

purpose this evening to lead you back to a scientific age some four, five, six, or seven thousand years ago, and to point out that the records that were written on the tombs of Egypt, and found in the papyri which have lain for ages in those tombs, tend to illustrate the truth of the grand record which we have in God's Holy Word.

EGYPT: PHYSICAL, HISTORICAL, LITERARY, AND SOCIAL. By the Rev. J. LESLIE PORTER, D.D., D.C.L.,
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JUST about thirty years ago I first set foot in Egypt. Since that time I have paid several visits to the country, and have had full opportunity of inspecting its modern towns, and of examining that marvellous system of irrigation which is the sole source of its wealth. I have also explored many of its grand temples and tombs. I have tried to discover the origin and object of its pyramids, obelisks, sphinxes, and colossal statues. I have spent much time in the study of its unique historic records, inscribed upon the walls of Karnak, Luxor, and Abu Simbel, and written upon papyrus rolls which have lain for thousands of years entombed with the embalmed bodies of the mighty dead, and are now, year after year, being brought forth by successful explorers, perfect as when deposited beside the mummies of the Pharaohs, and are being deciphered by scholars. I have inspected also, with absorbing interest, the interiors of those vast rock-hewn sepulchral chambers, on whose walls are depicted with singular minuteness of detail, artistic skill, and brilliancy of colouring, the manifold arts and industries, field labours and domestic pursuits, amusements, battles and conquests, trials and punishments, royal processions and state formalities, religious observances, funeral rites and ceremonies,—in a word, the whole life of the ancient Egyptians, in their best days, from the monarch to the peasant, from the warrior triumphing to the chained captive and down-trodden slave. I have spent days and days, with ever-increasing interest, in the Museum of Boulak, where the French and German savants, Brugsch, and Mariette, and Maspero have, with extraordinary industry, research, and scholarly instinct, accumulated treasures of ancient art and literature unequalled

in the world. I have also, during my visits, talked familiarly with the cultivators of the soil,—those *fellahin*, as they are called in their native tongue, who are doubtless the descendants of the aboriginal Copts. I have talked with the village *Sheikhs*, and district *Mudirs*, the hard task-masters of the fellahin. I have talked also with the Beys and Pashas, men of an alien race and foreign language, who have long usurped authority, and who continue to oppress the people and spoil the country.

I thus claim to know something of Egypt; and my wish now is to give, in the shortest possible space, a sketch of its general geography, history, condition, and prospects. It must only be a sketch, for to treat any of those topics fully would take a volume.

Physical Geography.

In many respects Egypt is the most interesting and remarkable country in the world. Its physical geography is unique. Its historic records are the oldest extant, not even excepting those of the Hebrews or Chaldeans. And those records have this peculiarity, that they touch, and to some considerable extent illustrate, the history of nearly every great nation of ancient and modern times. The primeval Hittites, the Jews, the pastoral Arabs, the commercial Phœnicians, the warlike Assyrians and Persians, the Greeks and Romans, are all figured on the Egyptian monuments, and described in their hieroglyphic inscriptions, or in their voluminous hieratic papyri. Egypt is thus a grand storehouse of antiquarian lore—a museum of primeval art, revealing the origin and development of letters, science, and useful inventions.

Then, again, in later ages, Egypt's new capital, Cairo, was enriched with some of the most elegant and gorgeous mosques and tombs of the Califs. The valley of the Nile became in succession the battle-field of Tartar and Crusader, Turk and Frank; and now, in our own day, the eyes of the civilised world are concentrated upon that strange conflict between the fierce tribes of the Soudan and the armies of England.

The history and antiquities of Egypt have had for me, during many years, a singular fascination, which, I need scarcely say, has not been diminished by recent events. I venture to express a hope that I may be so fortunate as to succeed in inspiring at least some of those who hear my words with a little of my own enthusiasm in the study of a subject which I have found to be, not only of absorbing interest, but of vast—even national—importance.

Egypt is the child of the Nile. The Nile deposits originally

formed its soil; and the Nile, and the Nile alone, renders that soil perennially fruitful. Were the Nile, by some convulsion of nature or by some gigantic work of engineering skill—neither of which is impossible—turned out of its present channel away up at Khartoum, or at any other point above Wady Halfa, Egypt would speedily become a desert. Water is absolutely necessary to fertility, and in Egypt there is scarcely any rain, and no water for irrigation save that of the Nile. It is a remarkable fact that the Nile does not receive a single tributary below Berber, though the distance thence to the sea, taking into account its tortuous course, is nearly two thousand miles. The volume of water decreases as it descends, partly owing to evaporation, but mainly to its employment for purposes of irrigation along the banks.

Ancient Names.

The most ancient name of Egypt—that found on its hieroglyphic inscriptions—is *Kam*, which means “Black,” and probably originated in the Nile deposits of black mud which cover the country. For the same reason apparently the Nile itself is called in the Bible (Josh. xiii. 3; Is. xxiii. 3) *Sihor*, “Black” or “Turbid.” Perhaps one might be right in assigning the same origin to the name given to Egypt by the Psalmist (cv. 23, 27; lxxviii. 51), “Land of *Ham*,” that is, “The Black Land.” The Hebrew *Ham* bears a close resemblance to the Egyptian *Kam*, and has the same signification. In fact, *Ham* is also an Egyptian word.

Egypt had in early ages, and still has, another name, *Misraim*, a dual form signifying “the two Misrs,” that is, Upper and Lower Egypt. The former embraces the valley of the Nile from Memphis (or Cairo) to Syene; the latter is the Delta.

The word *Misr*, or *Masur*, means “a defence,” and especially “a boundary defence,” and was most probably derived from those border forts built to protect the rich valley against the predatory incursions of the restless and warlike nomad tribes of the neighbouring deserts. Such forts were requisite from the very earliest period of the country’s history.

The name *Egypt* is not found on ancient monuments, and is not used by the natives. It appears to have originated in some way with the Greeks, and its meaning is uncertain. Poole suggests that it may be derived from the compound *Ai Kuptos*, “Land of the Kopts.” It was first given by

Homer and Strabo to the Nile, and then was extended to the whole country which the Nile has created, and still nourishes.

Ancient records represent Egypt as consisting of two provinces:—*Ta Res*, "The Southern Province"; and *Ta Meshit*, "The Northern Province." They correspond to the two divisions, Upper and Lower Egypt, already mentioned. The sovereign of each province is distinguished on monuments by a special crown. That of the Upper Province is white, and in form something like an Eastern water-jar; that of the Lower is red, and in shape not unlike a child's arm-chair. Each sovereign had also a distinctive title. The Upper was named *Shuten*, "King"; the Lower, *Shebt*, "Bee." May not this illustrate some passages of the Bible otherwise very obscure? The initial hieroglyphic sign of the word *Shuten* is a fractured reed; and the prophet Isaiah warned Israel, at a critical period of its history, in these figurative words: "Lo, thou trustest on the staff of this *bruised reed*, on Egypt" (xxxvi. 6; cf. Ezek. xxix. 6, 7); and the same prophet, in another place, speaks thus: "The Lord shall hiss for the *fly* that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt; and for the *bee* that is in the land of Assyria" (vii. 18). This is altogether characteristic of the style of Eastern imagery, playing on peculiar proper names.

When the two provinces were united under one sovereign he took the double title *Shuten-Shebt*, and assumed the double crown, that of the Upper Province being placed above, or rather set in, the other, as may be seen in statues of Rameses III. In one of the courts of the Temple of Rameses at Medinet Habou, in Thebes, there is an interesting representation of the coronation of the monarch, who, in the accompanying inscription, is said to have put on the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Egypt is but a small country to have played such an important part in the history of the world. It is made up of the Delta and the Nile Valley as far south as the First Cataract. The Delta, as the name implies, is a triangle, its base on the Mediterranean, extending from Alexandria to Port Said, about 150 miles. Its apex is at Cairo, and each side, roughly estimated, measures about 120 miles. A large portion of this area, however, perhaps nearly one-half, is lake, marsh, or desert, unfit for cultivation. South of Cairo there is only the Valley of the Nile, extending about 580 miles to Syene, and varying from two to twelve miles in width, of which the river averages one mile. The valley is hemmed in on each side by naked deserts. In places there are high cliffs bordering the alluvial banks, and in places ranges of yellow rocky hills,

hopelessly barren. The entire superficial area of the country which could at present be reached by the waters of the Nile, and thus made productive, scarcely exceeds 10,000 square miles, and, probably, not more than one-half of this is now under cultivation. The arable land of Egypt is about equal in extent to Yorkshire.

Such is Egypt proper,—the country extending along the Nile from the Mediterranean to the First Cataract at Syene. At the latter place the river bursts from the uplands of Nubia through a ridge of granite and a series of rugged cliffs and islets, the island of Philæ, with its stately temples, lying in the centre of the torrent at the top of the rapids. The quarries which supplied the architects of Egypt with that beautiful rose-coloured granite so largely employed in temples and monuments are situated in the adjoining cliffs, and the stone takes its familiar name, Syenite, from the adjacent town, Syene.

Above Syene the Nile Valley runs south a little more than 100 miles to Korosko, where it turns westward, and then makes a wide sweep south-west to Dongola, about 300 miles from Korosko. Here it curves to the east and north-east about 300 miles more to Abu Hamed, which, by the direct desert route, is only 230 miles from Korosko. From Abu Hamed to Berber is 140 miles, and from Berber to Khartoum 210, the general direction being south. The entire distance from Cairo to Khartoum in a straight line is 1,000 miles, while, by following the tortuous river, the distance is well-nigh doubled. When the water is low, as it is always between December and July, the passage of boats is extremely difficult, and, in places where there are rocks and rapids, next to impossible. When the river is high, boats pass up and down with comparative ease and safety.

The Inundation.

The annual inundation of the Nile is most remarkable, and upon it depends the fertility, indeed the very existence, of Egypt. I shall, therefore, try to explain its nature and causes. At Khartoum the two main tributaries of the Nile unite, having the town in the fork between them. The name of the western tributary is *Bahr-el-Abiad*, "The White River," so called from the prevailing tint of its water. Its sources are in the great lakes of Central Africa, the Albert and Victoria Nianza, and in the surrounding basins and uplands, comprising an area of nearly 200,000 square miles. The lakes are about 3,000 feet above the sea. The White Nile is broad and deep,

but generally sluggish. When seen from the north as one approaches Khartoum, it looks like a great lake. It may be regarded as the real and permanent source of the River of Egypt. Its volume is always great, winter and summer, and during the equatorial rains it does not rise more than a few feet. Were its current diverted in any way above Khartoum, the other tributaries would not supply a sufficient volume of water during the dry season to reach Lower Egypt. The White Nile supplies the permanent river; the other tributaries produce the inundation.

The second great tributary of the Nile flows past the east side of Khartoum, and is called *Bahr-el-Azrak*, "The Blue River," or more properly "Black," for the Arabic word has also this meaning. The colour during the inundation is deep purple, approaching black. Its chief sources are high up in the mountains of Abyssinia. When the equatorial rains set in, which they do regularly about the first week of June, the Black Nile, before that time low and sluggish, suddenly swells into a furious torrent, tearing away the soft soil of the banks, and carrying it in solution down to the lowlands, to be deposited on the surface of the plains. The width of this tributary at Khartoum is about 300 yards, and when in flood its depth is 30 feet.

About 170 miles below Khartoum another tributary, the *Atbara*, falls into the Nile. Its sources are also in the mountains of Abyssinia; and it produces, perhaps, even a greater influence on the fertilising qualities of the waters of the Nile than either of the others. Its course and current are thus in substance described in Sir Samuel Baker's valuable work, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia*. In the beginning of the year, and during the spring months, the bed of the Atbara is in part dry, and in part filled with stagnant pools, swarming with crocodiles, hippopotami, huge turtles, fish, and reptiles of various kinds. The banks, throughout a long reach of country near the base of the mountains, are formed for the most part of dark alluvial soil. It has numerous tributaries of a like kind. Immediately on the outburst of the summer rains the channel of the Atbara is filled to overflowing, and the mad torrent foams along with terrific force, undermining and tearing down the soft banks, and carrying the dissolved soil into the Nile.

The annual rise of the Nile is first observed at Khartoum early in June, but it is three weeks later ere it begins to be seen at Cairo. That is a time of great rejoicing, and the daily rise is proclaimed through the city by special criers, with characteristic expressions of praise to God and the Prophet.

The rise continues steadily till the end of September, when it attains its maximum of from 24 to 26 feet. There is a building in the little island of Roda, close to Cairo, containing a Nilometer, for measuring the rise of the water from day to day, and its maximum from year to year. The building is said to have been founded here in A.D. 705, and rebuilt in its present form in A.D. 850. We learn that during the time of the early Pharaohs a Nilometer was erected at Memphis, and maintained there for a lengthened period. There was another on the island of Elephantine, opposite Syene; both it and that at Memphis have disappeared.

One of the great festivals of Cairo is connected with the inundation. When the river attains a height of about 21 ft., which occurs generally between the 6th and 16th of August, the embankment which shuts out the river from the great Cairo Canal is cut by the governor of the city or his deputy: the water then rushes in, amid acclamations of joy from assembled multitudes, and is taken over the country for purposes of irrigation. The whole plain is intersected with such canals, and the rising water, being let into them at various points along the river-banks, is stored in enormous tanks and reservoirs for use during the long dry season.

The regulation of the water supply and its distribution over the surface of the ground have from the earliest ages been managed with marvellous ingenuity and scientific skill. Irrigation is of vital importance to agriculture, and it is essential to the prosperity of Egypt. It is requisite for the landed proprietor, and the population generally, that the water should be distributed in due proportion to each farm and field, and in such manner also as that the low-lying sections shall not get greater advantage by leakage or otherwise than the higher. To effect this, the Egyptian engineers measured with scrupulous accuracy the elevation of each irrigated section, and constructed canals, tanks, and dykes to suit the whole. Each little field is levelled, surrounded by a bank of earth, and provided with a properly-graduated sluice, through which the water is admitted. Skilled superintendents are also appointed by the local government, who regulate the time during which the water is allowed to flow into each section and field. The amount of taxation levied depends upon the size of the farm, and the quantity of water supplied for irrigation.

When the Nile is low the land near its banks, both in Egypt and Nubia, is irrigated artificially by means of buckets attached to long poles slung on cross-beams between upright posts. The buckets are dipped into the river, then raised, and emptied into canal or reservoir. This machine is called

Shadoof. Another machine is a large vertical wheel, called *Sâkiyeh*, having round it a row of earthen pots. It is turned by rude machinery, generally moved by cows, and the pots, being filled in the river into which they descend, are emptied into a trough, and the water carried away over the soil. The ceaseless mournful creaking and groaning of the *Sâkiyehs* are familiar to every traveller, and seem to constitute one of the chief glories of the Nubian peasant and the Egyptian *fellâh*, who would scorn to grease the axles and thus drown the music, and who greatly prefer to put the grease upon the matted locks of their own hair.

I have thus attempted to give a general, but necessarily brief and incomplete, sketch of the sources, course, and inundation of the Nile. There are still, however, one or two points of interest to be noted.

The Upper Nile, from the place where it is joined by the Atbara, flows, for the most part, with a very rapid current through a narrow rocky ravine, shut in by cliffs of sandstone, limestone, and granite, until it reaches the Cataracts of Syene. The bed of the river is frequently broken by little islands, rocks, and rapids. The latter are called Cataracts, and there are six of marked prominence between Syene and Khartoum. So long as the river is closely hemmed in, the current is swift and broken, and the mud it has brought down from Abyssinia and elsewhere is held in solution. During the inundation it rises in some parts of Nubia as much as 40 feet, while at Cairo the maximum rarely exceeds 26 feet; and in the Lower Delta it is not more than 4 or 5 feet. When the river passes Syene and enters Egypt proper, the valley is much wider, the current gentler, and the banks much lower. During the inundation the water spreads gradually over the flat country, leaving, when it passes away and evaporates, rich deposits on the surface of the ground.

Another fact is noteworthy. In Egypt the deposit is left in the river-bed as well as on the flat banks. The bed is thus slowly rising, and the inundation extends proportionally farther and farther outwards, materially increasing the ground capable of cultivation. It has been ascertained, from careful examination of the sites of the monuments on the plain of Thebes, that the soil formed by deposits has, since the erection of those monuments some 3,500 years ago, encroached on the desert about one-third of a mile; while the ruins of Heliopolis in the Delta, which once stood above reach of the inundation, are now buried in mud deposit to a depth of nearly 7 feet. The traveller also observes that many of the villages in the Delta are perched on mounds, composed mainly of the *débris* of older

habitations destroyed by floods. Other villages are surrounded by great dykes, as in Holland. When the Nile rises much above its average height, the result is disastrous; this, however, is a rare occurrence.

Some of the gigantic engineering works of the ancient Egyptians are deserving of special notice. Among the earliest was that huge embankment by which Menes, the first historic Pharaoh, changed the course of the Nile, from its original channel along the foot of the Libyan hills, to the centre of the Valley eastward, thereby leaving a site in the old bed for the great city of Memphis. Other engineering works of equal magnitude were constructed in various parts of the country. Probably the most ancient was the canal called *Buhr Yusef*, "Joseph's River," taken from the Nile below Thebes, and carried along the higher ground on the left bank, a distance of some 200 miles. From it a branch was led off by Amenemha III. (circa B.C. 2500), through a ravine and deep cutting in the Libyan range, to the Fayoum, a low-lying, cup-shaped region, with an area of 600 square miles. The canal is 30 feet deep, 160 feet wide, and about 10 miles long. At the place where it entered the valley a reservoir, 14 miles long by 7 miles wide, was constructed by drawing an embankment across the southern end of the valley. Here the surplus water was stored, and by an elaborate system of aqueducts and sluices the entire district was irrigated and made one of the most fruitful provinces in Egypt, still abounding in corn, vineyards, and, what is not found elsewhere in the country, olive-groves. Fayoum was the site of the famous Labyrinth erected by Amenemha, also of several pyramids, and an obelisk, now fallen and broken, apparently similar to that at Heliopolis. Some have supposed that the canal and great reservoir of Fayoum were intended to serve another purpose,—namely, to draw off a part of the water of the Nile in seasons of abnormal rise, and thus to save the lower country from dangerous flooding. Whatever were the objects aimed at, the work was one of extraordinary magnitude.

Another great work was the canal from the Nile to the Bitter Lake and Suez, now in part repaired and used for supplying sweet water along the line of railway. Another canal connected the Mediterranean and the Red Sea; and another, made in the time of Rameses the Great, joined the Nile to the Lake Mareotis, running past Alexandria.

There is evidence that the course of the Nile itself, and the channels of some of its branches in the Delta, have been materially altered in past ages, partly by natural and partly by artificial means. The Canopic branch ran in ancient times

close to the line of the present Mahmudiyeh Canal, which connects the Nile with Alexandria, but its channel is now dry. A more remarkable change in the main river has been observed in Nubia, near Semneh, about 25 miles above Wady Halfa, where there are temples and inscriptions of the twelfth and eighteenth dynasties. The Nile runs through a gorge between high cliffs which appear originally to have met, forming a rocky barrier, and damming the water so that it stood some 25 feet above its present level, and flooded a wide plain to the south and east. Here, in the now arid desert, are alluvial deposits similar to those of Egypt; and it may be that before the barrier was rent a branch flowed across the plain. This could only be ascertained by a careful survey.

History of the People.

As the physical geography of Egypt is unique, so is its history. The records inscribed on its temples and tombs, and written upon venerable papyri that have come down to us from remote ages, detail events which occurred 1,000 years or more before the time of Abraham. Accurate dates cannot be determined; we have not as yet sufficient data for a full and trustworthy chronology. But one thing is certain, that some of the extant written records of Egypt are long antecedent to the Pentateuch. And those records show that at that early period the Egyptians had attained to a very high degree of civilisation. Their learning was proverbial. In letters, art, sculpture, architecture, engineering, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, political science, mental and moral philosophy, they seem to have been the original educators of the world.

I cannot venture upon even a sketch of the general history of Egypt. An outline would be tedious and uninteresting, and details would take volumes. I propose, however, just to glance at a few salient points which touch upon important epochs in Bible history or the history of other great nations. I shall also mention a few facts of exceptional interest.

The Hebrew name of Egypt is *Mizraim*, and in Genesis (x. 6) we read that Mizraim was a son of Ham. This statement, however, must not, I think, be taken in a strictly ethnical sense, as if it meant that the Egyptians were all descendants of Ham. It probably only means that the country was at first occupied by, and got one of its names from, a Hamite colony, just as England took its name from the comparatively small colony of *Angli*. The physical type of the native Egyptian, as figured on the ancient monuments and seen in the modern peasantry, indicates a Japhetic rather

than an Hamitic origin. It bears no resemblance to the Negro, and the people, from the earliest historic period, possessed a regularity of features and symmetry of form, and showed intellectual power and refinement, to which no section of Hamites ever approached. They were, and still are, in general, handsome and well formed, with oval face, bright, almond-shaped black eyes, straight nose, thick yet finely-moulded lips, broad shoulders, and upright firmly-knit limbs. Their colour is, and always was, a light richly-tinted bronze; some of the younger women are models of grace and beauty. On the very oldest monuments we often find the Egyptian and the Negro figured side by side, each with his characteristic features. Early Egyptian art is in this respect especially valuable. The sculptor did not possess the freedom and graphic power of the Greek, but he, nevertheless, delineated with singular accuracy and minuteness the features, form, and costume of each race and nation.

One point regarding the original settlement of the country has not yet been absolutely determined, and that is whether the first colonists entered by the Isthmus of Suez and ascended the Nile Valley; or whether, having crossed the Red Sea from some point in Arabia, they established themselves in the mountains of Abyssinia, and then gradually moved down to the more fertile and genial region of Egypt. Be this as it may, the temples, tombs, and grand monuments that stud the banks of the Nile show that, from the earliest historic period, a race of men remarkable for wealth, architectural skill, and artistic taste, occupied the entire valley. It is also clear that the most ancient monuments, the pyramids of Gizeh, the Sphinx, and the tombs of Sakkarah, are in Lower Egypt, and belong to what is known as the Old Empire; while the temples and pyramids of Gebel Barkel, which are, I believe, the most southern, are of the comparatively late age of Tirhakah (B.C. 700), who is called in the Bible "The King of Ethiopia" (2 Kings xix. 9). None of the monuments of Nubia appear to be older than the twelfth dynasty in the Middle Empire, which Egyptologists date not later than B.C. 2000; and the finest of those monuments, the rock-hewn temples of Abu Simbel, were constructed by Rameses the Great, of the nineteenth dynasty (*circa* B.C. 1400). It is noteworthy also that on the small temple of Abu Simbel, dedicated to the Goddess Athor, her name is followed by the hieroglyphic sign signifying "foreign land," thus affording monumental evidence that Nubia was outside the country of the early Egyptian monarchs.

The authentic annals of ancient Egypt are mainly derived

from its own monuments and papyri. These have been wonderfully preserved. The dry climate has been the grand conservator; but another important factor in their preservation has been this, that many of the tombs and rock-hewn temples, which contain on their sculptured and inscribed walls, and in their sepulchral chambers, precious records, were shut up for ages by concealed doors, or by sand-drifts. It is only within the last quarter of a century that a vast number of the most important records have been exhumed; and I believe that many more still lie hid, to reward the researches of future explorers. In the British Museum, in Berlin and Turin, in the Louvre and in the Museum of Boulak, the Egyptologist can read for himself inscriptions on stone and records on papyrus, containing historic annals and incidents, and short literary, scientific, and religious treatises, of a period long anterior to the era of Greece or Rome. The ordinary reader may glean the leading facts from the works of Botta, Wilkinson, Rawlinson, Birch, Brugsch, Smith, Sayce, Lenormant, Mariette, Maspero, and others. The handy little volumes, "Records of the Past," published by Bagster, contain translations of a number of most interesting inscriptions and documents which give a general idea of the nature and value of the ancient literature of Egypt.

It is important to observe that from the earliest ages the learned Egyptians who erected the grand monuments, and developed by their engineering skill and enterprise the resources of the country, were as clearly distinguished from the nomads of Libya and Arabia, and from the black races of Nubia and Ethiopia, as are the modern fellahin and citizens of Cairo and Damietta from the shepherds of the desert and the dusky warriors of the Soudan. They were distinct in physique, in lineage, in mental characteristics and occupations. They never amalgamated, or attempted to amalgamate, with the dark races. They were obliged, from time immemorial, to defend their fertile territory from the predatory inroads of those restless neighbours, while, at the same time, they traded with them, and obtained from the Ethiopians many of the most valuable products of Central Africa, just as the modern Egyptians did under the firm rule of Mehemed Ali, and may do again when a settled government is established in the country. The commerce from the upper tributaries of the Nile, and from the wide region of the Soudan, forms an essential factor in the prosperity and progress of Egypt. So long as the Soudan remains disturbed, just so long will Egypt be unsettled, and so long will its prosperity be retarded and its finances ruinously affected.

Earliest Records.

In a temple situated amid the ruins of Abydos, or Thinis, one of the largest cities of Upper Egypt, two remarkable tablets were discovered a few years ago—one containing the names of 130 deities, the traditional or mythical rulers of the country in pre-historic times; the other, the names of seventy-six kings, arranged in chronological order. The first name on the latter list is Menes, and the last Seti, who set up the tablet in the temple he erected, and dedicated to Osiris, the god of the dead. It is beautifully engraved and in perfect preservation. It is unquestionably among the most important historical tablets in the world. The time embraced is variously computed; some making it only 1,500 years, others as much as 3,500. A similar tablet was found at Sakkarah, having on it the names of fifty-eight kings, which correspond so far to the list given by the historian Manetho, and also largely to the Abydos tablet. On a papyrus roll now in Turin, but unfortunately much mutilated, is an apparently similar list. The date of Menes' reign is estimated by Mariette at B.C. 5004, by Bunsen at B.C. 3623, and by Wilkinson at B.C. 2700. Recent researches among monuments and papyri seem to indicate a far more remote antiquity for the early Egyptian dynasties than was formerly thought of. We have not yet sufficient data to enable us to frame a perfectly satisfactory chronology.

Menes, as I have stated, was founder of Memphis, the first capital of Lower Egypt. The great city is now obliterated. Its stones were largely used in the building of Cairo, and what remain on the site have been long since covered with the deposits of the Nile. Nothing is visible save a mutilated statue of Sesostris lying on its face in the bottom of a pit. It formerly stood in front of the Temple of Phtah, father of the gods of Egypt, and was 40 feet high. The name *Phtah* means Architect or Creator, and in one of the inscriptions on the Temple of Dendera he is called "The Lord of Truth, who created all things," thus apparently indicating that the primeval Egyptians believed in one Supremo God, the Creator.

The successors of Menes in the early dynasties were famed for their learning. One of them composed a treatise on medicine, portions of which are still extant. In fact, it seems that medicine in all its branches was studied and practised with no little success. Herodotus affirms that there was a

specialist for every form of disease. Another of the early Pharaohs was celebrated for architectural skill. He built the oldest of the pyramids, Kochohe of Sakkarah. It was a royal sepulchre, situated in the centre of the Necropolis of the Old Empire, from which, in recent years, have been exhumed many not only of the most ancient, but most important historical records. No less than eleven pyramids stand on the same rocky plateau, and around them are multitudes of rock-hewn tombs.

To me the object of greatest interest at Sakkarah was the Serapeum, a vast range of subterranean chambers in the sides of a tunnelled avenue, a quarter of a mile long. Each chamber contains a granite sarcophagus, 13 feet long, 11 feet high, and 7 feet 6 inches wide. Twenty-four remain in position, though all have long since been rifled. There are many other chambers of a similar kind in the rocky hill, but they are covered with drift-sand.

This remarkable Necropolis was discovered by Mariette in 1861. At the entrance overhead there was originally a temple, with avenues of sphinxes leading to it, and wide areas around adorned with statues and smaller temples. One would suppose that such magnificent tombs could only have been prepared for the most illustrious monarchs. Strange to say, however, they were the tombs of bulls—sacred animals which the people worshipped. When living, the Bull-god, *Apis*, was lodged in a palace, and worshipped in a grand temple in Memphis; when dead, his embalmed body was laid in state in the princely vaults of Sakkarah, and worshipped still in the temple overhead. In no other place does one get a view, at once so striking and so humiliating, of the splendour, the artistic taste, the religious absurdities, and the degrading superstition of ancient Egypt.

Some three centuries after Menes, a monarch of another dynasty ascended the throne, whose genius and power raised Egypt to a commanding place among the nations of the East. This was Kufu, better known as Cheops, founder of the great pyramid of Gizeh. The pyramid is the grandest sepulchre in the world. Its base is 746 feet square, and it was 450 feet high. The manner of construction was as follows:—A base was levelled on the platform of rock, just where the fertile Nile Valley borders the sandy desert of Libya. A chamber was excavated in the rock beneath the base, having a sloping passage leading down to it. The pyramid was then built, layer upon layer of large stones, until the apex was reached. In the centre, sepulchral chambers were constructed, communicating, with each other and with that below the base, by

means of long and intricate passages. The chambers are lined with granite highly polished, and contain sarcophagi of the same material. Access to them is gained by an opening high up in the side of the pyramid, through which one passes into a long, dark, straight passage running down into the very heart of the monument. The exploration of those chambers was one of the most laborious tasks I ever undertook. The stones for the pyramid were brought from the hills on the opposite side of the Nile Valley, about ten miles distant; and it is said that 360,000 men were employed upon it for a period of twenty years. It is scarcely necessary to add that a work, so vast and so utterly useless, contributed largely to waste the energies and the resources of the country. Yet the mania for building pyramids increased, and more than one hundred of them dot the banks of the Nile.

The labours of Cheops were not confined to the great pyramid. He worked the mines of Wady Meghara, in the peninsula of Sinai, where his name appears carved upon the rock, and was, doubtless, seen by the Israelites in their wilderness journey. The rock-hewn sepulchres around the great pyramid were at least commenced in his time; and perhaps he may have been the designer of the Sphinx. Art and science flourished during his reign. An ancient inscription records the presentation by him of costly offerings to the gods, "images of stone, gold, bronze, ivory, and ebony." The carvings and paintings in the tombs at Gizeh represent with wonderful skill and precision the features, costume, employments, and amusements of the people, from the prince to the peasant. One sees there the baker, butcher, cook, tailor, goldsmith, glass-blower, potter, shepherd, ploughman, brickmaker, reaper; and also harpers, singers, dancers, acrobats, story-tellers, and a host of others. The accuracy of the sketches and the amount of light they throw upon the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians are wonderful. While wandering among those primeval monuments, and exploring those tombs, one almost seems to be mixing familiarly with the men and women who lived from five to six thousand years ago. Long before the age of Abraham, before any contact with the people of Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's ancestors, the Egyptians had advanced in civilisation, and in the arts and sciences, to a degree far exceeding that of any other nation. The grand temples of Thebes and Abu Simbel, the colossal monuments in every part of the country, the great canals, the gorgeous tombs, all proclaim the former glory of Egypt; and not the least remarkable characteristic of the monuments is that they tell us and show us how everything

was done. We see figured on the walls how they built ; how they hewed colossal stones from the quarries and conveyed them to their appointed places ; how they attacked and captured fortresses ; how they treated captives ; and how they used their slaves. I shall just select one or two of the more striking examples of their genius.

Origin of Alphabetic Writing.

The origin of our alphabet is one of the most interesting and instructive studies. It has of late been pursued with vast research and great success by Dr. Isaac Taylor. He has shown that the alphabets of Europe, Africa, and Western Asia have a common parentage ; and, strange as it may seem, he has traced them back stage by stage to those hieroglyphics which one sees on the earliest monuments of Egypt. Like the different races of mankind, the alphabets have evolved from one primeval source. Whether this is to be taken as an additional proof of the unity of the human race, I do not stop to inquire. I simply state it here as a fact—the result of independent research.

In ancient Egypt there were two distinct methods of writing : the one hieroglyphic, or pictorial ; the other hieratic, or alphabetical. In the former, all the forms used are, or were intended to be, pictures of the objects they represent. There are men, women, beasts, birds, reptiles, insects, human hands, eyes, and suchlike ; there are also circles, squares, crescents, curved lines, &c. All these are pictures, and the whole writing they make up is a narrative picture. This was probably the most ancient mode of writing. From it the alphabetic writing sprang. Every letter had, so to speak, its germ in a picture or ideogram ; and “ those pictures were gradually assumed as the representatives of words, and finally became the symbols of more or less elementary sounds,” that is, of letters. Dr. Taylor has described the origin of alphabetic writing in a single terse sentence: It began, he says, “ with ideograms, which afterwards developed into phonograms.” This development is illustrated in the early records of Egypt, where we find the two systems subsisting side by side ; and in some cases, as in the Rosetta Stone, the same inscription is written in both forms.

The date of the transition from the hieroglyphic to the hieratic is unknown. It was antecedent to the historic age. It is a remarkable fact, which, perhaps more even than her

grand monuments, shows the advanced civilisation of Egypt at a remote period, that we possess a papyrus hieratic manuscript written during the eleventh dynasty, which is a copy of a treatise "composed by Prince Ptah-Hotep, who lived during the reign of Assa, a king of the fifth dynasty." The manuscript was found by M. Prisse in 1847, in a tomb of the eleventh dynasty, and is thus older by many centuries than the time of Moses,—older probably than the date usually assigned to Abraham,—while the work itself must be regarded as the most ancient of all existing books. Yet in this manuscript we have a perfect alphabet, in which are the prototypes of the Semetic, and all alphabets derived from it,—Phœnician, Greek, Hebrew, Coptic, Arabic, Roman.

The subject-matter of the manuscript also proves that in that remote age the Egyptians were as far advanced in the refinements of literary composition, and in the fundamental principles of ethics, as they were in the mechanical art of writing with pen and ink. The author of the now famous papyrus-Prisse was an aged sage, who desired to give to the world the moral results of long experience and deep thought. He thus writes:—"With the courage which knowledge imparts discuss with the ignorant as with the learned. Good words shine more than the emerald which the slave finds among the pebbles." Again, we have an injunction to filial duty which strikingly reminds one of the fifth commandment:—"The obedience of a good son is a blessing; the obedient walks in his obedience. The son who accepts the words of his father will grow old on account of it. Obedience is of God; disobedience is hateful to God. The heart is the teacher of man in obedience and disobedience; but man gives life to his heart by obedience." Then he adds:—"Good for a man is the discipline of his father a good son is the gift of God. It is thus I obtain for you health of body and the favour of the king."

The sublime sentences of the Proverbs of Solomon scarcely surpass those maxims of the Egyptian sage. Yet the words were written probably a thousand years before Moses; and they formed, at that time, a code of ethics in the very school in which Moses was subsequently trained.

On, or Heliopolis, and its Obelisks.

The founding of the sacred City of On, and the establishment there of the Temple of the Sun, with its large staff of learned priests, form a noteworthy epoch in Egyptian history.

The exact date is unknown, but it must have been considerably before the twelfth dynasty, when Osirtasen, the first monarch of that dynasty, set up the obelisk that still stands on the site. On is said to be a form of the Egyptian *Ana*, one of the names of the sun-god, usually called *Ra*, whose chief place of worship was in the city. Hence its Hebrew name *Beth-Shemesh* (Jer. xliii. 13), "House of the Sun," and the Greek form, *Heliopolis*, "City of the Sun." The oldest and finest of Egyptian obelisks is that still standing on the site. It was erected, with another exactly similar, at the entrance to the Temple of the Sun, and on it is engraved the name of its founder, Osirtasen I., who lived not later than B.C. 2000; Mariette assigns a date 1,000 years earlier. Be this as it may, the obelisk was there when Abraham visited Egypt; it was there when Joseph ruled the country and married the daughter of Poti-Pherah, priest of On; it was there when Moses studied in the school of philosophy in the Temple, and became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; it was there when Plato, as we are told, studied in the same school; it was there when the infant Jesus was brought down to Egypt in the arms of His mother; it is there still, its tapering shaft rising up all solitary on the long-deserted site.

About five hundred years after Osirtasen two other obelisks were erected in front of the Temple by Thothmes III., one of the most famous monarchs of the eighteenth dynasty. They both bear the names of their founder, and also of two of his successors, Rameses II. and Seti II. Their history is a romance. They were removed to Alexandria by the Romans, and placed in front of the Temple of Cæsar. The Temple disappeared, but they remained. In process of time one fell. I saw them thus on my first visit to Alexandria. The fallen obelisk was given by Mehemed Ali to the English nation in 1819. Its subsequent story is well known,—how a special ship was built for it by the munificence of Erasmus Wilson, how it was cast adrift in the Bay of Biscay, how it was recovered and brought to England, and how it now stands on the Thames Embankment. Its companion was given to the United States of America, and forms one of the chief ornaments of the Public Park, New York.

These are not the only obelisks of which Egypt has been robbed. One which formerly stood before the great temple of Luxor is now in the Place de la Concorde, Paris; another of Thothmes III., from Thebes, adorns the grand area of the Lateran in Rome; another, also from Thebes, is in the Meidan of Constantinople. One cannot but lament the removal of

those unique monuments from the country where they were designed; but their existence in far distant and widely separated lands is not without advantage to the philologist and antiquarian. He can trace upon the hieroglyphics which cover them the original germs, so to speak, of those letters that now give expression with such marvellous precision and facility to the literature of the whole civilised world. Many of them still fortunately remain in Egypt. There is one, a companion apparently to that of Heliopolis, in the Fayoum, but fallen and broken. There are several in Thebes; there are some broken and prostrate on the site of the ancient Tanis in the Delta; and there is one unfinished, lying in a granite quarry near Syene.

Connexion of Egypt with Sacred History.

It would seem to have been soon after the close of the twelfth dynasty that Abraham visited Egypt. About a century later a new race of shepherd warriors, called *Hyksos*, apparently of Semitic origin, invaded and captured the country. They established the seat of their government in Memphis, but their conquests did not extend to Upper Egypt, of which Thebes was then the capital. During their rule Joseph was sold by his brethren and brought to the Egyptian court. It was quite characteristic of the strange transition of life and authority in the East that the slave became viceroy, and introduced his brethren to Pharaoh. The influence he gained, and the position to which the Israelites attained were, doubtless, in part owing to the fact that the then rulers of the country were Shemites and natives of Arabia.

Subsequently the Hyksos were conquered and expelled by Amosis, the founder of the eighteenth, which was a Theban dynasty. This dynasty inaugurated one of the most brilliant periods of Egyptian history. To them we owe most of the magnificent temples, monuments, and tombs that line the banks of the Nile, from Memphis southward. Records of their conquests, and of the glory of their country, are inscribed on the walls of Karnac, Luxor, Medinet Habou, Abu Simbel, and other places. Their conquests extended to the Euphrates, over Syria, Asia Minor, the Isles of Greece, and away down into Ethiopia on the south. They excelled in literature, science, art, engineering, and architecture; and they have left behind them, on the walls of their temples and tombs, and on numerous papyrus rolls, many hundreds of which are now in the museums of Europe, most valuable

records of their achievements. One of the monarchs of this dynasty was, doubtless, that new king who knew not Joseph, and who reduced the Israelites to hard and cruel servitude. On the monuments of the period we find graphic representations of brickmakers, with marked Jewish features, working under the lash of taskmasters.

Recent Researches and Discoveries.

The researches that are now being made at Tanis and other places in the Delta by the Egyptian Exploration Society I have not time even to glance at. They have been pretty fully described in the periodical press. But there is one most remarkable discovery of recent years which I must not overlook ; it is that of

Deir el-Bahry.

In the wild ravine of Deir el-Bahry, near Thebes, a cave was found some years ago by shepherds, who are always searching after antiquities. They kept their secret for a time, gradually drew forth from the cave long-hidden treasures, and found a ready market for them among travellers. At length the attention of the directors of the Boulak Museum was attracted ; the secret was discovered, and the cave visited by Brugsch. He found there a vast horde of mummies of kings, queens, and high dignitaries, who flourished from the time of Joseph down to the capture of Jerusalem by Shishak. The secret of the cave was this. On the decline of Thebes, the inhabitants being poor, bands were organised to break open and plunder the royal tombs, so numerous around the great city, and so rich in concealed treasures. Some pious patriot, disapproving of those sacrilegious acts, collected a number of the most precious contents of tombs still intact, and stowed them away secretly in this obscure cave. There they remained until found in some chance way by the shepherds.

I have only time to mention a very few of the most remarkable mummies, all of which are now in the Boulak Museum. I get my information mainly from the monograph of Maspero, published at Cairo in 1881, and illustrated with twenty photographs by Brugsch.

One of the first is Ahmes I., a monarch of the eighteenth

dynasty. He expelled the Hyksos from their last strongholds in the Delta. His name and titles are written in ink on the linen folds of the mummy. The coffin of his queen was also found, and her embalmed body is enveloped in crimson cloth, bound with folds of fine linen.

Another is Amenhotop, the founder of Karnac. On his face is a wooden mask painted, and probably a portrait of the monarch. The coffin of Thothmes I. was found; but his body had been removed, and in its place was the mummy of Pinotem, a contemporary of Solomon. We have also the coffin of Thothmes II. The folds of linen which encircle his mummy have written upon them long extracts from "The Book of the Dead" and "Litanies of the Sun."

But the most interesting of the mummies discovered is that of Rameses the Great, the Sesostris of the Greeks, and the Pharaoh at whose court Moses was educated. It is perfect, with the name of the monarch written in hieratic characters on the breast.

In addition to some forty coffins and mummies the cave contained about 6,000 other objects,—ornaments of gold and silver, gems, vases of bronze and terra cotta, goblets, statuettes, toilette requisites, and wearing-apparel for ladies, papyrus rolls, and a unique example of a funeral tent or pall used at the burial of Queen Isis. Of the latter there is a full description, with coloured plates, in Mr. Villiers Stuart's most interesting work.

All these relics give reality to the primeval history of Egypt. They show, too, the vast importance of the antiquarian treasures so wonderfully preserved in its tombs, and they serve to fill us with a greater desire to know more of that wonderful country.

THE EARL OF BELMORE.—Having been called upon by Sir Henry Barkly, I have much pleasure in moving the following resolution:—"That our best thanks be presented to President Porter for the Annual Address now delivered, and to those who have read papers during the session." I came here to-night simply as a casual visitor, for I am not a member of the Victoria Institute; but I confess that when I received the invitation to be present on this occasion, I was attracted partly by the fact that my friend, if he will allow me to call him so, and my former colleague on the Irish Education Board, Dr. Porter, was to deliver the Annual Address, and partly also by the nature of the subject with which he proposed to deal, namely, Egypt. Egyptian antiquities have always had a peculiar fascination for me, and this fascination has not been diminished by my having on several occasions been called upon to visit that country. On one occasion, a great many years ago,

I went up the Nile as far as Thebes, and four and a half years ago I paid a short visit to Cairo, on which occasion I went to the Museums at Sakkarah and Boulak, which have been referred to this evening. But at this late hour I will not occupy the time of the meeting, but will merely move the resolution that has been placed in my hands. (Applause.)

The Right Hon. A. S. AYRTON.—I have much pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks, and I have no doubt I am correctly expressing the feeling of those who have listened to the Address delivered this evening, when I say, it is a most succinct and lucid statement, on a very broad basis, of a wide and comprehensive subject, which has been presented to us, in a graphic form, and almost brings in review the whole condition of Egypt from the beginning of history to the present day, producing a greater impression on our minds than if we were to travel through some of those ponderous works which have been written to illustrate in detail all that has happened up to modern times. Although it is some years since I have been in Egypt and travelled up the Nile, I can fully appreciate the value of the Address.

The motion was unanimously agreed to.

Dr. PORTER.—I beg to return you my best thanks.

Mr. H. CADMAN JONES.—I have to move that the thanks of this meeting be presented to Sir Henry Barkly, for having so kindly, at a very short notice, taken the chair, in the absence of our valued President, the Earl of Shaftesbury, whose absence through illness we all regret. As this is a motion requiring no speech in its support, I shall therefore content myself with having put it before you.

Mr. J. F. FRANCE, F.S.A.—I have very great pleasure in seconding the resolution.

The resolution was carried by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN.—This is not the first occasion on which I have occupied the chair at a meeting of this kind, upon a moment's notice; and I have only to say that, however poor a substitute I may have proved for our venerated and venerable President, Lord Shaftesbury, you will, nevertheless, be disposed to accept the small service I have been called upon to render on the plea that I have been enabled to free our President from a task to which he has felt himself unequal. (Applause.)

The members, associates, and their friends then adjourned to the Museum, where refreshments were served.