lifetime and see more of the renowned river of Egypt, so celebrated in ancient story. We spent our last day in visiting the museum at Ghizeh, a national collection of Egyptian antiquities that surpasses every other collection in the world. It would be impossible to give a description of this splendid collection, but visitors find in each room a written account of the most valuable and interesting monuments, and principal objects displayed. We could intelligent guides give a summary of the have spent our twelve days in Cairo delightfully, as many did, in viewing the churches and mosques, palaces, gardens, bazaars, Joseph's well. On the old Cairo side of the hill, below the citadel, there is a miserable-looking house, which is asserted to be the house where the Virgin Mary took refuge at the time of the massacre at Bethlehem. There is an under-ground chapel connected with the house in which a number of ragged children are instructed by monks. There are several mosques

that the tourists do well to visit. The mosque El Azhar is very fine and is the chief university of the Mohammedan world. The number of students ranges from 10,000 to 12,000. One mosque stands on a hill which Moslem tradition asserts is the hill on which the

kings, priests, officials, monograms and other devices. They were set in rings, brooches, pins, and were worn by the dead and living, or were wrapped up in bandages which with the mummy was swathed and placed over the heart. The inscription on the funereal scarab was usually "Life, stability and protection." Sometimes they were adorned with the figure of the deceased adoring Osiris. By an easy transition the custom of placing scarabs on the bodies of the dead passed to the living, and men and women wore the scarab probably as a silent

his customer with profound deference, for fine clothing and ample funds are mighty divinities in Egypt as well as Canada. Observing the same article had various prices according to the buyer I contented myself with but a few as the jewelers seem to have no conscience in dealing with infidels, and as I had little faith in them, although their work shows exquisite taste and skill. The Mohammedan looks with contempt on the European who pays what he asks, though he loses by the operation.

In Cairo one sees the methods not of the Egyptians only, but all Oriental races to some extent. The dervishes of Cairo—two classes, the dancing and howling—many were interested in, but they afforded little to me but as objects of pity. There are still some objects of great interest in Old Cairo, among them the Church of Aboo Sirgeh, in which are shown two niches, said to have been the resting places of Joseph and Mary and the child Jesus during the flight into Egypt. It must have been a healthier spot than now, otherwise they would never have lived to see Palestine again, and they must have been small of stature to have occupied such a space.

Opposite Old Cairo is the pleasant Island of Roda, with groves and gardens, at one time a favorite place of resort from Cairo. Here it is traditionally asserted that Moses was found among the bullrushes by Pharaoh's daughter. A late tradition it must be, for at the time of Moses the Egyptian court was either at Memphis or at Zan, the site of the modern Tanis. I bought a small cradle, with a very small Moses enclosed, to commemorate my visit to so celebrated a spot, as all visitors are expected to do. The ornament disappoints people nearly as much as the location disappointed the writer.

But we must leave Cairo with all its charms, for we have been notified our train leaves at six o'clock for Luxor. After an all-night ride and a part of the next day by rail we reach the fertile plain extending for miles on both sides of the Nile. On landing at Luxor a native boat lay moored to a stone foundation of an old Roman pier. Two



RUINS AT KARNAK.

ark rested after the flood, and later the spot where Abraham was about to offer Ishmael (not Isaac) when a ram was sent to be offered instead. The schools of Cairo are numerous; most religious denominations have their own schools. Hospitals and philanthropic institutions are well worth visiting; also the library and the citadel alone would occupy some time, if time was taken to study its varied features of interest in connection with the history of the slaughter of 450 Mamelukes with 800 more in the city. The mosque of Sultan Hassan, dating from 1357, is perhaps the finest in the city. The architecture is graceful and elegant and the ornamentation superb. It is said to have cost 600 pounds a day for three years to build this building, and it is believed that the architect's hands were cut off by the sultan's command to keep the edifice unique.

We can scarcely say good-by to both old and new Cairo without referring to the myriads of models of certain beetles which are found in mummies and tombs and in the ruins of temples and other buildings in Egypt. The Egyptians called the scarabæus khepera and the god represented by this insect also Khepera. He was supposed to be the father of the gods, and made himself out of matter that he himself had made. He is identified with the rising sun and typified resurrection. Scarabs are divided into three classes—funereal scarabs, those worn for ornament, and historical. The greater number found measure from half an inch to two inches, and are made of steatite glazed green or blue or brown. The flat base of scarab was used for engraving the names of gods,

act of homage to the creator of the world, who was not only the god of the dead but of the living also. I became almost unconsciously interested in the study of the scarab and had about decided to buy some for myself and friends. But observing in Cairo and the Orient generally the merchant scans our clothes and general appearance. If his decision is favorable he will treat



CAIRO—SPHINX AND PYRAMIDS OF GIZA.

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