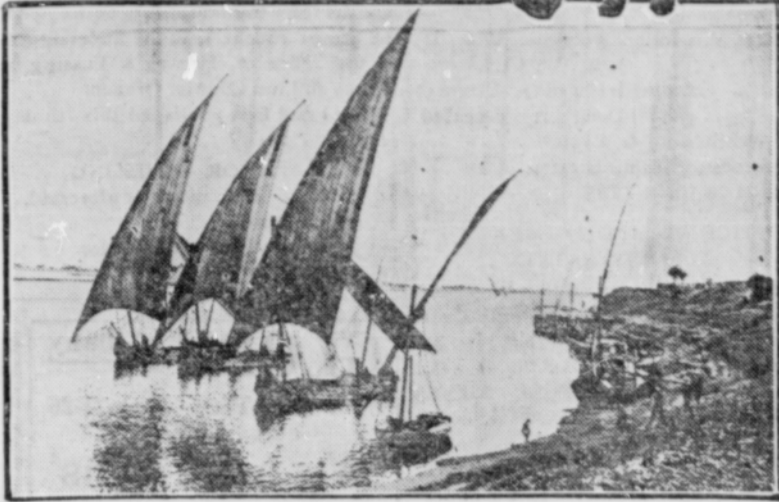


Modern Egypt



Freight Barges on the Nile.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)
EGYPT, in a dispute with England, has been once more at the focus of world attention, as she has been many times in the sixty centuries that make up most of known history.

Americans who visit Egypt know the country chiefly from the city standpoint. They see through the eyes of the extremely polite dragoman who escorts them about the streets of Cairo or Alexandria. The man who sweats in the sun on his tiny farm is an entirely different creature. His scale of living is of the meaneast.

The peasant population huddle in villages within the confines of four mud walls, homes which literally do not furnish them with a roof over their heads—wretched cabins improvised out of Nile mud, windowless as well as roofless. No modern pots and pans, none of the contrivances and shifts of modern times that go toward rendering life easy and comfortable, and which enable the foreman of a section gang on an American railroad to be better warmed, lighted, and served with news than was Queen Elizabeth of England.

We are accustomed to think of Egypt in terms of symbols—the Sphinx, Osiris, the Pyramids. The country has been a happy hunting ground for the archeologists, and their revelations turn us back through the abysses of time to the contemplation of mysterious figures of the past, whether a sacred bull or King Tut-ankhamen.

A country of wonders, no doubt; but the wonder of wonders is not the ancient relics dug from the earth, nor the mighty works of men's hands erected upon its surface, but the soil itself—that longish strip of green fringing the River Nile for the better part of one thousand miles.

Nature has dealt in niggardly fashion with the land of Egypt. The country possesses no copper, no iron ore, no forests, no precious minerals, and no good steam coal. It is fairly exact to remark that the country lacks all the prime prerequisites of modern industrialism. Agriculture is virtually the sole source of national wealth. But even in this field the country is extremely limited.

Only a Strip of Habitable Land.

Egypt is practically rainless and only one-twenty-fifth of the land is capable of cultivation. These fertile regions are sandwiched in between the Arabian and Libyan deserts. While the area of Egypt, not including the Sudan, is 350,000 square miles, or about eight times the size of the state of Pennsylvania, only a little more than 12,000 square miles are capable of cultivation.

Over this relatively small strip of habitable land the population swarms some 1,100 to the square mile, whereas the population of Belgium, the densest in Europe, is 652 to the square mile. Yet, despite all this, Egypt is probably the most perfect and extensive farming laboratory that the world has yet seen.

From an agricultural standpoint, the country presents a spectacle of three uniformities—climate, soil, moisture. Except for the region near the north coast, the country is rainless and frosts are unknown. The soil is the same, formed by the sediment from Nile water.

Now, uniformity is precisely the thing which the American farmer lacks. The main factor in crop yields is the weather, and the weather is always the unknown quantity. The Egyptian solves his farming equation by knowing the value of it before he starts.

With the American farmer, agriculture is more or less of a gamble with nature, whereas the Egyptian farmer bets on a certainty. Farming, therefore, in Egypt comes nearer to being an exact science than in any other important country in the world.

Where Man Surpassed Nature.

In ordinary speech, there is always a tendency to personify nature, to observe that nature does this or that or works according to some well-ordered plan or design. While the thought is not exact, we can with some measure of truth speak of nature's intentions about this planet and the life which flourishes upon its surface. For example, we may observe with truth that nature never intended Egypt, a comparatively sterile and drought-beset country, to support from its soil its present population of nearly 14,000,000 people.

The ingenuity of man, however, has contrived by art to supplement the gifts of nature. Nature ordained that the Nile should overflow once a year and flood the agricultural plains of its

valley, bestowing at once the twin gifts of moisture and fertility. When the flood has passed and the water has subsided, the farmer sows his seed and grows his annual crop. Traditionally and historically, it is either a feast or famine in Egypt. For a brief season the abounding flood, to be succeeded for the balance of the year by blazing suns and killing droughts.

The ingenuity of man has harnessed the great river by holding back the flood of waters during the freshest season and doling out these harnessed supplies during the lean months of the year. Through this device, streams of living water can be carried every month of the year to the roots of growing plants.

The great stone dam at Aswan is in reality the keystone of modern Egypt. This huge rampart of masonry, which retains a 50 foot head of water, weighing 2,340,000 tons, is pierced at its foot by 180 sluice-gates. These gates, kept wide open when the annual flood is coming down, late in the summer, are gradually closed when the crest of the flood has passed. By January the reservoir is full and remains so during February and March.

When the supply of water begins to fall, in the late spring and early summer, sluices are opened and stored water added to the normal discharge.

Great barrages are thrown across the Nile farther downstream. These are masonry obstacles laid across the river's course to raise the water in the stream to the level of the irrigation canals. The Nile barrage, a few miles below Cairo, is capable of raising the water level for the irrigation of the entire delta by as much as 20 feet.

Crops Require Lots of Water.

Perennial irrigation, as has been explained, means an all-year supply of water to the Egyptian farmer. The huge volume of water required for irrigating the porous soils of the delta under the blazing semitropical sun may be put at about 20 tons per acre per day as a minimum. Cotton-growing requires about 25 tons of water daily, while rice culture requires 60 tons.

Man and his works in Egypt have existed only by grace of the river. There has always been something mysterious about the annual rise of the Nile. Such a seemingly slight thing as a reversal of the winds that sweep in summer across equatorial Africa from the Atlantic would cut off the annual flood and lay waste the richest agricultural valley in the world.

But while the annual floods have varied from time to time in volume they have never in recorded history been entirely cut off. The apparition of the annual rise of the Nile is one of nature's certitudes, as well established and as universally accepted as the rising and setting of the sun.

The ancient Egyptians were continually casting about for an explanation of the annual flood, but they never succeeded in penetrating to the heart of the mystery. There is no longer the slightest mystery about a subject that baffled the intelligence of the ancient world. The White and the Blue Nile, meeting at Khartoum, form the great River Nile. The sources of the Nile are, therefore, dual—the one constant, the other variable.

The White Nile finds a catchment basin in a series of lakes, of which the greatest is Victoria, in equatorial Africa. This lake is some 2,500 miles by river from where the great stream debouches into the Mediterranean. The supply of water from the White Nile is fairly constant and is sufficient to furnish the River Nile with approximately the volume of water registered at mean low ebb.

From time immemorial, however, the prosperity of the country has depended upon the swollen flood that overflows the banks of the river and for weeks inundates the surrounding region. This blessed overflow is the result of other Nile sources, which are something of a variable.

The Blue Nile and the River Atbara find their catchment basins in the highlands of Abyssinia. Late in the summer this region is drenched with torrential rains, caused by the mountain interception of equatorial winds which draw across the heart of Africa from the Atlantic. Then the Blue Nile and the Atbara rise some 25 to 30 feet above their ordinary levels, and some weeks later these fresher waters appear in Egypt as the annual inundation of the Nile.

This so-called "red water" from the Abyssinian highlands not only supplies moisture, but also fertility to the soils of agricultural Egypt.



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The More the Less

Editor (rejecting manuscript)—You see, a story has to be just so to get into our magazine.
 Would-be Contrib.—Well, what's the matter with this one?
 Editor—It's only so-so.—Boston Magazine.

If one is always the underdog, he'd better emigrate.

English Women Live Longer Than American

Statistics show that English women live longer on the average than American women. English men and American men have about the same expectation of life.

Rollo Briten, statistician of the United States public health service, finds that the expectation of life which decreases gradually the older the person, is higher for English women than for American women at average age between ten and eighty years.

The difference between the two countries in this respect ranges from about four years in young womanhood to less than one year at the age of eighty.

This means that the Englishwoman of twenty may expect to live to be sixty-nine, while her American sister may expect to reach an age of only sixty-four or sixty-five.

No attempt is made by the public health service to explain why this difference in longevity exists between the female populations and not between the males.

Chance Brought Wild Rice to United States

Rice came to America by accident. In the year 1694 a rice-laden vessel from Madagascar bound for Liverpool put in to Charleston harbor in a raging storm. The captain, noting that the land and soil near Charleston resembled that where the rice was grown, gave the governor of the colony a handful, telling him that it might grow if planted, relates the Washington Star.

The governor planted the rice and several months later harvested the first crop ever grown in America. Since that time rice has steadily advanced until now it is a leading product of the southern states. It first spread into Georgia from the Carolinas, and with the beginning of the Civil war it entered Louisiana, now the leading rice state of the Union. It gradually found its way to Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas and finally into Arkansas. Later its cultivation was tried with success in California.

That Kind

Harold—Little girl, you have made me happy. Here is the ring.
 Phyllis—Is that it? Don't I get any crackerjack with it?

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Policeman (to arrested suspect)—How do you account for all this silverware in your pocket?

Prisoner—Well, you see, officer, we ain't got no sideboard at home.—Boston Transcript.

Just Once

"Did you ever see a room full of women perfectly silent?"

"Yes, once. Some one had asked which of those present was the oldest."—Toronto Telegram.

Old automobile casings are in demand in Greece to make footwear for the peasants, especially in Greek Macedonia and Thrace.

Impressed

"That salesman seems interested in the leopard." "Ssh! He thinks it's a dotted lion."

It is the law that keeps "aforesaid" alive.

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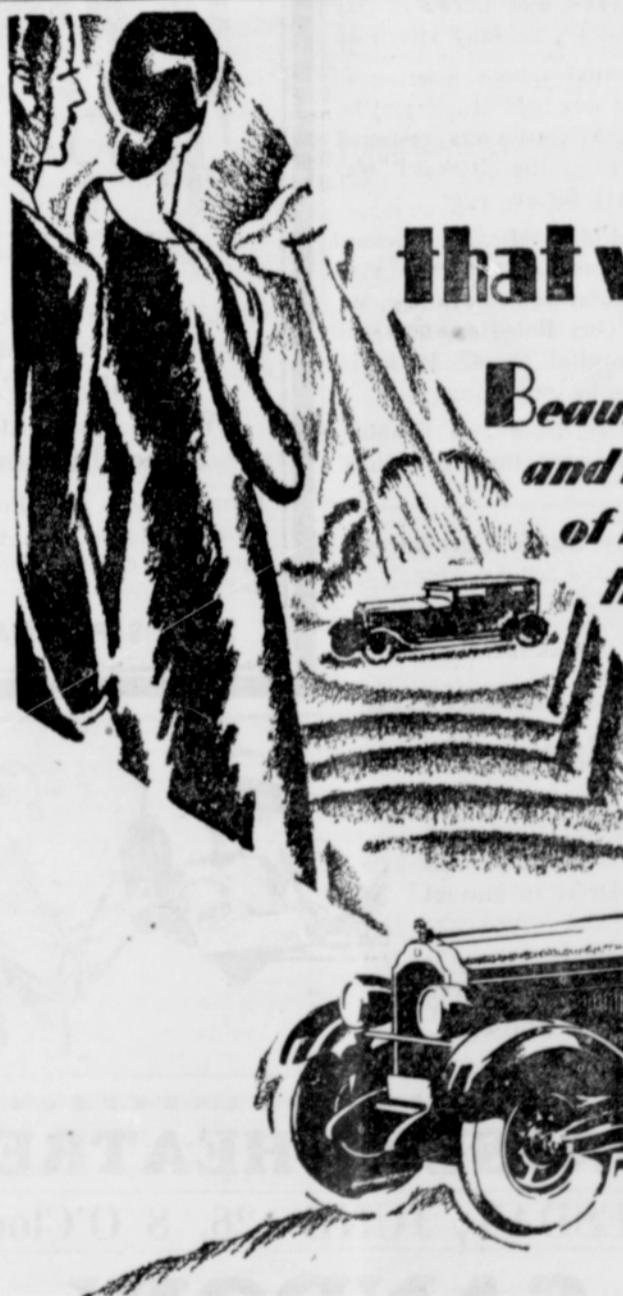
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Sees Jazz as Empire's Nero

Nero and his fiddle were no more deadly than the saxophone and its companions, according to Sir Henry Coward, a prominent English divine. Luxury and vulgar pleasure seeking, he says, brought Rome down into the dust, and jazz, he declares, is trending that way because it is taking the minds of the people away from tight thinking and spirituality. Besides, dark-skinned races that hold the whites in awe will cease to think of the European as a superman, and when that state of mind comes to pass England's hold on its myriad subjects in Asia and Africa will be broken once for all, Sir Henry boldly proclaims.

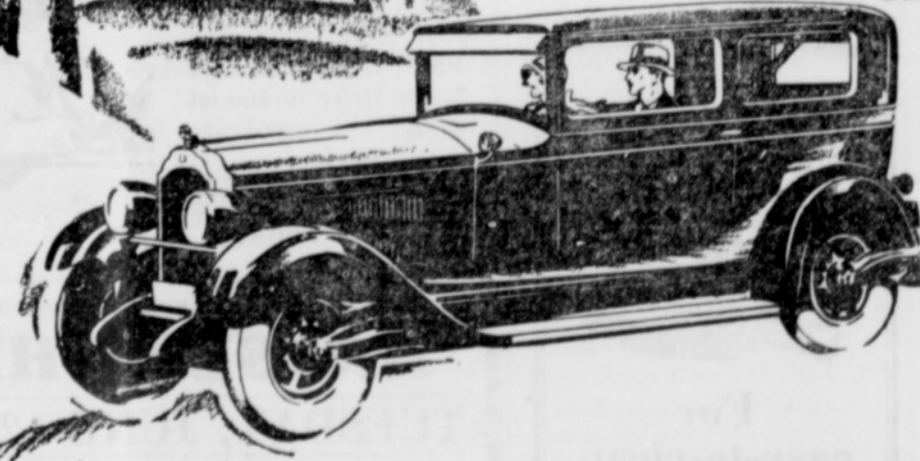
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