

COPY

Letter to Mrs Thomas de'Arcy

CUS 417/111.20 1/2

Palmyra
Luxor,
Feb 27th, 1911.

Dear Amy:-

We are having a most festive trip in this delightful steamer. E. B. O. with his usual generosity has arranged everything for our comfort. The boat holds six comfortably and has Captain, crew, cook, laundry-man and two men to look after the dining room. We left Cairo on the 15th and made about five miles an hour against the stream, tying up to a mud bank at night. The river itself is fascinating- an endless panorama, the Nile boats laden with sugar cane, wheat, beans, or ^{or} ~~or~~ ^{or} crops pass us every few minutes. The valley is narrow as a rule, but widens to one to two miles in places. In flood season - August to November - the banks overflow as the river rises 18 to 25 feet and leaves a thick deposit of mud. Crops are now in and the wheat and beans make a vision of green between the sand and the water. We are never out of sight of the Libyan or Arabian hills on either side rising to 600 or 1000 feet. The line between the dessert and the mud is so sharply defined that a foot may be on both. As we stood the other day on the top of the temple of Deuderah the line of green could be traced for miles extending like a band between the yellow sand and the water, and except an oasis or two intervening there was nothing but dessert for 2500 miles to the Atlantic. It is a weird and dismal looking waste. Along the banks at intervals the natives are seen pumping up the water in pails as the irrigation canals do not as yet supply the whole country. We have seen wonderful sights - the most marvellous the Karnak Temple here which covers an area of 1000 acres. St. Paul's could go inside one of the courts. Much still remains - enough to make it the greatest single building erected by man. There are 147 columns 60 (?) feet in height and 3 feet in circumference - a stupendous hall built about 1500 B.C. From this the famous are of sphinxes to Luxor, 6000 feet. Only a few of them remain. Huge ~~colossal~~ obelisks, , ^{hissa than} the arc de Triumph are scattered about. The old fellows were our masters in architecture and our greatest buildings seem the efforts of pigmies in comparison. This was the Temple of Amman in ancient Thebes which covered an enormous area in the valley and 3000 B.C. was one of the greatest cities the world has seen. Across the river far in a valley, among the mountains, are the tombs of the kings, nearly all of which have been explored and rifled. Only that of Amniphilis iii has the masonry intact. The old sinner tried to fool his successors (and succeeded) as he made several false passages to his tomb. The true one was only found in 1898 - about 310 feet under the mountain, the galleries

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leading to it, square passages about the size of the London tube, the walls beautifully decorated with scenes from his life and with the passage of his soul in the under world. Then one comes to a big chamber superbly colored and adorned and in the middle his stone coffin with his mummy, the face and chest exposed - strong good features of one of the greatest of Kings - and only 1500 B.C.! We saw three of the ~~tombs~~, there are 47 ! It was hot as hades - even in the ~~tombs~~ 300 to 600^{feet} in the heart of the solid limestone. I am glad Grace did not come. She would have been roasted - 80° for the first few days, and this afternoon the sand storm has come and the whole air is dark with it and grit everywhere. Amo, Elsie ~~Belhume~~, E.B.O., Wilmo~~t~~ and Ernest ~~Celkumach~~ ~~from~~ the party. We go on tomorrow to the Assuan dam at the first Cataract and then return to Cairo by the 15th - have a week there and sail 22nd for Naples. I hope to be back by April 1st. It seems a very lazy thing to take a long holiday like this, but it seemed too good a chance to miss, and it really has been splendid.

I hope you and Tom are coming over this summer. Our plans are uncertain. Mary comes soon. We shall go off somewhere with Ike. I dare say you will not be able to get away until late. You would not know the boy - as tall as I am, and just as good as gold, but no student. He has no desire for book learning and will have to take to some practical line of work.

My love to Kate and Marjorie, and and the Hurds, and the Thayers.

Your affectionate uncle,
W. O.

~~Such good reports from Billy.~~

U. E.B.O. His brother Sir Edmund Order of Toronto.
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