

# Images of the past

## 6.- Construction of the Old Aswan Dam

The construction of a dam at the first cataract in 1898-1902 to control the flow of the Nile resulted in a dramatic change of the life conditions for the inhabitants of Lower Nubia. It also led to the disappearance of temples and archaeological sites that were submerged under the water.

Although many voices were raised to protest against the “death” of the rich Nubian heritage, the Egyptian Antiquities Service was very slow to react. Howard Carter, Chief Inspector of Antiquities for Upper Egypt, was sent to Nubia in 1901 and wrote a short report on the condition of six temples in the region. Gaston Maspero, Director-General of the Antiquities Service, visited the area himself in 1904-1905 and examined 16 temples, including Debod.

Arthur Weigall, who had replaced Carter as Chief Inspector, was commissioned in 1906 to prepare a report on the condition of Nubian monuments and antiquities as a first step towards their restoration.



*Debod surrounded by the waters*



*Arthur Weigall*

. Weigall’s report mentioned the ruinous condition of Debod Temple as a result of the continuous looting of stones, and stressed the need for an urgent restoration of those elements that were still standing. The images annexed to the report show the serious damage that the temple had suffered in the previous decades. The vestibule and much of the mammisi were wrecked beyond recovery, the north and south façades were severely affected and the whole building had structural damages that could lead to its collapse. Outside the third pylon, still visible in 1896, had disap-

peared and with it the characteristic image the temple had presented throughout the 19th century.