

THE WESTERN DESERT OF EGYPT, ITS PROBLEMS AND ITS POTENTIALS

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The Western Desert occupies two thirds the area of Egypt. It is basically a platform of sedimentary rocks crossed by numerous belts of sand dunes that inundate whatever stands in their way. The flat terrain is broken by numerous depressions enclosing oases that provide the only respite from the prevailing harsh conditions. Early exploration in the 1920's by Hassanein and Kamal El-Din and in the 1930's by Peel, Sanford, and particularly Bagnold provided the basic data on this desert. However, to this date, much of it remains relatively unexplored.

The most potentially valuable aspect of the Western Desert is the occurrence of clayey, fertile soil in several locations. Some of these lie above a reservoir of fossil underground water, which if carefully used could supply enough water for irrigation. Additional potentials include deposits of iron, phosphates and other valuable minerals as well as a vast reservoir of building materials.