

OPEN LETTERS.

Spoiling the Egyptians.

THE traveler in Egypt is very soon confronted by the fact that Egypt is not all there. He visits the greatest ruin in the world, Karnak; the famous Hall of Ancestors has been stripped of its treasure: the bas-relief representing King Thothmes III. making offerings to threescore of his predecessors is in the Louvre. Seen on the spot such a sculpture would be of extraordinary interest and value even to the most casual student of Egyptian history. One stands in the doorway of the same hall and the great obelisk of Queen Hatason rises before him—a reminder that her chair, recently found, is now in Manchester, England. A statue of the architect of Karnak would be a rare sight when one's thoughts were full of the glories of his work; the only one known is in Munich.

On one side of the main entrance to the Temple of Luxor, in front of the great pylon built by Rameses II., stands a single beautiful obelisk of red granite; its companion is in Paris. Of the two obelisks which formerly stood near Pompey's Pillar—the only conspicuous monument now left in Alexandria—one is on the Thames Embankment in London, while the other is being slowly reduced to powder by the climate of New York.¹

At Assouan the tourist visits the granite quarries whence came most of the obelisks of Egypt. Close by was once a pillar bearing a Latin inscription, to the effect that "new quarries having been discovered near Philæ, many large pilasters and columns had been hewn from them during the reigns of Severus and Antoninus (Caracalla) and his mother Julia Domna," and that the hill was "under the guardianship of Jupiter-Ammon-Cenubis (Kneph) and Juno (Saté)," deities of Elephantiné. The inscription would be interesting to one standing on that very hill, but how carelessly is it passed by in the distant museum to which it has been removed.

Tombs are empty; not only were the mummies long since taken away by pilfering Arabs, but heavy sarcophagi, many of which might have been left in place without the possibility of injury, have been borne oversea.

Bubastis has been recently excavated, and its famous temple of Pasht is now scattered over the world—in London, Paris, Manchester, Greenock, York, Boston, Canada, and elsewhere. Bubastis is within two hours of Cairo on a main line of railway (to Ismailia on the Suez Canal), and if the interesting sculptures and statues found by M. Naville could have been kept on the ground and under proper surveillance (a less serious expense than their transportation) a museum would have been formed for the delight and instruc-

tion of visitors for all time. To-day, standing upon the elevated site of the houses of the town described by Herodotus, one looks across the bed of the broad canal which once flowed around the temple, and down upon a few scattered stones from among which nearly all of any interest have been removed. Probably no one person will ever see again all that was found at Bubastis, and the interest in the place itself is gone forever. Is it worth this to the museums which now hold the scattered fragments?

To give a list of all the Egyptian antiquities which are missing from their own land would be to reproduce the catalogue of the Egyptian exhibit of every museum in the world. A large part of these are mummies, funerary ornaments, vases, etc., of which there are thousands in existence, and such may properly be carried away to give pleasure and profit to the sight-seers of distant lands; but others are specific monuments, statues of gods and goddesses, bas-reliefs from the walls of certain tombs and temples, rare tablets, and the sarcophagi of famous kings, of every one of which there is but one.

The modern spoiling of Egypt was begun by Napoleon Bonaparte, who bore away the most precious things of a conquered land to enrich his own museums. Italy, served in the same way, has been more fortunate, and has seen many of her antiquities returned. In the time of Napoleon, before the era of railways and steamships, Egypt was farther removed from the great centers of civilization than is the interior of Australia to-day. Even forty years ago the traveler who had visited the temples of Egypt was looked upon as an explorer, and his book found a ready publisher. Then there was some reason for removing to other countries these neglected antiquities. The obelisk now in the Place de la Concorde was transplanted from the Temple of Luxor in 1831, when only the tops of the pylons and columns showed themselves here and there among the hovels of an Arab village. But to-day, thanks to the good work begun by M. Maspero, under the Egyptian government, the hovels have been swept away, the columns brought to light, and, when the work is completed, the temple will be seen in all its grandeur, but forever imperfect for want of the missing obelisk.

In this day of rapidly improving travel Egypt grows more accessible every year, and the time is not far distant when the journey from New York to Cairo will be no more serious a matter than is now the trip to Paris; and the Londoner will think nothing of running down to Luxor to spend his Christmas holidays under its warm sun. A thousand persons will visit Egypt a century hence to one to-day, and, without disparaging the heroic work of many of the excavators and the

¹ The following is quoted from an article in the "New York Tribune" of July 27, on the recent attempt to preserve the obelisk now standing in Central Park: "Before making the application [of the preservative] all the loose flakes on the surface were removed. They filled more than six barrels with stone, and weighed in the aggregate more than half a ton. . . . Now it

is simply a question, Professor Newberry says, how long paraffine and other preservatives can fight off the climatic attacks. If strictly cared for, the inscriptions may be retained in good condition for a century or longer. . . . The obelisk, which is now in a healthy old age, will be obliged, like everything else, to succumb at last."

grand results of their labors, it may yet come to be a matter of regret that the era of excavation could not have been contemporaneous with the day when the world would no longer think of removing the monuments from their own land and their own associations. Antiquities seen in Egypt possess an interest for even the unscientific tourist which can never be felt in the lifeless halls of the Egyptian departments of our museums.

The paramount interest in the country of the Pharaohs is not an art interest but an historical one; and its connection with the Bible, so strongly accentuated by the recent finding of the royal mummies at Deir-el-Bahari, makes it surpass all other lands in this regard. In Palestine there are only the localities to remind one of the Bible, but Egypt is full of sculptures and inscriptions which bear upon sacred history, and now the very bodies of Bible characters are being brought to light. Are we furthering historical research by scattering the tools of study throughout the world? It may be granted that much good has been done in the past and many valuable discoveries made by allowing such a document as the Rosetta Stone to rest in the British Museum within reach of the scholars of England; and the thousands of sculptures and statues in the British Museum and in other collections have done a vast educational work and have helped to interest the world in ancient Egypt. Indeed many of the more fragile monuments would probably have been destroyed long ago had they not been removed to a safe place, and before the establishment of the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities there was no such place in Egypt. Is it not time, however, to call a halt, and to provide for the preservation to Egypt, from this day forth, of all the objects she needs to make her history complete?

The exportation of antiquities by private persons has long been forbidden by law, but responsible explorers are granted permission to excavate with the understanding that a share of the result of their work shall go to the Egyptian Museum—theoretically the Museum being allowed to take whatever it pleases. But professional courtesy makes it difficult for the Museum authorities to retain the best of everything found by other explorers when the matter is left to choice, and indeed, with English influence becoming every day more paramount in Egyptian affairs, it is impossible for them to act freely. There is also too great an opportunity for the concealment of treasures, and for the carrying away to other countries of more than is needed simply to gratify a love of acquisition.

When M. Mariette, the founder of the Egyptian Museum, was in charge of the monuments, he insisted that excavations should be made only by the government of Egypt, which then furnished the necessary money. Foreign excavators were excluded, and the removal of antiquities to other countries ceased for a time. The government now provides only enough for the actual expenses of the Museum, and if new

excavations are to be made the means must be found outside of Egypt. If those interested in such work are not willing to intrust their money to the eminent commission, consisting of three Englishmen, three Egyptians, and two Frenchmen, which would at present have it in charge (provision could be made that certain approved explorers should do the work), then would it not be well to accept, with some modifications, the system of exploration which obtains in Greece? There such work by foreigners is allowed, with the restriction that absolutely no original object shall be taken from the country. Casts, squeezes, and drawings may be made, and reports published, and sometimes an explorer is granted for a certain number of years the sole right of reproduction of the objects he has excavated, and these he is allowed to sell to museums.¹

The climate of Egypt is such that many objects which elsewhere would need a roof above them can there remain uncovered in the very spot where they are found. Such of the more fragile objects as need to be removed from the place of finding should be gathered into one great treasure-house, amid the climatic conditions which have already preserved them through so many centuries.

Some of the things still hidden may well be left for our successors, but we in our passing day are trustees of the monuments now known, and there is much to be done in the way of preserving, guarding, and further excavating these. Esneh, one of the most beautiful of the Ptolemaic temples, the traveler finds nearly covered with mud-huts, and with only a single great hall visible; but here the columns are so grand and the proportions so magnificent that he longs to organize a force on the spot, dig out the other halls and the sanctuary, and reveal the beauties which are only awaiting an explorer with the means.

Thirty years ago the Temple of Edfou, now the most perfect of all, was buried under forty feet of soil, and nothing was visible except the top of the pylons. M. Mariette says: "I caused to be demolished the sixty-four houses which encumbered the roof, as well as twenty-eight more which approached too near the wall of the temple. When the whole has been isolated from its present surroundings by a massive wall the work of restoration at Edfou will be accomplished." The wall is not yet built; the village huts come close to one side, and on the other side towers a heap of rubbish nearly to the top of the 125-foot pylon.

The same eminent authority tells us that "Karnak, more than any other Egyptian temple, has for a long time suffered from infiltration of the Nile, whose waters, saturated with niter, eat into the sandstone. . . . The time may come when, with crash after crash, the columns of the magnificent hypostyle hall, whose bases are already three parts eaten through, will fall, as have fallen the columns in the great court in front of it." At Karnak the earth is seven feet deep around the base of the columns, and heaps of rubbish rise close to the

¹ While the present law in Greece works well in the case of important monuments, yet when hundreds of small objects, almost identical, are found together, a few score of which would be sufficient for Grecian museums for all time, it becomes a matter of regret that some of these cannot be exported for the enrichment of foreign collections. The treasury of the National Museum could be benefited by the sale of articles which now only crowd its shelves in useless duplicate. So many objects found in Egypt

are of this class that a law absolutely restricting the exportation of all antiquities would not only be continually violated (without much more severe customs' examinations than are now enforced), but it would be unnecessary. The present law which allows only antiquities under the seal of the Egyptian Museum to be removed is an admirable one, but it is almost a dead letter, and it is said that £20,000 worth of antiquities are exported every year.

outer walls and almost level with their tops. Fragments, not too large to be moved with comparatively simple machinery, and the proper position of which could be accurately determined by their inscriptions, lie everywhere; heads of statues, and even parts of obelisks, could be put in place. No one who sees the results of the work done in excavating the columns of Luxor, and in some cases reconstructing parts with brick and plaster, can doubt that similar labor put upon Karnak would repay a hundred fold in our day, and it might be the means of preserving to the world its grandest ruin. A recent commission has estimated that \$15,000 spent upon Karnak will make it safe from immediate danger and practically restore it, and \$42,500 is asked for by this commission as the minimum amount imperatively needed for the preservation and protection of all the most important temples.

Egypt must be aided in guarding her treasures. There is already a system of surveillance, and a tax of one pound is levied upon every Nile traveler to contribute to the preservation of the temples. But the ignorance and cupidity of the Arab guardians is apparent to every tourist: for a sufficient *bakshish* they can easily be induced to leave the traveler while he gratifies his own private bump of acquisitiveness by chipping away a piece of sculpture or cutting out a cartouche. A trustworthy man, of some education, should be in charge of each temple, and held responsible for damages to its walls. To such a man might be intrusted the work of continuing excavations and clearing away rubbish by slow degrees, as at Pompeii, so that no great amount of money need be spent at once; and, as at Pompeii, a new element of interest would constantly be added for the tourist.

The government does all it can with the limited means at command, but Egypt is "a nation meted out and trodden down," and the movement to preserve her monuments and to keep them within her own borders as the common heritage of all nations must come from without.

William W. Ellsworth.

COMMENT.

THE original spoiling of the Egyptians history considers to have been a creditable act; but the "spoiling" by our nineteenth-century vandals in Egypt is not only discreditable but barbarous. The Egypt Exploration Fund, whose vice-president for France is Maspero, is in hearty sympathy with the English society for the preservation of the monuments of Egypt, and some of its officers have started a fund for that purpose. Its managers have repeatedly called attention to the terrible mutilation of sculptures by relic fiends or by those who fill their orders. Professor Sayce, of our Fund, and Colonel Ross write earnestly from Egypt, extracts from their letters appearing in my letter on "Civilized Barbarism," in the "Boston Post" of March 19, 1890. Mr. Ellsworth does not express as much indignation as I then expressed. I closed with these suggestions:

I hope our American press will disseminate these painful facts as to the destruction of precious historical monuments at the instance of vandals who visit Egypt, or who pay gold for monuments that must be had at any and all sacrifice. First, I hope thereby our people will be more careful how they give *carte blanche* orders for mon-

umental remains, without regard to how they are to be obtained. Secondly, that that perfection of pleasure-giving, instruction-imparting tours, a trip up the Nile, may not lose, at least in part, its infinite charm—that of the inscriptions, pictorial representations, ethnographic bas-reliefs of a great people and contemporaneous races of 2000 to 6000 years ago—to all educated people who would profit by their inspection of the remains of ancient Egypt. Lastly, that the importance of exploration and research, such as the Egypt Exploration Fund carries on, may be strikingly emphasized—and more decipherments be made ere it is too late. For its work is above as well as under ground. Professor Sayce declares that "it is evident that whatever inscriptions there are above ground in Egypt must be copied at once if they are to be copied at all."

Brimful with general sympathy for Mr. Ellsworth's views, I must yet touch judicially on a few of his special ideals and intimations. Egypt as a colossal Pompeii means a colossal and impossible fund to preserve absolutely intact her monumental treasures. Hence the museum at Cairo, to preserve the portable treasures, has a grand mission aside from its value as a great museum. Such is the greed of the Turk, Egyptian, Arab, that the greater the fund the greater would be their steals; such is iconoclasm in Egypt that it is religiously bound to deface statues and inscriptions. The most that we can accomplish, with a liberal outlay annually, will be the protection of the chief temples and sites. Let us spend \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year for this purpose; but who will give the money?

The most valuable of the portable sculptures discovered at Bubastis were removed to save them from certain destruction. There was no money for guards to protect them by night and day; much less for building a museum "for the delight and instruction of visitors for all time." The best pieces were reserved for the Cairo Museum, which always has the pick of all "finds" in Egypt, and whose director grants the right to explore for science and his museum's benefit. Most of the objects taken from Egypt by the Fund, by permission of the director, are duplicates which he does not wish, but which are of great value to other museums. Comparatively few people can see Egypt; but hundreds of thousands of people can and do see the collections elsewhere, to their great profit in many cases.

Greece is not a typical case: with fifty fold its monuments and every Greek an iconoclast, the cases would be parallel perhaps. No little triangular jealousy exists between English, French, and German savants in Egypt,—the natural *odium archaeologicum*,—some of whom are sure to let the tongue wag under the influence of the green eye. I notice that sometimes tourists' letters unwittingly catch the glitter of that eye. Let us save the monuments of Egypt; let us explore; let us use the duplicates to make our own "Egypt at Home" for study and profit; all of which is consistent and may be accomplished.

Wm. C. Winslow.

EGYPT EXPLORATION FUND, BOSTON.

General Lee and the "Yankee in Andersonville."

As a constant reader of THE CENTURY, "A Yankee in Andersonville," by Dr. T. H. Mann, comes under my observation in the July number. The article in