Three needles are now carried in clips in the lid of the box, and bearing in mind the necessity for making certain they are not blocked by blood clots, in cases where the cerebrospinal fluid does not flow, cannulae which extend right to the tips are provided.

A cannula for the purpose of drawing the solution into the barrel, and by means of which all air may be expelled, is also furnished. A triangular-edged knife for puncturing the skin is carried in the box.

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**Travel.**

**A REPORT ON THE OASIS OF SIWA.**

By **CAPTAIN C. V. B. STANLEY.**

*Royal Army Medical Corps.*

(Summary by **MAJOR S. L. CUMMINS, ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS.**)

In October, 1910, it was reported that cholera was prevalent in Tripoli, and in view of the possibility of infection reaching Egypt over the western frontier, Captain C. V. B. Stanley, R.A.M.C., a Divisional Inspector in the Department of Public Health under the Egyptian Government, was sent on a mission to Siwa, an oasis at the northern part of the Libyan Desert, to decide on measures for the protection of the Nile Valley. In addition to this primary duty he was also instructed to study "the topographical character of the country, the inhabitants, such vital statistics as are available, the prevalence, conditions, and causes of infectious disease (with especial reference to malaria), the economic situation of the country and the social features of the population."

Captain Stanley's Report to the Director-General of his Department is of great interest in throwing light on the conditions of life of a community cut off, to a great extent, from the outside world, and on a people whose characters, intensified by their isolation, are typical of a phase of human existence that is rapidly passing away as facilities of communication break down the barriers of time and space. His journey is such as has often been described and need not occupy our attention beyond the quotation of one apt phrase, which sums up in a few words the monotony of travel in the desert. "The impression gathered is that of walking in the middle of a huge plate and never getting any nearer the edge." It is Siwa itself and its people that interest us, and Captain Stanley's vivid
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descriptions enable us to visualize both. "The Oasis is only a part of the great depression in which it lies"—the desert level being about 400 ft. above, and that of Siwa 70 ft. below, sea-level—"and which extends from Zeitown in the east to Baideen and Maraghe in the west, a distance of over 30 miles in length. Its breadth from the northern hills to the sand-dunes on the south is from four to five miles. About a quarter of this area is under cultivation, the rest being sand, salt lakes, and 'sebbakeh,' or salt lands. The cultivated land is generally at a higher level by two or three feet than the surrounding sebbakeh, and is always carefully fenced in by neat hedges made of palm branches."

"The whole oasis is fringed by a belt of sandy soil in which halfa grass, tarfa shrubs and stunted palms flourish. The ground over a great part of the sebbakeh is white from outcrops of pure salt. A year's supply of this salt is collected by the natives on the eve of Courban Bairam and at no other time, and on this day hundreds of donkeys and labourers can be seen taking loads of it away."

THE SPRINGS.

The life of the Siwans is intimately connected with their springs, which are numerous and of great celebrity throughout Northern Africa. Captain Stanley speaks of them as follows:—

"The most striking feature of Siwa is undoubtedly its springs, which at one time are said to have numbered 2,000, of which only eighty are in use. They are generally from 30 to 80 ft. in diameter and about 20 ft. deep. The water in them is particularly clear and sparkling; continuous streams of bubbles are always ascending to the surface, in some cases with such rapidity and violence as to give the impression that the water is boiling. Some of the springs are hot, such as those of Ain el Hammam and Ain Famoosa, which are in constant use by the women for bathing and washing clothes. The water is saline in varying degrees—most of it excellent to drink."

The rich Siwans have one or more "hattias" (gardens) of their own, each with its spring and perhaps a couple of thousand date trees, but amongst the poorer people there may be several owners of one hattia, each cultivating his own plot, which is separated from the rest by a well-made palm hedge.

Where disputes arise over the division of the water—a constant occurrence—they are referred to the "Rakkah" of the Spring, an official charged with the settlement of such differences. His decisions are made according to a code laid down in the "Dafter el
Ain," or "Book of the Springs," which contains precise instructions for the guidance of cultivators. The wealth of Siwa is derived from its dates and olives, which are grown for export and traded to the Arabs, but in addition a fair variety of fruit and vegetables is raised for local consumption. Garlic is held in great esteem as a preventive of sickness. It is only eaten for a period of four to seven days in October, during which large quantities are consumed. The men and women separate during the Garlic Festival.

Captain Stanley gives some interesting particulars about the varieties and relative values of the dates grown at Siwa, for which the text of his report should be consulted.

The importance of the date trade will be realized when it is noted that this oasis of roughly 4,000 inhabitants exports from 6,000 to 7,000 camel-loads of dates yearly to the coast, between Benghazi and Alexandria chiefly. The average yield of a date-tree is put at about fifty pounds weight of fruit.

A full olive crop is only taken every second year. About half the crop is consumed locally.

TOWNS.

There are only two towns in the Oasis, Siwa and Aghourmi, with a few scattered hamlets and an interesting settlement of rock-dwellers who have housed themselves in some ancient tombs in the mountain at Maragbe, seven miles west of Siwa.

The original town of Siwa is built on a hill, and appears as a solid mass of brown masonry presenting an unbroken front except where the original gate existed. A point of great interest is the complete separation of the inhabitants according as they live in the east or west part of the town. This difference has existed for generations and has led to many a sanguinary encounter even in recent times. Its influence is stamped on the very buildings, the old Treasury, for instance, having on its door two heavy wooden locks, one for the east, the other for the west, so that it could only be opened when a representative of both parties was present. The boundary between east and west is still to be seen, and even now the inhabitants, when they move to new dwellings, maintain their old division, the easterns moving to Manchia, the westerns to Karret el Belad.

"The interior of the town is a veritable labyrinth of streets a yard wide or less, steep flights of rough steps, rocky slippery passages and tunnels leading up and down, here and there, in a most bewildering fashion." Altogether a typical Oriental town
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snugly clinging to its traditions and untroubled—thanks to its desert barriers—by Western notions of improvement and progress.

Aghourmi seems to be very much the same, but its people have always held themselves aloof from the Siwans and their quarrels.

The Siwans are said to be of Berber origin, while the people of Aghourmi are supposed to be descended from "the Nazrani stock." As a matter of fact there appears to be "considerable mixture of both Arab and Sudanese blood, but not enough to have banished the dominant Siwan type, which Captain Stanley describes as follows:

"There is none of the warm colouring of the Egyptians, their complexions being a pale ashy grey. They have generally short straight noses, thin lips, and weak chins, in which the sub-labial depression is often absent. The hair is straight and dark in colour, but not black.

"Some of the women are good-looking, but they are kept strictly secluded. Black eyes are the rule, but grey or blue may be noticed.

"The women spend their time at embroidery and in doing coloured straw basket-work, at which they are very clever."

Two religious sects prevail, the "west" being all Senoussi, the "east" partly Senoussi and partly Madani. But the real division of the little community is the traditional one of east and west, and the eastern, be he Senoussi or Madani, will always be up in arms against the western, and vice versa. No actual hostilities have occurred for some years, the last big fight having been in April, 1897, when the notorious Hassouna Mansour and six other sheikhs were killed with one hundred of their men, eighty others being wounded. The two factions, however, still keep much apart.

"The morals of the Siwans have always been a byword and a reproach amongst those who come in contact with them. They are generally untruthful, lazy, given to intrigue, easily excited to mirth or anger, and swayed by every wind that blows."

They are a musical people, much given to singing, and using such instruments as drums, a stringed instrument, the Zamorra and the castanet. A very interesting peculiarity is that they can translate speech into music, the various notes and cadences having definite meanings, so that the music, even when extempore, is understood by the audience just as speech would be.

Captain Stanley describes how a flute-player gave, on his instrument, a long musical discourse describing the journey and beneficent actions of the Sanitary Inspector, the sheikh, translating the music into Arabic the while.
The report contains accounts of several interesting ceremonies that deserve the attention of anthropologists, such as the local customs at the feast of Yom Ashura, where the children exchange palm-branch frame-works decorated with torches, fruit, mint and sweets, the boys' frame-work being in the shape of a cross, while that of the girls' resembles and is called a "window."

There is also a ceremony for the drinking of tea, a habit much in vogue amongst the Siwans, but space does not admit of a full description of these customs, for which the report should be consulted.

Siwa was famed as the site of a Temple of Jupiter Ammon, about a dozen huge blocks of which, with their hieroglyphic inscriptions, still remain standing. Close to them is a small and nearly obliterated fountain, said to have been the celebrated "Fountain of the Sun."

In Ydrar Nasra is a rock-hewn cave called Tenachoor, with six square supporting pillars, and round the western face of the same rock are some Greek inscriptions. Under the summit of Ydrar Nasra is a large rock chamber, with the remains of six columns, and into which three rooms open.

Gebel Muta, "the Hill of the Dead," presents a very striking appearance, being riddled with tombs from base to summit. Some of the tombs are now inhabited by poor Arabs. Seven miles west of Siwa is a group of ruins known as Kasr-el-Roum, where Captain Stanley found, close under the sand, two fragments of a tablet with a carved Greek inscription. A quarter of a mile away are the remains of a Temple. Here, tradition says, a number of books were found and burnt by the Siwans who feared that the Christians should read them, find out that the country had originally belonged to them, and attempt to re-occupy it. It is evident that thorough archaeological research might reap an interesting harvest around Siwa.

DISEASES.

Captain Stanley proved the "Siwan fever," to be nothing more nor less than malaria, which was to be expected from the system of irrigation in vogue and the presence of much standing water. He reports that preventive measures, to be effective, must be on a very large scale, hardly to be contemplated for such a small and poor community.

Measles, small-pox, diphtheria, and dengue occasionally visit
Siwa, and tuberculosis, ophthalmia, and venereal diseases are of common occurrence.

SUPERSTITIONS.

The Evil Eye is as much feared here as elsewhere throughout Africa. In this connection, a curious custom is reported which deserves to be quoted. When a man dies his wife is shut up for four lunar months and ten days. During this period she is known as "Aghoula," and is dressed in white and confined to one room, seeing nobody except a girl attendant who brings her food but does not stay with her. At the end of the period, the town crier announces that she will bathe in Ain Tamoosa on a certain morning. On this day, nobody in the town ventures forth until the Aghoula has completed her purification and returned to her house, as evil is sure to befall anyone on whom her gaze may fall. Probably, a similar belief exempted Lady Godiva from the scrutiny of all except "Peeping Tom," who suffered for his temerity.

Both good and evil spirits, Melaika and Afrys, are believed to exist in numbers. Love philtres and charms are in constant use. It is regarded as part of the marriage ceremony for the bride to bathe in the spring of Ain Tamoosa on the wedding night.

Captain Stanley gives an interesting list of native remedies which are very similar to those in general use by the Arabs, and for which the report should be consulted. He also gives an account of Siwan money, weights and measures, and a very important note on the Siwan language, including a vocabulary of seven hundred words, notes on the grammar, and a list of Siwan personal names. The report also includes a local history of Siwa in two parts, one dealing with tradition, the other with the more recent history of the Oasis and the constant feuds between east and west. A number of capital photographs illustrate the report.

Altogether, the author is to be congratulated on an important contribution to the anthropology of Northern Africa.