This is nearly all in the Letter
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(Letter to Dr. Cushing) Feb. 22nd, 1911

S. S. "Seti"

Dear Cushing

Such a trip! I would give one of the fragments of Osiris to have you two on this boat. Everything arranged for our comfort and the dearest old dragoman who parades the deck in gorgeous attire with his string of 99 beads - each one representing an attribute of God! We shall take about 10 days to the Dam (Assouan), 580 miles from Cairo. Yesterday we stopped at Assiut and I saw the Hospital of the American Mission - 200 beds, about 20,000 out-patients. Dr. Grant is in charge with 3 assistants and many nurses. I found there an old Clevelander... who had fallen off a donkey and broken his ribs, and on the 8th day had thrombosis of left leg. He was better, but at 76 he should have stayed at home. The Nile itself is fascinating, an endless panorama - on one side or the other the Arabian or the Libyan desert comes close to the river, often in great lime stone ridges, 200-800 ft. in height; and then the valley widens to eight or ten miles. Yellow water, brown mud, green fields and grey sand and rocks always in sight; and the poor devils dipping up the water in pails from one level to the other. We had a great treat yesterday afternoon. The Pasha of this district has two sons at Oxford and their tutor, A. L. Smith, a great friend of his, sent him a letter about our party. He had a secretary meet us at Assuit and came up the river to Abutig. We had tea in his house and then visited a Manual Training School for 100 boys, which he supports. In the evening he gave us a big dinner. I wish you could have seen us start off on donkeys for the half mile to his house. It was hard work talking to him through an interpreter, but he was most interesting - a great tall Arab of very distinguished appearance. A weird procession left his house at 10 P.M. - all of us in eve. dress, which seemed to make the donkeys very frisky. Three lantern men, a group of donkey men, two big Arabs with rifles and following us a group of men carrying sheep - one alive! chickens, fruit, vegetables, eggs, etc., to stock our larder. We tie up every eve about 8 o'clock, pegging the boat in the mud. The Arabs are fine; our Reis, or pilot, is a direct descendant, I am sure, of Ramses II, judging from his face. After washing himself he spreads his prayer mat at the bow of the boat and says his prayers with the really beautiful somatic ritual of the Muslem. The old Pasha, by the way, is a very holy man and has been to Mecca where he keeps two lamps perpetually burning and tended by two eunuchs. He is holy enough to do the early morning prayer from 4 to 6 A. M. with some 2000 sentences from the Koran. It is a great religion- no wonder Moslem rules in the East. Wonderful crops up here - sugar cane, cotton, beans and wheat. These poor devils work hard but now they have the satisfaction of knowing they are not robbed. We are never out of sight of the desert and the mountains come close on one side or the other. Today we were for miles close under limestone heights - 800-1000 feet, grey and desolate. The river is a ceaseless panorama - the old Nile boats with curved prows and the most remarkable sails, like big jibs, swung on a boom from the top of the masts, usually two and the foresail the larger. I saw some great books in the Khedival Library - monster Korans superbly illuminated. The finer types have been guarded jealously from the infidel, and Moritz, the librarian, showed me examples of the finer forms that are not in any European libraries. Then he looked up a reference and said - "You have in the Bodleian three volumes of a unique and most important 16 cent. arabic manuscript dealing with Egyptian antiquities. We have the other two volumes. Three of the five were taken from Egypt in the 17th century. We would give almost anything to get the others." And then he showed me two fo the most sumptuous Korans, about 3 ft. in height, every page ablaze with gold, which he said they would offer in exchange. I have written to E. W. B. Cyclops Nicholson urging him to get the curators to make the exchange, but it takes a University decree to part with a Bodley book! Curiously enough I could not find any early Arabian books (of note) in medicine, neither Avicenna or Rhazes in such beautiful form as we have. I have asked a young fellow at school who is interested to look up the matter. . .

Feb 22/11

We shall have nearly a week in Cairo on our return. I went over the Ankylostoma specimens with Looss and the Bilharzia with Ferguson - both terrible diseases here (not the men!) - the latter, a hopeless one and so crippling. There were a dozen or more bladder cases in the hospital and the polypous cholitis which it causes is extraordinary. They must spend more money on scientific medicine. Looss has very poor accommodations. The laboratories are good, but the staffs are very insufficient. The hospital is impossible. I am brown as a fellah - such sun - a blaze all day. We reached Cairo in one of those sand storms, the air filled with a greyish dust which covers everything and is most irritating to eyes and tubes. This boat is delightful - five - six miles an hour against the current, which is often very rapid. The river gets very shallow at this season, and is fully eithteen feet below flood level. I have been reading Herodotus, who is the chief authority now on the ancient history of Egypt. He seems to have told all of the truth he could get and it has veen verified of late years in the most interesting way. Tomorrow we start at 8 for the Tombs of Denderah - a donkey ride of an hour. We are tied up to one of Cook's floating barge docks, squatted out side is a group of natives and the Egyptian policeman (who is in evidence at each stopping-place) is parading with an old Snider and a fine stock of cartridges in his belt.
P. S. 24th. Have just seen Denderah and the Temple of Hathor. Heavens, what feeble pigmies we are! Even with steam, electricity and the Panama Canal. . .

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