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FOR THE THELEMITES

ROSE AND ALEISTER CROWLEY'S STAY IN EGYPT IN 1904
A STUDY OF THE CAIRO WORKING
AND WHAT IT LED TO

BY
PERDURABO ST



FRATER PERDURABO, to whom this revelation was made with so many signs and wonders, was himself unconvinced. He struggled against it for years. Not until the completion of His own initiation at the end of 1909 did He understand how perfectly He was bound to carry out this work. (Indeed, it was not until his word became conterminous with Himself and His Universe that all alien ideas lost their meaning for him). Again and again He turned away from it, took it up for a few days or hours, then laid it aside. He even attempted to destroy its value, to nullify the result. Again and again the unsleeping might of the Watchers drove Him back to the work; and it was at the very moment when He thought Himself to have escaped that He found Himself fixed for ever with no possibility of again turning aside for the fraction of a second from the path.

The history of this must one day be told by a more vivid voice. Properly considered, it is a history of continuous miracle.

THE EQUINOX OF THE GODS, 1936 E.V.

The Crowleys in Helwan

Here are three entries from Aleister Crowley's diary from Egypt, "Feb. 11"; "Feb. 19"; and "Feb. 20", as they were published by him in *The Equinox* (1912 E.V.) and *EG* (1936 E.V.), and here printed together with comments by Perdurabo ST.



As I wrote in Chapter 2's introduction to *FRATER P.'S DIARY* [January – April, 1904 E.V.]:

"Let us dive into his diary from Egypt 1904 and look at its blinds and ciphers, and let us call what may come out of it – [the comments by me are printed in square brackets] – for results of facts and more or less pure guesswork! I have to warn the reader that in order to advance I must go into some detail. The "facts" are Frater P.'s printed diary, its words, stated "blinds", and its "cyphers" – my 'guesses' on the meaning of these "blinds" and stupid meaningless cyphers", as he called them in *EG*, are the "more or less pure guesswork", and is for me to think aloud and sometimes laugh without always claiming to be right, although the main part of its results came from a magickal work, which I performed in 2004 E.V. designed to decipher the Egypt diary's "blind" and stupid meaningless cyphers" – and most of these 'guesses' came to me in such a way that I personally believe that they are right."

Other entries with comments are found in the following extracts from *For the Thelemites*: "April 20, 1904 E.V."; "General Dickson"; and the "Book Preview"

FRATER P.'S DIARY

(This diary is extremely incomplete and fragmentary. Many entries, too, are evidently irrelevant or "blinds." We omit much of the latter two types.)

"This eventful year 1903 finds me at a nameless camp in the jungle of Southern Province of Ceylon; my thoughts, otherwise divided between Yoga and sport, are diverted by the fact of a wife . . ."

(This reference to Yoga is the subconscious Magical Will of the Vowed Initiate. He was not doing anything; but, on questioning himself, as was his custom at certain seasons, he felt obliged to affirm his Aspiration.)

Jan. 1. . . . (Much blotted out) . . . missed deer and hare. So annoyed. Yet the omen is that the year is well for works of Love and Union; ill for those of Hate. Be mine of Love! (Note that he does not add "and Union").

Jan. 28. Embark for Suez.

Feb. 7. Suez.

Feb. 8. Landed at Port Said.

Feb. 9. To Cairo.

Feb. 11. Saw b. f. g.

b. f. b.

(This entry is quite unintelligible to us.)

Feb. 11. Saw b.f.g.
b.f.b.
(This entry is quite unintelligible to us.)

[On p. 114 in EG is found the mentioning of "A Mr. Back, owner of the "Egyptian News," an hotel, a hunk of railway, &c., &c., dined once." The Crowleys were on February 11, as mentioned above, staying at the Grand Continental. A Mr. Back does not appear on any of the hotel lists where the Crowleys are being mentioned. However, *The Egyptian Gazette* on Tuesday, March 15, 1904, stated:

Personal. [...] The latest arrivals at the Hotel Beau-Rivage are [...] Mr. F. Back.²¹⁷

The Hotel Beau-Rivage (French for 'beautiful shore') was situated at Ramleh (Arabic meaning 'sand') on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea in the environs of Alexandria, some 5 km to the north-east of the city, and known as the 'Egyptian Riviera'.²¹⁸ The hotel was perhaps the one mentioned by Crowley (?). Francis Formby Back (1852-1913) of the London firm Back and Manson, Merchants, owned *The Egyptian Gazette*, which was published daily at Alexandria, and this paper is, of course, the "Egyptian News" mentioned by Crowley, since it was the only English daily newspaper published at that time in Egypt.²¹⁹ Francis Formby Back of Woodlands, Harrow Weald, Middlesex, son of Rev. James Back (1816-1874)²²⁰, who at his meeting with the Crowleys was 51 years of age, had like Aleister Crowley gone to Cambridge – in 1871 admitted pensioner at Christ's College and graduated with a B.A. in 1875. He had entered the merchant banking firm of George Craufurd Rew in 1874, and succeeded to the business (now

²¹⁷ The Egyptian Gazette. Alexandria: The Egyptian Gazette. ♦ Tuesday, March 15, 1904, p. 3.

²¹⁸ Karl Baedeker. Egypt and the Sûdân. Handbook for Travellers. Seventh Remodelled Edition. Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1914, p. 25-6. ♦ Ramleh is today mostly known as Ar Raml.

²¹⁹ Francis Formby Back was born in Bow, Middlesex, England, on June 7, 1852. His place of birth is not stated in the biographical material mentioned below, but is taken from the Census of England 1891 (169 Woodlands, Harrow Weald, Harrow, Middlesex, England.) ♦ For F. F. Back, see: Biographical Register of Christ's College 1505–1905 And of the Earlier Foundation, God's House 1448–1505; Compiled by John Peile, Litt.D., F.B.A. &c. 2 vols. Cambridge, UK: At the Press, 1910-13. ♦ Vol. II, (1913), p. 618. (Back, Francis Formby, p. 618.) ♦ For the statement that *The Egyptian Gazette* was the only English daily published in Egypt in 1904, see note¹⁸⁸ above. ♦ Back and Manson [Frederick William Manson] was a London firm located in *Egypt House, 36 New Broad Street, E.C.* ♦ For this, see: Who's Who Year-Book for 1909. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1909, p. 87. ♦ John Edwin Marshall. The Egyptian Enigma, 1890-1928. London: John Murray, 1928, p. 24: "on Philip's death [the proprietor of The Egyptian Gazette] the Gazette was sold to Messrs. Back and Manson". (*The Press in Egypt*, pp. 23-30.) ♦ The Gazette's Editor in 1904 E.V. was Oxford Graduate Rowland Snelling. Crowley writes that Mr. Back also was the owner of "a hunk of railway" and this could well be the *Alexandria and Ramleh Railway Company*, a company, which shortly is mentioned by J. E. Marshall in his book. Marshall was late Judge in the Egyptian Court of Appeal and had lived at Ramleh. He writes that he in 1904 had got the idea of creating the *Egyptian University*, which now is known as *Cairo University*. It was founded in 1908 E.V.

²²⁰ For Rev. James Back, see: Biographical Register of Christ's College 1505–1905 And of the Earlier Foundation, God's House 1448–1505; Compiled by John Peile, Litt.D., F.B.A. &c. 2 vols. Cambridge, UK: At the Press, 1910-13. ♦ Vol. II, (1913), p. 451. (Back, James, p. 451.) ♦ Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, From the Earliest Times to 1900. Compiled by J. A. Venn, Litt.D., F.S.A.; President of Queen's College. 10 vols. Cambridge, UK: At the University Press, 1922-54. ♦ Part II From 1752 to 1900; Volume I; Abbey – Challas (1940), p. 108. (BACK, JAMES, p. 108.)

Back and Manson) on the retirement of the senior partner in 1878.²²¹ Apart from the business interests mentioned by Crowley, Francis Formby Back was also the principal proprietor of the 800 acres farm, the 'Pyramids Estates', a date-palm plantation south of the pyramids.²²² He died at the age of sixty in Cairo on April 1, 1913 E.V.. Crowley knew in fact his eldest son the English physician Ivor Gordon Back (1879-1951) M.R.C.S., who also was a friend of Rose's brother the English painter Gerald Festus Kelly (1879-1972). Ivor Gordon Back, who was born on August 31, 1879, in Pinner, Harrow, Middlesex, England, was admitted to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in 1898, and graduated with a B.A. in 1901 – M.A. in 1907 E.V.; M.B. and B.C. also 1907 E.V.; and F.R.C.S. at St. George's Hospital in London the same year.²²³ He travelled round the world as A.K. Travelling Fellow, 1911-12 E.V., and published the book *Round the World and Back* in 1913 E.V..²²⁴ Ivor Back became surgeon to St. George's Hospital, and later surgeon to the Grosvenor Hospital for Woman in London. Ivor Back, who also was a freemason²²⁵, died on June 13, 1951 E.V., at the age of seventy-one in Paddington, London. Crowley writes in *Confessions* that Ivor Back edited the three volumes of his *Collected Works* (1905-7 E.V.), supplying learned notes to divers obscure passages, and also that they had climbed together.²²⁶ Crowley had dedicated his 1904 E.V. *In Residence: The Don's Guide to Cambridge* to him writing:

*I Dedicate THIS VOLUME TO IVOR GORDON BACK WHO SO WORTHILY CARRIED ON THE TRADITIONS OF HIGH THINKING AND NOBLE LIVING INAUGURATED BY MYSELF WHEN AT CAMBRIDGE BUT I AM TOO LAZY TO WRITE AN ODE TO HIM*²²⁷

As mentioned, Mr. F. Back does not appear on any of the hotel lists where the Crowleys are being mentioned, but since he often was in Egypt he could perhaps have owned an apartment in Cairo and taken part in the social life at the hotels. It is somehow strange that Crowley just mentions him as "A Mr. Back" and not writes that he knew his son. What did Crowley hide in this entry? Perhaps that Mr. Back was a

²²¹ See: Ibid., p. 108. (BACK, FRANCIS FORMBY, p. 108.)

²²² See: The Tropical Agriculturist and Magazine of the Ceylon Agricultural Society. Colombo, Ceylon: A. M. & J. Ferguson. ♦ Vol. XXXIX, No. 5, November 15th, 1912, p. 366. (*An Egyptian Date Plantation*, pp. 366-8.)

²²³ For Ivor Gordon Back, see: G. H. Brown; William Munk. Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians of London, 1826-1925.; 1930-1951. London, UK: Published by the College, 1955, p. 30. (Back, Ivor Gordon (1879-1951), p. 30.) ♦ Terry Gould; David Uttley. A History of the Atkinson Morley's Hospital 1869-1995. London, UK: The Athlone Press Ltd., 1996, pp. 53-4. (5. *Into the Twentieth Century: 1900-1939*, pp. 45-66.) ♦ Biography at the Royal College of Surgeons; Plarr's Lives of the Fellows Online: <https://livesonline.rcseng.ac.uk/biogs/E003789b.htm> ♦ Captain Ivor Gordon Back married at Holy Trinity in Chelsea, London, on July 21, 1915 E.V., Bertha Winifred (Barbara) Nash, eldest daughter of F. H. O. Nash, of Battle, Goring, Oxon. ♦ Reading Mercury, Oxford Gazette, Newbury Herald and Berks County Paper. Berkshire, England: Reading Mercury. ♦ Saturday, July 24, 1915, p. 5. (MARRIAGES.; BACK-NASH, p. 5.)

²²⁴ Ivor [Gordon] Back. Round the World and Back: An Account of the Journey of Ivor Back, A.K. Travelling Fellow 1911-1912. London, UK: University of London Press, 1913.

²²⁵ He belonged to the Grand Lodge of England and master of the Lansborough Lodge.

²²⁶ Confessions, p. 405f.

²²⁷ In Residence: The Don's Guide to Cambridge; By Aleister Crowley. Cambridge, UK: Elijah Johnson, 1904, p. [ii] (facing title page). ♦ For the book and its publication date, see note¹⁷²⁶ below.

crashing bore, and Crowley only had wished to see the 'back' of him, since here is what came to me:

Saw b.f.g. → Saw back formby gazette [?]

b.f.b. → back for back [?]

Could this be Crowley's humour?]

Feb. 19. *To Helwan as Oriental Despot.*
(Apparently P. had assumed some disguise, probably with the intention of trying to study Islam from within as he had done with Hinduism.)

[Helwan, or, Helouan, was a small town some 20 kilometres south-west of Cairo. As mentioned by Crowley in *Confessions*²²⁸ he called himself Prince Chioa Khan during his stay in Egypt, and this name and title together with his Princess's happens to be found several times on the lists of visitors at the Tewfik Palace Hotel in Helwan (see Figures 19A & 19B) printed in *The Egyptian Gazette* from February 27th to March 12th, 1904, and these lists also mentioned their "suite"! However, as seen above, on their arrival in Egypt Rose and he called themselves Lord and Lady Boleskine according to *The Egyptian Gazette*, and it was first after their arrival in Helwan that they appeared on hotel-lists as the Chioa Khans. There is no mention at all of a Mr. and Mrs. Crowley. I note that every time the prince and his princess are mentioned their home town or country is not stated, as done with most of the other visitors on the lists. It is a question whether the journalists at the gazette have met the Crowleys on their arrival in Egypt and known them as the Boleskines, or, if they just got their names from their hotels? If they had met them as the Boleskines in Cairo they would probably have witnessed how the two visitors after a quick trip to Port Said suddenly appeared in Helwan as Prince and Princess Chioa Khan, so I find it unlikely that anybody from the gazette, apart from its owner Mr. Back, actually met the Boleskines face to face. However, a statement in the gazette on Thursday, March 3, that the Prince and Princess Chioa Khan proposed to stay in Helouan till the end of April could suggest that someone from the gazette met them there, and it was also the first time that their name was spelled correctly. Furthermore, in order not to blow their cover as Prince and Princess Chioa Khan Crowley insisted on that Rose's parents should use the title and name 'Princess Chioa Khan' on letters to their daughter.²²⁹ A part of the reason behind using various names was clearly to hide from the wealthy American whom Rose had been engaged to marry, together with her former lover and friends, and *The Egyptian Gazette* was sold both in England and in America!

Regarding the Crowleys stay in Helwan, the following appeared in *The Egyptian Gazette* in February and March 1904:

²²⁸ *Confessions*, pp. 387-8.

²²⁹ See: John Symonds. *The Beast 666; The Life of Aleister Crowley*. London, UK: The Pindar Press, 1997, p. 64. (*Chapter Six; Prince and Princess Chioa Khan*, pp. [53]-64.) • Derek Hudson; Gerald Kelly. *For Love of Painting: The Life of Sir Gerald Kelly K.C.V.O. P.R.A.* London, UK: Peter Davies Limited, 1975, p. 26. (3. *The 'Chat Blanc'*, pp. 21-6.)



FIGURE 19A. *Helwan – Tewfik Palace Hotel*

1900s photograph showing the former viceregal mansion to the north of Helwan where “Prince and Princess Chioa Khan” were staying some three weeks in February and March 1904 before they took possession of the flat in Cairo around 14th of March. Black and white post card marked *HÉLOUAN-LES-BAINS. Tewfik Palace Hôtel.* – LL. [Léon & Lévy – Paris.] UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE. © From the author’s collection.



TEWFIK PALACE HOTEL.
HELOUAN, near CAIRO.

Formerly the favourite Residence of H.H. the late Khedive. Perfect Sanitation.—Purest Desert air. Electric Light. Hot and cold baths attached to most rooms. Ho use warmed by special system of Radiators, adjoining the Golf Links and Race Course, Tennis, Billiards, Garden and open air palm house, good stabling, dark room. Excellent Table. Moderate charges.

Medical Resident Director : ARTHUR J. M. BANTLEY, M.D.—Town Office at Stephenson & Co., Opera Square, Cairo.

26 56-31-3-90 : **P. E. HERGEL.** *Manager.*

FIGURE 19B. *Helouan – Tewfik Palace Hotel*

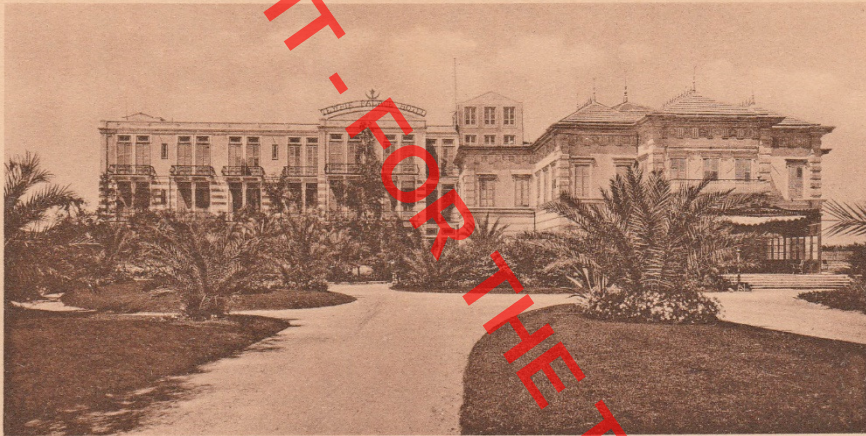
1900s picture of “Tewfik Palace Hotel, Helouan”, together with an advertisement for the hotel from *The Egyptian Gazette*, 1905 E.V. © From the author’s collection.

HELOUAN



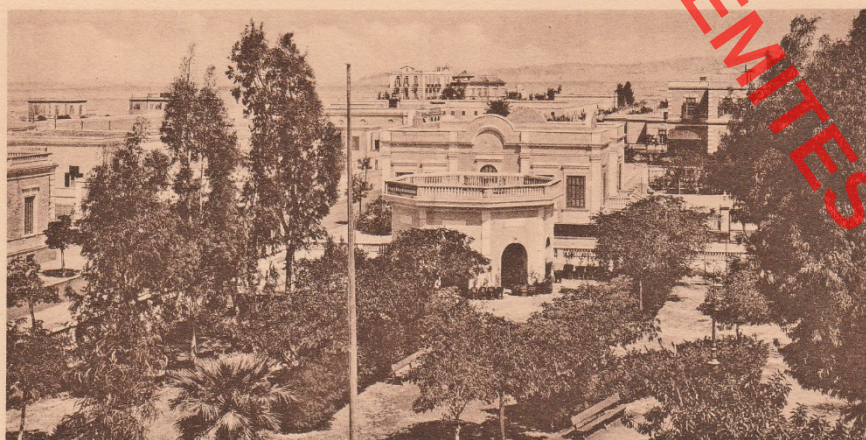
TEWFIK PALACE HÔTEL

HELOUAN

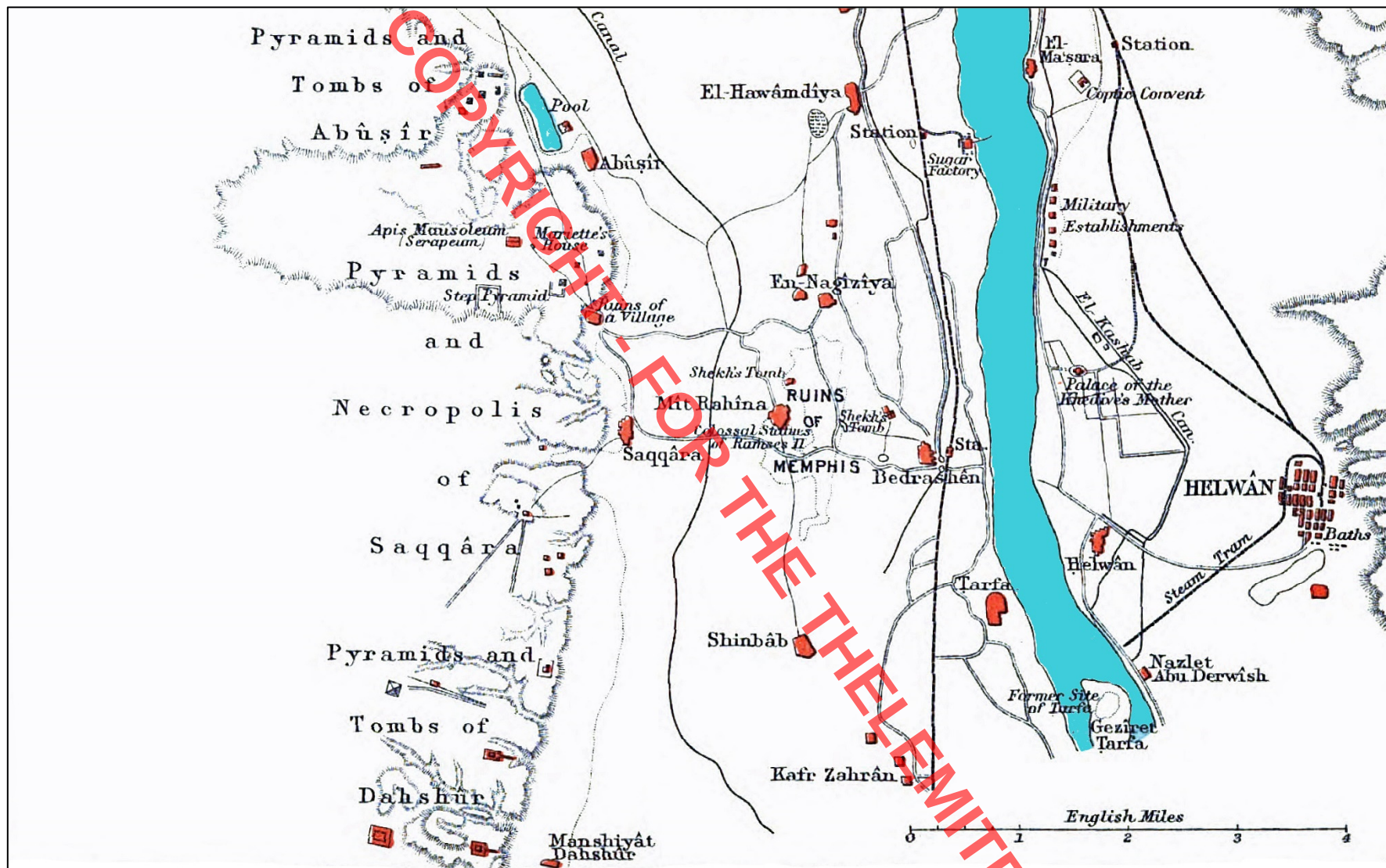


TEWFIK PALACE HÔTEL

HELOUAN



VUE SUR LE PALACE HÔTEL



Map of Helwân; Memphis; and Saqqâra, from E. A. Reynolds-Ball's *Cairo of To-Day* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1898, Facing p. 117). To the north of the town "HELWÂN", with its "Baths", is seen the "Palace of the Khedive's Mother", which became the Tewfik Palace Hotel. The hotel had views of the "Ruins of Memphis" and the pyramids of "Saqqâra", situated on the west of the River Nile. Author's collection.

- **Saturday, February 27, 1904:** *"Amongst the latest arrivals at the Tewfik Palace Hotel is Prince Chio [sic] Khan and suite". ("Our Visitors." [Tewfik Palace Hotel, Helouan])*²³⁰
- **Tuesday, March 1, 1904:** *"Prince Chiva [sic] Khan and suite". ("Visitors' Lists." – "Tewfik Palace Hotel, Helouan")*²³¹
- **Thursday, March 3, 1904:** *"Prince and Princess Chioa Khan, who are staying at the Tewfik Palace Hotel, we understand, propose staying in Helouan till the end of April. In announcing the arrival of his Highness in a previous issue, we omitted to mention that he was accompanied by the Princess." ("Our Visitors.")*²³²
- **Saturday, March 5, 1904:** *"His Highness Prince Chioa Khan, Her Highness Princess Chioa Khan and suite". ("[Visitors at] Tewfik Palace Hotel. [Helouan]")*²³³
- **Saturday, March 12, 1904:** *"Prince and Princess Chioa Khan and suite". ("[Visitors at] Tewfik Palace Hotel. [Helouan]")*²³⁴

In Baedeker's 1902 ed. of *Egypt. Handbook for Travellers*²³⁵ it is said about Helwan that it is an artificial oasis in the desert, 1¾ mill to the East of the Nile, and that it has about 8000 inhabitants. Furthermore, that it is within easy reach of Cairo by train and is known for its thermal springs, which were made available for sanatory purposes in 1871-72. The town has a Golf Course laid out on the desert, and also an International School for modern languages including Arabic. The Tewfik Palace Hotel, previously a residence of the Khedive Tewfik Pasha, was situated at the northerly end of Helwan. It had been bought and modernised by the British physician Arthur James McDonald Bentley (1850-1911).²³⁶ Reynolds-Ball1905 has a full page illustrated advertisement of the hotel saying:

*The Tewfik Palace Hotel; Half-an-hour from Cairo; Hourly train Service; The Former Palace of the Late Khedive Tewfik; Special Features: Best and Healthiest Situation in Helouan. The Most Equable, Dry, and Bracing Climate in Egypt. All the Comforts of a Refined English Home. Electric Light throughout. Balconies and Private Bathrooms to most of the Bedrooms. English Sanitary Arrangements. Warmed throughout by Special System of Radiators. Renowned Golf Links and Race-Course adjoining. General Manager – O. Aquilina (late of Thos. Cook & Son)*²³⁷

²³⁰ The Egyptian Gazette. Alexandria: The Egyptian Gazette. ♦ Saturday, February 27, 1904, p. 3.

²³¹ Ibid., Tuesday, March 1, 1904, p. 5.

²³² Ibid., Thursday, March 3, 1904, p. 3.

²³³ Ibid., Saturday, March 5, 1904, p. 7.

²³⁴ Ibid., Saturday, March 12, 1904, p. 5.

²³⁵ Karl Baedeker. *Egypt. Handbook for Travellers*. Fifth Remodelled Edition. Leipsic: Karl Baedeker, Publisher, 1902, pp. 154-6. • See also: W. Page May. *Helwân and the Egyptian Desert. A Guide to the Health Resort of Egypt*. London: George Allan, 1901.

²³⁶ See: W. Page May; A. H. Sayce; G. Schweinfurth. *Helwân and the Egyptian Desert*. London, UK: George Allen, 1901, p. 73. (Section VII; *Hotel and Pension Accommodation*, pp. 72-4.)

²³⁷ Reynolds-Ball1905, facing half-title.

In *Confessions* Crowley writes:

We landed at Port Said on Monday, February the eighth, and went to Cairo on the following day. It was part of the plan of the gods that my romantic passion and pride, the intoxicated infatuation of my hymeneal happiness, should have induced me to play a puerile part on the world's stage. I had called myself Count Svareff and Aleister MacGregor for quite definite and legitimate reasons; but I had never made a deliberate fool of myself by assuming an absurd alias. I was not for a moment deceived by my own pretext that I wanted to study Mohammedism, and in particular the mysticism of the fakir, the Darwesh and the Sufi, from within, when I proposed to pass myself off in Egypt for a Persian prince with a beautiful English wife. I wanted to swagger about in a turban with a diamond aigrette and sweeping silken robes or a coat of cloth of gold, with a jewelled talwar by my side, and two gorgeous runners to clear the way for my carriage through the streets of Cairo.^[238] [...] Having to choose a Persian name, I made it Chioa Khan (pronounced Hiwa Khan) being the Hebrew for The Beast.^[239] (Khan [Pers. خان khān, prince, nobleman, lord] is one of the numerous honorifics common in Asia.) I had no conscious magical intention in doing so. (Let me here mention that I usually called my wife Ouarda [Arab. وردة ouarda, a rose], one of the many Arabic words for Rose.)

As to my study of Islam, I got a sheikh to teach me Arabic and the practices of ablution, prayer and so on, so that at some future time I might pass for a Moslem among themselves. I had it in my mind to repeat Burton's journey to Mecca sooner or later. I learnt a number of chapters of the Koran by heart. I never went to Mecca, it seemed rather vieux jeu, but my ability to fraternize fully with Mohammedans has proved of infinite use in many ways.

My sheikh was profoundly versed in the mysticism and magic of Islam, and discovering that I was an initiate, had no hesitation in providing me with books and manuscripts on the Arabic Cabbala. These formed the basis of my comparative studies. I was able to fit them in with similar doctrines and other religions; the correlation is given in my 777^[240].

From this man I learnt also many of the secrets of the Sidi Aissawa; how to run a stiletto through one's cheek without drawing blood, lick red-hot swords, eat live scorpions, etc. (Some of these feats are common conjurers' tricks, some depend on scientific curiosities, but some are genuine Magick; that is, the scientific explanation is not generally known. More of this later.)

[238] An amusing picture of Prince Chioa Khan dressed up as described is printed in: Gerald Suster. *The Legacy of the Beast; The Life, Work and Influence of Aleister Crowley*. London, UK: W. H. Allen & Co., 1988, plate [3] inserted between pp. 128 & 129. ("A stage magician – the Great Mysterioso. Also Prince Chioa Khan at the time of receiving *The Book of the Law*.") • Also: "Photo of A. C. as Prince Chioa Khan" in Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute, University of London. (NS74. Hardback scrapbook, p. 8.) • For 'MacGregor', see note¹⁶⁶ above and note⁴²⁸⁶ below.

[239] חַיּוּא, "chioa" is Biblical Aramaic meaning "beast". In Hebrew it is spelt חיה, "beast" which derives from חיה, "to live" and literally means 'living being'. In Arabic is found ḥayawān, "animal, beast". • For this, see: Ernest Klein. *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, p. 214.

[240] [Aleister Crowley, et al.] 777 vel Prolegomena Symbolica ad Systemam Sceptico-Mysticae Viae Explicandae, Fundamentum Hieroglyphicum Sanctissimorum Scientiae Summae. London and Felling-on-Tyne: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd., 1909. • Later it was reprinted "with much additional matter" as: 777 Revised. Editorial Preface by N.:. London: The Neptune Press, 1955. • Also later revised editions. • For *Liber 777*, see note¹⁹⁷¹ below.

I was quite fixed in skepticism, as I have always been, but also in so-called rationalism, and I prosecuted these studies in strictly scholarly spirit. I worked very hard at them and made great progress accordingly; but my true life was still the honeymoon, slightly diluted by the ordinary pleasures of sport and society. I relapsed into golf after some fourteen years' total abstinence; took a few lessons from the pro at the Turf Club^[241], and found that my St Andrews swing and the canniness inculcated by Andrew Kirkcaldy made a fine basis for playing a fairly decent game. We went to Helwan on February 19th; and I played nearly every day, filled with a passionate ambition to become amateur champion. I had picked up my old form so rapidly that I imagined myself a heaven-born golfer. But the game held its own. I never even got to scratch.²⁴²

Regarding Crowley's description: "two gorgeous runners to clear the way for my carriage through the streets of Cairo", such runners are seen in Cairo on old photographs in front of carriages, barefooted, well dressed, and armed with long sticks with the purpose of driving people away (see Figure 18). Fourteen years before, on January 13, 1890, had the British explorer, Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904), after returning from his expedition for the relief of the Ottoman-German Jewish physician, and naturalist, Mehmed Emin Pasha (1840-1892), governor of the Equatorial Province of the Egyptian Sudan, driven through Cairo in a carriage led by stick-armed, barefooted, runners on his way from the station to see the khedive, as shown on an engraving in the French illustrated newsmagazine, *Le Monde illustré*.²⁴³ As to Crowley's choice of "Chioa Khan" for a name, it is suggestive that its composite Aramaic, Arabic/Persian meaning happens to be 'beast prince' inasmuch as he a few weeks later is styled "the prince-priest the Beast" in *Liber L vel Legis*!²⁴⁴ We also hear of Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890), English explorer, orientalist, and translator, and Crowley's boyhood's hero. Forbidden to non-Muslims Burton made the hajj, or pilgrimage, to the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina in 1853 and lived! Less than half a dozen Europeans were known to have made the hajj at that time. Burton made this pilgrimage in complete disguise as a Muslim native of the Middle East, an exploit of linguistic and cultural virtuosity, which carried considerable risk. During his stay in Mecca he performed all the rites of such pilgrimage – circumambulating the Kaaba, drinking the Zemzem water, and stoning the devil at Mount Arafat, etc.. His resulting book, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah*, made him famous, and the book became a classic of travel literature.²⁴⁵

Around the same time as Burton's journey took place, a Scottish botanist Robert Fortune (1812-1880), ruined China's economy by smuggling out of China a bunch of tea plants, which then were planted in India's Darjeeling region. The British were using

^[241] Reynolds-Ball 1905, p. 39: "The most fashionable [clubs in Cairo] are the Khedivial, Ghezireh, and Turf. The latter is very exclusive, and a visitor, unless a member of a good London club, would not find it easy to get elected as a temporary member." The Turf Club was located in Sharia el-Maghraby in the European quarter not far from Midan Soliman Pasha.

²⁴² Confessions, pp. 387-8.

²⁴³ LE MONDE ILLUSTRÉ; Journal hebdomadaire. Paris: Le Monde illustré. ♦ 34^e Année. – N° 1715 – 8 Février 1890, p. 85. ("ARRIVÉE DE STANLEY AU CAIRE. – SORTIE DE GARE.") (Stanley, pp. 85-6.)

²⁴⁴ *Liber L vel Legis*, I, [15]. • For 'Chioa Khan', see note¹³⁰¹ and note⁴³⁴² below.

²⁴⁵ Richard F. Burton. *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah*. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855-56. 3 vols. • For Burton, see also note³¹¹⁸ below.



FIGURE 18. *Cairo – “Two Gorgeous Runners”*

“We [Rose and Aleister Crowley] landed at Port Said on Monday, February the eighth [1904], and went to Cairo on the following day. It was part of the plan of the gods that my romantic passion and pride, the intoxicated infatuation of my hymeneal happiness, should have induced me to play a puerile part on the world’s stage. I had called myself Count Svareff and Aleister MacGregor for quite definite and legitimate reasons; but I had never made a deliberate fool of myself by assuming an absurd alias. I was not for a moment deceived by my own pretext that I wanted to study Mohammedism, and in particular the mysticism of the fakir, the Darwesh and the Sufi, from within, when I proposed to pass myself off in Egypt for a Persian prince with a beautiful English wife. I wanted to swagger about in a turban with a diamond aigrette and sweeping silken robes or a coat of cloth of gold, with a jewelled talwar by my side, and two gorgeous runners to clear the way for my carriage through the streets of Cairo. [...] Having to choose a Persian name, I made it Chioa Khan (pronounced Hiwa Khan) being the Hebrew for The Beast. (Khan [Pers. خان] khān, prince, nobleman, lord] is one of the numerous honorifics common in Asia.) I had no conscious magical intention in doing so. (Let me here mention that I usually called my wife Ouarda [Arab. وردة ouarda, a rose], one of the many Arabic words for Rose.)” – The Confessions of Aleister Crowley (1969 E.V.) • Real photo postcard from around the time of the Crowleys visit to Cairo, 1904 E.V. • LE CAIRE. – Saïs courant. – LL. [Léon & Lévy – Paris.] © From the author’s collection.

an enormous sum of money on buying tea in China. Export of living Chinese tea plants were strictly forbidden by the Chinese government, and furthermore, it was not easy for foreigners to travel in China. However, commissioned by the British East India Company Fortune went in 1848 to China on a dangerous mission disguised as a Chinese merchant, and after several attempts some plants survived the long journey back. And like Burton Robert Fortune got away with it!

Regarding Crowley's study of Arabic, I discover that he in fact made use of it in his first naming of what became the *Confessions*, and we also find a very noticeable calligraphic design on the 'Title page' of *Liber L vel Legis*, as we shall see later!²⁴⁶

That the Crowleys according to *The Egyptian Gazette*, March 3, proposed to stay in Helouan till the end of April could be due to the fact that the weather was fine and pleasant, and that the trees were starting to burst into leaf, unlike the weather in Europe, and especially in France, where the gazette the same day mentioned a snowstorm in Paris and the provinces with heavy snow.²⁴⁷

Funnily enough, a man who had joined the Golden Dawn in the autumn of 1900 – only a few months after that Mathers had been expelled from the Order – once found inspiration for a long-short story in Helwan. The British writer of supernatural fiction, Algernon Blackwood (1869-1951), went to Egypt and Helwan in early 1912 E.V., and there he worked on "*Sand*", a story set in Egypt, and which he published in *Pan's Garden: A Volume of Nature Stories* the same year.²⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, he was staying at Tewfik Palace Hotel, and in *Sand* we are told about the protagonist that he had a room on the top floor of a hotel in Helwan, which formerly had been a Khedivial Palace. In an article in the English society magazine *Country Life Magazine* from 1912 E.V., Blackwood writes the following about the hotel and its environment:

*My windows in a cool and airy building, formerly a vice-regal palace, with spacious halls, wide, lofty corridors, and palms that rustle endlessly in a shady garden, look forth to the Pyramids across the strip of brilliant vegetation where the Nile meanders with its freight of sweeping, pointed sails that rise like great wings of birds from the very ground. And from another window, facing south and east, I can see the sun rise over the Arabian wilderness of sand.*²⁴⁹

Due west of Helwan on the opposite side of the River Nile was the ruins of Memphis, the capital of Egypt in the Old Kingdom, and later also for shorter periods during the New Kingdom, and beyond Memphis its necropolis, Saqqara, with its pyramids. A site

²⁴⁶ See note³⁸²⁷ and note³⁹⁵¹ below.

²⁴⁷ The Egyptian Gazette. Alexandria: The Egyptian Gazette. ♦ Thursday, March 3, 1904, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ Algernon Blackwood. *Pan's Garden: A Volume of Nature Stories*. London, UK: Macmillan & Co., 1912. ♦ For *Sand*, see: Algernon Blackwood. *Ancient Sorceries and Other Weird Stories*. Edited and with an Introduction and Notes by S. T. Joshi. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002, p. 275 ff. ♦ For Blackwood and the Golden Dawn, etc, see: Michael Ashley. *Starlight Man: The Extraordinary Life of Algernon Blackwood*. London, UK: Constable, 2001, pp. 109-19. ♦ For Blackwood's stay in Helwan, see: Ibid., pp. 178-80. ♦ For Blackwood and Crowley, see: Ibid., pp. 116-7; 133-4. ♦ Crowley reviewed three of Blackwood's books in *The Equinox* (Vol. I., No. IV & V) giving him 'the big stick'.

²⁴⁹ Country Life Magazine. London, UK: Country Life. ♦ Vol. XXXI, No. 793. March 16th, 1912, p. 381. (*The Egyptian Desert from Helouan, Part I.; By Algernon Blackwood*, pp. 381-4.) ♦ See also note³⁶⁷ below.

with more than 10,000 tombs located between El-Ma'adi (suburb south of Cairo) and Helwan was excavated in the 1940s. These tombs comprise the largest Egyptian cemetery of the Early Dynastic Period. Today Helwan is a suburb of Cairo, and has become one of the centres of heavy industry with steel mills and cement factories etc.

A remark in passing on the name "Palace Hotel". Somehow Crowley seems to have liked the name, inasmuch as we find him staying at the *Palace Hotel* in St. Moritz in Switzerland during the Ab-ul-diz Working, and later we also find him staying at *Tunisia Palace Hotel* in the City of Tunis – and both Crowley's *Diary of a Drug Fiend* and *Moonchild* have their 'Palace Hotel'.]

Feb. 20. Began golf.

[AC started golfing in Helwan – there was a Golf Course laid out on the desert.

The same day the English statesman, late Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914), visited the new Cairo Museum (Saturday, February 20). He was on a two month holiday and proceeded to Luxor and Assuan.²⁵⁰ As to the new Cairo Museum at Kasr el-Nil, it was inaugurated on November 15, 1902, but as stated by Maspero in his introduction to the first guide to the new museum (signed September 25, 1902), *Guide du visiteur au musée du Caire* (1902), the transfer of the collection to the Cairo Museum, begun on March 9, 1902, had been completed on July 13, 1902, and the museum had been open for visitors since early in August, 1902. So, the "Boulak Museum", which was the name used for the new museum in daily conversation in its first years (since it contained the 'Boulak Collection'), thus also contained the "Stèle 666", waiting for the Crowleys to arrive at the museum on March 21, 1904 E.V.!]

²⁵⁰ Daily Mail. London, England: Daily Mail. ♦ Monday, February 22, 1904, p. 3. ("Mr. Chamberlain at Assuan", p. 3)



When the S.P.R.T. in 1905 E.V. published *Oracles: The Biography of an Art* it contained a note about the book titled "*TO EXPLAIN*", and which stated that the note was "*Written in the desert, near the Pyramids of Sakkarah.*"¹ This seems to indicate that Aleister Crowley during his stay in Helwan in 1904 E.V. visited Sakkarah where he wrote the note. Sakkarah, or, Saqqara, is the site of the principal cemetery at Memphis, some 40 kilometres to the south of present-day Cairo, and west of the River Nile, and, as mentioned above, due west of Helwan on the opposite site of the River Nile were the ruins of Memphis, and its necropolis Saqqara and Saqqara's pyramids could be seen from the windows of the Tewfik Palace Hotel (see the map).



In the desert at Saqqara with some of its pyramids in the background. Photograph by unknown French photographer from the beginning of 1900. © From the author's collection.

¹ Aleister Crowley. *Oracles: The Biography of an Art*; Unpublished Fragments of the Work of Aleister Crowley With Explanatory Notes by R. P. Lester and the Author. Boleskine, Foyers, Inverness: Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth, 1905, p. v. (*TO EXPLAIN*, p. v.) • The note "*TO EXPLAIN*" was not included in the *Oracles* published in the second volume of *Collected Works* in 1906 E.V.