

Wadi Halfa, is continued south-eastwards to Berber and on to Khartum. Cairo, the capital of Egypt, is situated at the head of the delta, and possesses railway and canal communication with Alexandria, the chief port of the region, which is situated a little west of the western arm of the Nile. Other ports are Rosetta and Damietta, at the mouths of the Nile, and Port Said, at the northern end of the Suez Canal, which is a convenient coaling-station, and has a large entrepôt trade.

The Suez Canal forms a short route for European vessels trading with the East ; but, on account of the tolls levied, it is cheaper for some ships, laden with heavy goods, to go by the Cape route whenever the consequent delay is of slight importance. The majority of vessels that pass through it are British steamers. The canal is about 100 miles long, including the lakes, and 27 feet deep, but only at certain places is it wide enough for two vessels to pass, though this defect is being remedied.

Though nominally part of the Turkish Empire, Egypt has practically an independent Government, subject in some degree to British control. On page 121 it will be seen that most of the trade of this country is carried on with the United Kingdom, and that cotton is by far the most valuable of the exports.

On account of the dry climate of Egypt, many of its ancient monuments have been preserved, and the country has become a favourite tourist resort in winter. Not far from Cairo are the Pyramids and the ruins of Memphis, one of the ancient capitals of the country, another being Thebes, situated on the Nile at the western end of the depression which leads to Kosseir, and noted for its wonderful temples of Karnak and Luxor. Some of these ancient monuments date back to 4000 B.C., and point to a very early civilization, due in part to the fertility which marked the district as soon as the ways of controlling and utilizing the Nile floods were understood, and in part to the protection afforded by the surrounding deserts, which made it possible for arts to develop with little warlike interruption. There was, moreover, no lack of building material ; for the Nile mud could easily be baked into bricks by the sun, and the granite of Syene at Assuan could be quarried, and floated in boats down the river. Timber, however, had to be imported, as also were slaves, dyed woollen goods, and various animals ; but the cultivation and manufacture of flax, and the mining of gold and copper then found in Egypt and the peninsula of Sinai rendered the country in the main self-sufficing, and rich enough to develop a high standard of culture.