

**A VISIT TO EGYPT IN 1872:
DESCRIBED IN FOUR LECTURES
TO THE LITERARY AND
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE**

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A Visit to Egypt in 1872: Described in Four Lectures to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne by Sir W. G. Armstrong

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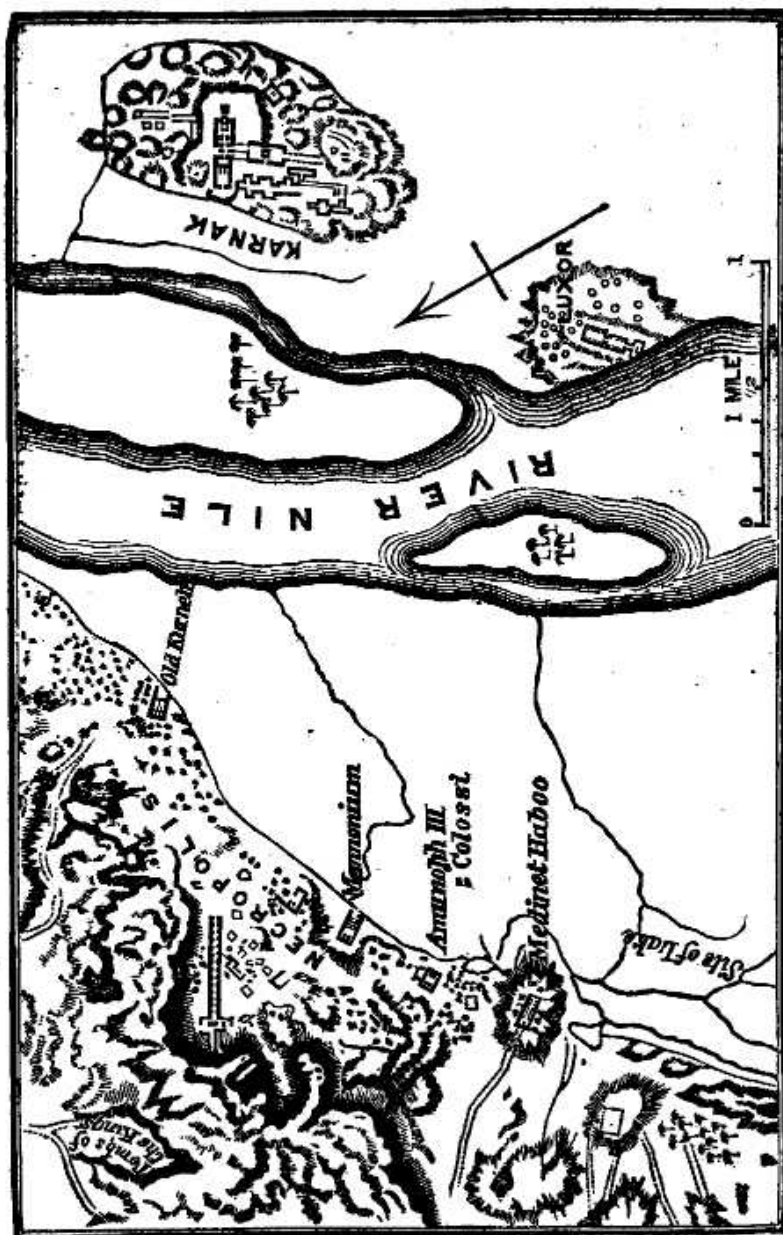
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SIR W. G. ARMSTRONG

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SITE OF THEBES



A. 830

VISIT TO EGYPT,

IN 1872.

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AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF NEWCASTLE-
UPON-TYNE.

BY

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

MAP OF SITE OF THEBES.

HIEROGLYPHIC OVALS.

PYLON AND PROPYLON.

PLAN OF GREAT TEMPLE OF KARNAK.

JUDAH MELEK.

A TYPICAL FIGURE.

MAP OF EGYPT.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

Alexandria—Its population—Caliph Omar—Fine harbour—Commercial importance—Cairo—Its inhabitants—Dress—Donkeys—Donkey-Boys—French Quarter—Native City—Streets and Bazaars—Women—Varieties of Race—Shopkeepers—Bargaining—Schools—Mosques—Memlooks—Mohammed Ali—Slaughter of the Memlooks—Anecdote—The Citadel—Old Cairo—Coptic Christians—Dervises and their Religious Services—Social life—Dining with a Pasha—Pasha's household—Slaves—Forced labour—The Khedive visited—His palace at Cairo—His Family—Syces—Dust of Egypt—Effect of Rain—The Pyramids of Gheezah—Visit to the Great Pyramid—Observations on—Origin of—The Sphinx.

LECTURE II.

Visit to Zakkarah—Site of Memphis—Native Villages—Habits of the Villagers—Pigeon-houses—Children—Site of Lake Mœris—Bahr Yocouf—Necropolis of Memphis—Pyramids of Zakkarah—Serpæum and Tombs of the Bulls—Osiris—Ramble amongst the Tombs—Return to Cairo—Museum of Boulak—Early Sculptures—Wooden Statue—Egyptian Chronology compared with that of the Bible—Great antiquity of Egypt—Hieroglyphics—Their Origin—Invention of an Alphabet—Hieratic and Demotic Writing—The Rosetta Stone—How Hieroglyphics were deciphered—Champollion—The Khedive's encouragement of Knowledge and Learning—Heliopolis—Minieh—Voyage up the Nile—Equipment—Life in a Dahabeeah—The Crew—Sugar Factories—Canal Works—Siout—Remarkable View—Arrival at Thebes—Disappearance of Ancient City.

LECTURE III.

Topography of Thebes—Principal Temples—Technical Terms—Temple Palaces—Temple of Luxor—Dromos—Temples at Karnak—Des-

cription of—Hieroglyphic Inscriptions—Antiquity of Karnak—Rameses the Great—Sculptures relating to the Jews—Karnak by Moonlight—Beware of the Dogs—National Ceremonies—Temple of Kurneh—The Memnonium—Colossal Statue of Rameses the Great—Extraordinary weight of Block of Stone—Astronomical Ceiling—Ancient Library—Temple of Amunoph III.—The Colossi of Thebes—Temple of Medeenet Haboo—Curious Sculptures—Amun-ra—Inscriptions—Monolith Statues—Style of Statuary—Sacred Lake—Funeral Rites—Valley of the Tombs of the Kings—Belzoni—Description of Tomb of Sethos—Manners and Customs exhibited by Hieroglyphics—Visiting—Entertainments—Parks and Gardens—Furniture—Ladies—Field Sports—Food—Agriculture—Art of Writing—Book of the Dead—Osiris—Immortality—Judgment of Souls—Animal Worship—The Scarab—The Ibis—Laws—Division into Castes—Property in Land—Priests—Origin of the Nation—Antiquity—Civilization—History.

LECTURE IV.

Resumption of Voyage—Edfoo—Silsilis—Quarries—River Gorge—Ancient Nile Deposit—Irrigation—The Shadoof—The Sakia—Change of River Scenery—Assocan—Limit of Egypt—Nubians—Visit to the Governor—Syenite Quarries—Masterly power of quarrying—Efficiency of Tools—Was Steel known?—How could they cut stone or shave themselves with Bronzes Implements?—Transport of Blocks—Visit to the Cataracts—Description—Polished Rocks—Metamorphosed Rocks—Adventures amongst the Cataracts.—Amphibious habits of the people—Baksheesh—Hawaghee—Isle of Philæ—Story of Osiris—Temple of Isis—The Camel—Nubia—Palm Trees—The Nile in Nubia—The Soudan—Climate of Nubia—Evenings on the Nile—Nubian Village—Kawass—Character of Desert—Dome palm—Thunder Storms—White Ants—Negotiating with Villagers—How to win a Wife—"Come and pull this Boat"—How to cure a Head-ache—Quarries at Silsilis—Crocodiles—Huge Turtle—Return to Cairo—Suez Canal—Bitter Lakes—Ismailya—The Bedouins—Return to England.

LECTURE I.

IN communicating to you my reminiscences of a recent visit to Egypt, I must beg of you to understand that I do not aspire to treat of that remarkable country in a recondite manner. My only aim is to enable my friends and townsmen to share with me the natural impressions of a tour in one of the most interesting regions of the world.

On the 17th of January, 1872, I arrived, in company with a friend, at Alexandria, having previously travelled from London to Brindisi, by way of Paris, Turin, Rome, and Naples. I had never been out of Europe before, and it was like entering upon a new life to be suddenly brought in contact with Camels and Turbans, and Palm Trees, and dark-skinned men, clothed in

many coloured garments. And yet Alexandria is not a purely Oriental city, its population being of the most mixed description. Christians from all parts of the world, and especially from Greece, Italy, and the Levant, together with Jews and Turks, are congregated there in great numbers, being attracted by the vast trade of which that city is the emporium. Alexandria possesses none of its ancient grandeur. It is essentially a seafaring place, reminding one, in many respects, of Wapping; and one looks in vain for any remnants of that love of philosophy and literature for which it used to be so famous. Founded by Alexander the Great, after he had destroyed the city of Tyre, it became the chief city of the Ptolemies. Afterwards, under the dominion of the Romans, it maintained an unrivalled importance as a seat both of commerce and of learning, until it fell a prey to Saracen invasion. In the year 640 it was captured by the Caliph Omar, who destroyed the far-famed library, which had been collected there, alleging, as an excuse for so doing, that if those books contained the same doctrine as the Koran, they were useless; and if they contained anything at variance with the Koran they were pernicious. The books were accordingly ordered to be burnt, and, for six months, they supplied fuel for heating the public baths, of which there was an extraordinary