LITTLE PEOPLE IN FAR-OFF LANDS



At the Edge of the Desert

Egypt, Morocco, Algeria

A. DUNNING

No. 10

NAVIRUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
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ERNAKULAM

AT THE EDGE OF THE DESERT

CHAPTER I

CAIRO

IN this book we are going on a journey, you and I, to places, as the name tells you, " At the edge of the desert." As of course you know, there are several deserts in various parts of the world, but the one near to the countries we are to visit, is the best known of them all—the Sahara Desert.

The Sahara covers a vast part of Northern Africa, and among the countries at its edge, is the famous land of Egypt. I am sure you have all heard of this wonderful country.

Now before we go into the fields and villages of this ancient land, we must spend a little time in its chief city of Cairo.

At a first glimpse, Cairo seems very much like one of our own cities. It has the same wide streets, fine shops, hotels, theatres and cinemas. We see motor traffic, we can go to the railway station and look at fine railway trains or to the airfield and watch great planes coming and going to various parts of the world.

But we notice a difference when we look at the people in the streets. We see they come from many different races—white, brown and black skinned peoples—and that there are very many of them.

In these crowds we notice a few women whose faces are covered with veils. These are Egyptian ladies, and until a few years ago it was a custom for all women of Egypt to wear such veils whenever they



A glimpse at the newer part of Cairo

left their homes. Nowadays this rule is almost forgotten.

So far, we have been looking at the newer part of the city of Cairo, and we could spend much more time there if it were possible.

But as time is short, let us turn off one of these

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wide, modern streets into this narrower side-lane, which brings us to a very different Cairo, to the older part of the city, and what we now see is much as it was hundreds of years ago.

There are no cars in these streets, for they are too narrow for such things. Instead we often find ourselves hugging the walls at the side of the street in order to let a donkey or a train of camels go by.

Some of the camels or donkeys are taking their goods to an open market-place higher up the street. They make slow progress, for in these narrow streets the dense crowds cannot make way very quickly, and the animals are often compelled to stop and wait for the crowd to thin out.

And what a varied crowd it is ! Here are some Egyptian workmen—some of them in long gowns and others in European clothes, but all of them wearing on the head either a turban or a tarboush.

We all know what a turban looks like, for many people of India wear them. As for a tarboush, this is a red hat which looks almost exactly like a plant-pot turned upside-down !

Just behind these people we see a very stately old gentleman in robes and a white turban. He is, as you might guess, a learned professor or teacher.

Before we have gone very much farther, we come across a man who is writing at a table by the side of the street. He is a letter-writer, and there were men like him doing the same thing hundreds of years ago.



In the old town of Cairo, near one of the massive gates

The sight of him reminds us that there are still very many people in Egypt, especially the older people, who have not learned to read or write. For such people, this man will write a letter in return for a small payment.

Egyptian children, though, are not likely to be seeking the services of a letter-writer. For nowadays every town and nearly every village in Egypt has its school where children learn their lessons very much as you do. In cities such as Cairo the schools are very fine indeed, and in Cairo itself there is also a splendid university.

None the less, in parts of old Cairo, there are small schools where the children do not spend very much time learning to write, but instead, pay a great deal of attention to the study of the scriptures of their religion. This religion is called Mohammedanism, after the name of their great prophet, Mohammed who, hundreds of years ago, founded the religion.

Nowadays, there are millions of his followers in the East, and if we peep into one of these schools, we see the boys (for these schools are not for girls) sitting on the ground in a ring. In front of them, also seated on the ground, is their teacher. At the door of the school is a little heap of shoes, for in such schools the children remove their footwear before going in, just as boys in our country take off their caps.

There is another place where British boys remove their caps before entering. Do you know where it is ?

You are quite right—the church or chapel. Well, in exactly the same way, men and boys in Egypt remove their *shoes* before going into their places of worship, which are called " mosques."

Cairo is known as " the city of a thousand mosques " and here, a little way up the street in which we stand, we can see one of them. It is a beautiful building with a fine central dome and very carefully looked after, for the Egyptians are reverent people and love their churches.

As we continue to go about the old city of Cairo, we see many strange sights.

Here, for example, is a figure seated on the ground in a corner away from the traffic, playing on a pipe which looks something like a flute. As he plays, two snakes rise out of baskets in front of him, and sway about dreamily as the music goes on. After a while he handles them without any fear, although they are poisonous snakes, and at last places them gently in their baskets again and looks around hopefully for the onlookers to give him money as a reward for his skill. He is a snake-charmer and the music he plays seems in some way to make the deadly creatures harmless to him.

But now, I feel, we must be on our way to see other parts of this wonderful country, so we must say good-bye to the capital and go farther afield, this time, indeed, to the very edge of the desert.

ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
Date

CHAPTER II

THE LAND OF THE NILE

Egypt owes its very life to the great River Nile which flows through it from south to north. When the snow on the mountains in the far-away south melts, the river begins to carry more and more water. This happens every year. The river swells and swells and at last overflows its banks.

This flood-water is very precious to the Egyptians, for the country has practically no other supply for the needs of the farmers. The flood-water is carried in little canals to the fields on either side of the river.

In the days of old, if for any reason the Nile did not happen to flood in any particular year, the people of Egypt knew that they were going to have a hungry time, for no crops could be grown on the parched earth. In such years, many died of starvation.

But nowadays engineers have built great dams or walls across the river in certain places. These walls hold up and so store the flood-water until it is required, and then it is run into the fields to water the crops.

But it is quite true that if there were no Nile there would be no green and fertile Egypt, and the desert would soon cover the whole of the land. As long as we are near the river we can forget the desert.

For here we find fields of clover (for cattle), sugar, rice and, in winter, maize, wheat, barley and flax. In

addition we see great stretches of land growing Egypt's biggest crop of all—cotton.

There are many trees, too, in the countryside near the Nile. Some of them are full of the most beautiful blossoms at certain times of the year.

Perhaps the finest sight of all is to see the charming wild flowers which spring up by the thousand, almost in a night, whenever a rare shower of rain soaks the desert parts of Egypt.

But if the trees and flowers are pleasant, the insects are *not !* There are mosquitoes that bite unmercifully and wild bees that follow you for miles to try to sting you if you have disturbed their nests.

Now that we have reached the banks of the Nile we shall not have far to go to find an Egyptian village. As we near it we see that around it are gardens growing onions, tomatoes and other vegetables such as we grow in our own country.

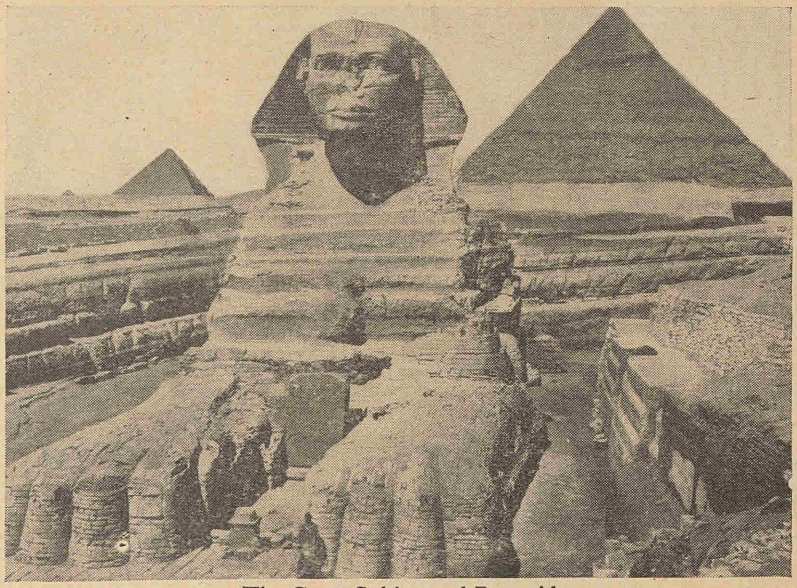
There are also many fruit trees—not apples, pears and plums such as you may see in British orchards, but oranges, grapes, peaches and other fruits which make our mouths water to think of.

Egyptian peasants, known as " fellaheen," are working, and working hard, in the fields. They are among the world's most skilful farmers.

As we look round this village, we see that it has a new school as well as a village mosque or church. Not all Egyptian villages have schools yet, but before long they will have. What is more, they will also

possess clinics, such as the one already working in this village, where sick people can go for help.

In some parts of Egypt villages are not nearly so fortunate as the one we are visiting. Many still have



The Great Sphinx and Pyramids

narrow, dirty lanes between the houses, few if any dust bins and too many flies, which spread disease.

Our next journey takes us away from the River Nile and out into the desert not very far from Cairo. We go along sandy paths a little way into the desert, and there before us is one of the most famous sights in the world.

It is a great stone pyramid, with others like it not far away, and we remember, from the many pictures we have seen of it, that it is among the wonders of the world.

So high is it that men standing at its base look like small dots. It is built of massive blocks of stone and is thousands of years old.

The pyramids were built as tombs for Egyptian kings, and if we had the time we might go inside one and see the many rooms and passages it contains.

Not very far from the pyramid, there is another very ancient piece of man's work—a great statue with the body of a lion which is lying down, and the head of a human being.

It was carved so long ago that nobody knows when. It is called The Great Sphinx, and even the most learned of those men who have examined and studied it cannot really say why it was carved. The only thing they feel certain about is that the Sphinx must be one of the oldest monuments in the world.

After seeing these wonderful sights we return to Cairo. In the distance we see a camel caravan setting out on a journey across the desert—a procession of camels carrying the goods of traders.

But, looking up, we see a great aeroplane zooming its way over the pyramid and the camels and us, far below. And the two things—plane and caravan—tell us that Egypt is a strange mixture of things which are very old and things which are very new.



A camel caravan, with the goods of traders, on the march across the desert

CHAPTER III

THE CHILDREN OF EGYPT

In these days more and more Egyptian children are going to school, just like you. The schools, too, are very much like ours. The boys and girls sit at desks (though they once sat on the ground).

But there are still some children in Egypt who do not go to school. Most of these live in country villages where there is, as yet, no school for them to go to. Some of them live with fairly well-to-do fathers and mothers who prefer them to be taught their lessons at home.

Children whose " schooling " takes place at home are chiefly girls. They are taught music and painting, reading, writing and such subjects as arithmetic and geography.

The boys of Egypt who do not go to school are often put in the care of craftsmen who teach them skilful trades. In the towns we may often see them helping these craftsmen at their work, not in factories, but in the streets.

Here is one, for example, seated on a carpet in the welcome shade of a tree, busily making shoes. By his side sits a boy about ten years old, learning to be a shoemaker.

In certain parts of Egypt there have been found tombs or graves, in which the ancient kings of the land were laid to rest thousands of years ago. Some

of these tombs have been found to contain most beautiful objects which were buried with their royal owners.

Furniture, with gold and silver decorations, or inlaid with ebony, wonderful jewellery, pottery and other priceless treasures have been discovered.

To this day there are highly skilled craftsmen in Cairo and other cities of Egypt who can make things as beautiful as those their ancestors made for the kings of long ago.

And so a few of the boys of Egypt to-day may be fortunate enough to find themselves having such artists as teachers. These boys in their turn will some day become jewellers, carpenters and goldsmiths.

But of course not all boys can learn such trades. Many more learn to become carpet-weavers and mat-makers. Others work at handlooms and become weavers of cloth. Still others learn the art of beating brass into the shape of bowls and trays, hammering out upon these things the most cunning and pleasing patterns.

Some boys do not work with craftsmen at all, but go to jobs which their ancestors could never have dreamed of. To-day Egypt has railways, cotton and silk factories, some oil wells and, like other countries, her motor coaches and cars, planes, river steamers, cinemas, hotels and so on. All these require workers.

Others again enter the service of the Egyptian

Government, either helping to run the country or enlisting for service in the fine Egyptian army.

If a boy or girl lives in a village it is very likely that he or she will go to work in the fields, when schooldays are done. Some of the boys may become workers helping to supply water from the Nile to the fields.



Boys and girls picking the crop in the cotton fields

In some places mechanical pumps are used. In others the water is still raised by hand in buckets and poured into a gutter from which it runs into the thirsty fields.

Girls who live in a village may have to work as hard as their brothers. They too will very likely help in the fields cultivating the crops.

They may plant rice in patches of ground flooded

with water, or they may have to do the tiring work of picking the cotton crop when harvesting season arrives.

Some girls do the work of porters, carrying goods from place to place and usually balancing their loads upon their heads. Thus they will carry grain to the village grinding mill, or cotton to the place where it is packed for taking away by motor.

Perhaps one of the most pleasant jobs for a young Egyptian is to become a sailor, not on the sea, but on one of the ships which go up and down the Nile with passengers and goods.

Although there are fine roads and, in these days, excellent railways from end to end of the land, much of what Egypt grows is carried by water from the far south of the country to the port of Alexandria. From here it is sent away to other parts of the world.

Some of it travels down the Nile in fast up-to-date steamships. The rest goes in Egyptian sailing boats called feluccas, which have great wing-shaped sails.

Of course it is not all work and no play for Egyptian boys and girls. There are some games and sports which they cannot enjoy at all and others which *you* could not learn.

They know nothing of snowballing for instance ! But in spite of the hot sunshine, they can enjoy cricket, tennis and races.

Some of the boys who become guides, and lead

visitors to such places as the Pyramids, take part, once a year, in a guides' race from bottom to top of one of the pyramids, and back. As the blocks of stone are very tall, the race is like climbing a mountain, and is hard work indeed—but they really enjoy it !

As for the girls of Egypt they play few games, but prefer sewing and cooking. Perhaps that is why they are often so plump and chubby.

CHAPTER IV

MOROCCO—TANGIER

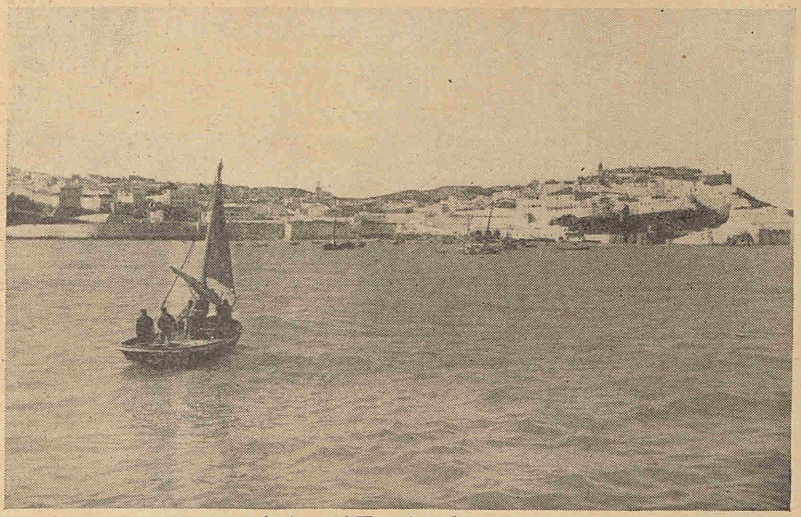
Egypt is in the east of Africa. Now we are jumping as if by magic, to Morocco, a country far away in the west, with the whole of the Sahara Desert between it and Egypt.

Let us do as we did in our visit to Egypt, shall we ? That is to say, we will go first of all to one of Morocco's chief towns. Its name is Tangier, and in some ways it is very much like Cairo, except that it is not so big. Tangier is a pleasant and popular holiday resort for many people.

They enjoy exactly the same games and pastimes which are to be enjoyed in European cities too, for Tangier has its golf links, its tennis courts, bathing and boating—in fact it is very much like our own seaside holiday resorts. The buildings are nearly all dazzling white in the brilliant sunshine—and there is no smoke from factory chimneys to darken them.

We notice too, that like many other buildings in the towns and villages of Egypt, they nearly all have flat roofs.

Our buildings in Europe have sloping roofs, as you know. We need such roofs in our climate, so that rain and snow may run off them quickly.



A general view of Tangier, from the sea

But in Tangier there is little rain and as for snow, it is unknown. So they make their roofs flat and they provide very pleasant places for sitting on or enjoying outdoor meals, well up above the dust and hubbub.

Like Cairo and many another city of the East, Tangier has two parts—an old city and a new one. The new one, made for and often by Europeans,

has fine wide streets, modern buildings, hotels, banks, gardens and squares, and, of course, motor vehicles.

The people of Tangier are called Moors and they are very much like the people of Egypt in appearance. They are also followers of the same religion—that is to say, they are Mohammedans.

Because the Moors are Mohammedans, one of the first things we are likely to see on our visit to the old city of Tangier is a mosque or place of worship.

Standing up almost like candles round the building are several tall, slim towers. We see these surrounding every mosque and they are called minarets. Five times every day—at sunrise, sunset, and at three other times—a priest goes up into the minaret and calls the people to prayer.

Wherever they are, if within hearing of this call, or whatever they may be doing, the Moors, or the "Faithful" as they are called, kneel down and pray. In kneeling they turn and bow their heads in the direction of the East, because the Holy City of their religion, the city of Mecca, lies in the East, in the country of Arabia.

Mecca to the Mohammedan is as important as Jerusalem is to the Christian. Any Mohammedan who makes a special journey or pilgrimage to Mecca, is looked upon with special respect by his fellow townsmen or villagers when he returns.

If the Moors, or indeed any other Mohammedans happen to be out of earshot of a mosque, they none

the less kneel and pray at certain times of the day.

They do not carry watches for these would probably never work well where there is so much desert sand to get into them.

But desert dwellers are as skilful as seamen in the art of telling the time by means of the sun, especially in a country where the sun is rarely covered by cloud.

As we wander along the narrow streets of Tangier, much as we did in Cairo, we see that there are many cafés.

The word " café " is French for coffee, and it is not surprising to see French words used side by side with Moorish ones in Tangier, for this country is ruled over by the French and many people from France live here.

In these cafés I have mentioned, we can see merchants and traders drinking coffee out of small brass bowls and smoking most curious looking pipes.

They are known as hookahs, and instead of having short stems like the ones men smoke in our own country, they have long, snaky-looking tubes which lead to bottles filled with water.

The tobacco smoke first goes through this water which cleans and cools it. For this reason, these queer pipes are sometimes called " bubbleys."

Tangier is built on a hillside, and many of the streets are very steep. That is true of the one along which we are passing, and we have quite a climb to reach the market-place, or Souk, as it is called.

In it we can see a mass of people of all kinds—city dwellers, men from the desert or from oases perhaps hundreds of miles away ; all sorts of buyers and sellers with their donkeys, mules or camels and their loads of fruit, brassware, greenstuff, cloth and other goods.



The Souk, or market-place, Tangier

We notice too, our old friends the snake-charmer and the letter-writer. They are not the same two people we saw in Cairo, of course, but two others making their livings by doing exactly the same kinds of service for the crowds.

We also come upon another entertainer whom we

have not met before. He is seated upon the ground in a shady part of the market-place with an attentive little throng about him. He is telling them stories of happenings of long ago.

We do not find story-tellers in the market-places of our own country these days, because nearly everyone in Britain can now read for him or herself.

But in Tangier or Morocco there are still many who cannot, and for these the story-teller acts as a human book—just as, long ago, minstrels in Britain sang or told about deeds of old to men and women who had no skill in reading.

Strangely enough, though, we should not have to go very far away from this native market-place to be able to buy a most up-to-date newspaper. Most of the newspapers in Morocco are printed in the French language, but there is one which is printed in English.

Leaving our story-teller and his audience, we spend a few minutes watching another very useful and popular trader going about his business. He carries a goatskin slung over his back. This is filled with water, and as we watch him we see a customer go up to him and give him a small sum of money.

In return, the water-carrier brings out a small brass cup which he fills from his store in the skin. The buyer takes it, drinks it eagerly, hands back the cup and goes on his way refreshed.

We, too, are thirsty, but we remember an invitation we have to visit the house of a well-to-do citizen of

Tangier and we make our way to it, knowing that we shall receive hospitality and refreshment—for the people " at the edge of the desert " are among the most hospitable on earth.

The house to which we are going seems from the outside to be nothing more than a plain white box with one small doorway. There do not appear to be any windows at all, and the wall rises blankly from the street.

But as soon as we pass through the doorway, we find ourselves in a passage which leads to a delightfully cool, square courtyard. This contains shrubs and flowers and has a tinkling water fountain in the centre.

Round the four sides of the courtyard run the inside walls of the house, and these, unlike the outside ones, have window spaces in them. One of the walls is partly open so that we can step straight from the courtyard into a cool, shady room.

On being invited to do so by our hostess, we enter this room and, seated on a couch with many soft cushions, we enjoy our cup of tea, or rather, our *three* cups of tea.

It would not be thought good manners to take fewer than three cups, but then, we do not mind this, for the tea is very refreshing and has an unusual flavour, for it contains sprigs of mint.

At last we take our leave of our kind friend and make our way back to the hotel where we are staying.

We have many preparations to make, for next we are taking a journey into the country of Morocco and leaving the city of Tangier far behind us.

CHAPTER V

LIFE IN MOROCCO

In many ways the people of Morocco are very much like those of Egypt. But Morocco is a more mountainous country than Egypt.

Until a very few years ago, the inhabitants of the more mountainous parts of Morocco were often fierce and warlike.

Since those days, however, good roads have been made across the country and many long-distance motor coaches leave Tangier for tours into the wilder parts. Now it is possible to travel to any part of Morocco in perfect safety.

The one thing which nowadays may make a native of Morocco angry would be to say or do anything against his religion.

If we were to visit a school in Morocco, we should find the children busily learning their Bible off by heart—not, of course, the same book which *we* call the Bible. Its name is the Koran, and it has over a hundred chapters and each chapter has many verses.

In going about the country, it is possible we may arrive in one of the villages during the special month which is set apart for fasting—that is, for going with-

out food, or at any rate eating very little, as their religion orders.

But although our friends may be fasting, they would not allow us to go without food or water. Knowing that we are not of their religion they would not be angry if *we* were to take a meal or a drink, and they would do all they could to supply us with both.

Eating a meal in the dwelling of some of the country people of Morocco is a strange adventure, for in many homes there is but one dish, which is placed in the centre of the diners.

Each of us in turn then dips into it with our fingers and takes out whatever food it contains, slipping it into our mouths and—no doubt—enjoying it !

Village life in Morocco is not very different from that of Egypt. One thing we miss is the River Nile and the canals which branch from it to carry water into the fields. The fields of Morocco are often watered by streams which come down from the mountains.

CHAPTER VI

ALGERIA

Between Morocco in the west and Egypt in the east is the country of Algeria, the third of our countries " at the edge of the desert."

We will visit it as we have done the other two, and begin with its chief city, the city of Algiers.

Here we get rather a surprise, for although Algiers contains many Arabs and some Moors also, they nearly all wear clothes like Europeans.

This is because Algiers is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and not very far away from Europe. So these Arabs meet Europeans more often than do the Arabs in other towns and perhaps, in their dress, they like to copy them.

Algiers, we quickly see, is a fine and mostly modern-looking city. It is built on low hills and looks out over a great bay.

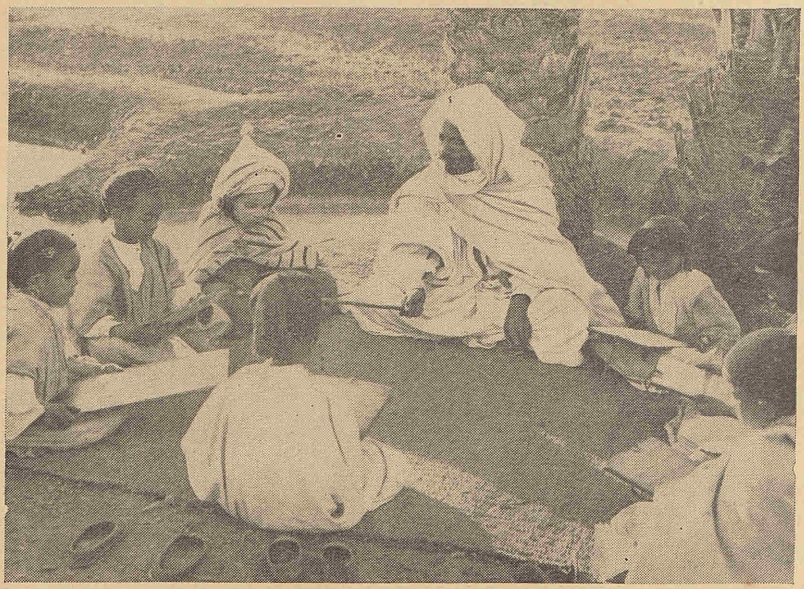
It has buildings and roads as fine as many a city in Europe—banks, shops, hotels and, as for the roads, they are mostly wide and alive with motor traffic.

But just as in the case of other cities we have visited, it has an older part—the Arab quarter. Here the narrow streets are crowded, not only with Arabs but with their animals, such as donkeys. Men and animals make it difficult to pass along, especially when we reach some of the narrowest lanes which are no more than five or six feet wide. The sides of the streets have arches running along, and within them traders set up their shops, secure from the scorching heat, or rain—for sometimes there is very heavy rain here. These shops are often quite small and so packed with goods such as carpets, pottery or food, that only one or two customers can get in at a time.

Next door they sell fruit, in great piles, though we wish that buyers could be made to understand that it

is neither safe nor pleasant to litter the streets with fruit skins and other refuse, as they seem to do everywhere in the older part of Algiers.

The children of Algiers are plentiful in these little streets and this seems to be a good time to study



Studying the Koran at an oasis school near Biskra

them and talk about them. Like their " country cousins " who live far away from the city, they are very much like the boys and girls of Egypt.

The boys go to school, and study the Mohammedan scriptures, the Koran. The girls stay at home and learn to cook and weave and sew.

They look after the house and carry out their father's orders—for in this country mother has very little to say in things and it is father who makes arrangements for almost everything both inside and outside the home.

He is, indeed, almost a king in his home. Sometimes he will eat his meals apart from his family and in addition he will expect to be served first. This is not selfishness, but merely a custom of the country.

Sometimes, both in Algiers and in the country or in other towns, a whole family will earn a living by weaving carpets at home.

If an Arab boy were lucky enough to earn a good sum of money he would be sure to buy a horse with it. The Arabs are great horse lovers, and one of the most famous breeds of horse ever known is called the Arab, noted for its gracefulness and speed.

With a horse to ride, an Arab boy could look forward to living an outdoor life, and there is nothing which this race of people enjoys more than hunting and shooting and riding.

If indeed he could do these things, no Arab boy would miss the comforts of living in a house. Baths, comfortable beds and well-arranged meals do not mean much to him. He often sleeps on the floor wrapped in a rug.

CHAPTER VII

LIFE IN THE COUNTRY

When we talk about " the country " in Algeria, we mean the northern part, nearest the Mediterranean Sea. The south of Algeria is not only " at the edge of the desert " but *in* the desert, and only wandering Arabs visit these parts.

But in the north, there is much more pleasant and fertile land. The people who live there are called Berbers, and they look after flocks of sheep and sometimes of goats.

The Berbers are not the same kind of people as the Arabs who also live in this country. Like them they wear the burnous, which is a cloak usually made from camel hair and brown in colour.

The women have coloured stripes on theirs to make them more gay, and both men and women can wear the burnous loose during the heat of the day and fasten it more closely around themselves at night when it often grows bitterly cold.

But though they may dress like the Arabs, the Berbers are different, not only in race but in looks.

Arabs are dark but it is sometimes possible to find a Berber with fair hair and blue eyes. In their work too they are different, for while Arabs are great wanderers, the Berbers quite often settle down in one place as farmers, and cultivate corn or perhaps grow date palms and look after orange groves.

Those of the Berbers, as well as the Arabs, who do not look after crops, tend instead their herds of sheep and goats, often very big herds, and as they eat up the grass in one place they have to be moved somewhere else.



An encampment of Nomads at an oasis

Such herdsmen and their families are called Nomads, which means "wanderers." They often have a tent for their home, since a house, built in one place, would be of little use.

If we look into one of these tents we find it a rather wonderful thing. Some of those belonging to the more wealthy herdsmen are very comfortable, with rugs and cushions.

These tents must be strong and able to protect their dwellers from all kinds of weather. Sometimes fierce winds blow. Sometimes there are heavy thunder storms with drenching rain. Then in the desert, the tents have to protect their owners against terrible sandstorms, which are so heavy that they blot out the sun and almost turn day into night.

Nomads often own so many sheep that they become quite wealthy. Such men will have others working for them, herding the animals while they themselves ride ahead in search of new grasslands. They find these grasslands at places called oases—usually spots in the desert where there is a spring, often with date palms growing round it.

From the days of the Bible to present times, oases have been a welcome sight to herdsmen or other travellers plodding along over the hot, waterless desert.

CHAPTER VIII

LIBYA

There is one more country we must glimpse before we come to the end of our travels. It lies between Egypt and Algeria and its name is Libya.

In many ways Libya is like Algeria. That part near the sea is fertile and will grow crops of wheat and fruit. In the south it becomes part of the great Sahara Desert.

The south of Libya is a place of oases. Here and there in the desert, where water appears, grass and

trees grow and settlements spring up. Some of these oases, or islands in the desert, are several miles across.

One of them, called Kufra, was so jealously guarded by the Arabs that no white man knew what it was like until a few years ago. The first white woman to visit it did so disguised as an Arab.

Another great oasis in Libya is called Siwa. It is a very ancient place, but the people who live there do not care to have many visitors, though nowadays they will not harm them.

Siwa has many old buildings, but no one lives in them since newer and better ones have been put up. Around the town, before the desert begins, is a vast ring of date palms owned by Arab farmers who do a great trade in sending their dates to the sea coast.

The trees, as well as the people of the oasis, are provided with water from two hundred springs, some hot and some cold. In addition the date palm supplies much more than dates. It gives the Arab his timber for building. Its leaves are so big that roofs can be covered with them, and it provides a kind of string or fibre which can be woven into baskets.

I could tell you much more about Libya and its wonderful oases, but now I think the time has come when we must close the book. Perhaps, though, the next time you hear such words as Egypt, Morocco, Algiers, Libya, Cairo, Nile, Tangier, Arab, or Berber, you will remember something about the visits you have made in these chapters.

QUESTIONS

Chapter I

1 Write a short description of the newer part of Cairo.
2 Write a short description now of the older part of the city.
3 Can you account for the little heap of shoes outside the school door ?

Chapter II

1 What reasons would you give for the statement : " Egypt owes its very life to the great River Nile " ?
2 Look at the last paragraph on page 10, " But, looking up . . . " Then write a story on " Pyramid, plane and caravan."

Chapter III

1 What do we learn from the chapter about the tombs of the ancient kings ?
2 Describe some of the occupations that youths may follow.

Chapter IV

1 Tell me something about the religion of the " Faithful " and their " call to prayer."
2 Describe your visit to the house of the well-to-do citizen.

Chapter VI

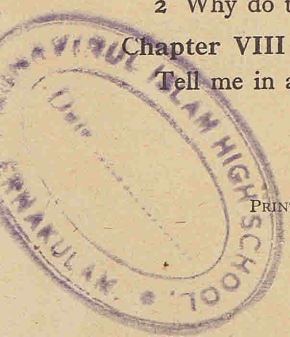
1 Write a few paragraphs describing the chief city of Algeria.
2 Why would an Arab boy consider himself lucky to possess a horse ?

Chapter VII

1 What great difference have you learnt between the Berbers and the Arabs ?
2 Why do the Nomads prefer to live in tents rather than houses ?

Chapter VIII

Tell me in a few sentences about the oases of Libya.



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