An Officer's Impression of the Sudan

right visual field and some irregular nystagmoid movements, increased by repetition of the test.

The report on the cerebro-spinal fluid showed: Negative Wassermann test, normal globulin content and normal cell count (negation of syphilis) with a complete paretic curve to Lange's colloidal test. The Lange's figures read 0.0116666666.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the help afforded by Major F. R. B. Skrimshire, R.A.M.C., Ophthalmic Specialist, in the investigation of the case.

Travel.

AN OFFICER'S IMPRESSION OF THE SUDAN.
BY BENEDICT.

The misfortune of a twelve-months' tour in the Sudan has been exaggerated; when Samuel Johnson wrote the following for Goldsmith he had not been outside England, but it is very true:

"How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part which kings and laws can cause or cure,
Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find."

I have indeed met people who really like the Sudan. It must be admitted that they are men who are wedded to their work, and who are not tempted like many of us by the comforts and distractions and the "happy fellowship" of mixed society. For a man who likes to be on his own and to live his own life, who dislikes any form of restraint (for example that which should be inseparable from feminine society), the Sudan offers a suitable burrow. To the Benedict it can be a sorrowful country, and the impressions it has made on one of them are reduced to words in the hope that they may help some whose tour is yet to come, in suggesting little things which make so much difference.

Nothing can be bought except in Khartoum, where prices are high; local products are difficult to obtain and are, in my opinion, one and all not worth buying. It is a surprisingly poor and unproductive country. On the other hand it should be appreciated that the leisure is beyond price. There is infinite time for reading, writing and sketching, or for learning languages, musical instruments (which must be portable, of course, e.g., the ukulele), rubbing up one's golf, especially approach-shots. On arrival in Cairo one was surprised to see golfers taking brassies in bunkers, and recovering with clean long shots on to the green; they were all men from the Sudan, I found, for there every course is entirely on sand. And finally, the compensations on one's return to Egypt that were never before even conceived are positively amazing.
Benedict

For the R.A.M.C. officer, besides Khartoum, there are two out-stations both situated in the "blue," at both of which one is thrown very much on one's own devices for amusement.

Khartoum was seen only in the rosy atmosphere of friends, charity, "beat-ups," and no work, and did strike the writer as delightful for a bachelor; the green lawns, the happy trees, the Nile, the flowers, the grass tennis courts, cause the wanderer from the true Sudan a catch in his throat on arrival.

The R.A.M.C. officers' quarters, within a four-minute push-bicycle ride along the bank of the Nile to meals at the club, make existence very comfortable; each quarter has a large ceiling fan and electric light, a bathroom, which has a long bath with water laid on, and there is also a little verandah. The building is separated from the Nile by the road and a well-kept garden of lawns, trees and shrubs about forty yards in length.

There is only one possible hotel, "The Grand," £E. 62 per month for two in winter and £E. 40 in summer.

The club is exceptionally well run, but it seems to be there for the bureaucracy; there are grass tennis courts, squash court, and a very fine swimming bath. Ladies are allowed only in six months or once a week, anyhow there is a very strict rule that women are not allowed every day! But over the beauty of this oasis hangs like a pall the uncharitable, intolerant and critical spirit of the "Cathedral Close," which pervades all Sudan officialdom.

The Summer Camp, open as a rule from March to October, is at Gebeit, eighty miles from Port Sudan. It is 2,600 feet above the Red Sea, a table land of sand, rocks and stones, with a few, very few, shrubs; and heights of steep, craggy basalt frowning irritably at the lot of us. The shrubs are, they say, the top branches of trees whose roots have struggled from the depth of 120 feet (the nearest water, which in parenthesis, is full of salts, largely mag. sulph.) to express their aspirations. Here officers and troops live in E.P.I.P. tents with camp kit on a floor of muddy sand; the dust and heat and flies afford an experience one is not able to forget. But it is a convalescent camp, it is the best that the Sudan offers for a batch of 100 men. The place has "features," and the angry hills receive a very kindly benediction at each sunset. Whereas, the rest of the country, as we know it, is one vast flat sandy abomination, the same when you go to sleep in the train one night as you wake up to the next morning; one indeed wonders if the train has moved during the time one has slept. Even the natives, who have never known anything better, have a saying that "When God made the Sudan, He laughed," but the sunsets at Gebeit make one believe He is sorry—and divinely sympathetic and kind.

Troops pick up their health here even when living in tents—and with permanent buildings it would make a wonderful change of air camp. There are roughly eight civilian houses at Gebeit Town, which can be reached by walking one and a half miles down the railway line. These are
occupied by railway officials who everywhere in the Sudan are willing to do anything they can for us.

El Obeid is best pictured from the description of the Foreign Legion fort by P. C. Wren in "Beau Geste"! The province marches with French Equatorial Africa. Here again one lives in camp kit, but in permanent quarters.

In both stations, of course, being the British Army, we have got amenities before unheard of: tennis and golf, hockey and football, and at El Obeid, in addition, basket-ball and polo. Shooting can be had with a month's leave and an expenditure of £100; but the anxiety about food, transport, water and a hundred and one things, and the probability of malaria and ill-health, render it rather a responsible undertaking. Around Gebeit, ibex and gazelle can be had in a two days' round-trek; and in El Obeid, guinea-fowl, sand-grouse and partridge in an afternoon's motor-car trip. El Obeid is a larger place; in the winter last year there were about forty British officials and twelve wives; it is the headquarters of the Sudan Defence Force Camel Corps, and has a large Civil Government staff.

The M.O. has, however, to fill in his time. It is impracticable to reduce the staff with a view to filling his day with work.

The danger of the Sudan is not so much to one's physical health as to one's intellectual and mental health—beyond malaria at Khartoum, Atbara, and El Obeid, and sandfly fever everywhere, there are no climatic complaints on which to put one's finger.

The following aids may be of service; camp-kit is, of course, essential:

1. Above everything, good books; these alone can afford intellectual exercise. Novels can usually be obtained locally.
2. A comfortable long easy-chair in rattan.
4. One's own pictures.

What can become a very great interest is a diary of one's thoughts and impressions and talks (there is a lot of conversation to be had, as it is dark at the latest at 6.30 p.m.). If this is kept from the time of leaving Egypt until one's return, and if such impressions (rather than doings, of which there is none of any interest to anyone, except perhaps on the journey) are expressed concisely in writing, not only is a large amount of material collected but the final compositions will be found suitable for publication with very little polishing; and the change in one's outlook on life in general is intensely interesting as a human document.

The discipline is excellent; because one's pleasures depend on one's "inner" self and on the companionship of the other Service exiles who are seldom more than two at out-stations, and are very much younger and junior in rank to the M.O. "The desire of pleasing and the willingness to be pleased" will be found invaluable; the resulting camaraderie in common isolation and, often, a permanent friendship, is well worth all the effort.
There will be many moments when the Apocrypha's text will be thought of: "My son, ask not of what profit is thy service." Moments at 9.15 a.m., when you stroll unwillingly back to your tent, with work finished and nothing necessary to be done all day, very hot, very dusty, very solitary.

Dr. Johnson says "Melancholy and depression of spirits must be diverted by every means, but by drinking. It is madness to combat with them." Hence for those of us with no outstanding artistic or literary talent the value of good books must be stressed, such books as Boswell's "Johnson," Gibbon's "Rise and Fall," the Classics generally.

The Sudan tour is not one to be avoided (and it should be an encouragement to know that headquarters endeavour to choose only the best people, both in Officers and Other Ranks!). It is interesting; for here one comes across that free, happy-go-lucky atmosphere which the typical native always produces, and which is so salutary for the strenuous, serious-minded Briton, the problems of life are seen in true perspective, and it is surprising how few of the things we worry our heads about really matter, and how vastly important those few remaining things are for development of character, for the tolerant and charitable outlook on life and people, which, after all, is what makes our world a happy place.

To attain such an attitude towards one's fellows, particularly those junior and less fortunate, is surely worth a twelve months' absence from civilization; the sameness and the solitude of the country, and the leisure, with its possibilities when intelligently used (and for which the public pays one to enjoy), have a decided influence in this direction—though, without effort, this may be a correspondingly debasing one.

THREE YEARS IN UPPER BURMAH.

By Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Younge,

Royal Army Medical Corps (ret.).

Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the relations of Great Britain with Burmah were almost nil. About the year 1820, however, the Burmese overran and conquered Assam and were thus brought into immediate contact with the Government of India. They were not by any means good neighbours, as they made frequent attacks on our subjects and our territory, and these caused, in 1824, the first Burmese war. This lasted for two years and led to our annexing the districts of Arakan and Tenasserim. This taught the Burmese a lesson and was followed by many years of quiet. Gradually, however, the same old system of petty annoyances recurring and led to a second war in 1852. This lasted for ten months and was followed by the annexation of the Pegu District, so that since 1852 the whole of Southern Burmah has been in our hands. In 1853 King