

WEEKLY LEAVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Those going on leave in the Middle East fall into two main divisions, on the one hand there are those keen on seeing things, and on the other those definitely out for a good time.

For the latter Cairo will hold many attractions. Firstly there is no long tiring journey to get there, and again hotels, bars and cabarets are all plentiful, and eager to cater for the pleasure seeker. However Cairo has also much for the earnest sight-seer, of which mention was made in our last issue.

For lovers of bathing, Alexandria, with its popular Stanley Bay, has a great attraction, and once more there are plenty of bars and cabarets for those on pleasure bent.

Those who seek a quiet restful holiday could not do better than go to Assuit, 200 miles up the Nile from Cairo, where the American hospitality is well known and has been so favourably commented on by all New Zealanders who have visited there.

Luxor and Aswan still further up the Nile are best visited in the wintertime. Luxor is the site of the finest collection of antiquities in the world, and across the Nile at Thebes are the Valley of the Kings and Queens, where the ancient Pharaohs are buried. Aswan Dam is one of the largest in the world.

Suez, Port Said and Ismailia all on the Suez Canal offer limited attractions for either class of troops, but boating and swimming can be indulged in.

But no matter what class of leave men are seeking I would advise them to go at least once to Palestine. It is an opportunity that will not come again to most of us.

The journey across the Sinai Desert is a tiring one but well worth the trouble. For those seeking pleasure Tel Aviv is the mecca of their desires, with Haifa second on the list. Jerusalem offers little attraction for them. Those who have come to see the Holy Land cannot do better than to proceed at once to Jerusalem.

There it is well to go on one of the organised daily trips to such places as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock (site of Solomon's Temple), The Wailing Wall of the Jews, Via Dolorosa, Solomon's Quarries and the Garden of Gethsemane. Half-day trips

can be arranged to Bethlehem; or to Jericho, the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

A round trip well worth taking is from Jerusalem to Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Tiberius, then to Haifa and to Mt. Carmel, to Tel Aviv and back to Jerusalem.

Most New Zealanders are amazed at the commercialisation of the Holy Places. To see Palestine fully and take time over the trips one really requires a fortnight.

A.S.H.

THE BOOTBLACK

My first day in Cairo wasn't a success. A small group of ill-mannered urchins with footstools followed me down the street and wanted to clean my boots. I told them, rather too mildly I'm afraid, to go away as my boots already shone like the rising sun, but one of the urchins drew my attention to my right foot which was covered with a sticky black mass.

Now, I thought, this was going a bit far and was about to wring the brat's neck when he protested his innocence and pointed to a second urchin who was at that moment disappearing around the next corner at a considerable speed. I was told later that this was by no means an uncommon occurrence in Cairo, but not withstanding this fact, a crowd of spectators gathered, and that they found the incident amusing was obvious.

I suppose the humour of the situation depends upon whether you are its victim or a spectator, but at that moment I could see nothing funny in any part of the proceedings, especially when the innocent urchin—and I have since changed my mind about his innocence—demanded two piastres for cleaning the black mess off my right boot and threatened to slap a similar mess on my face if I didn't pay up smartly. Now I didn't like his methods, but a Frenchman to whom I appealed, told me I had better pay if I wanted to avoid trouble. Then I discovered that I possessed only one piastre and two mills in small change. The urchin was about to renew his messy threat when the Frenchman took charge of the situation and sent the youngster on his way. The crowd seemed satisfied that they had had their moneysworth of entertainment but I felt a deep and bitter humiliation and resolved to be firmer in the future.

N.H.