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Hints on Life in . . .

Hints on

Life in

EGYPT

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INTRODUCTION

So you're going to Egypt?

It is never easy to get used to working in a foreign country, and war-conditions make it harder. That is the reason for this booklet. The idea is not to tell you things you ought to do and ought not to do -- whether you are in the services or have a civilian job; this is for the man who wants to get ready by learning the facts before he starts for Egypt. If you want facts, here they are.

The Country

To start with, Egypt isn't what Hollywood says it is. If you go to Egypt looking only for veiled ladies and mysterious harems "like in the Arabian nights", you'll be disappointed, because all of that went out a hundred years ago. But if you go to Egypt ready for a foreign country that is really foreign, and if you know what differences to expect, then you'll not only do your job better, you'll have a better time, too.

On the map, Egypt is big -- a time and a half as big as Texas -- but when you check the number of people in the country, it's only about fifteen-sixteen millions (over 130 millions in the United States). This would make you expect Egypt to be sparsely settled, like Arizona and New Mexico, but, since 14/15'ths of the whole country is desert (some sand, mostly rock), and all the people live in the other fifteenth, the population is really thick; it averages over 2,000 to the square mile, more even than in Belgium.

Most of these people are farmers (4/5'ths of the total). They live on small farms, are very poor, and seem clear behind the

times compared with an American farmer. But before you make up your mind on Egyptian farming, remember that not so very many years ago all of these farmers were peasants who owned no land, couldn't read or write, had no chance to get ahead at all. When you see how far the Egyptian has come since then, you may decide that he is about as up to date in his country as we are in ours.

On the other hand, you will find, especially in the cities, Egyptian officials, doctors, lawyers and businessmen, who are well educated, many of them having attended schools and colleges in Europe or European or American schools in Egypt. You should remember that they are used to being more formal with strangers, and even acquaintances and friends, than we are. Be strictly businesslike in your dealings with them until you get to know them better and feel more sure of your ground.

What to Pack

It is a good thing to remember that while the average temperature of Egypt is higher than in this country, it can be bitterly cold, especially in the desert at night. Take a good topcoat, or get an abaya, the Arab woolen cloak, to wear in the desert. You will need at least two good woolen blankets, preferably tightly woven to keep out the wind. If you expect to be out in the desert, an air mattress is the thing to take, and a sleeping bag will keep you warm under the most severe conditions.

There is nothing worse than tight clothes in a hot climate; they must be loose to be comfortable. For warm-weather use, take khaki shorts, but don't forget long khaki pants, which you'll have to wear until you get used to the sun; you will find them better than shorts in places where flies, mosquitoes and sand-flies are a problem. Shirts should be of khaki cotton, with short sleeves, open throat, and two breast pockets which button up. Wide-brimmed

straw or panama hats are the best thing to take, since they are cool, shade the eyes, and are light in weight. Tropical sun helmets are much heavier than an ordinary hat. When in the desert, old timers wear the Arab headdress or kaffiyah, which is light and at the same time gives good protection against the sun and dust storms. The best kind of a shoe is a leather moccasin-type with heavy soles to protect the feet against hot sand and rocky ground; be sure your shoes are large, because your feet will swell. Rubber-soled shoes and sneakers are undesirable because they make the feet sweat badly. Don't take high boots or breeches.

If you have to deal with upper-class Egyptians, you should dress carefully; nowhere is a man more judged by his clothes than in the East. You should therefore have at least one good woolen suit with appropriate shoes, shirts and neckties, for formal wear in winter, and light linen, palm-beach or beach-cloth suits for the same purpose in summer.

Miscellaneous items: (1) You must have a water-canteen of large capacity. Get the kind with a felt covering, since the contents can be kept cool by wetting the felt cover. (2) The next most useful thing is an all-purpose pocket knife. It should have one large blade, a combination screw driver and bottle-opener blade, a can-opener, a leather-punch, and a corkscrew. It may save your life if you are stranded in the desert with nothing but a can of bully-beef and a bottle of beer. (3) A flashlight, of good size, with extra bulbs and batteries. (4) Plenty of toothbrushes, and toothpaste, shaving cream and especially razor blades. These are worth their weight in gold in Egypt today. If you wear glasses, take at least two pairs in case of breakage.

If you like to read, better take along a good supply of books and magazines, unless you are sure the company is going to supply them.

Don't forget sun-glasses, at least two pairs. The color which is best on the eyes is bluish-green. If possible, get Polaroid lenses, which eliminate glare. You should consult an oculist about this, however, since Polaroid glass is harmful to some peoples' eyes.

Camera: This may be the only time you'll ever get to Egypt, and you may regret it for the rest of your life if you don't take any pictures. Better not take color film, since there are no facilities for getting it developed in the Near East. In Cairo are many good photographers' shops, including a branch of Eastman Kodak, where good printing and developing of still and movie film is done. Get a light meter or an exposure table, because you'll find exposure time much shorter in Egypt than here, owing to the intensity of the light.

Climate

In Egypt, expect hot weather, no rain (or else very little) except along the Mediterranean coast, and bright sunlight -- almost every day. Average temperatures run:

	<u>January</u>	<u>July</u>
Port Sa'īd.....	57	81
Cairo.....	53	84
Aswān.....	42	118

But, although the days are hot, the nights are cold from the minute the sun goes down. In the desert, night temperature is often close to freezing. You will always want warm bedclothes handy.

The hot days would be uncomfortable if it were not for the steady, year-round north wind which blows in from the Mediterranean. At Cairo you sometimes get south and west winds in the winter. In the spring and fall comes a hot, sandstorm wind called the Khanseen or sharqiyah (sirocco). It almost stops life while it blows -- the Egyptians say it "drives men crazy" -- but it seldom lasts more than two or three days.

In this hot, dry country, you will be very unlucky if you do not see a mirage. Be careful that it does not make you lose your way if you are travelling in the desert.

The Nile

On the map or on the spot, the first thing you see is the Nile River, the one important item in all Egypt. Without it, the whole country would be desert, fit only for tent-Arabs who never settle down to farm. In Egypt, water doesn't come from the skies, it comes from the Nile River.

This river flows in almost a straight line, south to north. That means that UPPER EGYPT is the country along the upper (south) Nile and LOWER EGYPT is on the lower (north) Nile. On the map, this makes UPPER EGYPT lie under LOWER EGYPT. The trouble is that Americans aren't used to important rivers that flow north. In Egypt, just remember that up-stream is south and you can't go wrong.

The water in the Nile is not drained off Egyptian country. It is rain and snow from the mountain country of east-central Africa, far south of Egypt. And it is muddy, for it washes down good rich

soil, year after year. The rains in these African mountains come and go with the season of the year. This makes the Nile in Egypt have a considerable yearly rise and fall. At Cairo, the average difference between "low Nile" and "high Nile" is 16 feet (better than a storey and a half). Farther south, at Aswān where the valley is more narrow and the current stronger, the difference averages 23 feet. High water comes towards the end of May, low water about the middle of September. The rise and fall are both slow and steady. This means that a good deal of Egyptian land is covered for several weeks, or months, with muddy flood water. The mud sinks and sticks. When the water goes down, the mud stays, as fine fertilizer as can be found. From all this you can easily see why a "good Nile" means a good farm year and a "low Nile" means crop failure.

The fact that all of Egypt's water comes from the Nile floods and not from rain-fall also means that the amount of Egyptian farmland is measured almost exactly by the width of the Nile flood. At Aswān in south Egypt is about where the farm belt starts. At Cairo in north (lower) Egypt is where the delta starts. The delta is the low rich plain where the Nile fans out from Cairo northwest to northeast, building up the rich low-lands in which its several mouths reach the sea. Draw a triangle from Alexandria west to Port Sa'id, Port Sa'id to Cairo, Cairo back to Alexandria, and you have the approximate size of the delta. Call the Delta a turnip and give it a tap-root reaching south along the Nile as far as Aswān. You have the location of the farm country of Egypt.

Some people say Egypt is like a tunnel. Start south from Cairo and you have to go straight on, there's no turn right or left because of the desert. Others compare it to a long tube (the Nile) with a funnel stuck in one end (the Delta). Certainly, there is no other country in the world where there is the same link between a river and farming. That is why Egyptian weather reports are more concerned about the weather in the mountain country a thousand miles south than they are with the weather in Egypt itself.

Government of Egypt

Egypt has a government something like England's. There are a King and Queen (His Majesty, Fārūq the First, and Her Majesty, Queen Farīdah) who rule according to a Constitution. This Constitution dates from 1923.

The Government has three departments (like the United States of America): a legislative, and executive, and the courts. The legislature is made up of (1) the Senate (2) the Chamber of Deputies (like the American Senate and House of Representatives). The executive power rests in the Council of Ministers under the Prime Minister (like the English Cabinet). The king has certain rights and powers, something like those of the king of England.

Social Life

Classes. You will notice that many Egyptians are very dark, but this does not necessarily mean that they are Negroes, any more than the Hindus or Hawaiians are. They do not like to be called "natives", because this word makes them think you are comparing them with inhabitants of uncivilized or backward countries. Egypt is a very old country, and is one of the places where civilization had its beginnings. Although many of the present-day Egyptians are descended from Arabs who came there in the seventh century or after, they are very proud of the ancient culture of their land and of its independence and its place as a leading nation in the Near East today. Don't do or say anything to offend their pride in this matter.

In Egypt the largest class is that of the fellahin, or farmers and peasants. Next come the laboring class, found mostly in cities. This class is much smaller than in the United States, since Egypt is not an industrial country. The middle class, which forms the backbone of our country, is very small in Egypt, and is composed mostly of fairly prosperous merchants and government officials and workers. The upper class is the big landowners and wealthy merchants. Both the higher middle class and the upper classes are more or less westernized in dress and home life and speak English or French.

Religions of Egypt

Moslem. Americans are used to a country where there is one common religion (the Christian) with two main branches (Catholic and Protestant) plus several smaller religious groups of whom the Jews are the most important. In all of the countries of the Near East, the religious picture is more complicated than in America.

Most Arabs -- and Arabs are in the majority in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and West Africa -- are Moslems. They believe in the religion founded by the Prophet Muhammed (in Arabia almost 1,500 years ago). They believe in God (the same God that Christians and Jews believe in) whom they call Allāh (just as the French call Him Dieu). They believe in all of the Prophets whom the Jews and Christians accept plus Muhammed whom they call the "last of the prophets."

The Moslem religion -- Islām (which means "giving oneself over to the will of God") -- has a set of daily prayers and devotions

which take a larger percentage of a man's time than do the Christian or Jewish religions. Perhaps this is one reason why many travellers and students have believed that the Moslem is always a fanatic. This is not true. He is a religious man and it is polite not to ask him too many questions or to interfere with his worship. In the same way, you would not want him to interfere with what you believe or do not believe.

On the other hand, he will be glad to show you his mosques (they are prayer-houses, not churches as we understand the word) and he will welcome any polite interest you show in learning about his religion and his life.

Moslems, like Jews and Catholics, have certain laws about food: they do not eat pork, for instance, and they sometimes fast. All alcoholic drinks were forbidden Moslems by Muhammed. You know that "Prohibition" is never completely successful, but it has worked better in the Moslem world than it did with us. In spite of the "progress", "modernization", and "westernization" of Egypt, you may find many young Egyptian Moslems who do not drink. This is especially true away from the sea-coast and the larger cities. In such cases, you will be wise if you do not drink, certainly not to drink too much. The better kind of Egyptians, too, are more formal and less easy-going than Americans are. If you take your time making friends, you will be wiser than if you are in too much of a hurry.

Dogs are not as happy in the Moslem world as in America. Moslems think they are rather unclean. Do not take a dog into a house unless you are invited to.

Moslems have their own ideas on the place of women. You had better watch and listen: finally you will understand how a Moslem feels about polygamy (having more than one wife: not many men do this today), about women going veiled (this, too, is going out of

style), and about many other things which will seem strange to you at first. Remember, he is doing what he believes is right and he is in his own country. Give him the same fair and open mind you would expect from him if he were in America and you were the one whose "ways seemed strange".

You will find guides, Arabs as well as others, who want to "show you the town", give you a "glimpse of the mysterious East". This is a tourist-racket run for suckers: most Americans can tell a racket when they see one.

Some of you may have heard that the Moslems "worship" Muhammed. This is not true. They have one religion. You have another. With understanding and experience on both sides, Moslems and Christians always have been able to get along together. Today, in most Near Eastern countries, there is at least a legal guarantee of the same "religious freedom" that we have in the American constitution. This guarantee covers every one: Christian, Moslem, Jew and all others.

Christian. Besides Moslems, there are several sects of Christians and also some Jews in Egypt. The Christians include Copts, Greek Orthodox, and Catholic and Protestant. You may be surprised to find that Oriental Christians seem just as foreign to you as the Moslems do: also, that they have many of the same laws on food and ideas about women that the Moslems do. If you stop to think, you will soon realize that the important differences between Egyptians and Americans are not caused by different religions. They are caused by the distance between the two countries and by the great difference between the history of the two countries. One of the greatest profits you may get by living away from America can be your chance to see, and learn to understand, other people on their own home ground.

Customs

In social life, the most striking difference between us and most Muslims is the way they separate men from women. This is true even of Oriental Christians to a large degree. Naturally among the upper classes you will find Egyptian women who do not wear veils and who mix with men at parties; but even so, there are many who stick to the old ways. Even in the streetcars (called "trams"), you will find that half the car is reserved for women, and the same is true of the trains, where they have special compartments. When meeting a Muslim acquaintance, you never ask how his wife is, and at most, only ask after his "family". Women as a rule are not given the same education and other opportunities as men, but there are, of course, exceptions.

Westernized Egyptians eat as we do, but if you are invited to a meal in the country or in the desert, you must eat only with the right hand. Watch your host.

If you visit an Egyptian for either social or business reasons, you will be immediately invited to sit down to coffee and cigarettes. After you have discussed the weather and each other's health, it will be time to talk about business. Business and social affairs are not rushed in Egypt.

Labor

There are organized labor unions in Egypt, but these are confined largely to a few large factories run on modern lines. The great masses of labor, such as agricultural workers and common day-

laborers, are unorganized. It is the custom in Egypt to handle unskilled labor through an Egyptian foreman, who has his own ways of getting things done. If you disagree with his methods or don't think he's getting results, take him aside and speak to him. If you correct him or call him down in front of the other workmen, he will lose his hold over them. It is very important to be sure of your orders and have your mind thoroughly made up when you give them; don't change your mind too often. Egyptian workmen are used to being treated with a firm hand, but at the same time, you must be fair with them. If they know this, there will be little trouble.

There are certain religious observances which you will have to reckon with when handling Egyptian workers. Since they will be mostly Muslims, they will be entitled to take time off to pray five times daily: at dawn, in the middle of the morning, at noon, in the middle of the afternoon, and early in the evening. The time of prayer is not determined by the clock, but by the height of the sun, and so varies with different seasons of the year. Many workers don't bother to pray, but if they want to, they have to be given time off. Another thing to keep in mind is that, in the month of Ramadān, Muslims are supposed to fast all day, and to eat only after sunset. Since the Muslim year is a lunar one, and shorter than ours, Ramadān comes at a different time each year, with relation to our calendar. In 1942 it will come between September 12 and October 12; in 1943 it falls between September 1 and October 1; and in 1944 between August 10 and September 9. Naturally, at this time, workmen cannot be expected to do as much work or work as hard as ordinarily, since they eat nothing all day, and allowance must be made for short tempers.

Friday is the day of rest among Muslims. Foreign businesses often observe Sunday instead, but you will find that your workmen will appreciate it if you let them have their own day of rest, and it will help create good will.

Living Conditions

You will probably be provided with houses or barracks to live in where conditions are not much different from what they are in the United States. The average Egyptian worker or farmer lives either in a one or two-story, flat-roofed house with one or two, or occasionally, more rooms. The house is built around a courtyard, where cooking and other housework is carried on. In towns the houses are usually of adobe brick, two stories high, with wooden balconies on the second floor overlooking the street; these houses are crowded together on streets so narrow that it is impossible to drive a car through them, let alone a truck. The windows are usually small, but they are made so to keep out the sun and make the house cooler. Flies, fleas, lice, bed-bugs, and cockroaches swarm in most Egyptian villages, so go prepared to deal with them. To keep flies out, it is a good idea to flit the room and hang mosquito netting over doors and windows.

Food and drink

Unless you live on imported foods, you are going to find a good deal of a change, as far as food is concerned. The main dishes of the Egyptian farmer's or worker's menu are bread, onions, and rice. The bread is not bad, if well-baked, and it will pay you to eat it. Rice takes the place of potatoes in our diet. The Egyptians eat little meat, and it would be wise for you to cut down on meat except in cold weather. The important thing to remember is never eat vegetables or fruit without either cooking them or peeling them or washing them in a solution of potassium permanganate (POISON: be sure to rinse it off.) The reason for these precautions is that

many vegetable gardens are watered from polluted sources, and a bad case of dysentery can result if you are careless. Melons are especially to be avoided since they are apt to carry cholera.

As in the rest of the Near East, canned food is still a luxury for most of the people, so that they have to eat fruits and vegetables as they come in season. This makes their diet seem monotonous to us, but you will probably have preserved food to draw on.

The average Egyptian drinks nothing but water. If you drink local water, boil it unless it has been tested and pronounced safe. The best way to keep water cool is to put it in a gullah, or Arab porous earthenware jar, which keeps the contents cool by evaporation. Milk should always be boiled before drinking.

Theoretically, alcoholic drinks are forbidden to Muslims, but in practice, many Muslims do drink. The favorite Egyptian drink is "araq", which is something like anisette or vodka, and just as powerful. It is usually drunk by adding water to it, when it turns a milky-white. Hard liquor is very bad for anyone living in a hot climate, unless it is taken very sparingly. Better stick to beer, and then drink it only in the evening when the air has cooled.

Coffee is good in Egypt, once you get accustomed to it. It is much thicker and more powerful than ours, and so is drunk in small cups; don't try to drink the dregs. There are three usual ways of taking coffee: sweet, medium, or without sugar (never with cream). Tea is drunk in glasses, and is usually very sweet.

Don't take drinks with ice in them or get in the habit of drinking ice water, because it chills the stomach. This is especially true if you are overheated from exertion.

Egyptian cigarettes are made with Turkish tobacco, and are first class. Cigars, however, are apt to be scarce and expensive, so if you smoke them you had better take a supply. The same is true of chewing tobacco.

Europeans

There are more Greeks in Egypt than any other foreign nationality; as in this country, they are mostly small shopkeepers. Next come the British, under which are included a good many Maltese, Cypriotes, and British Indians. Most of the British are connected with cotton exporting firms in Alexandria; with the Shell Oil Company or with the Imperial Chemical Company, but there are a good many who are employed by the Egyptian Government. The Italians are next. At present they are of course not as much in evidence as before the war; they used to control a good deal of the building trade, both as contractors and as suppliers of materials. After the Italians come the French, but these include many natives of French North African possessions. The Swiss are hotel-keepers and in the restaurant business. Germans and Belgians were fewest in number before the war.

Especially in Lower Egypt, you will find a large number of Levantines. They are chiefly of Jewish, Armenian, or Syrian origin, but often have Italian, Greek, or French blood in them. Most of them are Egyptian subjects. ("Levantine" is no compliment, so be careful when you use it.)

The British include not only Englishmen, but large numbers of Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and men from other parts of the British Empire. It is well-known that middle and upper-class Britishers are apt to be a little formal and stand-offish from our point of view. Don't force yourself on them. Most of the British you meet will be in the army. You will probably have little trouble getting on with the average British soldier, once you get to understand his talk. The New Zealanders, South Africans, and especially the Australians are more like Americans in many ways, and you should have no trouble getting on with them. Don't forget that the South Africans have Negroes in their country too, and feel about the same toward them as we do in the South. Don't call British sailors "limeys" unless you want trouble.

Languages

You have probably already decided that Egypt is a good place to hear many different languages spoken.

Arabic is the language of the real Egyptians. French is the language which foreigners used to use in business. Lately, English has caught up with, and passed by, French as the business and society language. Arabic, French and English are all three "official" languages in Egypt. Besides these, Greek, Italian, Spanish, German and Turkish can all be heard, especially in the seaports. Away from the big towns, Arabic is the only language people understand. An American who wants to learn one foreign language to use in Egypt will probably find that Arabic is the one that does the most good.

On the other hand, Arabic is a difficult language with its own alphabet (written from right to left) which takes time to learn. But although Arabic is difficult, it is entirely possible for an American to learn it if he tries, and it will certainly repay him. If you know it, Arabic is useful in many places besides Egypt. Arabic is the language of North Africa and the Sahara, of Palestine, Syria and Irāq. All Moslems, if they are educated, know some Arabic. It is one of the most important languages of the modern world.

When you first hear the foreign languages spoken in Egypt, you may be glad that English is also known and used in almost every important place. But the more you listen to this English and the more Englishmen you talk to, the more you will realize that British English and American English are almost two different languages.

Of course, British books and American books are the same. But how many of us "talk like a book?" You may be sure that the English are no more careful when they talk than we are. British talk and American talk are different in more ways than in pronunciation. They have words we do not have. We have some that they don't. Some words mean one thing to them, something different to us. The question is not whether they are "right" to say so and so are we are right not to say it. Nobody wonders whether it is "right" for a Frenchman to talk French. It is right for the British to talk British English and for the Americans to talk American English.

If you are much with Englishmen, you will find that you soon begin to "learn" their language. Unless you then begin to talk like them, you will also see that they are learning American English from you. The old sign in the Paris store window, "English spoken; American understood" was more than a joke. It pointed to a fact which English and Americans too often forget: American English and British English are not always quite the same language. Sometimes you have to "translate" to find out what the other one means.

Measures

In Egypt you will find three main kinds of people: Egyptians, Englishmen, and Europeans. Each of them has his own set of weights and measures. Not all of them use the same calendar. And you will have to learn to use a new kind of money.

The unit of Egyptian money is the Egyptian Pound (its sign is LE: compare our \$ and the £ which is the sign of the English Pound Sterling). The LE is about equal to an English Pound. This used to be around \$5.00 but now has fallen to about \$4.00

Here is a table of Egyptian money and approximate American values. You should be careful of two things:

1. Many counterfeit coins are circulating in Egypt. Be sure to learn how to tell the good from the bad.
2. If you have money to change from dollars to LE, go to a bank or a reliable office. The money changers always take a high percent. They will gyp you if they dare. So don't risk a loss. Use the banks to change your money.

Egyptian Money - Equals About

(Paper Money)

LE 100.....	\$4.00.
50.....	2.00.
10.....	40.
5.....	20.
1.....	4.00
1/2 pound (50 piasters)...	2.00

The pound is called a līrah or giniha (guinea). The 5-piaster piece is sometimes called a "shilling". The half-piaster is usually known as a ta'rīfah or girsh zaghīr (small piaster). The Arabic word for "piaster" is girsh, but sāgh is often used as well.

Beware of counterfeit coins in Egypt. Bad money is more common there than almost anywhere else in the world, and you should try to learn the difference between good and bad as soon as possible. It is a good idea to refuse to change large silver pieces when asked to do so by strangers. You ought to keep in mind that the Egyptian pound is worth 6 pence more than the British pound sterling, so don't exchange Egyptian for British money without remembering this.

Coins

(gold)	£ 1 (= 100 piastres).....	\$4.00
	1/2 (= 50 piasters).....	2.00
(silver)	20 piasters.....	.80
	10 piasters.....	.40
	5 piasters.....	.20
	2 piasters.....	.08
(nickel)	10 milliemes (= 1 piaster).....	.04
	5 milliemes (= 1/2 piaster)....	.02
	2 1/2 milliemes.....	.01
	2 milliemes.....	.008
(bronze)	1 millieme (1/10 piaster).....	.0016
	1/2 millieme (1/20 piaster)....	.0032

Calendars

Four calendars are official in Egypt: the Gregorian, the Moslem, the Jewish and the Coptic.

The Gregorian is the calendar we use. If you travel much in Egypt, you will have to understand the Moslem calendar, too. These are points to remember:

1. To the Moslems, a day begins at sunset (not at midnight, as it does in our system).
2. The Moslem year is lunar, and so is a few days shorter than our solar year: this means that each Moslem date equals a date in our calendar a few days earlier than the same Moslem date did last year.
3. The year one for the Moslems is the year of Muhammed's migration from Mecca to Madinah (= 622 of our era).
4. Here is a table of Moslem and Gregorian dates for 1942-1944. It tells you the date that each Moslem month begins.

(see table on next page)

Weights and Measures

In Egypt, distances and other measurements are by the metric system, which is as follows:

1 kilometer	= 1,000 meters	or .62137 miles
1 meter	= 100 centimeters	or 39.37 inches
1 centimeter	= 100 millimeters	or .3937 inch
1 millimeter	=	.03937 inch

Length¹ (Arab system)

1 qīrāt barsūm	= 1/6 habba shā'ir	= 0.087 centimetre	= 0.034 inch
1 habba shā'ir	= 1/144 dirā' mi'māri	= 0.521 centimetre	= 0.205 inch
1 usba'a	= 1/24 dirā' mi'māri	= 3.125 centimetres	= 1.230 inches
1 qabdāh	= 1/6 dirā' mi'māri	= 12.5 centimetres	= 4.921 inches

1 dirā' mi'māri = 0.75 metre = 29.53 inches
= 2.461 feet

1 bā' = 4 dirā' mi'māri = 3 metres = 3.281 yards

1 dirā' baladi = 0.58 metre = 22.83 inches = 1.903 feet

1 qasaba = 3.55 metres = 11.65 feet = 3.882 yards

1 hindsah = 0.656 metre = 25.83 inches = 2.152 feet

¹The dirā' baladi is used for textiles, the dirā' mi'māri (or pic) is used by architects, and the qasaba is used for agricultural land. The units derived from them, with their metric equivalents, have been declared legal, and are those measures which begin on the far left margin. The measures which have been indented in the above table were not given in the law.

Capacity¹

(British System)

Gasoline and other liquids are sold in Egypt by the Imperial Gallon.

1 Imperial gallon = 1.20094 U.S. gallons

1 Imperial quart = 1.2007 U.S. quart

(Metric System)

1 hectoliter = 100 liters = 2.838 U.S. bushels; 26.418 U.S. gallons

1 liter = .9081 etc. = 1.0567 liquid quarts

(Arab System)

1 qirât	= 1/32 qadah	= 0.064 litre	= 0.113 pint
1 knarâba	= 1/16 qadah	= 0.129 litre	= 0.227 pint
1 tuwa	= 1/8 qadah	= 0.258 litre	= 0.454 pint
1 rub'ah	= 1/4 qadah	= 0.516 litre	= 0.907 pint
1 nuuf qadah	= 1/2 qadah	= 1.031 litres	= 1.815 pints
1 qadah	= 1/96 ardeb	= 2.062 litres	= 3.630 pints
1 melwa	= 2 qadahs	= 4.125 litres	= 0.907 gallon
1 rub'	= 2 qadahs	= 3.250 litres	= 1.815 gallons
1 kâla	= 8 qadahs	= 16.500 litres	= 0.454 bushel
1 wâba	= 16 qadahs	= 33.000 litres	= 0.907 bushel
1 ardeb	= 6 wâbas	= 19800 litres	= 5.444 bushels

¹ In Egypt, liquids are often bought and sold by weight, and there are no special Arabic liquid measures. The gallon is in ordinary use for measuring gasoline. Most of these measures vary in size from place to place.

Weight (metric system)

1 metric ton	=	2204.6 pounds
1 quintal	=	220.46 pounds
1 kilogram, or kilo	=	2.2046 pounds
1 gram	=	15.432 grains

(Arab system)

1 dirhem	=	3.12 grams	=	48.149 grains
1 oqia = 12 dirhems	=	37.44 grams	=	1.321 oz.
1 rotl = 144 dirhems	=	449.28 grams	=	0.9905 lb.
1 oko = 400 dirhems	=	1248.00 grams	=	2.751 lbs.
1 qantâr = 100 rotla (36 ôkos)	=	44.928 kilograms	=	99.05 lbs.

Area (metric system)

1 hectare = 10,000 square meters or 2.471 acres

(Arab system)

The principal measure of area is the faddân. It equals 4200.83 square meters or 5024.16 square yards.

Business -- How to Shop

Sometimes you will have to go shopping. It will save you time, money, and temper if you remember these things before you start:

a) In the Near East, people "bargain" for everything. Except in the most modern and "European" stores, you should always bargain yourself.

b) The most important point is this: don't be in a hurry. Look around, find what you want, then pretend to be interested in something else. Finally, ask the price of the article you want. After the storekeeper tells you his "first asking price", go on to some other article. Come back to what you want. Make your first offer. It should be as much too low as you think the shopkeeper's price too high. Don't believe the shopkeeper who claims that his is a one-price store.

c) Gradually, if you keep your patience and your sense of humor, you will strike a bargain that is satisfactory to you both. But bargaining is an "art"; you have to learn it by practising and you will probably make some expensive mistakes before you really know the ropes. One thing will help: most Americans have a good streak of "Yankee horse-trader" in them. That is excellent equipment for shopping in the Near East.

Beware of buying antiques, especially scarabs, from peddlers and small shopkeepers. The fake antique trade keeps hundreds of people busy in Egypt the year round. The only place to buy scarabs is in the Egyptian Museum, in Cairo; they guarantee all they sell to be genuine.

Health and Hygiene (see also under Food and Drink)

The thing to keep in mind when you think about living in Egypt is that it is not a tropical country, but has what is called a "desert climate", that is: warm days, cool nights, and very little rain all year round. This means that in most parts of Egypt you will not be bothered with damp heat; the air is pretty dry, which makes high temperatures much easier to bear.

Egypt has a reputation among travelers of being on the whole not quite as clean as some other countries in the Near East, so you must take extra care of yourself if you want to keep in condition. Before you leave this country you will have shots against cholera and paratyphoid and will probably be vaccinated.

But there are certain illnesses and disorders which you will find in Egypt and not here. One of your first experiences will be with what is called "Gypsy tummy", the signs of which are diarrhoea, slight stomach cramps and loss of appetite. It is said to be caused by the change in food and climate, but after you have been there a while it will pass off. Some say that a woollen belly-band about 8 inches wide is a good remedy for this trouble, but it should not be worn unless you are actually suffering from an attack.

There are plenty of fleas in Egypt. These may carry plague, and it is better to sleep out of doors than in a flea-infested house. But there are more serious things to be on guard against. Malaria is carried by mosquitoes, so sleep under a net. If you are in the desert, you will need a very fine net to protect you against sand-flies, for their bite causes a fever which lasts for weeks. There is a kind of stable-fly, whose bite causes a boil to appear on the face, and this usually leaves a large scar after healing. This is known as "Aleppo button", or "Baghdad boil", depending on where you are.

Don't go out in the sun without a hat or head covering of some kind, and don't let yourself get sunburned. In Egypt the sun is not to be played with as in this country. You will notice that the Egyptians keep themselves well covered, and they do this because they have learned by experience. On the other hand, if you are sufficiently protected from the sun, you can go out and work in it all day with perfect safety -- don't think it's going to kill you. Just take it a little easy at first, but before long you'll take it as it comes. Be sure to eat plenty of salt, because although you often won't notice that you're sweating because of the rapid evaporation, you are continually losing a lot of water and with it, salt from your body. If you lose too much salt, heat exhaustion will follow.

Beware of snakes and scorpions which make their homes under rocks, in bushes, in old ruins, etc. There are a number of deadly snakes in Egypt, and a scorpion bite, while seldom fatal, can give you a very bad time.

Don't go swimming or wading in the Nile without protection for your feet. Egyptians who walk barefoot in the Nile mud become infected with bilharzia, a blood disease caused by a parasite which is carried by a fresh-water snail and enters the human body through the skin. When swimming in the Red Sea, it is advisable to wear bathing shoes owing to the presence of sharp corals, etc., which may cut your feet. In the Mediterranean you can go barefoot.

Syphilis and gonorrhoea are just as common among certain classes of Egyptian women as among Europeans. They are found in country villages as well as in large cities like Port Said, Cairo, Ismailia, and Alexandria. Don't take anything for granted.

Don't sleep with an electric fan blowing on you unless you are wearing pajamas or are covered; it may lead to pneumonia.

Special Do's and Don'ts

You will probably often think, to yourself, "Egypt is certainly different from what I thought it was!" And, if you see much of any Frenchmen or Englishmen -- or any other "foreigners", anywhere -- you will probably find yourself thinking the same thing about them: and if you could read their minds, you would see them thinking "Well! this fellow doesn't act like any American I ever read about!"

Europeans used to believe that America was a country full of gold, buffalo, prayer-meetings, and wild Indians. Radio and American movies have changed some of this, but not all of it, for the movies are likely to make foreigners decide that all Americans live lives like those that Hollywood dreams up. Perhaps the one thing that did the most to convince Europe that we were not all "Supermen" was

news of our "depression". But many still think that any American can spend as much as he wants, anytime, for anything. You may have to convince them a) that you yourself are just an average man -- no richer and not much smarter than most Americans and b) that it takes more than a magic word and a stack of dollars to get America the kind of all-out production that it will take before we really hit our stride in this war.

Englishmen have always known more about us than the other people in Europe have, but even the English have been likely to picture us as a pretty hard-boiled crowd -- a nation of men who put their feet on the table, and carry tommy-guns just for amusement.

The history of the past five years has given England and America a real opportunity to understand each other better. In Egypt, meeting and working with Englishmen and with Britons from all over the Empire, you have a chance to be part of that history and to do your part in helping to strengthen the British-American understanding and friendship that Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill are counting on to "win the peace" when this war is finished.

One more thing: you are in for a surprise if you think that "The English don't have a sense of humor". Translate your joke into British English, and you will find that their sense of humor is just about like ours.

Recreation

Since you are going to a foreign country you naturally can't expect people there to do everything as we do, and that applies to sports as well as everything else. Baseball and our variety of football are unknown; they play, instead, soccer

which you will probably learn to like. On the other hand, not many Americans get to be enthusiastic over cricket, which is a little slow when compared with baseball. Soccer is the favorite game of British soldiers, sailors, and civilians, and they follow it about as much as we do baseball. Tennis, squash, and golf are played around Cairo and Alexandria; the courts and links are mostly owned by private clubs.

Polo and horse-racing go on during the winter months at the Gezira Sporting Club and at Mena, near Cairo.

Duck shooting begins in October on the big lakes near the north coast of Egypt. Snipe-shooting is good in the marshlands of the northern Delta, near the Mediterranean. Quail and grouse exist, but the grouse hunting is not as good as it is farther south in the Sudan. Gazelles can be hunted in the desert on either side of the Nile.

Egypt is full of interesting things to see, and you'll probably want to make a lot of trips in your free time. Alexandria is not particularly interesting except for the good beach, but in Cairo you can spend a good deal of time going through the bazars or markets and seeing what a real oriental city is like. The Cairo Zoo is one of the best in the world and is well worth a visit.

If you are interested in history and archeology, Egypt is as near to Paradise as you will ever get. The dry sand and clear air of Egypt will preserve almost anything. Today archeology -- the digging up, preserving and study of the remains of ancient civilizations (buildings, mummies, tools, pottery, etc.) is a science, not just treasure-hunting. An archeologist is as careful of his work as any contractor who is putting up a building. He can thus reconstruct life as it was in Egypt thousands of years ago. Americans have had a big share in developing the science of archeology and in putting it into practice in Egypt.

The most famous things in Egypt are the Sphinx and the Pyramids, just outside of Cairo. But Luxor, an overnight trip southward from Cairo by train, is almost as famous for its enormous temples and tombs of famous pharaohs. If you can't get there, and even if you can, you must visit the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, where the objects found in the well-known tombs of Tut-ankh-Amen are kept. Some of these things have now been stored away for the duration of the war, but you will still be able to see some very interesting things.

You will need a guide, but don't believe everything he tells you. Get a good guide-book and read these things up for yourself.

Books you might like to read

Some of the books in this list may sound good to you. Most of them can be found in any good library. A few of them you may want to buy for yourself.

I. Fiction:

1 -- Morier, James, "Hajji Baba of Isfahan." This is the best story of old-fashioned Moslem life (Persia a hundred years ago) that has ever been written. Highly humorous. There is a second volume, "Hajji Baba in England."

2 -- Dwight, Harry. "Stamboul Nights". A book of short stories about life in the old Ottoman Empire, before the first World War.

3 -- Weigall, Arthur E.P.B. "Laura Was My Camel". (New York, 1933). Entertaining reminiscences of an archaeologist's life in Egypt. The same author has written a number of historic novels (novels about many of the great people in Egypt's past: Mark Anthony, Cleopatra, Alexander the Great, etc.). You would probably enjoy some of these.

1 --The two greatest travel books about the Arabs of the Arabian desert, books which help you to understand Arabs everywhere, are "Travels in Arabia Deserta" by Charles Doughty and "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom", Lawrence of Arabia's story of the Arab Revolt in the First World War. Both of these books are "hard reading" but each of them is well worth the time it takes.

2 -- Guide Books: There are many of these. Among the best are a) Macmillan's Guide to Egypt and the Sudan, 7th Edition, London, 1916; b) "Baedeker's Egypt and the Sudan," 8th Edition, London, 1929; c) "Cook's Handbook to Egypt and the Sudan", 2nd Edition, (edited by E.A.W. Budge), London, 1906; d) Holmes, Burton, "Egypt and the Suez Canal" (Chicago, 1940)

III. Modern History (1800 on --):

1-- Wilson, Sir Arnold. "The Suez Canal, London, 1933.

2 -- Adams, Charles C. "Islam and Modernism in Egypt", New York, 1933.
A book about politics and political parties in Egypt.

3 -- "Modern Egypt" (2 volumes), London, 1908-1915, by the Earl of Cromer, the Englishman who controlled Egypt for many years.

4 -- "Egypt since Cromer", Lord Lloyd, (2 volumes), London, 1933-1934.
This brings Cromer's story up to date.

5 -- Not all Englishmen approved of the policy their country followed in taking and ruling Egypt. If you would like to see the other side of English opinion on the conquest of Egypt, read the books of Wilfred Scawen Blunt (and of his wife, Lady Anne Blunt), particularly his "Secret History of the Occupation of Egypt" and his Diaries.

1 -- "History of the Arabs" by Prof. Phillip Hitti (of Princeton) is the best book that has yet been written in English on Arab history. You can use the index to find what you want about Egypt. The footnotes will give the names of other books, if you want. There are also good lists of histories in the guide-books which were named above.

2 -- For ancient history, you might try the writings of Prof. James Henry Breasted (Chicago), especially his "History of Egypt" and "Dawn of Conscience". Other good books are the English translations of the books of Professors Adolf Erman and George Steindorff.

3 -- Finally, if you would like to read some very old histories of the Egyptians, try the Bible, the Old Testament, especially the earlier books.

V. Medical and Health:

1 -- Reed, Alfred C. "Health for Travelers" (San Francisco, 1931). This is a handy, pocket-size book written by somebody who knows the East and what is important for your health. A good book to carry around with you.