EGYPT

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Author [1]

Canon George Rawlinson (23 November 1812 – 7 October 1902) was a 19th-century English scholar, historian, and Christian theologian. He was born at Chadlington, Oxfordshire, and was the younger brother of Sir Henry Rawlinson.

Having taken his degree at the University of Oxford (from Trinity College) in 1838, he was elected to a fellowship at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1840, of which from 1842 to 1846 he was fellow and tutor. He was ordained in 1841, was Bampton lecturer in 1859, and was Camden Professor of Ancient History from 1861 to 1889.

In his early days at Oxford, he played cricket for the University, appearing in five matches between 1836 and 1839 which have since been considered to have been first-class.

In 1872 he was appointed canon of Canterbury, and after 1888 he was rector of All Hallows, Lombard Street. In 1873, he was appointed proctor in Convocation for the Chapter of Canterbury. He married Louisa, daughter of Sir RA Chermside, in 1846.

His chief publications are his translation of the History of Herodotus (in collaboration with Sir Henry Rawlinson and Sir John Gardiner Wilkinson), 1858–60; The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World, 1862–67; The Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy (Parthian), 1873; The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy (Sassanian), 1875; Manual of Ancient History, 1869; Historical Illustrations of the Old Testament, 1871; The Origin of Nations, 1877; History of Ancient Egypt, 1881; Egypt and Babylon, 1885; History of Phoenicia, 1889; Parthia, 1893; Memoir of Major-General Sir HC Rawlinson, 1898. His lectures to an audience at Oxford University on the topic of the accuracy of the Bible in 1859 were published as the apologetic work The Historical Evidences of the Truth of the Scripture Records Stated Anew in later years. He was also contributor to the Speaker's Commentary, the Pulpit Commentary, Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, and various similar publications. He was the author of the article "Herodotus" in the 9th edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica.

[1] Wikipedia, *George Rawlinson*

I. The Land of Egypt

In shape Egypt is like a lily with a crooked stem. A broad blossom terminates it at its upper end; a button of a bud projects from the stalk a little below the blossom, on the left-hand side. The broad blossom is the Delta, extending from Aboosir to Tineh, a direct distance of a hundred and eighty miles, which the projection of the coast--the graceful swell of the petals--enlarges to two hundred and thirty. The bud is the Fayoum, a natural depression in the hills that shut in the Nile valley on the west, which has been rendered cultivable for many thousands of years by the introduction into it of the Nile water, through a canal known as the "Bahr Yousouf." The long stalk of the lily is the Nile valley itself, which is a ravine scooped in the rocky soil for seven hundred miles from the First Cataract to the apex of the Delta, sometimes not more than a mile broad, never more than eight or ten miles. No other country in the world is so strangely shaped, so long compared to its width, so straggling, so hard to govern from a single centre.

At the first glance, the country seems to divide itself into two strongly contrasted regions; and this was the original impression which it made upon its inhabitants. The natives from a very early time designated their land as "the two lands," and represented it by a hieroglyph in which the form used to express "land" was doubled. The kings were called "chiefs of the Two Lands," and wore two crowns, as being kings of two countries. The Hebrews caught up the idea, and though they sometimes called Egypt "Mazor" in the singular number, preferred commonly to designate it by the dual form "Mizraim," which means "the two Mazors." These "two Mazors," "two Egypts," or "two lands," were, of course, the blossom and the stalk, the broad tract upon the Mediterranean known as "Lower Egypt," or "the Delta," and the long narrow valley that lies, like a green snake, to the south, which bears the name of "Upper Egypt," or "the Said." Nothing is more striking than the contrast between these two regions. Entering Egypt from the Mediterranean, or from Asia by the caravan route, the traveller sees stretching before him an apparently boundless plain, wholly unbroken by natural elevations, generally green with crops or with marshy plants, and canopied by a cloudless sky, which rests everywhere on a distant flat horizon. An absolute monotony surrounds him. No alternation of plain and highland, meadow and forest, no slopes of hills, or hanging woods, or dells, or gorges, or cascades, or rushing streams, or babbling rills, meet his gaze on any side; look which way he will, all is sameness, one vast smooth expanse of rich alluvial soil, varying only in being cultivated or else allowed to lie waste. Turning his back with something of weariness on the dull uniformity of this featureless plain, the wayfarer proceeds southwards, and enters, at the distance of a hundred miles from the coast, on an entirely new scene. Instead of an illimitable prospect meeting him on every side, he finds himself in a comparatively narrow vale, up and down which the eye still commands an extensive view, but where the prospect on either side is blocked at the distance of a few miles by rocky ranges of hills, white or yellow or tawny, sometimes drawing so near as to threaten an obstruction of the river course, sometimes receding so far as to leave some miles of cultivable soil on either side of the stream. The rocky ranges, as he approaches them, have a stern and forbidding aspect. They rise for the most part, abruptly in bare grandeur; on their craggy sides grows neither moss nor heather; no trees clothe their steep heights. They seem intended, like the mountains that enclosed the abode of Rasselas, to keep in the inhabitants of the vale within their narrow limits, and bar them out from any commerce or acquaintance with the regions beyond.

Such is the twofold division of the country which impresses the observer strongly at the first. On a longer sojourn and a more intimate familiarity, the twofold division gives place to one which is threefold. The lower differs from the upper valley, it is a sort of debatable region, half plain, half vale; the cultivable surface spreads itself out more widely, the enclosing hills recede into the distance; above all, to the middle tract belongs the open space of the Fayoum nearly fifty miles across in its greatest diameter, and containing an area of four hundred square miles. Hence, with some of the occupants of Egypt a triple division has been preferred to a twofold one, the Greeks interposing the "Heptanomis" between the Thebais and the Delta, and the Arabs the "Vostani" between the Said and the Bahari, or "country of the sea."

It may be objected to this description, that the Egypt which it presents to the reader is not the Egypt of the maps. Undoubtedly it is not. The maps give the name of Egypt to a broad rectangular space which they mark out in the north-eastern corner of Africa, bounded on two sides by the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and on the two others by two imaginary lines which the map-makers kindly draw for us across the sands of the desert. But "this

Egypt," as has been well observed, "is a fiction of the geographers, as untrue to fact as the island Atlantis of Greek legend, or the Lyonnesse of mediaeval romance, both sunk beneath the ocean to explain their disappearance. The true Egypt of the old monuments, of the Hebrews, of the Greeks and Romans, of the Arabs, and of its own people in this day, is a mere fraction of this vast area of the maps, nothing more than the valley and plain watered by the Nile, for nearly seven hundred miles by the river's course from the Mediterranean southwards." The great wastes on either side of the Nile valley are in no sense Egypt, neither the undulating sandy desert to the west, nor the rocky and gravelly highland to the east, which rises in terrace after terrace to a height, in some places, of six thousand feet. Both are sparsely inhabited, and by tribes of a different race from the Egyptian--tribes whose allegiance to the rulers of Egypt is in the best times nominal, and who for the most part spurn the very idea of submission to authority.

If, then, the true Egypt be the tract that we have described--the Nile valley, with the Fayoum and the Delta--the lily stalk, the bud, and the blossom--we can well understand how it came to be said of old, that "Egypt was the gift of the river." Not that the lively Greek, who first used the expression, divined exactly the scientific truth of the matter. The fancy of Herodotus saw Africa, originally, _doubly_ severed from Asia by two parallel _fjords_, one running inland northwards from the Indian Ocean, as the Red Sea does to this day, and the other penetrating inland southwards from the Mediterranean to an equal or greater distance! The Nile, he said, pouring itself into this latter _fjord_, had by degrees filled it up, and had then gone on and by further deposits turned into land a large piece of the "sea of the Greeks," as was evident from the projection of the shore of the Delta beyond the general coast-line of Africa eastward and westward; and, he added, "I am convinced, for my own part, that if the Nile should please to divert his waters from their present bed into the Red Sea, he would fill it up and turn it into dry land in the space of twenty thousand years, or maybe in half that time--for he is a mighty river and a most energetic one." Here, in this last expression, he is thoroughly right, though the method of the Nile's energy has been other than he supposed. The Nile, working from its immense reservoirs in the equatorial regions, has gradually scooped itself out a deep bed in the sand and rock of the desert, which must have originally extended across the whole of northern Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. Having scooped itself out this bed to a depth, in places, of three hundred feet from the desert level, it has then proceeded partially to fill it up with its own deposits. Occupying, when it is at its height, the entire bed, and presenting at that time the appearance of a vast lake, or succession of lakes, it deposes every day a portion of sediment over the whole space which it covers: then, contracting gradually, it leaves at the base of the hills, on both sides, or at any rate on one, a strip of land fresh dressed with mud, which gets wider daily as the waters still recede, until yards grow into furlongs, and furlongs into miles, and at last the shrunk stream is content with a narrow channel a few hundred yards in width, and leaves the rest of its bed to the embraces of sun and air, and, if he so wills, to the industry of man. The land thus left exposed is Egypt--Egypt is the temporarily uncovered bed of the Nile, which it reclaims and recovers during a portion of each year, when Egypt disappears from view, save where human labour has by mounds and embankments formed artificial islands that raise their heads above the waste of waters, for the most part crowned with buildings.

There is one exception to this broad and sweeping statement. The Fayoum is no part of the natural bed of the Nile, and has not been scooped out by its energy. It is a natural depression in the western desert, separated off from the Nile valley by a range of limestone hills from two hundred to five

hundred feet in height, and, apart from the activity of man, would have been arid, treeless, and waterless. Still, it derives from the Nile all its value, all its richness, all its fertility. Human energy at some remote period introduced into the depressed tract through an artificial channel from the Nile, cut in some places through the rock, the life-giving fluid; and this fluid, bearing the precious Nile sediment, has sufficed to spread fertility over the entire region, and to make the desert blossom like a garden.

The Egyptians were not unaware of the source of their blessings. From a remote date they speculated on their mysterious river. They deified it under the name of Hapi, "the Hidden," they declared that "his abode was not known;" that he was an inscrutable god, that none could tell his origin: they acknowledged him as the giver of all good things, and especially of the fruits of the earth. They said--

"Hail to thee, O Nile! Thou showest thyself in this land, Coming in peace, giving life to Egypt; O Ammon, thou leadest night unto day, A leading that rejoices the heart! Overflowing the gardens created by Ra; Giving life to all animals; Watering the land without ceasing: The way of heaven descending: Lover of food, bestower of corn, Giving life to every home, O Phthah!...

O inundation of Nile, offerings are made to thee; Oxen are slain to thee; Great festivals are kept for thee; Fowls are sacrificed to thee; Beasts of the field are caught for thee; Pure flames are offered to thee; Offerings are made to every god, As they are made unto Nile. Incense ascends unto heaven, Oxen, bulls, fowls are burnt! Nile makes for himself chasms in the Thebaid; Unknown is his name in heaven, He doth not manifest his forms! Vain are all representations!

Mortals extol him, and the cycle of gods! Awe is felt by the terrible ones; His son is made Lord of all, To enlighten all Egypt. Shine forth, shine forth, O Nile! shine forth! Giving life to men by his omen: Giving life to his oxen by the pastures! Shine forth in glory, O Nile!"

Though thus useful, beneficent, and indeed essential to the existence of Egypt, the Nile can scarcely be said to add much to the variety of the landscape or to the beauty of the scenery. It is something, no doubt, to have the sight of water in a land where the sun beats down all day long with unremitting force till the earth is like a furnace of iron beneath a sky of molten brass. But the Nile is never clear. During the inundation it is deeply stained with the red argillaceous soil brought down from the Abyssinian highlands. At other seasons it is always more or less tinged with the vegetable matter which it absorbs on its passage from Lake Victoria to Khartoum; and this vegetable matter, combined with Its depth and volume, gives it a dull deep hue, which prevents it from having the attractiveness of purer and more translucent streams. The Greek name, Neilos, and the Hebrew, Sichor, are thought to embody this attribute of the mighty river, and to mean "dark blue" or "blue-black," terms sufficiently expressive of the stream's ordinary colour. Moreover, the Nile is too wide to be picturesque. It is seldom less than a mile broad from the point where it enters Egypt, and running generally between flat shores it scarcely reflects anything, unless it be the grey-blue sky overhead, or the sails of a passing pleasure boat.

The size of Egypt, within the limits which have been here assigned to it, is about eleven thousand four hundred square miles, or less than that of any European State, except Belgium, Saxony, and Servia. Magnitude is, however, but an insignificant element in the greatness of States--witness Athens, Sparta, Rhodes, Genoa, Florence, Venice. Egypt is the richest and most productive land in the whole world. In its most flourishing age we are told that it contained twenty thousand cities. It deserved to be called, more (probably) than even Belgium, "one great town." But its area

was undoubtedly small. Still, as little men have often taken the highest rank among warriors, so little States have filled a most important place in the world's history. Palestine was about the size of Wales; the entire Peloponnese was no larger than New Hampshire; Attica had nearly the same area as Cornwall. Thus the case of Egypt does not stand by itself, but is merely one out of many exceptions to what may perhaps be called the general rule.

If stinted for space, Egypt was happy in her soil and in her situation. The rich alluvium, continually growing deeper and deeper, and top-dressed each year by nature's bountiful hand, was of an inexhaustible fertility, and bore readily year after year a threefold harvest--first a grain crop, and then two crops of grasses or esculent vegetables. The wheat sown returned a hundredfold to the husbandman, and was gathered at harvest-time in prodigal abundance--"as the sand of the sea, very much,"--till men "left numbering" (Gen. xli. 49). Flax and doora were largely cultivated, and enormous quantities were produced of the most nutritive vegetables, such as lentils, garlic, leeks, onions, endive, radishes, melons, cucumbers, lettuces, and the like, which formed a most important element in the food of the people. The vine was also grown in many places, as along the flanks of the hills between Thebes and Memphis, in the basin of the Fayoum, at Anthylla in the Mareotis at Sebennytus (now Semnood), and at Plisthine, on the shore of the Mediterranean. The date-palm, springing naturally from the soil in clumps, or groves, or planted in avenues, everywhere offered its golden clusters to the wayfarer, dropping its fruit into his lap. Wheat, however, was throughout antiquity the chief product of Egypt, which was reckoned the granary of the world, the refuge and resource of all the neighbouring nations in time of dearth, and on which in the later republican, and in the imperial times, Rome almost wholly depended for her sustenance.

If the soil was thus all that could be wished, still more advantageous was the situation. Egypt was the only nation of the ancient world which had ready access to two seas, the Northern Sea, or "Sea of the Greeks," and the Eastern Sea, or "Sea of the Arabians and the Indians." Phoenicia might carry her traffic by the painful travel of caravans across fifteen degrees of desert from her cities on the Levantine coast to the inner recess of the Persian Gulf, and thus get a share in the trade of the East at a vast expenditure of time and trouble. Assyria and Babylonia might for a time, when at the height of their dominion, obtain a temporary hold on lands which were not their own, and boast that they stretched from the "sea of the rising" to "that of the setting sun"--from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean; but Egypt, at all times and under all circumstances, commands by her geographic position an access both to the Mediterranean and to the Indian Ocean by way of the Red Sea, whereof nothing can deprive her. Suez must always be hers, for the Isthmus is her natural boundary, and her water-system has been connected with the head of the Arabian Gulf for more than three thousand years; and, in the absence of any strong State in Arabia or Abyssinia, the entire western coast of the Red Sea falls naturally under her influence with its important roadsteads and harbours. Thus Egypt had two great outlets for her productions, and two great inlets by which she received the productions of other countries. Her ships could issue from the Nilotic ports and trade with Phoenicia, or Carthage, or Italy, or Greece, exchanging her corn and wine and glass and furniture and works in metallurgy for Etruscan vases, or Grecian statues, or purple Tynan robes, or tin brought by Carthaginian merchantmen from the Scilly islands and from Cornwall; or they could start from Heroopolis, or Myos Hormus, or some port further to the southward, and pass by way of the Red Sea to the spice-region of "Araby the Blest," or to the Abyssinian timber-region, or to the shores of Zanzibar

and Mozambique, or round Arabia to Teredon on the Persian Gulf, or possibly to Ceylon or India. The products of the distant east, even of "far Cathay," certainly flowed into the land, for they have been dug out of the ancient tombs; but whether they were obtained by direct or by indirect commerce must be admitted to be doubtful.

The possession of the Nile was of extraordinary advantage to Egypt, not merely as the source of fertility, but as a means of rapid communication. One of the greatest impediments to progress and civilization which Nature offers to man in regions which he has not yet subdued to his will, is the difficulty of locomotion and of transport. Mountains, forests, torrents, marshes, jungles, are the curses of "new countries," forming, until they have been cut through, bridged over, or tunnelled under, insurmountable barriers, hindering commerce and causing hatreds through isolation. Egypt had from the first a broad road driven through it from end to end--a road seven hundred miles long, and seldom much less than a mile wide--which allowed of ready and rapid communication between the remotest parts of the kingdom. Rivers, indeed, are of no use as arteries of commerce or vehicles for locomotion until men have invented ships or boats, or at least rafts, to descend and ascend them; but the Egyptians were acquainted with the use of boats and rafts from a very remote period, and took to the water like a brood of ducks or a parcel of South Sea Islanders. Thirty-two centuries ago an Egyptian king built a temple on the confines of the Mediterranean entirely of stone which he floated down the Nile for six hundred and fifty miles from the quarries of Assouan (Syene); and the passage up the river is for a considerable portion of the year as easy as the passage down. Northerly winds--the famous "Etesian gales"--prevail in Egypt during the whole of the summer and autumn, and by hoisting a sail it is almost always possible to ascend the stream at a good pace. If the sail be dropped, the current will at all times take a vessel down-stream; and thus boats, and even vessels of a large size, pass up and down the water-way with equal facility.

Egypt is at all seasons a strange country, but presents the most astonishing appearance at the period of the inundation. At that time not only is the lengthy valley from Assouan to Cairo laid under water, but the Delta itself becomes one vast lake, interspersed with islands, which stud its surface here and there at intervals, and which reminded Herodotus of "the islands of the AEgean." The elevations, which are the work of man, are crowned for the most part with the white walls of towns and villages sparkling in the sunlight, and sometimes glassed in the flood beneath them. The palms and sycamores stand up out of the expanse of waters shortened by some five or six feet of their height. Everywhere, when the inundation begins, the inhabitants are seen hurrying their cattle to the shelter provided in the villages, and, if the rise of the water is more rapid than usual, numbers rescue their beasts with difficulty, causing them to wade or swim, or even saving them by means of boats. An excessive inundation brings not only animal, but human life into peril, endangering the villages themselves, which may be submerged and swept away if the water rises above a certain height. A deficient inundation, on the other hand, brings no immediate danger, but by limiting production may create a dearth that causes incalculable suffering.

Nature's operations are, however, so uniform that these calamities rarely arise. Egypt rejoices, more than almost any other country, in an equable climate, an equable temperature, and an equable productiveness. The summers, no doubt, are hot, especially in the south, and an occasional sirocco produces intense discomfort while it lasts. But the cool Etesian wind, blowing from the north through nearly all the summer-time, tempers the ardour of the sun's rays even in the hottest season of the year; and during the remaining months, from October to April, the climate is

simply delightful. Egypt has been said to have but two seasons, spring and summer. Spring reigns from October into May--crops spring up, flowers bloom, soft zephyrs fan the cheek, when it is mid-winter in Europe; by February the fruit-trees are in full blossom; the crops begin to ripen in March, and are reaped by the end of April; snow and frost are wholly unknown at any time; storm, fog, and even rain are rare. A bright, lucid atmosphere rests upon the entire scene. There is no moisture in the air, no cloud in the sky; no mist veils the distance. One day follows another, each the counterpart of the preceding; until at length spring retires to make room for summer, and a fiercer light, a hotter sun, a longer day, show that the most enjoyable part of the year is gone by.

The geology of Egypt is simple. The entire flat country is alluvial. The hills on either side are, in the north, limestone, in the central region sandstone, and in the south granite and syenite. The granitic formation begins between the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth parallels, but occasional masses of primitive rock are intruded into the secondary regions, and these extend northward as far as lat. 27 deg.10'. Above the rocks are, in many places, deposits of gravel and sand, the former hard, the latter loose and shifting. A portion of the eastern desert is metalliferous. Gold is found even at the present day in small quantities, and seems anciently to have been more abundant. Copper, iron, and lead have been also met with in modern times, and one iron mine shows signs of having been anciently worked. Emeralds abound in the region about Mount Zabara, and the eastern desert further yields jaspers, carnelians, breccia verde, agates, chalcedonies, and rock-crystal.

The flora of the country is not particularly interesting. Dom and date palms are the principal trees, the latter having a single tapering stem, the former dividing into branches. The sycamore (_Ficus sycamorus_) is also tolerably common, as are several species of acacia. The acacia seyal, which furnishes the gum arable of commerce, is "a gnarled and thorny tree, somewhat like a solitary hawthorn in its habit and manner of growth, but much larger." Its height, when full grown, is from fifteen to twenty feet. The _persea_, a sacred plant among the ancient Egyptians, is a bushy tree or shrub, which attains the height of eighteen or twenty feet under favourable circumstances, and bears a fruit resembling a date, with a subacid flavour. The bark is whitish, the branches gracefully curved, the foliage of an ashy grey, more especially on its under surface. Specially characteristic of Egypt, though not altogether peculiar to it, were the papyrus and the lotus--the _Cyperus papyrus_ and _Nymphaea lotus_ of botanists. The papyrus was a tall smooth reed, with a large triangular stalk containing a delicate pith, out of which the Egyptians manufactured their paper. The fabric was excellent, as is shown by its continuance to the present day, and by the fact that the Greeks and Romans, after long trial, preferred it to parchment. The lotus was a large white water-lily of exquisite beauty. Kings offered it to the gods; guests wore it at banquets; architectural forms were modelled upon it; it was employed in the ornamentation of thrones. Whether its root had the effect on men ascribed to it by Homer may be doubted; but no one ever saw it without recognizing it instantly as "a thing of beauty," and therefore as "a joy for ever."

Nor can Egypt have afforded in ancient times any very exciting amusement to sportsmen. At the present day gazelles are chased with hawk and hound during the dry season on the broad expanse of the Delta; but anciently the thick population scared off the whole antelope tribe, which was only to be found in the desert region beyond the limits of the alluvium. Nor can Egypt, in the proper sense of the word, have ever been the home of red-deer, roes, or fallow-deer, of lions, bears, hyaenas, lynxes, or rabbits. Animals of these classes may occasionally have appeared in the alluvial plain, but they would only be rare visitants driven by hunger from their true

habitat in the Libyan or the Arabian uplands. The crocodile, however, and the hippopotamus were actually hunted by the ancient Egyptians; and they further indulged their love of sport in the pursuits of fowling and fishing. All kinds of waterfowl are at all seasons abundant in the Nile waters, and especially frequent the pools left by the retiring river--pelicans, geese, ducks, ibises, cranes, storks, herons, dotterels, kingfishers, and sea-swallows. Quails also arrive in great numbers in the month of March, though there are no pheasants, snipe, wood-cocks, nor partridges. Fish are very plentiful in the Nile and the canals derived from it; but there are not many kinds which afford much sport to the fisherman.

Altogether, Egypt is a land of tranquil monotony. The eye commonly travels either over a waste of waters, or over a green plain unbroken by elevations. The hills which inclose the Nile valley have level tops, and sides that are bare of trees, or shrubs, or flowers, or even mosses. The sky is generally cloudless. No fog or mist enwraps the distance in mystery; no rainstorm sweeps across the scene; no rainbow spans the empyrean; no shadows chase each other over the landscape. There is an entire absence of picturesque scenery. A single broad river, unbroken within the limits of Egypt even by a rapid, two flat strips of green plain at its side, two low lines of straight-topped hills beyond them, and a boundless open space where the river divides itself into half a dozen sluggish branches before reaching the sea, constitute Egypt, which is by nature a southern Holland--"weary, stale, flat and unprofitable." The monotony is relieved, however, in two ways, and by two causes. Nature herself does something to relieve it Twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, the sky and the landscape are lit up by hues so bright yet so delicate, that the homely features of the prospect are at once transformed as by magic, and wear an aspect of exquisite beauty. At dawn long streaks of rosy light stretch themselves across the eastern sky, the haze above the western horizon blushes a deep red; a ruddy light diffuses itself around, and makes walls and towers and minarets and cupolas to glow like fire; the long shadows thrown by each tree and building are purple or violet. A glamour is over the scene, which seems transfigured by an enchanter's wand; but the enchanter is Nature, and the wand she wields is composed of sun-rays. Again, at eve, nearly the same effects are produced as in the morning, only with a heightened effect; "the redness of flames" passes into "the redness of roses"--the wavy cloud that fled in the morning comes into sight once more--comes blushing, yet still comes on--comes burning with blushes, and clings to the Sun-god's side.

Night brings a fresh transfiguration. The olive after-glow gives place to a deep blue-grey. The yellow moon rises into the vast expanse. A softened light diffuses itself over earth and sky. The orb of night walks in brightness through a firmament of sapphire; or, if the moon is below the horizon, then the purple vault is lit up with many-coloured stars. Silence profound reigns around. A phase of beauty wholly different from that of the day-time smites the sense; and the monotony of feature is forgiven to the changefulness of expression, and to the experience of a new delight.

Man has also done his part to overcome the dulness and sameness that brood over the "land of Mizraim." Where nature is most tame and commonplace, man is tempted to his highest flights of audacity. As in the level Babylonia he aspired to build a tower that should "reach to heaven" (Gen. xi. 4), so in Egypt he strove to startle and surprise by gigantic works, enormous undertakings, enterprises that might have seemed wholly beyond his powers. And these have constituted in all ages, except the very earliest, the great attractiveness of Egypt. Men are drawn there, not by the mysteriousness of the Nile, or the mild beauties of orchards and palm-groves, of well-cultivated fields and gardens--no, nor by

the loveliness of sunrises and sunsets, of moonlit skies and stars shining with many hues, but by the huge masses of the pyramids, by the colossal statues, the tall obelisks, the enormous temples, the deeply-excavated tombs, the mosques, the castles, and the palaces. The architecture of Egypt is its great glory. It began early, and it has continued late. But for the great works, strewn thickly over the whole valley of the Nile, the land of Egypt would have obtained but a small share of the world's attention; and it is at least doubtful whether its "story" would ever have been thought necessary to complete "the Story of the Nations."

II. The People of Egypt

Where the Egyptians came from, is a difficult question to answer. Ancient speculators, when they could not derive a people definitely from any other, took refuge in the statement, or the figment, that they were the children of the soil which they had always occupied. Modern theorists may say, if it please them, that they were evolved out of the monkeys that had their primitive abode on that particular portion of the earth's surface. Monkeys, however, are not found everywhere; and we have no evidence that in Egypt they were ever indigenous, though, as pets, they were very common, the Egyptians delighting in keeping them. Such evidence as we have reveals to us the man as anterior to the monkey in the land of Mizraim Thus we are thrown back on the original question--Where did the man, or race of men, that is found in Egypt at the dawn of history come from?

It is generally answered that they came from Asia; but this is not much more than a conjecture. The physical type of the Egyptians is different from that of any known Asiatic nation. The Egyptians had no traditions that at all connected them with Asia. Their language, indeed, in historic times was partially Semitic, and allied to the Hebrew, the Phoenician, and the Aramaic; but the relationship was remote, and may be partly accounted for by later intercourse, without involving original derivation. The fundamental character of the Egyptian in respect of physical type, language, and tone of thought, is Nigritic. The Egyptians were not negroes, but they bore a resemblance to the negro which is indisputable. Their type differs from the Caucasian in exactly those respects which when exaggerated produce the negro. They were darker, had thicker lips, lower foreheads, larger heads, more advancing jaws, a flatter foot, and a more attenuated frame. It is quite conceivable that the negro type was produced by a gradual degeneration from that which we find in Egypt. It is even conceivable that the Egyptian type was produced by gradual advance and amelioration from that of the negro.

Still, whencesoever derived, the Egyptian people, as it existed in the flourishing times of Egyptian history, was beyond all question a mixed race, showing diverse affinities. Whatever the people was originally, it received into it from time to time various foreign elements, and those in such quantities as seriously to affect its physique--Ethiopians from the south, Libyans from the west, Semites from the north-east, where Africa adjoined on Asia. There are two quite different types of Egyptian form and feature, blending together in the mass of the nation, but strongly developed, and (so to speak) accentuated in individuals. One is that which we see in portraits of Rameses III, and in some of Rameses II.--a moderately high forehead, a large, well-formed aquiline nose, a well-shaped mouth with lips not over full, and a delicately rounded chin. The other is comparatively coarse--forehead low, nose depressed and short, lower part of the face prognathous and sensual-looking, chin heavy, jaw large, lips thick and projecting. The two types of face are not, however, accompanied by much difference of frame. The Egyptian is always slight in figure, wanting in muscle, flat in foot, with limbs that are too long, too thin, too lady-like. Something more of muscularity appears, perhaps, in the earlier than in the

later forms; but this is perhaps attributable to a modification of the artistic ideal.

As Egypt presents us with two types of physique, so it brings before us two strongly different types of character. On the one hand we see, alike in the pictured scenes, in the native literary remains, and in the accounts which foreigners have left us of the people, a grave and dignified race, full of serious and sober thought, given to speculation and reflection, occupied rather with the interests belonging to another world than with those that attach to this present scene of existence, and inclined to indulge in a gentle and dreamy melancholy. The first thought of a king, when he began his reign, was to begin his tomb. The desire of the grandee was similar. It is a trite tale how at feasts a slave carried round to all the guests the representation of a mummied corpse, and showed it to each in turn, with the solemn words--"Look at this, and so eat and drink; for be sure that one day such as this thou shalt be." The favourite song of the Egyptians, according to Herodotus, was a dirge. The "Lay of Harper," which we subjoin, sounds a key-note that was very familiar, at any rate, to large numbers among the Egyptians.

The Great One has gone to his rest,
Ended his task and his race; Thus men are aye passing away, And youths are aye taking their place. As Ra rises up every morn, And Turn every evening doth set,
So women conceive and bring forth, And men without ceasing beget. Each soul in its turn draweth breath-- Each man born of woman sees Death.

Take thy pleasure to-day, Father! Holy One! See, Spices and fragrant oils,
Father, we bring to thee. On thy sister's bosom and arms Wreaths of lotus we place; On thy sister, dear to thy heart,
Aye sitting before thy face. Sound the song; let music be played And let cares behind thee be laid.

Take thy pleasure to-day; Mind thee of joy and delight! Soon life's pilgrimage ends, And we pass to Silence and Night. Patriarch perfect and pure, Nefer-hotep, blessed one! Thou Didst finish thy course upon earth, And art with the blessed ones now. Men pass to the Silent Shore, And their place doth know them no more.

They are as they never had been, Since the sun went forth upon high; They sit on the banks of the stream That floweth in stillness by. Thy soul is among them; thou Dost drink of the sacred tide, Having the wish of thy heart-- At peace ever since thou hast died. Give bread to the man who is poor, And thy name shall be blest evermore.

* * * * *

Take thy pleasure to-day, Nefer-hotep, blessed and pure. What availed thee thy other buildings? Of thy tomb alone thou art sure. On the earth thou hast nought beside, Nought of thee else is remaining; And when thou wentest below, Thy last sip of life thou wert draining. Even they who have millions to spend, Find that life comes at last to an end.

Let all, then, think of the day Of departure without returning-- 'Twill then be well to have lived, All sin and injustice spurning. For he who has loved the right,
In the hour that none can flee, Enters upon the delight Of a glad eternity. Give freely from out thy store, And thou shalt be blest evermore.

On the other hand, there is evidence of a lightsome, joyous, and even frolic spirit as pervading numbers, especially among the lower classes of the Egyptians. "Traverse Egypt," says a writer who knows more of the ancient country than almost any other living person, "examine the scenes sculptured or painted on the walls of the chapels attached to tombs, consult the inscriptions graven on the rocks or traced with ink on the papyrus rolls, and you will be compelled to modify your mistaken notion of the Egyptians being a nation of philosophers. I defy you to find anything more gay, more amusing, more

freshly simple, than this good-natured Egyptian people, which was fond of life and felt a profound pleasure in its existence. Far from desiring death, they addressed prayers to the gods to preserve them in life, and to give them a happy old age--an old age that should reach, if possible, to the 'perfect term of no years.' They gave themselves up to pleasures of every kind; they sang, they drank, they danced, they delighted in making excursions into the country, where hunting and fishing were occupations reserved especially for the nobility. In conformity with this inclination towards pleasure, sportive proposals, a pleasantry that was perhaps over-free, witticisms, raillery, and a mocking spirit, were in vogue among the people, and fun was allowed entrance even into the tombs. In the large schools the masters had a difficulty in training the young and keeping down their passion for amusements. When oral exhortation failed of success, the cane was used pretty smartly in its place; for the wise men of the land had a saying that 'a boy's ears grow on his back.'"

Herodotus tells us how gaily the Egyptians kept their festivals, thousands of the common people--men, women, and children together--crowding into the boats, which at such times covered the Nile, the men piping, and the women clapping their hands or striking their castanets, as they passed from town to town along the banks of the stream, stopping at the various landing-places, and challenging the inhabitants to a contest of good-humoured Billingsgate. From the monuments we see how the men sang at their labours--here as they trod the wine-press or the dough-trough, there as they threshed out the corn by driving the oxen through the golden heaps. In one case the words of a harvest-song have come down to us:

"Thresh for yourselves," they sang, "thresh for yourselves, O oxen, thresh for yourselves, for yourselves-- Bushels for yourselves, bushels for your masters!"

Their light-hearted drollery sometimes found vent in caricature. The grand sculptures wherewith a king strove to perpetuate the memory of his warlike exploits were travestied by satirists, who reproduced the scenes upon papyrus as combats between cats and rats. The amorous follies of the monarch were held up to derision by sketches of a harem interior, where the kingly wooer was represented by a lion, and his favourites of the softer sex by gazelles. Even in serious scenes depicting the trial of souls in the next world, the sense of humour breaks out, where the bad man, transformed into a pig or a monkey, walks off with a comical air of surprise and discomfiture.

It does not, however, help us much towards the true knowledge of a people to scan their frames or study their facial angle, or even to contemplate the outer aspect of their daily life. We want to know their thoughts, their innermost feelings, their hopes, their fears--in a word, their belief. Nothing tells the character of a people so much as their religion; and we are only dealing superficially with the outward shows of things until we get down to the root of their being, the conviction, or convictions, held in the recesses of a people's heart. What, then, was the Egyptian religion? What did they worship? What did they reverence? What future did they look forward to?

Enter the huge courts of an Egyptian temple, or temple-palace, and you will see portrayed upon its lofty walls row upon row of deities. Here the king makes his offering to Ammon, Maut, Khons, Neith, Mentu, Shu, Seb, Nut, Osiris, Set, Horus; there he pours a libation to Phthah, Sekhet, Tum, Pasht, Anuka, Thoth, Anubis; elsewhere, it may be, he pays his court to Sati, Khem, Isis, Nephthys, Athor, Harmachis, Nausaas, and Nebhept. One monarch erects an altar to Satemi, Tum, Khepra, Shu, Tefnut, Seb, Netpe, Osiris, Isis, Set, Nephthys, Horus, and Thoth, mentioning on the same monument Phthah, Num, Sabak, Athor, Pasht, Mentu, Neith, Anubis, Nishem,

and Kartak. Another represents himself on a similar object as offering adoration to Ammon, Khem, Phthah-Sokari, Seb, Nut, Thoth, Khons, Osiris, Isis, Horus, Athor, Uat (Buto), Neith, Sekhet, Anata, Nuneb, Nebhept, and Hapi. All these deities are represented by distinct forms, and have distinct attributes. Nor do they at all exhaust the Pantheon. One modern writer enumerates seventy-three divinities, and gives their several names and forms. Another has a list of sixty-three "_principal_ deities," and notes that there were "others which personified the elements, or presided over the operations of nature, the seasons, and events." The Egyptians themselves speak not unfrequently of "the _thousand_ gods," sometimes further qualifying them, as "the gods male, the gods female, those which belong to the land of Egypt." Practically, there were before the eyes of worshippers some scores, if not some hundreds, of deities, who invited their approach and challenged their affections.

Nor was this the whole, or the worst. The Egyptian was taught to pay a religious regard to animals. In one place goats, in another sheep, in a third hippopotami, in a fourth crocodiles, in a fifth vultures, in a sixth frogs, in a seventh shrew-mice, were sacred creatures, to be treated with respect and honour, and under no circumstances to be slain, under the penalty of death to the slayer. And besides this local animal-cult, there was a cult which was general. Cows, cats, dogs, ibises, hawks, and cynocephalous apes, were sacred throughout the whole of Egypt, and woe to the man who injured them! A Roman who accidentally caused the death of a cat was immediately "lynched" by the populace. Inhabitants of neighbouring villages would attack each other with the utmost fury if the native of one had killed or eaten an animal held sacred in the other. In any house where a cat or a dog died, the inmates were expected to mourn for them as for a relation. Both these and the other sacred animals were carefully embalmed after death, and their bodies were interred in sacred repositories.

The animal-worship reached its utmost pitch of grossness and absurdity when certain individual brute beasts were declared to be incarnate deities, and treated accordingly. At Memphis, the ordinary capital, there was maintained, at any rate from the time of Aahmes I. (about B.C. 1650), a sacred bull, known as Hapi or Apis, which was believed to be an actual incarnation of the god Phthah, and was an object of the highest veneration. The Apis bull dwelt in a temple of his own near the city, had his train of attendant priests, his harem of cows, his meals of the choicest food, his grooms and currycombers who kept his coat clean and beautiful, his chamberlains who made his bed, his cup-bearers who brought him water, &c., and on fixed days was led in a festive procession through the main streets of the town, so that the inhabitants might see him, and come forth from their dwellings and make obeisance. When he died he was carefully embalmed, and deposited, together with magnificent jewels and statuettes and vases, in a polished granite sarcophagus, cut out of a single block, and weighing between sixty and seventy tons! The cost of an Apis funeral amounted sometimes, as we are told, to as much as L20,000. To contain the sarcophagi, several long galleries were cut in the solid rock near Memphis, from which arched lateral chambers went off on either side, each constructed to hold one sarcophagus. The number of Apis bulls buried in the galleries was found to be sixty-four.

Nor was this the only incarnate god of which Egypt boasted. Another bull, called Mnevis, was maintained in the great temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, and, being regarded as an incarnation of Ra or Tum, was as much reverenced by the Heliopolites as Apis by the Memphites, A third, called Bacis or Pacis, was kept at Hermonthis, which was also an incarnation of Ra. And a white cow at Momemphis was reckoned an incarnation of Athor. Who can wonder that foreign nations ridiculed a religion of this kind--one that

"turned the glory" of the Eternal Godhead "into the similitude of a calf that eateth hay"?

The Egyptians had also a further god incarnate, who was not shut up out of sight like the Apis and Mnevis and Bacis bulls and the Athor cow, but was continually before their eyes, the centre of the nation's life, the prime object of attention. This was the monarch, who for the time being occupied the throne. Each king of Egypt claimed not only to be "son of the Sun," but to be an actual incarnation of the sun--"the living Horus." And this claim was, from an early date, received and allowed. "Thy Majesty," says a courtier under the twelfth dynasty, "is the good God ... the great God, the equal of the Sun-God. ... I live from the breath which thou givest" Brought into the king's presence, the courtier "falls on his belly," amazed and confounded. "I was as one brought out of the dark; my tongue was dumb; my lips failed me; my heart was no longer in my body to know whether I was alive or dead;" and this, although "the god" had "addressed him mildly." Another courtier attributes his long life to the king's favour. Ambassadors, when presented to the king, "raised their arms in adoration of the good god," and declared to him--"Thou art like the Sun in all that thou doest: thy heart realizes all its wishes; shouldest thou wish to make it day during the night, it is so forthwith.... If thou sayest to the water, 'Come from the rock,' it will come in a torrent suddenly at the words of thy mouth. The god Ra is like thee in his limbs, the god Khepra in creative force. Truly thou art the living image of thy father, Tum.... All thy words are accomplished daily." Some of the kings set up their statues in the temples by the side of the greatest of the national deities, to be the objects of a similar worship.

Amid this wealth of gods, earthly and heavenly, human, animal, and divine, an Egyptian might well feel puzzled to make a choice. In his hesitation he was apt to turn to that only portion of his religion which had the attraction that myth possesses--- the introduction into a supramundane and superhuman world of a quasi-human element. The chief Egyptian myth was the Osirid saga, which ran somewhat as follows: "Once upon a time the gods were tired of ruling in the upper sphere, and resolved to take it in turns to reign over Egypt in the likeness of men. So, after four of them had in succession been kings, each for a long term of years, it happened that Osiris, the son of Seb and Nut, took the throne, and became monarch of the two regions, the Upper and the Lower. Osiris was of a good and bountiful nature, beneficent in will and words: he set himself to civilize the Egyptians, taught them to till the fields and cultivate the vine, gave them law and religion, and instructed them in various useful arts. Unfortunately, he had a wicked brother, called Set or Sutekh, who hated him for his goodness, and resolved to compass his death. This he effected after a while, and, having placed the body in a coffin, he threw it into the Nile, whence it floated down to the sea. Isis, the sister and widow of Osiris, together with her sister Nephthys, vainly sought for a long time her lord's remains, but at last found them on the Syrian shore at Byblus, where they had been cast up by the waves. She was conveying the corpse for embalmment and interment to Memphis, when Set stole it from her, and cut it up into fourteen pieces, which he concealed in various places. The unhappy queen set forth in a light boat made of the papyrus plant, and searched Egypt from end to end, until she had found all the fragments, and buried them with due honours. She then called on her son, Horus, to avenge his father, and Horus engaged him in a long war, wherein he was at last victorious and took Set prisoner. Isis now relented, and released Set, who be it remembered, was her brother; which so enraged Horus that he tore off her crown, or (according to some) struck off her head, which injury Thoth repaired by giving her a cow's head in place of her own. Horus then renewed the war with his uncle, and finally slew him with a long spear, which he drove

into his head." The gods and goddesses of the Osirid legend, Seb, Nut or Netpe, Osiris, Isis, Nephthys, Set, and Horus or Harmachis, were those which most drew towards them the thoughts of the Egyptians, the greater number being favourite objects of worship, while Set was held in general detestation.

It was a peculiar feature of the Egyptian religion, that it contained distinctively evil and malignant gods. Set was not, originally, such a deity; but he became such in course of time, and was to the later Egyptians the very principle of evil--Evil personified. Another evil deity was Taour or Taourt, who is represented as a hippopotamus standing on its hind-legs, with the skin and tail of a crocodile dependent down its back, and a knife or a pair of shears in one hand. Bes seems also to have been a divinity of the same class. He was represented as a hideous dwarf, with large outstanding ears, bald, or with a plume of feathers on his head, and with a lion-skin down his back, often carrying in his two hands two knives. Even more terrible than Bes was Apep, the great serpent, with its huge and many folds, who helped Set against Osiris, and was the adversary and accuser of souls. Savak, a god with the head of a crocodile, seems also to have belonged to the class of malignant beings, though he was a favourite deity with some of the Ramesside kings, and a special object of worship in the Fayoum.

The complex polytheism of the monuments and the literature was not, however, the practical religion of many Egyptians. Local cults held possession of most of the nomes, and the ordinary Egyptian, instead of dissipating his religious affections by distributing them among the thousand divinities of the Pantheon, concentrated them on those of his nome. If he was a Memphite, he worshipped Phthah Sekhet, and Tum; if a Theban, Ammon-Ra, Maut, Khons, and Neith; if a Heliopolite, Tum, Nebhebt and Horus; if a Elephantinite, Kneph, Sati, Anuka, and Hak; and so on. The Egyptian Pantheon was a gradual accretion, the result of amalgamating the various local cults; but these continued predominant in their several localities; and practically the only deities that obtained anything like a general recognition were Osiris, Isis, Horus, and the Nile-god, Hapi.

Besides the common popular religion, the belief of the masses, there was another which prevailed among the priests and among the educated. The primary doctrine of this esoteric religion was the real essential unity of the Divine Nature. The sacred texts, known only to the priests and to the initiated, taught that there was a single Being, "the sole producer of all things both in heaven and earth, himself not produced of any," "the only true living God, self-originated," "who exists from the beginning," "who has made all things, but has not himself been made." This Being seems never to have been represented by any material, even symbolical, form. It is thought that he had no name, or, if he had, that it must have been unlawful to pronounce or write it. He was a pure spirit, perfect in every respect--all-wise, almighty, supremely good. It is of him that the Egyptian poets use such expressions as the following: "He is not graven in marble; he is not beheld; his abode is not known; no shrine is found with painted figures of him; there is no building that can contain him;" and, again: "Unknown is his name in heaven; he doth not manifest his forms; vain are all representations;" and yet again: "His commencement is from the beginning; he is the God who has existed from old time; there is no God without him; no mother bore him; no father hath begotten him; he is a god-goddess, created from himself; all gods came into existence when he began."

The other gods, the gods of the popular mythology were understood in the esoteric religion to be either personified attributes of the Deity, or parts of the nature which he had created, considered as informed and inspired by him. Num or Kneph represented the creative mind, Phthah the creative hand, or

act of creating; Maut represented matter, Ra the sun, Khons the moon, Seb the earth, Khem the generative power in nature, Nut the upper hemisphere of the heavens, Athor the lower world or under hemisphere; Thoth personified the Divine Wisdom, Ammon perhaps the Divine mysteriousness or incomprehensibility, Osiris the Divine Goodness. It is difficult in many cases to fix on the exact quality, act, or part of nature intended; but the principle admits of no doubt. No educated Egyptian conceived of the popular gods as really separate and distinct beings. All knew that there was but One God, and understood that, when worship was offered to Khem, or Kneph, or Maut, or Thoth, or Ammon, the One God was worshipped under some one of his forms or in some one of his aspects. He was every god, and thus all the gods' names were interchangeable, and in one and the same hymn we may find a god, say Ammon, addressed also as Ra and Khem and Turn and Horus and Khepra; or Hapi, the Nile-god, invoked as Ammon and Phthah; or Osiris as Ra and Thoth; or, in fact, any god invoked as almost any other. If there be a limit, it is in respect of the evil deities, whose names are not given to the good ones.

Common to all Egyptians seems to have been a belief, if not, strictly speaking, in the immortality of the soul, yet, at any rate, in a life after death, and a judgment of every man according to the deeds which he had done in the body while upon earth. It was universally received, that, immediately after death, the soul descended into the Lower World, and was conducted to the "Hall of Truth," where it was judged in the presence of Osiris and of the forty-two assessors, the "Lords of Truth" and judges of the dead. Anubis, "the director of the weight," brought forth a pair of scales, and, placing in one scale a figure or emblem of Truth, set in the other a vase containing the good actions of the deceased; Thoth standing by the while, with a tablet in his hand, whereon to record the result. According to the side on which the balance inclined, Osiris, the president, delivered sentence. If the good deeds preponderated, the blessed soul was allowed to enter the "boat of the Sun," and was led by good spirits to Aahlu (Elysium), to the "pools of peace" and the dwelling-place of Osiris. If, on the contrary, the good deeds were insufficient, if the ordeal was not passed, then the unhappy soul was sentenced, according to its deserts, to begin a round of transmigrations into the bodies of more or less unclean animals, the number, nature, and duration of the transmigrations depending on the degree of the deceased's demerits, and the consequent length and severity of the punishment which he deserved or the purification which he needed. Ultimately, if after many trials purity was not attained, then the wicked and incurable soul underwent a final sentence at the hands of Osiris, Judge of the Dead, and being condemned to annihilation, was destroyed upon the steps of heaven by Shu, the Lord of Light. The good soul, having first been completely cleansed of its impurities by passing through the basin of purgatorial fire guarded by the four ape-faced genii, was made the companion of Osiris for a period of three thousand years; after which it returned from Amenti, re-entered its former body, and lived once more a human life upon the earth. The process was repeated till a mystic number of years had gone by, when, finally, the blessed attained the crowning joy of union with God, being absorbed into the Divine Essence, from which they had emanated, and thus attaining the true end and full perfection of their being.

Such a belief as this, if earnest and thorough, should be productive of a high standard of moral action; and undoubtedly the Egyptians had a code of morality that will compare favourably with that of most ancient nations. It has been said to have contained "three cardinal requirements--love of God, love of virtue, and love of man." The hymns sufficiently indicate the first; the second may be allowed, if by "virtue" we understand justice and truth; the third is testified by the constant claim of men, in their epitaphs, to have been benefactors of their species. "I was

not an idler," says one; "I was no listener to the counsels of sloth; my name was not heard in the place of reproof ... all men respected me; I gave water to the thirsty; I set the wanderer on his path; I took away the oppressor, and put a stop to violence." "I myself was just and true," writes another: "without malice, having put God in my heart, and being quick to discern His will. I have done good upon earth; I have harboured no prejudice; I have not been wicked; I have not approved of any offence or iniquity; I have taken pleasure in speaking the truth.... Pure is my soul; while living I bore no malice. There are no errors attributable to me; no sins of mine are before the judges.... The men of the future, while they live, will be charmed by my remarkable merits." And another: "I have not oppressed any widow; no prisoner languished in my days; no one died of hunger. When there were years of famine, I had my fields ploughed. I gave food to the inhabitants, so that there was no hungry person. I gave the widow an equal portion with the married; I did not prefer the rich to the poor."

The moral standard thus set up, though satisfactory, so far as it went, was in many respects deficient. It did not comprise humility; it scarcely seems to have comprised purity. The religious sculptures of the Egyptians were grossly indecent; their religious festivals were kept in an indecent way; phallic orgies were a part of them, and phallic orgies of a gross kind. The Egyptians tolerated incest, and could defend it by the example of the gods. Osiris had married his sister; Khem was "the Bull of his mother". The Egyptian novelettes are full of indecency and immorality, and Egyptian travellers describe their amours very much in the spirit of Ferdinand, Count Fathom; moreover, the complacency with which each Egyptian declares himself on his tomb to have possessed every virtue, and to have been free from all vices, is most remarkable. "I was a good man before the king; I saved the population in the dire calamity which befell all the land; I shielded the weak against the strong; I did all good things when the time came to do them; I was pious towards my father, and did the will of my mother; I was kind-hearted towards my brethren ... I made a good sarcophagus for him who had no coffin. When the dire calamity befell the land, I made the children to live, I established the houses, I did for them all such good things as a father does for his sons."

And, notwithstanding all this braggadocio, performance seems to have lagged sadly behind profession. Kings boast of slaying their unresisting prisoners with their own hand, and represent themselves in the act of doing so. They come back from battle with the gory heads of their slain enemies hanging from their chariots. Licentiousness prevailed in the palace, and members of the royal harem intrigued with those who sought the life of the king. A belief in magic was general, and men endeavoured to destroy or injure those whom they hated by wasting their waxen effigies at a slow fire to the accompaniment of incantations. Thieves were numerous, and did not scruple even to violate the sanctity of the tomb in order to obtain a satisfactory booty. A famous "thieves' society," formed for the purpose of opening and plundering the royal tombs, contained among its members persons of the sacerdotal order.

Social ranks in Egypt were divided somewhat sharply. There was a large class of nobles, who were mostly great landed proprietors living on their estates, and having under them a vast body of dependents, servants, labourers, artizans &c. There was also a numerous official class, partly employed at the court, partly holding government posts throughout the country, which regarded itself as highly dignified, and looked down _de haut en has_ on "the people." Commands in the army seem to have been among the prizes which from time to time fell to the lot of such persons. Further, there was a literary class, which was eminently respectable, and which

viewed with contempt those who were engaged in trade or handicrafts.

Below these three classes, and removed from them by a long interval, was the mass of the population--"the multitude" as the Egyptians called them. These persons were engaged in manual labour of different kinds. The greater number were employed on the farms of the nobles, in the cultivation of the soil or in the rearing of cattle. A portion were boatmen, fishermen, or fowlers. Others pursued the various known handicrafts. They were weavers, workers in metal, stone-cutters, masons, potters, carpenters, upholsterers, tailors, shoe-makers, glass-blowers, boat-builders, wig-makers, and embalmers. There were also among them painters and sculptors. But all these employments "stank" in the nostrils of the upper classes, and were regarded as unworthy of any one who wished to be thought respectable.

Still, the line of demarcation, decided as it was, might be crossed. It is an entire mistake to suppose that caste existed in Egypt. Men frequently bred up their sons to their own trade or profession, as they do in all countries, but they were not obliged to do so--there was absolutely no compulsion in the matter. The "public-schools" of Egypt were open to all comers, and the son of the artizan sat on the same bench with the son of the noble, enjoyed the same education, and had an equal opportunity of distinguishing himself. If he showed sufficient promise, he was recommended to adopt the literary life; and the literary life was the sure passport to State employment. State employment once entered upon, merit secured advancement; and thus there was, in fact, no obstacle to prevent the son of a labouring man from rising to the very highest positions in the administration of the empire. Successful ministers were usually rewarded by large grants of land from the royal domain; and it follows that a clever youth of the labouring class might by good conduct and ability make his way even into the ranks of the landed aristocracy.

On the other hand, practically, the condition of the labouring class was, generally speaking, a hard and sad one. The kings were entitled to employ as many of their subjects as they pleased in forced labours, and monarchs often sacrificed to their inordinate vanity the lives and happiness of thousands. Private employers of labour were frequently cruel and exacting; their overseers used the stick, and it was not easy for those who suffered to obtain any redress. Moreover, taxation was heavy, and inability to satisfy the collector subjected the defaulter to the bastinado. Those who have studied the antiquities of Egypt with most care, tell us that there was not much to choose between the condition of the ancient labourers and that of the unhappy _fellahin_ of the present day.

III. The Dawn of History

All nations, unless they be colonies, have a prehistoric time--a dark period of mist and gloom, before the keen light of history dawns upon them. This period is the favourite playground of the myth-spirits, where they disport themselves freely, or lounge heavily and listlessly, according to their different natures. The Egyptian spirits were of the heavier and duller kind--not light and frolicsome, like the Greek and the Indo-Iranian. It has been said that Egypt never produced more than one myth, the Osirid legend; and this is so far true that in no other case is the story told at any considerable length, or with any considerable number of exciting incidents. There are, however, many short legends in the Egyptian remains, which have more or less of interest, and show that the people was not altogether devoid of imagination, though their imagination was far from lively. Seb, for instance, once upon a time, took the form of a goose, and laid the mundane egg, and hatched it. Thoth once wrote a wonderful book, full of wisdom and science, which told of everything concerning the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea,

and the four-footed beasts of the earth. He who knew a single page of the book could charm the heaven, the earth, the great abyss, the mountains, and the seas. Thoth took the work and enclosed it in a box of gold, and the box of gold he placed within a box of silver, and the silver box within a box of ivory and ebony, and that again within a box of bronze; and the bronze box he enclosed within a box of brass, and the brass box within a box of iron; and the box, thus guarded, he threw into the Nile at Coptos. But a priest discovered the whereabouts of the book, and sold the knowledge to a young noble for a hundred pieces of silver, and the young noble with great trouble fished the book up. But the possession of the book brought him not good but evil. He lost his wife; he lost his child; he became entangled in a disgraceful intrigue. He was glad to part with the book. But the next possessor was not more fortunate; the book brought him no luck. The quest after unlawful knowledge involved all who sought it in calamity.

Another myth had for its subject the proposed destruction of mankind by Ra, the Sun-god. Ra had succeeded Phthah as king of Egypt, and had reigned for a long term of years in peace, contented with his subjects and they with him. But a time came when they grew headstrong and unruly; they uttered words against Ra; they plotted evil things; they grievously offended him. So Ra called the council of the gods together and asked them to advise him what he should do. They said mankind must be destroyed, and committed the task of destruction to Athor and Sekhet, who proceeded to smite the men over the whole land. But now fear came upon mankind; and the men of Elephantine made haste, and extracted the juice from the best of their fruits, and mingled it with human blood, and filled seven thousand jars, and brought them as an offering to the offended god. Ra drank and was content, and ordered the liquor that remained in the jars to be poured out; and, lo! it was an inundation which covered the whole land of Egypt; and when Athor went forth the next day to destroy, she saw no men in the fields, but only water, which she drank, and it pleased her, and she went away satisfied.

It would require another Euhemerus to find any groundwork of history in these narratives. We must turn away from the "shadow-land" which the Egyptians called the time of the gods on earth, if we would find trace of the real doings of men in the Nile valley, and put before our readers actual human beings in the place of airy phantoms. The Egyptians themselves taught that the first man of whom they had any record was a king called M'na, a name which the Greeks represented by Men or Menes. M'na was born at Tena (This or Thinis) in Upper Egypt, where his ancestors had borne sway before him. He was the first to master the Lower country, and thus to unite under a single sceptre the "two Egypts"--the long narrow Nile valley and the broad Delta plain. Having placed on his head the double crown which thenceforth symbolized dominion over both tracts, his first thought was that a new capital was needed. Egypt could not, he felt, be ruled conveniently from the latitude of Thebes, or from any site in the Upper country; it required a capital which should abut on both regions, and so command both. Nature pointed out one only fit locality, the junction of the plain with the vale--"the balance of the two regions," as the Egyptians called it; the place where the narrow "Upper Country" terminates, and Egypt opens out into the wide smiling plain that thence spreads itself on every side to the sea. Hence there would be easy access to both regions; both would be, in a way, commanded; here, too, was a readily defensible position, one assailable only in front. Experience has shown that the instinct of the first founder was right, or that his political and strategic foresight was extraordinary. Though circumstances, once and again, transferred the seat of government to Thebes or Alexandria, yet such removals were short-lived. The force of geographic fact was too strong to be permanently overcome,

and after a few centuries power gravitated back to the centre pointed out by nature.

If we may believe the tradition, there was, when the idea of building the new capital arose, a difficulty in obtaining a site in all respects advantageous. The Nile, before debouching upon the plain, hugged for many miles the base of the Libyan hills, and was thus on the wrong side of the valley. It was wanted on the other side, in order to be a water-bulwark against an Asiatic invader. The founder, therefore, before building his city, undertook a gigantic work. He raised a great embankment across the natural course of the river; and, forcing it from its bed, made it enter a new channel and run midway down the valley, or, if anything, rather towards its eastern side. He thus obtained the bulwark against invasion that he required, and he had an ample site for his capital between the new channel of the stream and the foot of the western hills.

It is undoubtedly strange to hear of such a work being constructed at the very dawn of history, by a population that was just becoming a people. But in Egypt precocity is the rule--a Minerva starts full-grown from the head of Jove. The pyramids themselves cannot be placed very long after the supposed reign of Menes; and the engineering skill implied in the pyramids is simply of a piece with that attributed to the founder of Memphis.

In ancient times a city was nothing without a temple; and the capital city of the most religious people in the world could not by any possibility lack that centre of civic life which its chief temple always was to every ancient town. Philosophy must settle the question how it came to pass that religious ideas were in ancient times so universally prevalent and so strongly pronounced. History is only bound to note the fact. Coeval, then, with the foundation of the city of Menes was, according to the tradition, the erection of a great temple to Phthah--"the Revealer," the Divine artificer, by whom the world and man were created, and the hidden thought of the remote Supreme Being was made manifest to His creatures, Phthah's temple lay within the town, and was originally a _naos_ or "cell," a single building probably not unlike that between the Sphinx's paws at Ghizeh, situated within a _temenos_, or "sacred enclosure," watered from the river, and no doubt planted with trees. Like the medieval cathedrals, the building grew with the lapse of centuries, great kings continually adding new structures to the main edifice, and enriching it with statuary and painting. Herodotus saw it in its full glory, and calls it "a vast edifice, very worthy of commemoration." Abd-el-Latif saw it in its decline, and notes the beauty of its remains: "the great monolithic shrine of breccia verde, nine cubits high, eight long, and seven broad, the doors which swung on hinges of stone, the well-carven statues, and the lions terrific in their aspect." At the present day scarcely a trace remains. One broken colossus of the Great Ramesses, till very recently prostrate, and a few nondescript fragments, alone continue on the spot, to attest to moderns the position of that antique fane, which the Egyptians themselves regarded as the oldest in their land.

The new city received from its founder the name of Men-nefer--"the Good Abode." It was also known as Ei-Ptah--"the House of Phthah." From the former name came the prevailing appellations--the "Memphis" of the Greeks and Romans, the "Moph" of the Hebrews, the "Mimpi" of the Assyrians, and the name still given to the ruins, "Tel-Monf." It was indeed a "good abode"--watered by an unfailing stream, navigable from the sea, which at once brought it supplies and afforded it a strong protection, surrounded on three sides by the richest and most productive alluvium, close to quarries of excellent stone, warm in winter, fanned by the cool northern breezes in the summer-time, within easy reach of the sea, yet not so near as to attract the cupidity of pirates. Few capitals have been more favourably placed. It

was inevitable that when the old town went to ruins, a new one should spring up in its stead. Memphis still exists, in a certain sense, in the glories of the modern Cairo, which occupies an adjacent site, and is composed largely of the same materials.

The Egyptians knew no more of their first king than that he turned the course of the Nile, founded Memphis, built the nucleus of the great temple of Phthah, and "was devoured by a hippopotamus." This last fact is related with all due gravity by Manetho, notwithstanding that the hippopotamus is a graminivorous animal, one that "eats grass like an ox" (Job xi. 15). Probably the old Egyptian writer whom he followed meant that M'na at last fell a victim to Taourt, the Goddess of Evil, to whom the hippopotamus was sacred, and who was herself figured as a hippopotamus erect. This would be merely equivalent to relating that he succumbed to death. Manetho gave him a reign of sixty-two years.

The question is asked by the modern critics, who will take nothing on trust, "Have we in Menes a real Egyptian, a being of flesh and blood, one who truly lived, breathed, fought, built, ruled, and at last died? Or are we still dealing with a phantom, as much as when we spoke of Seb, and Thoth, and Osiris, and Set, and Horus?" The answer seems to be, that we cannot tell. The Egyptians believed in Menes as a man; they placed him at the head of their dynastic lists; but they had no contemporary monument to show inscribed with his name. A name like that of Menes is found at the beginning of things in so many nations, that on that account alone the word would be suspicious; in Greece it is Minos, in Phrygia Manis, in Lydia Manes, in India Menu, in Germany Mannus. And again, the name of the founder is so like that of the city which he founded, that another suspicion arises--Have we not here one of the many instances of a personal name made out of a local one, as Nin or Ninus from Nineveh (Ninua), Romulus from Roma, and the like? Probably we shall do best to acquiesce in the judgment of Dr. Birch: "Menes must be placed among those founders of monarchies whose personal existence a severe and enlightened criticism doubts or denies."

The city was, however, a reality, the embankment was a reality, the temple of Phthah was a reality, and the founding of a kingdom in Egypt, which included both the Upper and the Lower country some considerable time before the date of Abraham, was a reality, which the sternest criticism need not--nay, cannot--doubt. All antiquity attests that the valley of the Nile was one of the first seats of civilization. Abraham found a settled government established there when he visited the country, and a consecutive series of monuments carries the date of the first civilization at least as far back as B.C. 2700--probably further.

If the great Menes, then, notwithstanding all that we are told of his doings, be a mere shadowy personage, little more than _magni nominis umbra_, what shall we say of his twenty or thirty successors of the first, second, and third dynasties? What but that they are shadows of shadows? The native monuments of the early Ramesside period (about B.C. 1400-1300) assign to this time some twenty-five names of kings; but they do not agree in their order, nor do they altogether agree in the names. The kings, if they were kings, have left no history--we can only by conjecture attach to them any particular buildings, we can give no account of their actions, we can assign no chronology to their reigns. They are of no more importance in the "story of Egypt" than the Alban kings in the "story of Rome." "Non ragionam di loro, ma guarda e passi."

The first living, breathing, acting, flesh-and-blood personage, whom so-called histories of Egypt present to us, is a certain Sneferu, or Seneferu, whom the Egyptians seem to have regarded as the first monarch of their fourth dynasty. Sneferu--called by Manetho, we

know not why, Soris--has left us a representation of himself, and an inscription. On the rocks of Wady Magharah, in the Sinaitic peninsula, may be seen to this day an incised tablet representing the monarch in the act of smiting an enemy, whom he holds by the hair of his head, with a mace. The action is apparently emblematic, for at the side we see the words _Ta satu_, "Smiter of the nations;" and it is a fair explanation of the tablet, that its intention was to signify that the Pharaoh in question had reduced to subjection the tribes which in his time inhabited the Sinaitic regions. The motive of the attack was not mere lust of conquest, but rather the desire of gain. The Wady Magharah contained mines of copper and of turquoise, which the Egyptians desired to work; and for this purpose it was necessary to hold the country by a set of military posts, in order that the miners might pursue their labours without molestation. Some ruins of the fortifications are still to be seen; and the mines themselves, now exhausted, pierce the sides of the rocks, and bear in many places traces of hieroglyphical inscriptions The remains of temples show that the expatriated colonists were not left without the consolations of religion, while a deep well indicates the care that was taken to supply their temporal needs. Thousands of stone arrow-heads give evidence of the presence of a strong garrison, and make us acquainted with the weapon which they found most effectual against their enemies.

Sneferu calls himself _Neter aa_, "the Great God," and _Neb mat_, "the Lord of Justice." He is also "the Golden Horus," or "the Conqueror." _Neb mat_ is not a usual title with Egyptian monarchs; and its assumption by Sneferu would seem to mark, at any rate, his appreciation of the excellence of justice, and his desire to have the reputation of a just ruler. Later ages give him the title of "the beneficent king," so that he would seem to have been a really unselfish and kindly sovereign. His form, however, only just emerges from the mists of the period to be again concealed from our view, and we vainly ask ourselves what exactly were the benefits that he conferred on Egypt, so as to attain his high reputation.

Still, the monuments of his time are sufficient to tell us something of the Egypt of his day, and of the amount and character of the civilization so early attained by the Egyptian people. Besides his own tablet in the Wady Magharah, there are in the neighbourhood of the pyramids of Ghizeh a number of tombs which belong to the officials of his court and the members of his family. These tombs contain both sculptures and inscriptions, and throw considerable light on the condition of the country.

In the first place, it is apparent that the style of writing has been invented which is called hieroglyphical, and which has the appearance of a picture writing, though it is almost as absolutely phonetic as any other. Setting apart a certain small number of "determinatives," each sign stands for a sound--the greater part for those elementary sounds which we express by letters. An eagle is _a_, a leg and foot _b_, a horned serpent _f_, a hand _t_, an owl _m_, a chicken _u_, and the like. It is true that there are signs which express a compound sound, a whole word, even a word of two syllables. A bowl or basin represents the sound of _neb_, a hatchet that of _neter_, a guitar that of _nefer_, a crescent that of _aah_, and so on. Secondly, it is clear that artistic power is considerable. The animal forms used in the hieroglyphics--the bee, the vulture, the uraeus, the hawk, the chicken, the eagle--are well drawn. In the human forms there is less merit, but still they are fairly well proportioned and have spirit. No rudeness or want of finish attaches either to the writing or to the drawing of Sneferu's time; the artists do not attempt much, but what they attempt they accomplish.

Next, we may notice the character of the tombs. Already the tomb was more important than the house; and while every habitation constructed for the living men of the time has

utterly perished, scores of the dwellings assigned to the departed still exist, many in an excellent condition. They are stone buildings resembling small houses, each with its door of entrance, but with no windows, and forming internally a small chamber generally decorated with sculptures. The walls slope at an angle of seventy-five or eighty degrees externally, but in the interior are perpendicular. The roof is composed of large flat stones. Strictly speaking, the chambers are not actual tombs, but mortuary chapels. The embalmed body of the deceased, encased in its wooden coffin (Gen. 1. 26), was not deposited in the chamber, but in an excavation under one of the walls, which was carefully closed up after the coffin had been placed inside it. The chamber was used by the relations for sacred rites, sacrificial feasts, and the like, held in honour of the deceased, especially on the anniversary of his death and entrance into Amenti. The early Egyptians indulged, like the Chinese, in a worship of ancestors. The members of a family met from time to time in the sepulchral chamber of their father, or their grandfather, and went through various ceremonies, sang hymns, poured libations, and made offerings, which were regarded as pleasing to the departed, and which secured their protection and help to such of their descendants as took part in the pious practices.

Sometimes a tomb was more pretentious than those above described. There is an edifice at Meydoum, improperly termed a pyramid, which is thought to be older than Sneferu, and was probably erected by one of the "shadowy kings" who preceded him on the throne. Situated on a natural rocky knoll of some considerable height, it rises in three stages at an angle of 74 deg. 10' to an elevation of a hundred and twenty-five feet. It is built of a compact limestone, which must have been brought from some distance. The first stage has a height a little short of seventy feet; the next exceeds thirty-two feet; the third is a little over twenty-two feet. It is possible that originally there were more stages, and probable that the present highest stage has in part crumbled away; so that we may fairly reckon the original height to have been between a hundred and forty and a hundred and fifty feet The monument is generally regarded as a tomb, from its situation in the Memphian necropolis and its remote resemblance to the pyramids; but as yet it has not been penetrated, and consequently has not been proved to have been sepulchral.

A construction, which has even a greater appearance of antiquity than the Meydoum tower, exists at Saccarah. Here the architect carried up a monument to the height of two hundred feet, by constructing it in six or seven sloping stages, having an angle of 73 deg. 30'. The core of his building was composed of rubble, but this was protected on every side by a thick casing of limestone roughly hewn, and apparently quarried on the spot. The sepulchral intention of the construction is unquestionable. It covered a spacious chamber excavated in the rock, whereon the monument was built, which, when first discovered, contained a sarcophagus and was lined with slabs of granite. Carefully concealed passages connected the chamber with the outer world, and allowed of its being entered by those in possession of the "secrets of the prison-house." In this structure we have, no doubt, the tomb of a king more ancient than Sneferu--though for our own part we should hesitate to assign the monument to one king rather than another.

If we pass from the architecture of the period to its social condition, we remark that grades of society already existed, and were as pronounced as in later times. The kings were already deities, and treated with superstitious regard. The state-officials were a highly privileged class, generally more or less connected with the royal family. The land was partly owned by the king (Gen. xlvii. 6), who employed his own labourers and herdsmen upon it; partly, mainly perhaps, it was in the hands of great landed proprietors--nobles,

who lived in country houses upon their estates, maintaining large households, and giving employment to scores of peasants, herdsmen, artizans, huntsmen, and fishermen. The "lower orders" were of very little account. They were at the beck and call of the landed aristocracy in the country districts, of the state-officials in the towns. Above all, the monarch had the right of impressing them into his service whenever he pleased, and employing them in the "great works" by which he strove to perpetuate his name.

There prevailed, however, a great simplicity of manners. The dress of the upper classes was wonderfully plain and unpretending, presenting little variety and scarcely any ornament. The grandee wore, indeed, an elaborate wig, it being imperative on all men to shave the head for the sake of cleanliness. But otherwise, his costume was of the simplest and the scantiest. Ordinarily, when he was employed in the common duties of life, a short tunic, probably of white linen, reaching from the waist to a little above the knee, was his sole garment. His arms, chest, legs, even his feet, were naked; for sandals, not to speak of stockings or shoes, were unknown. The only decoration which he wore was a chain or riband round the neck, to which was suspended an ornament like a locket--probably an amulet. In his right hand he carried a long staff or wand, either for the purpose of belabouring his inferiors, or else to use it as a walking-stick. On special occasions he made, however, a more elaborate toilet. Doffing his linen tunic, he clothed himself in a single, somewhat scanty, robe, which reached from the neck to the ankles; and having exchanged his chain and locket for a broad collar, and adorned his wrists with bracelets, he was ready to pay visits or to receive company. He had no carriage, so far as appears, not even a palanquin; no horse to ride, nor even a mule or a donkey. The great men of the East rode, in later times, on "white asses" (Judges v. 10); the Egyptian of Sneferu's age had to trudge to court, or to make calls upon his friends, by the sole aid of those means of locomotion which nature had given him.

Women, who in most civilized countries claim to themselves far more elaboration in dress and variety of ornament than men, were content, in the Egypt of which we are here speaking, with a costume, and a personal decoration, scarcely less simple than that of their husbands. The Egyptian _materfamilias_ of the time wore her hair long, and gathered into three masses, one behind the head, and the other two in front of either shoulder. Like her spouse, she had but a single garment--a short gown or petticoat reaching from just below the breasts to half way down the calf of the leg, and supported by two broad straps passed over the two shoulders. She exposed her arms and bosom to sight, and her feet were bare, like her husband's. Her only ornaments were bracelets.

There was no seclusion of women at any time among the ancient Egyptians. The figure of the wife on the early monuments constantly accompanies that of her husband. She is his associate in all his occupations. Her subordination is indicated by her representation being on an unduly smaller scale, and by her ordinary position, which is behind the figure of her "lord and master." In statuary, however, she appears seated with him on the same seat or chair. There is no appearance of her having been either a drudge or a plaything. She was regarded as man's true "helpmate," shared his thoughts, ruled his family, and during their early years had the charge of his children. Polygamy was unknown in Egypt during the primitive period; even the kings had then but one wife. Sneferu's wife was a certain Mertitefs, who bore him a son, Nefer-mat, and after his death became the wife of his successor. Women were entombed with as much care, and almost with as much pomp, as men. Their right to ascend the throne is said to have been asserted by one of the kings who preceded Sneferu; and from time to time women

actually exercised in Egypt the royal authority.

IV. The Pyramid Builders

It is difficult for a European, or an American, who has not visited Egypt, to realize the conception of a Great Pyramid. The pyramidal form has gone entirely out of use as an architectural type of monumental perfection; nay, even as an architectural embellishment. It maintained an honourable position in architecture from its first discovery to the time of the Maccabee kings (1 Mac. xiii. 28); but, never having been adopted by either the Greeks or the Romans, it passed into desuetude in the Old World with the conquest of the East by the West. In the New World it was found existent by the early discoverers, and then held a high place in the regards of the native race which had reached the furthest towards civilization; but Spanish bigotry looked with horror on everything that stood connected with an idolatrous religion, and the pyramids of Mexico were first wantonly injured, and then allowed to fall into such a state of decay, that their original form is by some questioned. A visit to the plains of Teotihuacan will not convey to the mind which is a blank on the subject the true conception of a great pyramid. It requires a pilgrimage to Ghizeh or Saccarah, or a lively and _well-instructed_ imagination, to enable a man to call up before his mind's eye the true form and appearance and impressiveness of such a structure.

Lord Houghton endeavoured to give expression to the feelings of one who sees for the first time these wondrous, these incomprehensible creations in the following lines:

After the fantasies of many a night,
After the deep desires of many a day,
Rejoicing as an ancient Eremite Upon the desert's edge at last I lay: Before me rose, in wonderful array, Those works where man has rivalled Nature most, Those Pyramids, that fear no more decay Than waves inflict upon the rockiest coast, Or winds on mountain-steeps, and like endurance boast.

Fragments the deluge of old Time has left
Behind in its subsidence--long long walls
Of cities of their very names bereft,--
Lone columns, remnants of majestic halls,
Rich traceried chambers, where the night-dew falls,-- All have I seen with feelings due, I trow, Yet not with such as these memorials Of the great unremembered, that can show The mass and shape they wore four thousand years ago.

The Egyptian idea of a pyramid was that of a structure on a square base, with four inclining sides, each one of which should be an equilateral triangle, all meeting in a point at the top. The structure might be solid, and in that case might be either of hewn stone throughout, or consist of a mass of rubble merely held together by an external casing of stone; or it might contain chambers and passages, in which case the employment of rubble was scarcely possible. It has been demonstrated by actual excavation, that all the _great_ pyramids of Egypt were of the latter character that they were built for the express purpose of containing chambers and passages, and of preserving those chambers and passages intact. They required, therefore, to be, and in most cases are, of a good construction throughout.

There are from sixty to seventy pyramids in Egypt, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Memphis. Some of them are nearly perfect, some more or less in ruins, but most of them still preserving their ancient shape, when seen from afar. Two of them greatly exceed all the others in their dimensions, and are appropriately designated as "the Great Pyramid" and "the Second Pyramid." A third in their immediate vicinity is of very inferior size, and scarcely deserves the pre-eminence which has been conceded to it by the designation of "the Third Pyramid."

Still, the three seem, all of them, to deserve description, and to challenge a place in "the story of Egypt," which has never yet been told

without some account of the marvels of each of them. The smallest of the three was a square of three hundred and fifty-four feet each way, and had a height of two hundred and eighteen feet. It covered an area of two acres, three roods, and twenty-one poles, or about that of an ordinary London square. The cubic contents amounted to above nine million feet of solid masonry, and are calculated to have weighed 702,460 tons. The height was not very impressive. Two hundred and twenty feet is an altitude attained by the towers of many churches, and the "Pyramid of the Sun" at Teotihuacan did not fall much short of it; but the mass was immense, the masonry was excellent, and the ingenuity shown in the construction was great. Sunk in the rock from which the pyramid rose, was a series of sepulchral chambers. One, the largest, almost directly under the apex of the pyramid, was empty. In another, which had an arched roof, constructed in the most careful and elaborate way, was found the sarcophagus of the king, Men-kau-ra, to whom tradition assigned the building, formed of a single mass of blue-black basalt, exquisitely polished and beautifully carved, externally eight feet long, three feet high, and three feet broad, internally six feet by two. In the sarcophagus was the wooden coffin of the monarch, and on the lid of the coffin was his name. The chambers were connected by two long passages with the open air; and another passage had, apparently, been used for the same purpose before the pyramid attained its ultimate size. The tomb-chamber, though carved in the rock, had been paved and lined with slabs of solid stone, which were fastened to the native rock by iron cramps. The weight of the sarcophagus which it contained, now unhappily lost, was three tons.

The "Second Pyramid," which stands to the north-east of the Third, at the distance of about two hundred and seventy yards, was a square of seven hundred and seven feet each way, and thus covered an area of almost eleven acres and a half, or nearly double that of the greatest building which Rome ever produced--the Coliseum. The sides rose at an angle of 52 deg. 10'; and the perpendicular height was four hundred and fifty-four feet, or fifty feet more than that of the spire of Salisbury Cathedral. The cubic contents are estimated at 71,670,000 feet; and their weight is calculated at 5,309,000 tons. Numbers of this vast amount convey but little idea of the reality to an ordinary reader, and require to be made intelligible by comparisons. Suppose, then, a solidly built stone house, with walls a foot thick, twenty feet of frontage, and thirty feet of depth from front to back; let the walls be twenty-four feet high and have a foundation of six feet; throw in party-walls to one-third the extent of the main walls--and the result will be a building containing four thousand cubic feet of masonry. Let there be a town of eighteen thousand such houses, suited to be the abode of a hundred thousand inhabitants--then pull these houses to pieces, and pile them up into a heap to a height exceeding that of the spire of the Cathedral of Vienna, and you will have a rough representation of the "Second Pyramid of Ghizeh." Or lay down the contents of the structure in a line a foot in breadth and depth--the line would be above 13,500 miles long, and would reach more than half-way round the earth at the equator. Again, suppose that a single man can quarry a ton of stone in a week, then it would have required above twenty thousand to be employed constantly for five years in order to obtain the material for the pyramid; and if the blocks were required to be large, the number employed and the time occupied would have had to be greater.

The internal construction of the "Second Pyramid" is less elaborate than that of the Third, but not very different. Two passages lead from the outer air to a sepulchral chamber almost exactly under the apex of the pyramid, and exactly at its base, one of them commencing about fifty feet from the base midway in the north side, and the other commencing a little outside the base, in the pavement at the foot of the pyramid. The first

passage was carried through the substance of the pyramid for a distance of a hundred and ten feet at a descending angle of 25 deg. 55', after which it became horizontal, and was tunnelled through the native rock on which the pyramid was built. The second passage was wholly in the rock. It began with a descent at an angle of 21 deg. 40', which continued for a hundred feet; it was then horizontal for fifty feet; after which it ascended gently for ninety-six feet, and joined the first passage about midway between the sepulchral chamber and the outer air. The sepulchral chamber was carved mainly out of the solid rock below the pyramid, but was roofed in by some of the basement stones, which were sloped at an angle. The chamber measured forty-six feet in length and sixteen feet in breadth; its height in the centre was twenty-two feet. It contained a plain granite sarcophagus, without inscription of any kind, eight feet and a half in length, three feet and a half in breadth, and in depth three feet. There was no coffin in the sarcophagus at the time of its discovery, and no inscription on any part of the pyramid or of its contents. The tradition, however, which ascribed it to the immediate predecessor of Men-kau-ra, may be accepted as sufficient evidence of its author.

Come we now to the "Great Pyramid," "which is still," says Lenormant, "at least in respect of its mass, _the most prodigious of all human constructions_," The "Great Pyramid," or "First Pyramid of Ghizeh," as it is indifferently termed, is situated almost due north-east of the "Second Pyramid," at the distance of about two hundred yards. The length of each side at the base was originally seven hundred and sixty-four feet, or fifty-seven feet more than that of the sides of the "Second Pyramid." Its original perpendicular height was something over four hundred and eighty feet, its cubic contents exceeded eighty-nine million feet, and the weight of its mass 6,840,000 tons. In height it thus exceeded Strasburg Cathedral by above six feet, St. Peter's at Rome by above thirty feet, St. Stephen's at Vienna by fifty feet St. Paul's, London, by a hundred and twenty feet, and the Capitol at Washington by nearly two hundred feet. Its area was thirteen acres, one rood, and twenty-two poles, or nearly two acres more than the area of the "Second Pyramid." which was fourfold that of the "Third Pyramid," which, as we have seen, was that of an ordinary London square. Its cubic contents would build a city of twenty-two thousand such houses as were above described, and laid in a line of cubic squares would reach a distance of nearly seventeen thousand miles, or girdle two-thirds of the earth's circumference at the equator. Herodotus says that its construction required the continuous labour of a hundred thousand men for the space of twenty years, and moderns do not regard the estimate as exaggerated.

The "Great Pyramid" presents, moreover, many other marvels besides its size. First, there is the massiveness of the blocks of which it is composed. The basement stones are in many cases thirty feet long by five feet high, and four or five wide: they must contain from six hundred to seven hundred and fifty cubic feet each, and weigh from forty-six to fifty-seven tons. The granite blocks which roof over the upper sepulchral chamber are nearly nineteen feet long, by two broad and from three to four deep. The relieving stones above the same chamber, and those of the entrance passage, are almost equally massive. Generally the external blocks are of a size with which modern builders scarcely ever venture to deal, though the massiveness diminishes as the pyramid is ascended. The bulk of the interior is, however, of comparatively small stones; but even these are carefully hewn and squared, so as to fit together compactly.

Further, there are the passages, the long gallery, the ventilation shafts, and the sepulchral chambers all of them remarkable, and some of them simply astonishing. The "Great Pyramid" guards three chambers. One

lies deep in the rock, about a hundred and twenty feet beneath the natural surface of the ground, and is placed almost directly below the apex of the structure. It measures forty-six feet by twenty-seven, and is eleven feet high. The access to it is by a long and narrow passage which commences in the north side of the pyramid, about seventy feet above the original base, and descends for forty yards through the masonry, and then for seventy more in the same line through the solid rock, when it changes its direction, becoming horizontal for nine yards, and so entering the chamber itself. The two other chambers are reached by an ascending passage, which branches off from the descending one at the distance of about thirty yards from the entrance, and mounts up through the heart of the pyramid for rather more than forty yards, when it divides into two. A low horizontal gallery, a hundred and ten feet long, leads to a chamber which has been called "the Queen's"--a room about nineteen feet long by seventeen broad, roofed in with sloping blocks, and having a height of twenty feet in the centre. Another longer and much loftier gallery continues on for a hundred and fifty feet in the line of the ascending passage, and is then connected by a short horizontal passage with the upper-most or "King's Chamber." Here was found a sarcophagus believed to be that of King Khufu, since the name of Khufu was scrawled in more than one place on the chamber walls.

The construction of this chamber--the very kernel of the whole building--is exceedingly remarkable. It is a room of thirty-four feet in length, with a width of seventeen feet, and a height of nineteen, composed wholly of granite blocks of great size, beautifully polished, and fitted together with great care. The construction of the roof is particularly admirable. First, the chamber is covered in with nine huge blocks, each nearly nineteen feet long and four feet wide, which are laid side by side upon the walls so as to form a complete ceiling. Then above these blocks is a low chamber similarly covered in, and this is repeated four times; after which there is a fifth opening, triangular, and roofed in by a set of huge sloping blocks, which meet at the apex and support each other. The object is to relieve the chamber from any superincumbent weight, and prevent it from being crushed in by the mass of material above it; and this object has been so completely attained that still, at the expiration of above forty centuries, the entire chamber, with its elaborate roof, remains intact, without crack or settlement of any kind.

Further, from the great chamber are carried two ventilation-shafts, or air-passages, northwards and southwards, which open on the outer surface of the pyramid, and are respectively two hundred and thirty-three and one hundred and ninety-four feet long. These passages are square, or nearly so, and have a diameter varying between six and nine inches. They give a continual supply of pure air to the chamber, and keep it dry at all seasons.

The Great Gallery is also of curious construction. Extending for a distance of one hundred and fifty feet, and rising at an angle of 26 deg. 18', it has a width of five feet at the base and a height of above thirty feet. The side walls are formed of seven layers of stone, each projecting a few inches over that below it. The gallery thus gradually contracts towards the top, which has a width of four feet only, and is covered in with stones that reach across it, and rest on the walls at either side. The exact object of so lofty a gallery has not been ascertained; but it must have helped to keep the air of the interior pure and sweet, by increasing the space through which it had to circulate.

The "Pyramid Builders," or kings who constructed the three monuments that have now been described, were, according to a unanimous tradition, three consecutive monarchs, whose native names are read as Khufu, Shafra, and Menkaura. These kings belonged to Manetho's fourth dynasty; and

Khufu, the first of the three, seems to have been the immediate successor of Sneferu. Theorists have delighted to indulge in speculations as to the objects which the builders had in view when they raised such magnificent constructions. One holds that the Great Pyramid, at any rate, was built to embody cosmic discoveries, as the exact length of the earth's diameter and circumference, the length of an arc of the meridian, and the true unit of measure. Another believes the great work of Khufu to have been an observatory, and the ventilating passages to have been designed for "telescopes," through which observations were to be made upon the sun and stars; but it has not yet been shown that there is any valid foundation for these fancies, which have been spun with much art out of the delicate fabric of their propounders' brains. The one hard fact which rests upon abundant evidence is this--the pyramids were built for tombs, to contain the mummies of deceased Egyptians. The chambers in their interiors, at the time of their discovery, held within them sarcophagi, and in one instance the sarcophagus had within it a coffin. The coffin had an inscription upon it, which showed that it had once contained the body of a king. If anything more is necessary, we may add that every pyramid in Egypt--and there are, as he have said, more than sixty of them--was built for the same purpose, and that they all occupy sites in the great necropolis, or burial-ground opposite Memphis, where the inhabitants are known to have laid their dead.

The marvel is, how Khufu came suddenly to have so magnificent a thought as that of constructing an edifice double the height of any previously existing, covering five times the area, and containing ten times the mass. Architecture does not generally proceed by "leaps and bounds;" but here was a case of a sudden extraordinary advance, such as we shall find it difficult to parallel elsewhere. An attempt has been made to solve the mystery by the supposition that all pyramids were gradual accretions, and that their size marks simply the length of a king's reign, each monarch making his sepulchral chamber, with a small pyramid above it, in his first year, and as his reign went on, adding each year an outer coating; so that the number of these coatings tells the length of his reign, as the age of a tree is known from the number of its annual rings. In this case there would have been nothing ideally great in the conception of Khufu--he would simply have happened to erect the biggest pyramid because he happened to have the longest reign; but, except in the case of the "Third Pyramid," there is a unity of design in the structures which implies that the architect had conceived the whole structure in his mind from the first. The lengths of the several parts are proportioned one to another. In the "Great Pyramid," the main chamber would not have needed the five relieving chambers above it unless it was known that it would have to be pressed down by a superincumbent mass, such as actually lies upon it. Moreover, how is it possible to conceive that in the later years of a decrepid monarch, the whole of an enormous pyramid could be coated over with huge blocks--and the blocks are largest at the external surface--the work requiring to be pushed each year with more vigour, as becoming each year greater and more difficult? Again, what shall we say of the external finish? Each pyramid was finally smoothed down to a uniform sloping surface. This alone must have been a work of years. Did a pyramid builder leave it to his successor to finish his pyramid? It is at least doubtful whether any pyramid at all would ever have been finished had he done so.

We must hold, therefore, that Khufu did suddenly conceive a design without a parallel--did require his architect to construct him a tomb, which should put to shame all previous monuments, and should with difficulty be surpassed, or even equalled. He must have possessed much elevation of thought, and an intense ambition, together with inordinate selfishness, an overweening

pride, and entire callousness to the sufferings of others, before he could have approved the plan which his master-builder set before him. That plan, including the employment of huge blocks of stone, their conveyance to the top of a hill a hundred feet high, and their emplacement, in some cases, at a further elevation of above 450 feet, involved, under the circumstances of the time, such an amount of human suffering, that no king who had any regard for the happiness of his subjects could have consented to it. Khufu must have forced his subjects to labour for a long term of years--twenty, according to Herodotus--at a servile work which was wholly unproductive, and was carried on amid their sighs and groans for no object but his own glorification, and the supposed safe custody of his remains. Shafra must have done nearly the same. Hence an evil repute attached to the pyramid builders, whose names were handed down to posterity as those of evil-minded and impious kings, who neglected the service of the gods to gratify their own vanity, and, so long as they could exalt themselves, did not care how much they oppressed their people. There was not even the poor apology for their conduct that their oppression fell on slaves, or foreigners, or prisoners of war. Egypt was not yet a conquering power; prisoners of war were few, slaves not very common. The labourers whom the pyramid builders employed were their own free subjects whom they impressed into the heavy service.

It is by a just Nemesis that the kings have in a great measure failed to secure the ends at which they aimed, and in hope of which they steeled their hearts against their subjects' cries. They have indeed handed down their names to a remote age: but it is as tyrants and oppressors. They are world-famous, or rather world-infamous. But that preservation of their corporeal frame which they especially sought, is exactly what they have missed attaining.

Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops,

says the doggerel of the satiric Byron; and it is the absolute fact that while thousands of mummies buried in common graves remain untouched even to the present day, the very grandeur of the pyramid builders' tombs attracted attention to them, caused the monuments to be opened, the sarcophagi to be rifled, and the remains inclosed in them to be dispersed to the four winds of heaven.

Still, whatever gloomy associations attach to the pyramids in respect of the sufferings caused by their erection, as monuments they must always challenge a certain amount of admiration. A great authority declares: "No one can possibly examine the interior of the Great Pyramid without being struck with astonishment at the wonderful mechanical skill displayed in its construction. The immense blocks of granite brought from Syene, a distance of five hundred miles, polished like glass, and so fitted that the joints can scarcely be detected! Nothing can be more wonderful than the extraordinary amount of knowledge displayed in the construction of the discharging chambers over the roof of the principal apartment, in the alignment of the sloping galleries, in the provision of the ventilating shafts, and in all the wonderful contrivances of the structure. All these, too, are carried out with such precision that, notwithstanding the immense superincumbent weight, no settlement in any part can be detected to an appreciable fraction of an inch. Nothing more perfect mechanically has ever been erected since that time."

The architectural effect of the two greatest of the pyramids is certainly magnificent. They do not greatly impress the beholder at first sight, for a pyramid, by the very law of its formation, never looks as large as it is--it slopes away from the eye in every direction, and eludes rather than courts observation. But as the spectator gazes, as he prolongs his examination and inspection, the pyramids

gain upon him, their impressiveness increases. By the vastness of their mass, by the impression of solidity and durability which they produce, partly also, perhaps, by the symmetry and harmony of their lines and their perfect simplicity and freedom from ornament, they convey to the beholder a sense of grandeur and majesty, they produce within him a feeling of astonishment and awe, such as is scarcely caused by any other of the erections of man. In all ages travellers have felt and expressed the warmest admiration for them. They impressed Herodotus as no works that he had seen elsewhere, except, perhaps, the Babylonian. They astonished Germanicus, familiar as he was with the great constructions of Rome. They furnished Napoleon with the telling phrase, "Soldiers, forty centuries look down upon you from the top of the pyramids." Greece and Rome reckoned them among the Seven Wonders of the world. Moderns have doubted whether they could really be the work of human hands. If they possess only one of the elements of architectural excellence, they possess that element to so great an extent that in respect of it they are unsurpassed, and probably unsurpassable.

These remarks apply especially to the first and second pyramids. The "Third" is not a work of any very extraordinary grandeur. The bulk is not greater than that of the chief pyramid of Saccarah, which has never attracted much attention; and the height did not greatly exceed that of the chief Mexican temple-mound. Moreover, the stones of which the pyramid was composed are not excessively massive. The monument aimed at being beautiful rather than grand. It was coated for half its height with blocks of pink granite from Syene, bevelled at the edges, which remain still in place on two sides of the structure. The entrance to it, on the north side, was conspicuous, and seems to have had a metal ornamentation let into the stone. The sepulchral chamber was beautifully lined and roofed, and the sarcophagus was exquisitively carved. Menkaura, the constructor, was not regarded as a tyrant, or an oppressor, but as a mild and religious monarch, whom the gods ill-used by giving him too short a reign. His religious temper is indicated by the inscription on the coffin which contained his remains: "O Osiris," it reads, "King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menkaura, living eternally, engendered by the Heaven, born of Nut, substance of Seb, thy mother Nut stretches herself over thee in her name of the abyss of heaven. She renders thee divine by destroying all thy enemies, O King Menkaura, living eternally."

The fashion of burying in pyramids continued to the close of Manetho's sixth dynasty, but no later monarchs rivalled the great works of Khufu and Shafra. The tombs of their successors were monuments of a moderate size, involving no oppression of the people, but perhaps rather improving their condition by causing a rise in the rate of wages. Certainly, the native remains of the period give a cheerful representation of the condition of all classes. The nation for the most part enjoys peace, and applies itself to production. The wealth of the nobles increases, and the position of their dependents is improved. Slaves were few, and there was ample employment for the labouring classes. We do not see the stick at work upon the backs of the labourers in the sculptures of the time; they seem to accomplish their various tasks with alacrity and gaiety of heart. They plough, and hoe, and reap; drive cattle or asses; winnow and store corn; gather grapes and tread them, singing in chorus as they tread; cluster round the winepress or the threshingfloor, on which the animals tramp out the grain; gather lotuses; save cattle from the inundation; engage in fowling or fishing; and do all with an apparent readiness and cheerfulness which seems indicative of real content. There may have been a darker side to the picture, and undoubtedly was while Khufu and Shafra held the throne; but kings of a morose and cruel temper seem to have been the exception, rather than the rule, in Egypt; and the moral

code, which required kindness to be shown to dependents, seems, at this period at any rate, to have had a hold upon the consciences, and to have influenced the conduct, of the mass of the people. "Happy the nation that has no history!" Egypt during this golden age was neither assailed by any aggressive power beyond her borders, nor had herself conceived the idea of distant conquest. An occasional raid upon the negroes of the South, or chastisement of the nomades of the East, secured her interests in those quarters, and prevented her warlike virtues from dying out through lack of use. But otherwise tranquillity was undisturbed, and the energies of the nation were directed to increasing its material prosperity, and to progress in the arts.

Among the marvels of Egypt perhaps the Sphinx is second to none. The mysterious being with the head of a man and the body of a lion is not at all uncommon in Egyptian architectural adornment, but the one placed before the Second Pyramid (the Pyramid of Shafra), and supposed to be contemporary with it, astonishes the observer by its gigantic proportions. It is known to the Arabs as Abul-hol, the father of terror. It measures more than one hundred feet in length, and was partially carved from the rocks of the Lybian hills. Between its out-stretched feet there stands a chapel, uncovered in 1816, three walls of which are formed by tablets bearing inscriptions indicative of its use and origin.

A small temple behind the great Sphinx, probably also built by Shafra, is formed of great blocks of the hardest red granite, brought from the neighbourhood of Syene and fitted to each other with a nicety astonishing to modern architects, who are unable to imagine what tools could have proved equal to the difficult achievement. Mysterious passages pierce the great Sphinx and connect it with the Second Pyramid, three hundred feet west of it. In the face of this mystery all questions are vain, and yet every visitor adds new queries to those that others have asked before him.