THE LAND OF KHEMI

UP AND DOWN THE MIDDLE NILE

BY

LAURENCE OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF 'THE LAND OF GILEAD,' 'LORD ELGIN'S MISSION TO CHINA,' 'PICCADILLY,' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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CONTENTS.

LABYRINTH, HAWARA.

SEE PP 70 & 78

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PREFACE.

My first visit to Egypt took place just forty years ago, and I have a very vivid recollection of its aspect in those days, and of the strong impression which the contrasts of oriental life, to all that I had been accustomed to, produced upon my youthful mind. During the following twenty years, I traversed it seven or eight times,—sometimes hurriedly, sometimes leisurely. I have been, therefore, enabled to judge of its progress between 1851 and 1881, as compared with the previous period. The subject has, so thoroughly exhausted by the various works which have been published since the days of Mehemet Ali, and the country is now so largely frequented by invalids, and so overrun by

tourists, that I should not have ventured to contribute to the popular literature on Egypt, had not the kindness of the authorities enabled me to spend some months in the interior under conditions particularly favourable for an observation of the present state of the people, and which, moreover, tempted me, in spite of ignorance and inexperience, to venture a little upon the inexhaustible field of antiquarian research. My notes at the time I embodied in articles in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' which I had no intention, when I wrote them, of publishing in any other form. I only do so now in the hope that they may encourage visitors to depart a little from the beaten track, as proving that, even in a country so well worn by the feet of tourists, there are other things to be done in the valley of the hill besides living in Shepheard's Hotel, and going straight up to the Second Cataract and back. Unfortunately, our winter in Egypt was a medical prescription, and both my wife and I were too great invalids to profit by our opportunities to the extent we could have wished. As

I make no pretensions to being an Egyptologist, but was merely bitten by the interest of the subject as it forced itself upon my notice, I have rarely ventured beyond an attempt to popularise certain historical or archæological views, more or less agreed upon by those best competent to judge; so if I have hazarded suggestions of my own, it is with the greatest diffidence, the more especially as, having since had occasion to go almost direct to America, I have not been in a position to revise my work, or to refer to authorities other than the few stray books I happened to have with me in Egypt.

In conclusion, I would express my sense of obligation and thanks to his Highness the Khedive, his Excellency Riaz Pasha, and Sir Edward Malet, H.B. Agent and Consul-General, for the hospitality with which we were treated, and the courtesy and consideration shown to us by the officials at our various places of residence.

SALEM-ON-ERIE.

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THE LAND OF KHEMI.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARSINOITE NOME.

About seventy miles to the south-west of Cairo, and twenty-five miles from the Nile, in a depression of the Libyan desert, lies a region celebrated above all others in Egypt for the luxuriance of its vegetation and the variety of its products. Known in modern days as the Fayoum, it was called by the Greeks the Arsinoite Nome, and by the early Egyptians Phiom, or "the district of the marsh;" and a tradition still exists among the country people that this marsh was reclaimed by Joseph the son of Jacob. Whether it derived another

and equally ancient appellation of Ta-She, or "Land of the Lake," from the Birket el Kurûn (Lake of the Horn)—a large sheet of water on its western margin—or from the once celebrated Lake Moeris, the dikes of which still remain to indicate its former site, is not possible to determine; but its wealth of water in all ages was calculated to invest it with a peculiar charm in a country dependent, not upon the rainfall, but upon natural conditions, for its supply of that commodity. Herodotus, Strabo, and Pliny have all written in terms of enthusiasm of this oasis, while modern travellers have bestowed comparatively little attention upon it; and hence, though a valetudinarian, I was tempted to its sequestered palm-groves, and have only since had reason to regret that the state of my health prevented my exploring it thoroughly, and exhausting its varied attractions.

There is something very unromantic in the idea of going by railway to an oasis in the desert; but I consoled myself by thinking, as I whirled along the left bank of the Nile in a cloud of dust, that the fatigue of a three days' camel journey, which has thus been super-

seded, would have presented an insuperable obstacle to my trip—and endeavoured to extract from the motley throng of native passengers who crowded the second and third class carriages, that oriental flavour which the appliances of modern civilisation are tending so rapidly to destroy.

At the station of Wasta, fifty miles from Cairo, the road branches off to the Fayoum. Here we are delayed a couple of hours to wait for the down-train ; and seated in a date-grove, evidently consecrated to *al fresco* meals, to judge by the great quantity of shells of hard-boiled eggs which are strewn around, we prepare our afternoon tea by the aid of a spirit-lamp, to the intense interest of the spectators, and sketch the curiously shaped Pyramid of Meidûm, rising in stages behind the village of that name, some four miles distant,—interesting as having furnished, from the adjoining Mastabas, the oldest sculptures in the world, and the earliest existing examples of the art of writing. Monsieur Daninos, the French Egyptologist, who unearthed these statues about ten years ago, gave me an interesting account of their discovery. It seems that the sheikh of the

village of Meidûm took the unprecedented step of sending a message direct to Ismail Pasha, the late Khedive, to tell him that he had discovered caverns full of treasure in his neighbourhood. The Khedive referred the intelligence to the late Mariette Pasha, who did not attach much credit to it, but despatched Daninos Bey, who was then assisting him in his antiquarian researches, to verify it. On arriving at the spot, Daninos Bey found the sheikh in considerable trepidation from the threats of one of the local officials, who represented his having reported to the Khedive direct instead of through the regular channels. However, he was comforted by a decoration, and the promise of protection, and was requested to lead the way to the cavern. This turned out to be an unimportant little hole; but Daninos Bey saw other indications in the neighbourhood, which induced him to believe that excavation might be attended with success—the more especially as he had got his excavating party on the spot, and was unwilling to return *re infecta*. He therefore set his men to work to uncover one of the mounds, and they shortly disclosed a slab which appeared to form

part of the roof of an opening leading into a tomb. Soon the leading Arab, who had crawled into the aperture, reappeared in the utmost alarm, saying that there were living people inside. Monsieur Daninos at once climbed up the mound, and, squeezing through the opening, was startled by the life-like appearance of two seated figures with sparkling eyes and flesh-like tints. They were a young and handsome couple — the male painted a reddish brown, the female a light yellow. In their eyes were crystals, which imparted to them a peculiarly living aspect. Their features, which were calm and dignified, were as perfect as the day they were chiselled. They had been seated in this chamber, hermetically sealed from the outward air, for 5600 years, when the garish light of nineteenth-century civilisation was let in upon them. They represent the Prince Ankaho-tep, son of King Seneferoo of the third dynasty, and his wife Nefert, who both died young; and they are now preserved under glass in the museum at Boulak, where they are among its most valued treasures.

The branch train to Fayoum is a very rattle-trap affair, but, fortunately, travels at so slow a

rate, that the danger of its falling to pieces is comparatively remote. The traces of paint, which once adorned the carriages, are rapidly vanishing, and they look as brown and barbarous as the desert they traverse. As first-class passengers are rare, there is only one compartment for them, and this is seldom used, and becomes a permanent repository of dust. However, we were glad to take possession of it, "bag and baggage," and crawled out of the station in a westerly direction, leaving the pyramid, and the village which occupies the site of the ancient city—"Beloved of Tum"—to the right. The high mound on which the modern village of Meidûm is situated must contain the *débris* of one of the oldest cities in Egypt, and would probably well repay excavation, as its name occurs on the monuments of the third dynasty, B.C. 3900.

It takes scarcely a quarter of an hour to traverse the cultivated strip that intervenes between the hill and the desert—just before reaching which, on the left, we pass a village of pigeon-towers, that presents a curious appearance, as the population of the village is comparatively small, while that of the pigeons

is relatively great. They inhabit conical domes of mud, like large bee-hives, which are grouped upon towers and upon narrow oblong constructions, built expressly for them—eight or ten upon each tower, and sometimes as many as thirty upon one roof. In these mud-cones earthenware vessels are embedded, opening inwards; while a row of holes admits the bird into the interior of the structure, where, as well as on the outside, numerous perches are arranged. The advantage of this contrivance is, that whenever a pigeon is wanted, the owner goes at night into the house while the birds are in their nests, and abstracts as many as he chooses without disturbing the others. The swarms of pigeons which are thus reared serve the double purpose of furnishing food and manure; but I doubt whether, on the whole, they do not do more harm to the young crops than good to the land.

We now emerge from the desert, and the road gradually ascends for a few miles to a summit-level of about a hundred and forty feet above the level of the sea—as great an altitude, probably, as that attained by any railway in the country. On our left is a

range of sand-hills, and beyond it we can distinctly observe the depression which was once filled by the waters of Lake Moeris, and a portion of which is now a sandy desert; its southern extremity is marked by the Pyramid of Illahoon, also clearly visible. A little further on we cross the Bahr Bela Ma—a broad *wady* with precipitous sides, down the centre of which winds a narrow sluggish stream; and near it we observe the remains of some of the old embankments of the lake. In a few minutes more we are cheered by the sight of a grove of date-trees, and our short traject of fifteen miles of desert is at an end. We are at El Edwa, the first village of the Fayoum; and a run of five miles more through richly cultivated country, lands us at Medinet el Fayoum, the capital of the province, and practically the terminus of the railway, so far as ordinary travel is concerned.

Although the kindness of the Government had provided us with lodgings (for hotels are unknown in the Fayoum), our first night, owing to the late hour of our arrival, was spent in a tent; and I was lulled to sleep by the wailing and sighing of the numerous water-wheels or

sakkyas, which are a special characteristic of the Fayoum. They differ from those of other parts of Egypt, inasmuch as the motive power does not consist of oxen or buffaloes, but of the water itself,—the natural incline of the country giving the canals a sufficient current to enable them to turn these huge undershot wheels, which are made of date-fibre, and on which are fixed alternately earthen jars and wooden paddles; as they revolve, they groan and strain under the pressure, as though some mortal injury was being inflicted upon them. It is not the harsh creaking of wood, but the plaintive moan of over-stretched fibre; and as the whole province resounds with their lamentations, one almost feels inclined to pity it as the victim of some serious nervous disorder. There was something very weird in the sound that first night, as with mournful cadence it rose and fell in the still air, now sinking almost to a sigh, now rising to a harsh scream; and my first impulse in the morning was to go and inspect the primitive mechanism which thus fertilises the whole country with its never-ending day and night rotation. As Medinet el Fayoum is the great centre of water distri-

bution for the province, there are probably a greater number of these water-wheels collected here than elsewhere, and the place is surrounded by a network of canals and rivulets which encompass it at all seasons with a setting of the richest verdure, and have made its orchards and gardens the theme of the traveller and historian from the earliest times. All this is due to the Bahr Youssef, or "river of Joseph," which is, in fact, a branch of the Nile, diverted from that river at Siout, and which, after a tortuous course of upwards of two hundred miles along the base of the Libyan hills and parallel with the Nile, takes advantage of a depression in the chain, and is conducted by sluices at Illahoon into the province—flowing through the town of Medinet in a broad deep stream until it reaches its northern end, when it is dammed across and diverted into seven different channels and ceases to be navigable. Before this occurs, however, numerous minor canals and *sakkyas* keep robbing it of its water; and just outside our place of abode, which was at the entry to the town, three considerable streams, all turning water-wheels, diverged from it into the

country. Many traditions connect Joseph in the popular mind with this river and city; but nothing definite upon the subject has been discovered. A Copt told me that the Fayoum was the creation of Joseph when Pharaoh gave him *pleins pouvoirs* to deal with the famine. That he then conceived the idea of diverting the waters of the Nile into this natural depression, and turned what had formerly been a marsh into a most fertile province; and a further tradition exists to the effect that he was buried here, and that it was from this neighbourhood that his body was removed by the Jews at the time of the exodus. Unfortunately for the Copt's story, evidence of the strongest kind exists to show that the Fayoum was a flourishing province many hundred years before Joseph's time, to which I shall presently allude. It does not, however, follow that Joseph had nothing to do with perfecting the irrigation works connected with the river which is called after him. There is generally some foundation for names and traditions of this sort; and it is probable that the Israelites — who were not slow to discover the most available spots for

their industry—when they came to Egypt, settled at some subsequent period in the Fayoum as well as in Goshen; for it is said of the children of Israel after Joseph's death, that they "multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them."

Indeed, Leo Africanus says, in his description of this locality,—"The ancient city was built by one of the Pharaohs on an elevated spot, near a small canal from the Nile, at the time of the exodus of the Jews, after he had afflicted them with the drudgery of hewing stones, and other laborious employments," thus establishing a connection between the Jews and the Fayoum; though I think there can be no doubt that the ancient city, the remains of which still strew the neighbourhood, existed here long anterior to the period of the Jewish exodus.

Before, however, entering upon a description of the antiquities of the Fayoum, it may be interesting to note the modern aspect of the province and its capital. There can be no doubt that in ancient days the cultivable area of the oasis was much greater than it is at present, as the indications of a town and

irrigation works near the ruins of Kasr Kharoon, at the south-western extremity of the Birket el Kurûn, where it is now a desert, abundantly testify. At the present day it measures twenty-three miles north and south, and twenty-eight miles east and west. The town of Medinet el Fayoum is situated on a plateau which is about the same level as the Nile. From here the country trends rapidly to the Birket el Kurûn, which is, according to Linant, 94 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, thus falling about 170 feet in fifteen miles. The Birket el Kurûn is a lake of brackish water, about thirty-five miles long and seven broad; and into this drain fall the waters of the Bahr Youssef, after they have fertilised the whole area of the province. The result is, that the country is intersected by numerous more or less swiftly-running streams, which, cutting through the soft soil, often form little gorges of great beauty and luxuriance, as at the village of Fidimin, where they overflow their dams in cascades—a scenic feature unknown in any other part of Egypt. Where these dams exist there are often little lakes, embowered in palm-groves and gardens, thus

giving the Fayoum a pre-eminence, so far as beauty of landscape is concerned, over every other part of the country. Strabo was evidently much struck with the exceptional fertility and beauty of the Fayoum.

"The Arsinoite Nome," he says in his account of the Nomes of Egypt, "is the most remarkable of all, both on account of its scenery and its fertility and cultivation; for it alone is planted with large, perfect, and richly productive olive-trees—and the oil is good when carefully prepared. Those who are neglectful may, indeed, obtain oil in abundance, but it has a bad smell. In the rest of Egypt the olive-tree is never seen, except in the gardens of Alexandria, where, under favourable circumstances, they yield olives, but no oil. Vines, corn, podded plants, and many other products, also thrive in this district in no small abundance."

Olive-oil seemed to hold an exceptionally high rank in the estimation of the old historian; but persons of other tastes will find here in the season a profusion of figs, oranges, apricots, and other fruits, which will equally justify the reputation of the province for pro-

ductiveness. Twenty years ago its beauty was even greater than it is now. The gardens that had made it celebrated throughout Europe had latterly gradually been allowed to run waste, owing to the extreme severity of the taxation with which this province was afflicted during the *régime* of the late Khedive. The peasants were thus impoverished to such an extent that the province stood a fair chance of being ruined, and its fertility of being destroyed, when the change of government took place under which it has begun to prosper with surprising rapidity. Unfortunately, one of its main and most attractive staples of industry has disappeared; through no fault, however, of the Government. Fifteen years ago Medinet was surrounded by fields of roses, covering hundreds of acres; and the inhabitants drove a profitable trade by the sale of attar of roses. During the rose season the town was the most fragrant residence in Egypt. Unfortunately, the rose-trees were attacked by a malady which has entirely ruined the industry; and although efforts have since been made to renew it, they have hitherto been without success. Sugar and

cotton are now the principal products of the province; and fields of beans, lentils, wheat, and other ceréals stretch in all directions as far as the eye can reach.

According to tradition, the Arsinoite Nome contained in former days 366 towns and villages, which, even supposing its limits to have far exceeded those that now exist, seems an over-estimate. The present population is probably about 150,000 souls, of whom 9000 live in the chief town. This, after establishing ourselves in the quarters which had been kindly provided for us, we lost no time in exploring.

It is the habit of dragomans to lay in large supplies of food for the tourists they nurse in the East. As, however, we had carefully avoided providing ourselves with that functionary, and had decided to live upon the food of the country, with the aid of a single servant[1] and our own culinary acquirements, it became important to discover what meat and vegetables were furnished by the bazaar. This consists of a long narrow street,

[1] For the benefit of any of my readers who propose visiting Egypt, I cannot too highly recommend this man, whose name is Mohamet Achmet, as a servant. He is also qualified to act as a dragoman.

for the most part covered over in the usual way, and extremely characteristic and oriental in its aspect. At one place the Bahr Youssef runs under it, but there is nothing to suggest that we are on a bridge, as it is completely built over with shops. For the benefit of future travellers, who want to know what they may depend upon finding in an ordinary Arab town of this description, I may say that the staple of food is beans and lentils,—the latter making a most excellent *purée*, and the former, when eaten very young, almost equalling peas. Onions, yams, spinach, and *okra* are abundant; rice and potatoes rare. Native bread, made from the country wheat, would be good, were it not rather sour; but we used to make soda-cakes; and after some trouble, discovered a mill at which maize could be ground rough instead of fine. This enabled us to have *mush*, which, eaten with rich cream, makes a delicious substitute for porridge. The land flows with milk and honey, and there is no lack, therefore, of butter and cream-cheeses. Beef is not procurable; the mutton is bad, generally suspiciously pervaded with the flavour of goat, chickens are cheap

and abundant—four dozen eggs can be bought for a shilling; and pigeons are eightpence a-pair. Fish in great quantities are brought from the Birket el Kurûn, resembling, generally, very large carp. There is a prejudice against them, and it is said they give fever; but I thought them excellent. Teal and wild duck occasionally come into the market, and cost about sixpence apiece. They are caught by the hunter putting his head in a calabash and wading out, accompanied by some tame ducks as decoy; he then scatters food on the water, and when the wild ducks come to feed round him, gently draws them under water with his hand. As they always have a sentinel out, it is necessary in approaching them to dispose of this gentleman first. The flock, not noticing his disappearance, and completely off their guard, may then be easily got at.

From all this it will appear that it was our own fault if we failed to have proper nourishment at Fayoum. I vainly tried one day to add to our larder with an extemporised fishing-rod and a worm; but beyond a dozen small creatures, which collectively weighed about a pound and a half, I extracted nothing from the

most tempting-looking pools under the water-wheels: and as the cook declined to cook them, on the ground that they were unwholesome, I was discouraged from any further effort. A more profitable occupation was to wander over the ruins of the ancient city of Crocodilopolis Arsinoë; and this was a never-ending source of interest and amusement. The high mounds of *débris*, which cover an immense area of ground, were scarcely a mile from our abode, and consist of an enormous accumulation of potsherds, bones, bricks, rags, fibre, and dust. The highest mound is fifty feet above the level of the plain, and its summit commands a panoramic view of the whole of the province.

It is impossible to describe the rich and glowing beauty of the sunsets I have seen from this spot. The extraordinary clearness of the atmosphere brought out with the utmost distinctness the most distant outline. In the far east one could see the forms of the desert-ranges beyond the Nile, faintly blushing in the last rays of the sun. Nearer still, are the sand-hills of the desert on this side of the river, with the Pyramids of Howara and Illahoon standing out conspicuously; then succeeds a

carpet of cultivation, to the brilliant green of which the more sombre hues of the palm-groves furnish a fitting contrast; amidst all this luxuriance water is sparkling and winding everywhere. In the extreme western distance we catch glimpses of the "Lake of the Horn," lying in the shadow of the Libyan hills; while in the immediate foreground the quaint cemetery and mud-houses of Medinet el Fayoum which crown the high banks of the Bahr Youssef, so uncouth and barbarous looking at other times, are now all melted into a confused haze, as the sun setting behind the town throws it into a bluish-purple shadow, from which shoot here and there a minaret or a palm-tree. After we have feasted our eyes with the view from the top of the mound, we go down to see what is to be discovered at the bottom of it. We find on one side that it is scarped and perfectly precipitous, and that it is apparently a huge heap of *débris*, in which the pottery, bones, rags, straw, and date-fibre are packed in layers looking like strata. In places we see cropping out the remains of old brick walls, still standing wedged in the mound, here and there they are undermined by the labours of the peasants,

who come and scoop out the dust of ages which fills these old chambers, and in which the pottery and bones are embedded. This they sift and carry off to put upon their fields as manure. It is a fine impalpable powder, which gets into one's nose and eyes, and penetrates into the innermost recesses of one's garments; nevertheless we revel in it for the sake of the treasures which it may contain. Here at the base of the mound we observe a protruding skull, with short curly hair still clinging to it. We make an Arab manure-sifter exhume the mortal remains, and find clinging to the legs the wrappages of coarse linen, in which the whole body was once swathed: the skin is tightly drawn over the ribs, but none remains on the face. As we grub in the cloud of dust raised by this operation, we come across lumps of soft yellow stuff, which turns out to be mummy-cloth of a finer texture. Meantime another Arab triumphantly hands us a piece of *papyrus*, which he has found somewhere else, and on which, in spite of its tattered condition, we can make out an invocation to Allah, in Arabic letters of the style used in the first century of the Hegira, which shows that it

cannot be above twelve hundred years old,—a comparatively modern relic, which we treat with contempt while grubbing amid the remains of the twelfth dynasty. At the same time, we cannot flatter ourselves that what we do discover dates back beyond the Roman, or, at most, the Ptolemaic period. In the course of five or six walks which we took over these ruins, we picked up ourselves seven coins, of which four were of the reigns of Vespasian, Diodletian, Constantine, and Trajan. One was a curious Cufic coin; and we procured about a dozen more from the Arabs, most of which were undecipherable, but those we made out were also Roman. Some of the pottery was of a blue, green, or yellow glaze, the colours remarkably brilliant; but unfortunately we only found it in fragments. Pieces of glass bottles were common; and I picked up one perfect little phial of iridescent glass, used by the sympathetic ancients to contain tears. Beads were comparatively abundant, and we made quite an assortment of them. There were numerous fragments of glass bracelets, unfortunately none perfect. From the appearance and shape of the broken *amphoræ*, which

lay strewn around in great profusion, they must have been of a great size; and from one spot we may look over hundreds of acres of this shattered ware, testifying to the extensive use of pottery by the ancients. I pulled out several large pieces of coloured cloth from the base of this cliff of projecting *débris*, a hand-broom made of date-fibre, and a key of curious shape, heavily oxidised. From the great quantities of slag lying about in parts of these ruins, it would seem as though the city had been subjected at some time to the action of fire; and large fragments of blue glass were to be found which had evidently undergone a process of fusing. These, however, may have been the runnings from the glass furnaces. It is worthy of note, nevertheless, that a tradition exists among the Copts, of the city having been burnt by a besieging army, who tied torches to the tails of cats and drove them into the town.

The Arab diggers, who live in huts in the neighbourhood of these ruins, occasionally pick up valuable antiquities; but they are too ignorant to know their worth, and it is painful to think how many objects of interest they must

smash in the course of their excavations for manure-dust. As it is, when they want to build, they come here for bricks which have stood the test of centuries; and I saw one man loading his donkey with large sun-dried bricks, twenty inches long by nine wide, which he was picking out of a wall just showing through the mound. In one part of these ruins there are numbers of chambers, built of crude brick, in a very fair state of preservation; and it was in these that I found most of the beads and coins. Besides bricks and pottery, one now and then stumbles across a small piece of marble carving, or some larger fragments of granite columns. In looking over these chambers and mounds, we can trace the difference between the Roman and Egyptian periods. We see on the surface the strewn pottery, glass-ware, and coins of the later time, with here and there a few burnt bricks, which were most probably Roman, as the Egyptians rarely used them; but as we get lower down in our examination of the scarped cliff of *débris*, we come upon all the evidences of Egyptian structure, with bones and mummy-cloth more abundant, and thicker layers of straw or fibre.

It was from the bottom of the cliff that I pulled out a fragment, at least a foot square, of what must have been an ancient Egyptian fishing-net. The crude brick walls which crop out from the base of these mounds, and over which probably a later town was built, are sometimes curved or waving in their construction. The whole description answered exactly to that given by Sir Gardner Wilkinson, who says :—

"The use of crude bricks baked in the sun was universal throughout the country, for private and for many public buildings; and the dry climate of Egypt was particularly suited to those simple materials. They had the recommendation of cheapness, and even of durability; and those made 3000 years ago, whether with or without straw, are even now as firm and fit for use as when first put up in the reigns of the Amenophis and Thotines, whose names they bear. When made of the hill-mud or alluvial deposit, they required straw to prevent their cracking; but those formed of clay (now called *haybeh*) taken from the torrent-beds on the edge of the desert, held together without straw; and crude brick walls frequently had the additional security of a layer of reeds

or bricks, plæced at intervals to act as binders. The courses of bricks were also disposed occasionally in horizontal curves, or a succession of concave and convex lines, throughout the length of the wall; and this undulating arrangement was even adopted in stone, especially in quays by the river-side."

The modern cemetery of Medinet el Fayoum, with its picturesque tombs, is placed amid these ruins at the point where they most nearly approach the town.

The Egyptian monarch whose name is most intimately associated with this province, and to whom it probably owed, in the first instance, its development into a region of exceptional fertility, was Amenemhat the Third, who reigned in Egypt about 3000 years before Christ, and 600 years, therefore, before the arrival of Joseph in the country. In those days Egypt was called "the Land of Khemi," the "Ham" of the Bible, or "the Black Country"—a name derived from the blackness of the soil. Amenemhat seems to have had a great talent for engineering, and for irrigating this black soil in the most effectual manner. It is almost beyond a doubt that he it was who led the Bahr Youssef through

the Libyan hills, and formed the vast reservoir of Lake Mœris; for the Greeks called him Ameris, believing that the Lake Mœris, which they regarded as a marvel of engineering skill, was called after him. The word *meri*, however, is Egyptian for "lake." On its margin was situated the famous labyrinth, which I afterwards visited; and here blocks of stone have been found bearing the name of Amenemhat. This lake extended to the city, the ruins of which I have just described, and which in those days was called Shât, or Pi-Sebek, "the abode of Sebek;" and it was the headquarters of the worship of the sacred crocodile, kept in Lake Mœris,—hence the name by which this city was afterwards known, of Crocodilopolis. Sebek is the name of the Egyptian god, who is always represented with the head of a crocodile; and that reptile was held especially sacred to him in the Arsinoite and several other nomes. He was by no means generally worshipped, however; indeed a certain Typhonic or infernal character was attributed to him. And this was specially the case in the adjoining Heracleopolitan nome, where the inhabitants worshipped the ichneu-

mon, the greatest enemy of the crocodile; and it was their hatred which finally caused the destruction of the Labyrinth.

One of the most interesting antiquities, however, discovered in the Fayoum, is the head of one of the Hyksos, or shepherd-kings. From the discoveries recently made at San, the Greek Tanis, and the Biblical Zoan, which they made their capital, and which was also the chief city of the land of Goshen, there can be little doubt that these conquerors of Egypt were a Semitic race from the East, and it is not impossible that among their kinsfolk were Abraham and Sarah, whose sojourn in the country forms the earliest notice of it to be found in the Bible; more especially as it will be remembered that Hagar, the patriarch's second wife, and his daughter-in-law, Ishmael's wife, were both Egyptians. They ruled over the land for nearly four centuries and a half, while the exiled royal race took refuge in Upper Egypt. They adopted the style, language, religion, arts, and writing of the conquered country, and according to Dr Brugsch, it was under the reign of the Hyksos Pharaoh Nub, B.C. 1730, that Joseph was sold into Egypt; and

during the reign of his successor, Apopi, that he rose to honour, and that the famine took place which brought Jacob and his family to Egypt, and which is mentioned on a tomb at El Kab. The tomb belonged to the father of Aahmes, a naval officer who took part in the expulsion of the Hyksos—an event which, as Joseph lived to the age of a hundred and ten years, must have occurred before his death. It runs thus: "When a famine prevailed for many years, then I gave the city corn during each famine." As we learn from the Biblical record that "Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over all the land of Egypt" during these years, it is evident that the father of Aahmes must have been one of his subordinate officers.

The accounts given of the methods to which Joseph resorted during these seven years of famine for supplying the necessities of the whole population of Egypt, whom he ultimately caused to sell all their lands to Pharaoh, excepting only those belonging to the priests, clearly warrant the inference that the Fayoum, which was the most fertile portion of it, must have come under his special notice as a granary; and the tradition that he was buried

there may have a foundation in fact. The sacred historian is careful to tell us that when Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old, "they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." There is, indeed, every reason to suppose that so great a benefactor to the country, and a man who had filled such high office, was honoured with a tomb worthy of his greatness. And although we are informed that at the exodus Moses took his body to Palestine, the substantial character of these monuments makes it not impossible that his place of sepulture, and possibly a statue representing him, may yet be discovered in Egypt, and that the most likely place to find it would be the Fayoum.

Like the Hyksos conquerors themselves, it is probable that Joseph identified himself with the religion and customs of the Egyptians. We learn that Pharaoh "gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On." Potiphe-ra means "dedicated to Ra," or "the sun." In other words, his father-in-law was a priest of the temple at Heliopolis. The Hyksos themselves, although they seem to have compromised with their consciences by

applying the name of the Egyptian god Set to their own gods (Baalim), were apparently Baal-worshippers before coming to Egypt. This indication of a Semitic origin has given rise to the notion that the Hyksos may have been Phœnicians, while others think they were tribes from the Arabian desert. There are many circumstances strongly conducing to such ideas, though the three heads in the Boulak museum, the features of which show remarkable power, are not, it must be admitted, of a marked Semitic type; and the advice Joseph gave to his father and brethren before they asked permission of the shepherd-king to allow them to settle in Egypt, has a most significant allusion to their dynastic appellation. "When Pharaoh," he says, "shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? then ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians." Now Tanis, which the Hyksos kings had made their capital, was in the land of Goshen. Joseph, no doubt, resided in it,

and he wished his kindred to be settled near him. He therefore appeals to the weak side of the shepherd-king, who is himself Semitic and not Egyptian by race, and gives as a reason why they should live near the capital, where, doubtless, the conquering Semitic population preponderated, that they are shepherds, and that they would probably be ill-treated by the Egyptians, who abominate shepherds, if they went beyond the immediate protection of the ruling centre.

Pharaoh is apparently completely won over by the sympathy thus established of identity of occupation, and probably of race. He gives them the choice of the whole country to settle in; and tells Joseph to choose from his brethren "men of activity to rule over his cattle." It is evident, then, that the Israelites were in high favour at this time; but a change must have taken place in their circumstances almost immediately afterwards, when Aahmes or Amosis, the first king of the eighteenth dynasty, defeated the army of the Hyksos, consisting, according to Manetho, of 24,000 men, took their capital, and drove a large proportion of them out of Egypt, most of them

retreating to Palestine, where they finally settled, and, according to some authorities, founded Jerusalem. Those who remained, however, were subjected to great persecution, in which the Israelites, who as Semites had been identified with them, shared. The sojourn of the latter is said by St Paul to have lasted four hundred years; and the explanation of their having multiplied during that period into a nation of 600,000 souls, may perhaps be found in the fact that they had mingled and become identified with those of the Hyksos Semites that remained. Indeed it is recorded that when they left Egypt "a mixed multitude went up also with them."

In opposition to the theory that I have here enunciated, and which is advocated by many eminent Egyptologists, in regard to the date of the arrival of Joseph in Egypt, and the period of the sojourn of the Israelites, it is only right to say that it is a point which is still open to discussion, and that such men as Bunsen and Lepsius maintain widely opposite opinions. Bunsen holds that the family of Jacob came to Egypt in the reign of Sesertesen (Sesostris), about 2650 years before

Christ; and since he agrees with Lepsius in placing the exodus in the reign of Meneptah, he allows an interval of 1440 years to elapse between Joseph and the exodus, or more than fourteen centuries. Lepsius, however, enters upon an elaborate and most carefully digested argument to prove that only about 90 years intervened from the entrance of Jacob to the exodus of Moses, and about as much from the entrance of Abraham into Canaan to Jacob's exodus; so that from Abraham to Moses only about 180, or, if we wish to make the most of it, 215 years passed, which alone, according to this calculation, are reckoned from Abraham to Jacob. Josephus maintains that the Hyksos were the Jews; and it is a curious fact that the Hyksos reigned in Egypt exactly 430 years, the period mentioned in Exodus as that of the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt; but Josephus dates his 430 years from the arrival of Abraham in Egypt, and leaves 215 years as the period intervening between Joseph and Moses. Now we know by the genealogies that Moses was the grandson of Levi by his mother Jochebed,[1] and

[1] Exodus vi. 20.

therefore the grand-nephew of Joseph. Levi, who was Jacob's third son, must have been a middle-aged man when he came to Egypt, as we are told that Joseph was thirty when his brethren arrived. He died when he was a hundred and thirty-seven years old. Moses was eighty years old when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt. In order to make up the 215 years of Josephus, we should have to suppose that Levi had been seventy years in the country, and was therefore probably about a hundred and twenty years old when Jochebed was born, and that she was sixty-five years old when she conceived Moses—both somewhat extreme assumptions. Under no circumstances, without a miracle, such as took place in the case of Sarah, can we stretch the period to the 430 years of Exodus, or the 400 of St Paul. It is worthy of note that, according to the Septuagint, the period of 430 years is not calculated from the entry of Jacob and his family, but from the entrance of Abraham into Canaan. It reads thus: "Now the dwelling of the children of Israel, which they dwelt in the land of Egypt *and in the land of Canaan*, was 430 years;" but it is difficult

to extend the generations from Abraham to Moses, even to that extent. The whole subject is encompassed with difficulty. As a contemporary record, the account which Manetho gives of the exodus is full of interest, as containing the Egyptian version of the expulsion of the Lepers, as he calls the Jews; and indeed he insinuates that they had become a public nuisance, not only from the disease which was prevalent among them, but from the hold they had got upon the country, and their ever-increasing influence and possessions in it.

Egyptologists generally seem agreed that it was under the reign of Rameses the Great that Moses was born; and it is an interesting fact that the second court of the Temple of Abydos furnishes us with the name of the daughter of Pharaoh who found him in the bulrushes. All the names of the daughters of Rameses are inscribed there, and that of the eldest bears so close a similarity to the name furnished by Josephus, allowing for the Greek termination which he uses, as to leave no moral doubt as to their identity. The name given by Josephus is Mautaretis; that inscribed in the chamber of Abydos is Maut-Art, or the great mother—

thus furnishing a curious confirmation of the truth of the narrative. According to the fragment of Manetho, Moses passed the early part of his life as a priest in the temple dedicated to the worship of the sun at Heliopolis. The notice is curious, and runs as follows: "It is said that a priest who founded their (the Jews') polity and laws—a Heliopolitan by race, named Osarsiph—when he went over to this nation from the service of the god Osiris in Heliopolis, received a change of name and was called Moses." I have already alluded to Joseph's connection with the same temple; and it is not unlikely that during the whole of this time the Israelites had, to some extent, conformed to the religion of the country with which both Joseph and Moses were so intimately associated, and in which the latter, with his great talents, had probably distinguished himself by his priestly learning. Indeed it would seem as though his theology, even after he became lawgiver to the Israelites, had been imbued with this early training. It is a singular and interesting fact that we find much of it embodied in the early funereal *papyri*. Thus the departed soul, pleading his justification before

Osiris, recounts the temptations he has resisted in such words as these: "I have not committed murder; I have not stolen; I have not committed adultery; I have not removed my neighbour's landmark, nor caused him to shed tears,"—and so on, developing a moral code of a very high order. It was as a general, however, that Moses rose to the highest distinction; for Josephus tells that he was placed by Rameses in command of the Egyptian armies in Ethiopia, where he waged a successful war, and married the daughter of the king whom he had conquered, returning to Egypt in the reign of Meneptah. He was thus a man of varied experience, of great learning, and of high position in Egypt when he was compelled to flee to Midian, returning at the age of eighty, eminently qualified by the training he had undergone for the functions he was then called upon to fulfil.

It was under Meneptah the Second that the exodus took place, about the year B.C. 1325. He does not seem to have perished in the Red Sea, though, according to the song of Moses, his horse was lost. His tomb is at Thebes, in the Bab-el Molock, immediately behind that

of Rameses the Great. At the same time, this does not furnish absolute proof that he was placed in it, as the Egyptian kings used to commence to build their tombs when they began to reign. I have been led by the discovery of the head of a Hyksos king in the Fayoum, and the traditional connection of Joseph with that province, into a digression which only belongs to it in so far as it goes to establish the possibility of his tomb being here, and to confirm the impression, also evidently entertained by Leo Africanus, that the Jews were settled here as well as in the land of Goshen, as it must have been for more than 400 years under Semitic rule.

The oasis is next mentioned in the days of Osorkon the First, of the twenty-second dynasty, when Crocodilopolis was so embellished and extended by that monarch, that it was called "the city of Osorkon" in the celebrated *stele* of Piankhi. This Osorkon was the Zerah of the Bible, who invaded Palestine with an army of a million of men, and was defeated by Asa. He lived about 950 years before Christ. Seven hundred years after this, Crocodilopolis lost its uncouth name, and Ptolemy Phila-

delphus bestowed upon it the more euphonious appellation of Arsinoë, after his wife, and the "Land of the Lake" became "the Arsinoite Nome." One of the modern names for Medinet el Fayoum is Medinet el Faris, or "the City of the Horseman or Knight;" and these ruins, after having been called successively Pi-Sebek, Crocodilopolis, and Arsinoë, are known in the present day to the natives as Kom Faris. The most perfect relics of the magnificence of this once rich and populous city are to be found in the mosque of Kait Bey, which spans the Bahr Youssef, at the point where it finally emerges from the town, and which is itself a most picturesque ruin, about 400 years old. It has long since lost its roof, and from its centre, by the side of a well with an old stone basin, rise two tall date-trees; but the marble and granite columns, with their Corinthian capitals, which are all still standing, came from Arsinoë. There are two small fluted marble columns near the pulpit, which are particularly delicate and beautiful. The pulpit itself is an elaborate work of arabesque, inlaid with ivory. On the bridge in front of this mosque are the remains of an old wall; and the view

of the Bahr Youssef, seen through the crumbling arches, as it winds away under the date-trees which fringe its banks, when the women are filling their water-jars, is one of the most striking in the town, and equalled only, perhaps, by one a little further on, where there is another old mosque, also roofless, and also ornamented with columns plundered from Arsinoë, that stands on the brink of the river, and is irresistible in its situation and picturesque decay, from an artistic point of view. Indeed our walks and rides about Fayoum were being perpetually interrupted by the charming studies for the pencil which they presented; and we spent half our time squatting on heaps of brickbats, surrounded by admiring crowds of women and children, in the attempt to carry away in our sketch-books reminiscences of the scenes which it afforded us so much enjoyment to discover. One of the most characteristic and interesting of these was the fair, which takes place every Tuesday, when a large proportion of the country population flock to Medinet, to buy and sell produce. There must have been nearly 2000 people assembled on the large open space outside the

town on the day that we visited it. In one quarter were collected all the camels, buffaloes, oxen, donkeys, and sheep, that were for sale. Down the centre of the most crowded part a temporary street of canvas-booths had been erected, where Manchester goods were temptingly displayed: here the country-women were chaffering for the blue cotton, of which their garments are made; Bedouins from the neighbourhood of the Birket, with their independent swagger, were supplying themselves with cooking utensils in the quarter devoted to copper and brass ware; there were Copts, with quite a different cast of countenance, and crushed and downcast manner, haggling and bargaining, with the facility of getting the best of it which is peculiar to them. Here was a man blowing a trumpet as an invitation to a peep-show; there a *crétin*, with receding skull, epileptic tremor, and idiotic stare, receiving the homage of the unsophisticated *fellahin*, who kissed his hand as a tribute to his infirmity. Altogether it was an insecty, odoriferous, screaming, wrangling, jostling throng, to shoulder one's way amongst. There was no mistake about the oriental flavour, in more senses

than one. And the satisfaction of our curiosity and interest involved a certain sacrifice of personal comfort, as we came to discover afterwards, during an arduous and protracted effort to reduce the numbers of the hopping mementoes of our visit.

Mere existence, and, much more, sight-seeing, in Egypt, involves a perpetual struggle with fleas; and one goes into a crowd with about the same shiver of reluctance that one would feel before taking a plunge into the Serpentine in the depth of winter. These were our sensations one Sunday when we determined to attend service in the Coptic church. We were escorted thither by some of the leading members of the community, who are largely employed here, as elsewhere in Egypt, as clerks in the public office—writers, accountants, and so forth. The church was a square building, supported by eight columns, and divided by two screens running across it longitudinally. Behind one, which was of open arabesque work, sat the women by themselves. In the centre the male congregation for the most part squatted on their heels; but there were two rows of chairs in

front provided for the more aristocratic portion of the congregation, where we were furnished with seats. Immediately in front of us was an opaque screen, ornamented with rude Scripture pictures, and consisting of inlaid ebony and ivory, that divided us from the apse. In the middle of it was an opening through which was visible the altar, a massive brick erection, upon which a sheep might have been conveniently sacrificed. It was now covered with a curtain, upon which the Coptic cross, with its peculiar pendent squares, was designed. In the centre of it was the case, also covered, which contained the chalice. In the midst of the congregation was a reading-desk, at which two of the deacons read from the liturgy, alternately in Coptic and Arabic. This was removed before the service was completed. The congregation, which was composed of four or five hundred persons, was decidedly irreverent; there was a constant movement of places and subdued conversation going on all the while that the priests were intoning the service in the rapid nasal voice peculiar to them. It was a form that apparently had to be got through by the priests in as little time as

possible, and by the people with no attention whatever. The sacrament was celebrated by a priest in a white surplice embroidered with gold, but who, according to invariable usage, was barefoot. When the celebration began we were allowed to take off our shoes and take a couple of chairs into the apse and seat ourselves beside the altar. There were besides ourselves and the priest two or three youths, apparently neophytes, and three little boys leaning over the altar opposite the celebrant, one to fan the flies off, and the others to chant responses: at the door of the apse was a man swinging incense. Four candles were burning on the altar, and a very old chandelier hung from the roof. During the whole time that the priest chanted the service he held extended in either hand a square piece of richly embroidered cloth, emblazoned with the cross and sundry Coptic devices. The bread, on which was stamped a cross, consisted of a substantial cake, something like a hot cross bun, and when the priest took it, one like it was handed to each of us, apparently as a keepsake. Having broken it into a glass saucer and elevated it before the congrega-

tion, he uncovered the wine, dipped his finger into it and crossed the bread. He then commenced to partake of the bread, giving it at the same time to a young man by his side, and to a child about seven years old, who walked incessantly round the altar with a candle in his hand and a square embroidered cloth held to his mouth. Every time he passed the priest he stopped, received a mouthful, and then started off again with the cloth held tightly to his mouth, continuing his walk until the bread was finished. I asked a young Copt the meaning of this child's performances, and he said he was, "like Samuel, training for the priesthood from his infancy." All this time, when the priest was not intoning, a group of four boys outside in the church were chanting the responses in Arabic, in a loud discordant key, in alternation with those within the apse, who chanted in Coptic. It was a wild Arabic cadence, which sounded strangely in connection with a Christian service, and with the constantly recurring refrain of "Kyrie Eleison." When the bread and wine were disposed of, and the vessels divested of the last crumb and drop, the chalice

was filled with water and handed to us, so that we, together with those so minded, might partake of it. After the service was over we adjourned to an enclosed court outside the church where there was a *divan*, and where we were regaled with coffee and cigarettes, and introduced to the old priest who had officiated, and who had so gentle and winning an expression of countenance, that I was led to hope that his religion consisted of something beyond the forms I had been witnessing. There is a small Roman Catholic Church in Medinet, which we also visited, and where an Italian *curé*, who was unfortunately absent, officiates to a congregation of about fifty persons, mostly converts or their descendants. He is the only European permanently resident in the place. The Protestant American Mission opened a school here not long ago; but it was so badly supported, and their efforts met with so little success, that it was abandoned after a short time.

The Copt population of the province of Fayoum is about 5000; of these a large proportion are *fellahin*. Those in the town, as I have already said, are for the most part

scribes, and after going to their church, I am inclined to think may also be Pharisees. During our stay in the Fayoum we saw a good deal of the *mudir* or governor, and one or two of the other officials, to whom we were much indebted for various acts of kindness. For the last ten years the Fayoum has been administered with marked success by the present governor, who has, in consequence, held his position for an almost unprecedented length of time. The mode of administering an Egyptian province is in some respects patriarchal. The *mudir* is, or should be, easy of access to the humblest *fellah;* and if he is a capable man, can exercise the functions of a benevolent despot without let or hindrance. On the other hand, the power thus at his disposition may easily be, and often is, abused. Once a-week the sheikhs of villages used to congregate in the avenue leading to the Government offices. As a rule, they were tall handsome men, and formed striking groups, in their black flowing *abeihs*, beneath which the white under-garment folded across the chest shows in strong and harmonious contrast. With all these men the governor was in direct and

constant contact, and was thus in a position to know the exact condition of every village in his *mudirate*. Sometimes he would address them collectively, after receiving their various reports; and on occasions of disputes or complaints, groups of the lowest class of *fellahin* might be seen waiting for their audience.

This same avenue was on certain days of the week the resort of numerous letter-writers, who, seated on the ground under the trees, would draw up petitions or write letters for those who could not do so for themselves; here, too, were pitched the tents of the party who are making a cadastral survey of the province under Colonel Mason, to whose hospitality we were indebted for a tent on the first night of our arrival. As this avenue was also the approach to our own rooms, we were in a position to know pretty well what was going on generally. Nor was Fayoum without its dissipations. One evening we dined out and accomplished the feat of steadily wading with our fingers, in the absence of plates or knives and forks, through fifteen elaborately cooked native dishes, which had been prepared in the

harem by the ladies of our host, who were skilled in the culinary art. As the *plats* were not cooked dry, but consisted of cunningly prepared gravies and sauces, fingers seemed especially inadequate, even with the aid of bread, to secure satisfactory mouthfuls. However, as we had so many to do justice to, a little of each went a long way. Turkish and Arabic cookery errs perhaps on the side of being too greasy; but I confess I prefer it to any other, perhaps because I acquired the taste for it in my youth.

We had now pretty well exhausted the attractions of the town of Medinet, and determined to make some expeditions to such objects of interest in the Fayoum as were within our power. There were a prostrate obelisk and some curious ruins still to be seen within an easy distance of the town, but we had more especially set our hearts upon visiting the Pyramid of Howara, and the far-famed Labyrinth which, in the days of Herodotus, was numbered among the seven wonders of the world, and the ruins of which have lately been discovered by Linant Bey, upon the shores of the dried-up Lake Mœris. Indeed

the two great attractions which had induced me to visit the Arsinoite Nome consisted in the prospect that it afforded of exploring the mysteries of the Labyrinth, and of fishing in the brackish waters of the Birket el Kurûn.

CHAPTER II.

THE LABYRINTH AND THE LAKES.

THE most striking object which meets the eye from the summit of the highest mound of ruin of the ancient city of Arsinoë, is the Pyramid of Howara, distant about five miles as the crow flies from the modern town of Medinet el Fayoum, but considerably farther by the road,—if the narrow paths which traverse the fields can be called roads,—for the country is so intersected by canals, that one is frequently obliged, in riding, to make long detours in search of a bridge. As our capacity for enduring fatigue was somewhat limited, we determined, under these circumstances, to make the expedition in a boat—a mode of locomotion not usually employed in the Fayoum. There are, indeed, only about fourteen miles of navigable river, the sluices at Illahoon barring all

farther progress eastwards, and the subdivision of the Bahr Youssef at Medinet into numerous minor canals blocking it by dams and water-wheels in all directions. I held converse with the head of the boating fraternity on the feasibility of my project, and found that ten heavy barges and two small boats composed the entire carrying capacity of the river. The barges are used for conveying manure to the fields adjoining the canal, and bringing their produce to the town. I inspected the small boats, and having selected the one which was least old and leaky, had her cleaned, and an awning put up in the stern. I am thus particular in describing the boating resources of the canal, because I was misled by the glowing description of Monsieur Lenoir,[1] in an account which he gives of a hurried visit to the Fayoum, and its chief town, of the general accuracy of which his description of its commerce may serve as an illustration :

"Boats and immense barges," he says, "are moored as far as the eye can reach along its brick quays, which come hither to obtain grain and straw, the produce of the last harvest.

[1] Le Fayoum, Sinai, et Petra, par Paul Lenoir.

Numberless caravans compete with this navigation transport, and serve to connect Medinet with Cairo."

Out of the twelve boats and barges which exist, I never saw more than two fastened to the river-bank at one time. "The brick quays along which they are moored as far as the eye can reach," exist entirely in the writer's imagination; and it is evident, as the canal is only navigable for about fourteen miles in an exactly opposite direction to that of Cairo, which is about seventy miles distant, that the "numberless caravans" have not much reason to fear competition. It is true that in former years, during the inundation, boats came up from the Nile by the El Magnoun canal to Illahoon, where produce was transferred from the barges from Medinet; but this route has long been discontinued, and there is now no connection between Illahoon and Cairo, excepting by following the tortuous course of the Bahr Youssef up to Siout, which would involve a circuit of nearly 500 miles. As a matter of fact, the produce of the Fayoum goes to Cairo neither by camel nor boat, but by railway. Sails are not used by this magnificent fleet of boats and

barges, and masts are only erected for towing purposes.

It was on a warm lovely morning in February that we spread ourselves on the carpet at the stern of the boat, and, towed by two sturdy *fellahin*, made our way against the current at the rate of about three miles an hour. As there is no regular towing-path, our progress is constantly impeded by overhanging trees, by projecting *sakkyas*, by the walls of mud-villages, which occasionally rise straight out of the water; and our trackers are sometimes wading waist-deep, sometimes running far into the bean-fields to turn the corners of creeks — sometimes one side becomes impossible, and we have to take them on board and transfer them to the opposite bank; but in spite of all this, they push along with so much energy that we pass rapidly one or two old barges laden to the water's edge with manure-dust, but which are an extremely picturesque feature in the landscape—though, in so far as age and shape are concerned, they might advantageously figure in a museum of Egyptian antiquities. The banks are just too high to prevent our seeing much of the country

over them, but they furnish us with glimpses of peasant life as we glide past the little mud-villages on their margin, where the women are engaged in their perpetual occupation of washing and filling their water-jars, or, squatted opposite the dead wall of a house, are jerking to and fro a goat-skin bag containing milk, with a view in this primitive fashion of converting it into butter, and where half-naked men are standing in rows opposite each other as if they were going to dance Sir Roger de Coverley, when suddenly they fall to with ponderous flails, and thrash out the corn, accompanying their blows with a measured and not unmusical chant. Buffaloes, blindfolded in order that they may be spared a consciousness of the monotonous nature of their occupation, as they tramp slowly round in a circle, are grinding it, after it has been thrashed, in creaking mills, above which flocks of pigeons flutter round their quaint conical towers. Water is being dipped out of the canal by men in pairs working the double-lever *shadoofs*, who laboriously swing up and down the long bars weighted with mud at one end and with a basket-work bucket at the other.

Naked children of the tenderest years are paddling in the mud, or screaming with a virulence and pertinacity peculiar to the Arab infant. Amid these sights and sounds we glide gently through the rich country; and when from time to time we land, it is to look over an interminable expanse of wheat, beans, lentils, and clover, with here and there dark groves of date-trees clustered round villages on distant mounds. The whole country is lulled into a luxury of repose, which the lowing of cattle, the wail of the water-wheels, and the hum of distant voices seem rather to enhance than to disturb; and our noiseless mode of travel is in keeping with the universal calm. In fact there is a sort of Sunday feeling in the very air of Egypt, which the sleepy agricultural operations of the peasantry are too placid to destroy. After we had proceeded thus for about an hour and a half, we landed to inspect a massive embankment which had been erected by the ancients, but had been renewed in more modern times to prevent the Bahr Youssef in seasons of inundation from bursting into the broad ravine of the Bahr Bela Ma; or "river without water"—most appropriately

so called, for it was a wide dry *wady* about a hundred yards across, with precipitous banks thirty feet high—that cuts through the whole length of the Fayoum, winding away by the ragged bed the floods have cut for it in the course of the overflows of ages to the north-west, till it reaches the village of Tamiyeh, where it is dammed up into a small lake or reservoir, which discharges its superfluous waters into the Birket el Kurûn. In ancient times it is probable that this ravine, as well as another as gigantic, the Bahr Nazlet, which runs to the south-west, was used to carry off the waters of Lake Mœris. These two *wadies*, with villages perched on the cliffs which form their banks, form a striking feature in the scenery of the Fayoum.

So long as the Bahr Youssef remains in the valley of the Nile, skirting the base of the Libyan hills, it inundates the country like its parent stream; but when it has passed the sluices of Illahoon and entered the Fayoum, it is brought under control, and only allowed to flow into the numerous *wadies* which are dry at other seasons. Sometimes, however, it bursts its restraining banks, and rushes into a

new channel, scooping out the mud and forming the bed of a broad river. This had been the case with the Bahr Bela Ma, though at what date the embankment had been last renewed the boatmen were unable to tell me. At all events, its invasion upon that occasion involved a dike of great length and solidity, and must have been a work of great expense.

Soon after this the current became swifter, and the *dolce far niente* we had enjoyed to such perfection was rudely interrupted; a *sakkya* projecting into the river where it was unusually narrow, forced it into quite a little rapid, the tow-rope got entangled with the water-wheel, and the mast gave way and came down with the run, breaking the rotten thwarts of the boat as she broached to the current, which swept us down sideways till we stuck on a friendly bank. There was an immense amount of shouting and wading before we repaired damages and got under way again, but the Bahr Youssef had become a lively stream, and our progress was slow: we were, in fact, ascending to the level of the highest plateau of the Fayoûm, and before long we came to a worse rapid than the last, where

our men, unwarned by the previous disaster, allowed the same thing to happen to us. Fortunately we were not far from the village of Howara, the sheikh of which had been notified of our arrival the day before; and he appeared just at this juncture, accompanied by a large proportion of the male population of the village, and the donkeys upon which we were to ride to the Pyramid. We therefore determined to leave the boat to find its way up the next rapid without us, till it reached the spot nearest the Pyramid, where we intended to re-embark, while we started off along the banks on donkey-back. We now soon began to observe evidences of antiquity; and these were of especial interest when we reached the ten-arched bridge of Kanatir el Agami. This spans a dry cultivated *wady*, in which is a grove of date-trees; but in ancient times it was the main channel by which the waters of the Bahr Youssef were conducted into Lake Mœris. The ancient buttresses of the bridge rest on foundations of massive stone; and the embankment that now prevents the river from flowing into its old channel is very solid, and bears the marks

of extreme age. We rode along it until we reached the Katasanta structure, which consists of a terrace of six carefully-jointed steps of large and well-hewn blocks, but bears no inscription whatever: it no doubt formed part of the artificial limits of Lake Mœris. Then we crossed the Bahr Wardani, a deep stream flowing out of the Bahr Youssef, also an ancient channel of the river into the lake, and called by the Arabs the Bahr es Sherki, or "River of the East." We turned sharply after crossing it, and followed its left bank; then traversing a hot little bit of desert, we reached our destination, after a journey of three hours and a half from Medinet. The first view of the Labyrinth was eminently disappointing, and consisted of nothing but mounds of ruins. However, in the midst of these we came upon the traces of what probably was once a temple of some magnificence, though all that now remains of it are some large blocks of granite and limestone, and the shaft and capital of a papyrus column with traces of sculpture. Some blocks here have been disinterred, which are now covered with sand, bearing the name of Amenemhat III.

Traversing this waste of ruin, we reached the base of the Pyramid of Howara, and found a cool spot in its shade in which to lunch, prior to a more minute examination of the surrounding objects. We began already to feel, however, that our imaginations had been unduly excited by the descriptions of the writers of antiquity by whom they had been visited.

I venture to quote the accounts given by Herodotus and Strabo of the interesting spot upon which we now found ourselves; for although comparatively so little met the eye, it is impossible not to feel convinced that the sand-hills which we were investigating conceal substantial remains, yet to be discovered, of one of the most marvellous monuments of ancient grandeur and ingenuity of which we have any record. Herodotus writes :—

"I have seen this monument; and I believe that if one were to unite all the buildings and all the works of the Greeks, they would yet be inferior to this edifice, both in labour and expense, although the temples of Ephesus and Samos are justly celebrated. Even the Pyramids are certainly monuments which surpass their expectation, and each one

of them may be compared with the greatest productions of the Greeks. Nevertheless, the Labyrinth is greater still. We find in its interior twelve roofed *aulæ*, the doors of which are alternately opposite each other. Six of these *aulæ* face to the north, and six to the south: they are contiguous to one another, and encircled by an *enceinte*, formed by an exterior wall. The chambers that the buildings of the Labyrinth contain are all double, one underground and the other built above it. They number 3000, 1500 in each level. We traversed those that are above ground, and we speak of what we have seen; but for those which are below, we can only say what we were told, for on no account whatever would the guardians consent to show them to us. They say that they contain the tombs of the kings who in ancient times built the Labyrinth, and those of the sacred crocodiles, so that we can only report on these chambers what we have heard. As to those of the upper storey, we have seen nothing greater among the works of man. The infinite variety of the corridors and the galleries which communicate with one an-

other, and which one traverses before arriving at the *aulæ*, overwhelm with surprise those who visit these places, and who pass now from one of the *aulæ* into the chambers which surround it, now from one of these chambers into the porticoes, or again from the porticoes into the other *aulæ*. The ceilings are everywhere of stone, like the walls, and these walls are covered with numberless figures engraved in the stone. Each one of these *aulæ* is ornamented with a peristyle executed in white stone, perfectly fitted. At the angle where the Labyrinth terminates there is a pyramid 240 feet in height, decorated with large figures sculptured in relief. There is an underground passage of communication with this pyramid."

Strabo, who visited the Labyrinth hundreds of years later, was no less struck with the magnificence and design of this wonderful structure.

"There is also," he says, "the Labyrinth here, a work as important as the Pyramids, adjoining which is the tomb of the king who built the Labyrinth. After advancing about thirty or forty *stadia* beyond the first entrance

of the canal, there is a table-shaped surface on which rise a small tower and a vast palace, consisting of as many royal dwellings as there were formerly nomes. There is also an equal number of halls bordered with columns and adjoining each other, all being in the same row and forming one building, like a long wall having the halls in front of it. The entrances to the halls are opposite the wall. In front of the entrances are long and numerous passages, which have winding paths running through them, so that the ingress and egress to each hall is not practicable to a stranger without a guide. It is a marvellous fact that each of the ceilings of the chambers consists of a single stone, and also that the passages are covered in the same way with single slabs of extraordinary size, neither wood nor other building material having been employed. On ascending the roof, the height of which is inconsiderable, as there is only one storey, we observe a vast plain of stone slabs. Descending again, and looking into the halls, we may observe the whole series borne by twenty-seven monolithic columns: the walls also are constructed

of stone of similar size. At the end of this structure, which is more than a *stadium* in length, is the tomb, consisting of a square pyramid, each side of which is four *plethra* [400 feet] in length, and of equal height. The deceased who is buried here is called Ismandes. It is also asserted that so many palaces were built because it was the custom for all the nomes, represented by their magnates, with their priests and victims, to assemble here to offer sacrifices and gifts to the gods, and to deliberate on the most important concerns."

This is what we learn from ancient sources of the Labyrinth. It will now be interesting to turn to the only serious attempt which has been made in later years to explore its mysteries. This was undertaken by the Prussian expedition under Lepsius, about forty years ago, when the identification of its site had first been made by Linant Bey. They had a hundred men at work for nearly a month, and this was the result:—

"Where the French expedition had vainly sought for chambers, we literally at once found hundreds of them, both next to and above one

another, small, often diminutive ones, besides greater ones, and large ones supported by small columns, with thresholds, and niches in the walls, with remains of columns and single casing stones, connected by corridors, so that the descriptions of Herodotus and Strabo in this respect are fully justified. The whole is so arranged that three immense masses of buildings 300 feet broad enclose a square place which is 600 feet long and 500 feet wide. The fourth side, one of the narrow ones, is bounded by the Pyramid which lies behind it—it is 300 feet square, and therefore does not quite reach the side wings of the above-mentioned masses of buildings. . . . We found no inscriptions in the ruins of the great masses of chambers which surround the central space. It may easily be proved by future excavations that this whole building, and probably also the disposition of the twelve courts, belong only, in fact, to the twenty-sixth dynasty of Manetho, so that the original temple of Amenemhat formed merely part of this gigantic architectural enclosure."

It is most earnestly to be hoped that these excavations anticipated by Lepsius will some

day be made, as, when we compare his account with those of Herodotus and Strabo, it falls far short of what we should have been led to expect; and there can be little doubt that these mounds of sand, which cover the surface of a far greater area than he dealt with, conceal treasure which would richly reward further examination. Unfortunately his excavations have since been buried by the sand.

Our first proceeding after luncheon was to scramble to the top of the Pyramid so as to get a bird's-eye view of the ruins. Strabo apparently overestimated its dimensions. When perfect, the base was fifty feet less each way than he gives it; and Herodotus, who puts the height at 240 feet, was more nearly right than Strabo, who estimates it at 400. It is by no means an imposing structure, and is one of four built of crude brick mixed with straw, one being at Illahoon, and two at Sakkara. If it was built, as Strabo tells us, by Ismandes, who is identical with Semempses, the fifth king of the first dynasty, then it is the oldest pyramid existing in Egypt. It has been suggested that it was built by Asychis, the fourth king of the

third dynasty; but even in that case it must rank immediately after Meidûm and Dashour, which become the oldest. The ground for this hypothesis is, that Herodotus tells us that, according to the priests, a king named Asychis, desirous of eclipsing all his predecessors, left a pyramid of brick as a monument of his reign, with the following inscription engraved on the stone :—

"Despise me not in comparison with the stone pyramids, for I surpass them all, as much as Zeus surpasses the other gods. A pole was plunged into the lake, and the mud which clave thereto was gathered, and bricks were made of the mud, and so I was formed."

The proximity of the lake may account for this allusion, and it has been ascertained that the nucleus is a natural mass of rock, thirty-nine feet high, which may be "the stone" upon which the inscription was cut. Its present appearance would certainly disappoint the king's expectations, for the sides have crumbled so much away that I have since regretted that I did not achieve the proud distinction of riding on my donkey to the top of the oldest pyramid in the world.

It appears originally to have been built in stages, and from its summit we could obtain an idea of the shape of the Labyrinth, which was of a horse-shoe form, and of the position and size of the temple, the remains of which were mapped out at our feet. On the opposite side of the Bahr es Sherki we overlooked a congeries of crude brick-built chambers, all roofless. To the north was a long line of small chambers, with the crumbling walls of others scattered here and there. The form of Lake Mœris, on the margin of which this pyramid was built, might also be detected by the aid of a strong imagination; and, about eight miles off, the Pyramid of Illahoon stood out sharply against the distant line of the hills beyond the Nile. To the southward a long grove of date-trees marked the limit of the oasis; and to the westward the town of Medinet, surrounded by gardens and palm-trees, formed an attractive feature in the landscape. To the eastward, all was desert, bounded by sand-hills. A closer inspection of the ruins, after we had descended from the Pyramid, on the left bank of the Bahr es Sherki, disclosed little of interest beyond a curious sort of double

underground passage, formed by flags of limestone. The upper passage seemed to have been roofed in on a level with the surface of the soil, and below this again there was a second one, which, however, was so choked with sand that it was impossible to follow it. As I was examining it I put up a jackal, which darted away across the desert, startled at the sudden intrusion upon his solitude. There were some mummied bones about, and I wondered whether flesh which had undergone the drying process of ages could afford satisfactory gnawing material for these scavengers of the wilds. I suppose a human leg three thousand years old, if it does not contain much nourishment, must have a taste of some sort.

There can be no doubt that we owe the modern word "labyrinth" to the strange accumulation of chambers and tortuous passages which once existed on the shores of Lake Mœris. According to Manethon, the Labyrinth derived its name from King Labarys, its founder, also known as Amenemhat III.; but another derivation has been suggested, which possesses the combined merit of

extreme antiquity and originality. It seems that the old Egyptian word for the mouth of a reservoir, which Lake Mœris undoubtedly was, is *ra-hunt* or *la-hunt*. Hence one of the names of the lake was "Hunt." The temple of the mouth of the reservoir would be *ra-pe-ro-hunt*, or *la-pe-lo-hunt*. From *laperohunt* we get to *laperint*, and then, by easy stages, to "labyrinth." It is more likely, however, to have been the combination from which Illahoon is derived—the terminations *lo-hunt* and *la-hunt* not being very dissimilar, the addition of the Arabic article *el* forming the word.

In allusion to Lake Mœris, over which we were now looking, Herodotus says: "Wonderful as is the Labyrinth, the work called the Lake of Mœris, which is close by the Labyrinth, is still more astonishing." Strabo says of it:—

"Owing to its size and depth, it is capable of receiving the superabundance of water during the inundation without overflowing the habitations and crops; but later, when the water subsides, and after the lake has given up its excess through one of its two mouths, both it and the canal retain water enough for

purposes of irrigation. This is accomplished by natural means, but at both ends of the canal there are also lock-gates by means of which the engineers can regulate the influx and efflux of the water."

These lock-gates—which, according to Diodorus, cost £11,250 every time they were opened—are, no doubt, the great stone dikes and sluices mentioned later by Aboolfeda at Illahoon, which regulated the quantity admitted into the Fayoum; and it seems not improbable that the modern Illahoon, with its pyramid, was the site of the ancient town of Ptolemais.

The Greeks believed that Lake Mœris was constructed by a king of the same name; but it is proved that no such king existed, and that they invented the king from the Egyptian word "mere," which exactly corresponds to our word "mere." Until within a comparatively recent period, the Birket el Kurûn was popularly supposed to have been the ancient Lake Mœris; but as we know that the great object of Lake Mœris was to act as a reservoir for the waters which fertilised the Fayoum, and that it was constructed as a triumph of

engineering skill by Amenemhat III., it becomes absolutely impossible to identify it with the Lake of the Horn, which is two hundred feet below the level of Lake Mœris and the country it was intended to irrigate, and is evidently a natural sheet of water fed by springs: but even if it were not, it is at all events a natural depression, which it would require no genius to fill with water. Moreover, Herodotus, speaking of the Labyrinth, says: "It was a little above Lake Mœris, opposite Crocodilopolis." Now the Lake of the Horn is fifteen miles from the site of Crocodilopolis, but the dikes which testify to the existence of some vast ancient reservoir are in the immediate vicinity of the latter. According to the estimate of Linant Bey, to whom is due the discovery of the site of the Labyrinth and the position of Lake Mœris, this sheet of water must have been about sixty miles in circumference, and with an average depth of twenty feet. Pomponius Mela says that it was navigated by large vessels which conveyed the produce of the Fayoum to other parts of Egypt. The Pyramid and Labyrinth were situated at the point where the

river entered it, and the vast expanse of green over which the eye wanders between the Pyramid and Medinet was formerly covered by its waters. Wherever the natural formation of the country did not restrain them, immense dikes were built, which must have been in some places thirty feet high, and which, to judge by the traces that exist on the north and west sides, must have been about thirty miles long, with an average breadth of one hundred and fifty feet—a work on a scale which would have appalled engineers not accustomed to build pyramids. Linant Bey calculates that this reservoir must have irrigated a superficies of 600,000 acres, as, besides feeding the Fayoum, he believes that its waters were carried down into the province of Gizeh, and so ultimately into the old Canopic branch of the Nile at Mariout. Nor can one wonder that an artificial lake of such great extent should have seemed a prodigy of engineering skill to the ancients. In addition to its great utility as a fertilising agent, it was invested with a character of sanctity which gave it a wide celebrity. The sacred crocodile, which was carefully tended and petted in

its waters, was an object of the deepest veneration to the inhabitants of the Arsinoite Nome, who treated it with the most marked respect, and kept it at considerable expense, while a most elaborate *cuisine* provided it with dainties. "Geese, fish, and various fresh meats," says Sir Gardner Wilkinson, "were dressed purposely for it; they ornamented its head with ear-rings, its feet with bracelets, and its neck with necklaces of gold and artificial stones; it was rendered perfectly tame by kind treatment; and after death its body was embalmed in a most sumptuous manner."

It was rather unfortunate for the crocodile and his worshippers that the inhabitants of the adjoining Heracleopolitan Nome worshipped the ichneumon, the bitter enemy of the crocodile, which, it is reported, waged war upon him by the original device of crawling down his throat when he was asleep, and feeding upon his intestines. The antipathy between the crocodile and the ichneumon, in consequence of this unfair mode of proceeding, seems to have extended to the worshippers of the two animals, which led, during the reign of the Romans, to disputes that terminated in blood-

shed, and made the contending parties forget the respect due to the sacred monuments of their adversaries to such an extent, that the destruction of the Labyrinth by the Heracleopolitans was the final result. It is difficult to reconcile, psychologically, a worship so full of trivialities with a religion so replete with lofty moral conceptions, and with the high intellectual capacity which created a Lake Mœris, reared huge pyramids, constructed the stupendous work of art that was celebrated throughout the then civilised world as the Labyrinth, and called into existence, out of a tract of desert, the fertile province which for many centuries derived its name as the Crocodilopolitan Nome, from the animal thus venerated.

When we had exhausted our examination of the left bank of the Bahr es Sherki, we announced our intention to the crowd of attendant Arabs who had accompanied us from the village, of crossing over to see the network of chambers on the other side. To our dismay they pronounced the stream unfordable, and told us we should have to make a circuit of two miles by a bridge. This I resolutely declined, and some of the Arabs accordingly

stripped to try and find a ford. The was so narrow that it might easily have been jumped with the aid of a leaping-pole; but the men had some difficulty in finding a spot where the water only came up to their armpits. This was the depth even close to the bank; but by performing a sort of circus feat, and each of us sitting astride the heads of two men, we got carried across, while our donkeys were sent round. It was not a very graceful performance for a lady; but in the absence of any other spectators than the sons of the desert, it did not so much matter. The chambers were a disappointing collection of tiny apartments, with thick walls of crude brick—possibly over a hundred in number—their floors strewn with pottery, rags, and bones. We picked up a bead, some good specimens of blue and green glazed terra cotta, and fragments of glass. In one room alone I observed five human skulls, and there were numerous bones to which the dried flesh still adhered under the wrappings of mummy-cloth. Altogether, the vestiges of these ruins conveyed as much the idea of a necropolis as of an assemblage of council-chambers, and it is not unlikely that its primi-

tive design was simply to serve as a vast sepulchre like that at Sakkara. There can be little doubt that pyramids invariably form the centres of such burial-places — indeed Herodotus tells us that he was informed by his guides that the lower chambers were used for funeral purposes; and Amenemhat may have selected this spot on the shores of the lake he had created, as his own resting-place and that of the chief men of his reign. From the records upon the inscriptions where his name has been found, it is almost beyond a doubt that he is buried here, although not within the Pyramid; and the mode of sepulture among the ancient Egyptians renders it, in the opinion of some Egyptologists, extremely likely that this vast congeries of apartments, which at a later period were converted into council-halls, were originally mortuary chambers, but upon a scale of such magnificence and vastness that the subsequent dynasties considered them available for other purposes. Indeed we have no record of the Labyrinth being used for great imperial assemblies until the period immediately preceding the Psamtikides of the twenty-sixth

dynasty, or about 1900 years after the time of Amenemhat, its constructor. At the same time, it is not impossible that the Labyrinth was used for other purposes as well as those of sepulture, even from the earliest period; for the assemblage of twelve palaces or *aulæ*, as described by Herodotus, must have had some reference to the twelve nomes into which Egypt was divided before the number was increased by Rameses II. to thirty-six. And we may be safe in saying that if we carry our imaginations back 3500 years, or even more, the spot upon which we were now standing presented an aspect of scenic beauty, of architectural magnificence, and was invested with a character of political and religious importance, unrivalled in the world, which it retained for nearly 2000 years. It was evidently selected, from its central position on the boundary-line that divided Upper from Lower Egypt, for the great regal, political, and sacerdotal rites which were celebrated here. Standing on the shores of a beautiful lake, the waters of which reflected the magnificent city of Crocodilopolis Arsinoë immediately opposite, and which was navigated by

numberless craft, and surrounded by palm-groves and those gardens of fruits and flowers for which the province was celebrated, the Labyrinth occupied a position of great scenic beauty, and of political significance. It was the great council-hall of Egypt. Hither flocked the representatives of the different nomes to the great assembly of the nation; here congregated the high priests to celebrate those great religious ceremonies which demanded the united homage of the people. Here probably kings were crowned, laws were made, great public works decided upon, questions of war or peace settled,—in a word, in this congeries of palaces, under the shadow of the Pyramid, on the banks of this vast artificial lake, that had been adorned and beautified by the taste and resources of successive centuries, all the highest interests of the nation were discussed in assemblies composed of the great powers of the State — the king, the priesthood, and the army. It is difficult to associate in one's mind the crude brick rooms which are still standing, or even the discoveries of Lepsius, now covered with sand, with all this splendour and magnificence, of which

more important vestiges must still remain to reward the labours of the explorer.

We returned to the village of Howara by another road, approaching the bluff, upon the edge of which it is built like a fortress, through a grove of date-trees, and re-embarked at a spot where an Arab was working a most primitive ferry-boat. It presented the appearance of a straw raft with sides, and was constructed entirely of bundles of reeds; one bundle was placed upright in the bows, and round it a rope was passed that stretched across from one bank to the other, and by means of which the boat was worked. We floated back over the placid waters of the Bahr Youssef in the glow of the brilliant sunset, the men keeping time to the lazy plash of their oars with boat-songs,—their choruses now measured and dreamy, as though unable to resist the somnolent influences which pervaded all nature—now wild and fitful, as they put on a spurt, probably under the still more potent inspiration of empty stomachs and a pot of lentils in prospect.

The railway, which has its terminus at Medinet el Fayoum for regular traffic, is continued

to the Government sugar-factory at Abou'kser as an agricultural line; and twice a-week during the cane-cutting season, a waggon—it can scarcely be called a carriage—is attached for the conveyance of passengers. I was glad to join a party, consisting of the governor and two or three native officials, on a trip to the factory, which is situated in the vicinity of the Birket el Kurûn, or "Lake of the Horn." It is not much more than ten miles, as the crow flies, to Aboukser; but as the difference of level between the plateau on which Medinet is situated and the lake is about 170 feet, and the descent becomes more abrupt towards the end of the plateau, the line takes a long curve, partly for the sake of an easier gradient, and partly because it thus traverses a wider extent of cane-field—its whole length being thus over fifteen miles. The train at starting consisted only of the engine and waggon, which might have been a baggage-van with four windows cut in it, and a divan placed all round; but before we had gone very far, we came upon a couple of trucks filled with cane standing on the line in the middle of a cane-field. They were mere iron cradles, their walls consisting

of long stalks of sugar-cane woven into the iron so as to hold the cane, which was cut into lengths from two to three feet long. They were attached in front of the engine, which then moved slowly along till we came to another batch. These were almost empty; but the cane was piled on each side of the line, and gangs of Arabs rapidly loaded them, while we took advantage of the delay to water the engine. This was performed in the most primitive fashion by a couple of *sakkas*, or water-carriers, who, having placed a notched section of a date-tree between the engine and the ground to serve as a ladder, laboriously filled the goatskins, which are swung on their backs, at a ditch by the side of the track, climbed up the tree-ladder on to the engine, and emptied their goatskins into the boiler. By the time it was full the trucks were loaded, and we went on again, pushing about a dozen of them before us. This operation was performed several times, until at last there were at least thirty loaded trucks ahead of the engine. As may be imagined, under these circumstances we never attained a very high rate of speed; but we were not in a hurry, and I was

not sorry to traverse an entirely new tract of country thus leisurely, as it enabled me the better to appreciate its rich luxuriance and still undeveloped capabilities. The Fayoum contains, at a rough estimate, about 250,000 acres of land, of which half belongs to the Government, and the remainder to the peasants and native proprietors. Among these latter some are very rich; and one of my fellow-passengers on this occasion, had an estate of about a thousand acres, on which he had built a handsome country-house. He pointed it out to me as we passed it about a mile from the track, and invited me to pay him a visit, an invitation which I regretted I was unable to accept. From all that I could learn, a well-managed farm in the Fayoum may be made a most profitable undertaking. If the cultivation of the sugar, cotton, and indigo, for which it is eminently adapted, has not proved so successful as it might be, the causes are not far to seek.

There are no regular stations on this line, but we stop "*apropos* accordingly," as my coachman used to say, whenever sugar-cane happens to be lying about. We passed, nevertheless, many thriving villages, most of them

picturesquely situated on mounds, or on the edge of one of the precipitous *wadies* which intersect the country, and which form in places pretty wooded glens through which brawl running streams, while heavy palm-groves throw their shade over all. After leaving Sineru, which is a large village, with gardens of prickly pear, and a little grove of opuntia trees, the country begins to slope more rapidly towards the lake, and the railway takes a wide curve past the villages of Agamieh, Nazlet, and Bisheh, all lying to the left of the line, and connected with each other by dense groves of date-trees. Of these, Nazlet is the most picturesquely situated on the Bahr Nazlet, which in former times was one of the outlets of the Lake Mœris, and is now a ravine 250 yards broad from bank to bank, and 100 feet deep, which forms quite a romantic and imposing feature in the landscape. Near Bisheh the line crosses the extensive mounds of an ancient town, covered, like those at Arsinoë, with fragments of pottery, glass, bones, brickbats, &c.; but unfortunately there was no sugar-cane at the spot, so the train did not stop to enable me to get out and examine it. Indeed we had

picked up all the loaded trucks by this time, and were rumbling along at the rate of about ten miles an hour, followed by a racing, scrambling crowd of boys and girls, who rush out of the adjoining villages when the train passes, to pick up the scatterings of sugar-cane which fall from the trucks. For at least a couple of miles we were thus pursued, old men and women occasionally joining in the race, and in their eagerness to clutch the cane, rolling over each other on the track. By this time we have reached our lowest level: to the left, about five miles distant, beyond a flat, and in places marshy, tract, the blue waters of the lake glisten in the afternoon sun; and rising abruptly from their western margin are the Libyan hills, beyond which stretches an unexplored and desolate tract of the Sahara. In strong contrast with the wildness and beauty of the scene, a row of tall iron funnels or chimneys right in front of us indicate our destination, and we pull up between more piles of sugar-cane, in an atmosphere strongly flavoured with the all-pervading odour of molasses. On a bluff about a mile to the right is the village of Aboukser, while the flat tract that intervenes between us

and the lake is an expanse of cane-fields, through which radiate branches of the agricultural railway in all directions.

Unfortunately I was not well enough to encounter the fatigue of a ride to the lake and back, and the boating and fishing expedition on its waters which had been the main object of my trip. Indeed I had hoped to be able to visit the ruins of Kasr Karoon, which are situated at its south-western extremity, as well as those of Kasr Nimroud just opposite, on the summit of the desert cliff, and the ruined walls of which could be distinguished from Aboukser with a spy-glass. There are no villages worthy the name on the margin of the lake. The fishing population are mostly Bedouin Arabs, who live in tents or hovels, and whose open undecked boats are of a primitive unwieldy description, without masts or sails, redolent of decayed fish, and affording, as I was informed, a maximum of discomfort in every way. I afterwards met an old resident in Egypt, and a distinguished Egyptologist, who had camped for eight days at the ruins of Kasr Nimroud, and who described them as consisting of gigantic mud-brick walls, evi-

dently those of an ancient fortress, situated on a high plateau of natural rock, an hour distant from the margin of the lake, the road leading to which was paved with immense flags of stones, on which were visible ruts as of chariot-wheels. But, curiously enough, neither he nor any person at Aboukser of whom I made inquiry, had ever heard of Dimeh, with its street 400 yards long embellished with lions, and its ruined temple. Lepsius says it was marked on his map as Medinet Nimroud, but he could only hear of it by the name of Dimeh—an experience that illustrates how easy it is for travellers in these parts to be misled in regard to nomenclature: it is supposed to be the site of the ancient Bacchis.

The ruins of Kasr Karoon are much better known than those of Dimeh or Kasr Nimroud; but even they would certainly repay further investigation. Five miles beyond Aboukser, on the same side of the lake, is the village of Senhur, which is situated on mounds indicating the site of an ancient city of some extent. Indeed there is every reason to suppose that in former times the edge of this plateau overlooking the lake was crowned with a series of towns

inhabited by a large population. In point of position and surroundings, all the modern villages have a sort of family resemblance, and of these Aboukser may be taken as a type. At the base of the bluff was an extensive grove of fine palm-trees, beneath which sugar-cane had been planted; and as I passed through it, the whole population were out cutting it. Men, women, children, camels, and buffaloes were picturesquely grouped under the shade of the tall feathering trees in the cane-field, all noisily at work; while through it curved a canal abundantly supplied with water, that found its way to the lower level by an artificial cascade about forty feet high, which foamed over a high dike that in former times retained its waters in a lake. After sketching so unusual an object in Egypt as a waterfall, I made my way to the top of it with the view of examining the ancient structure. The lake was now dry, and its bottom served as the vegetable garden for the village; but there was no question as to the extreme antiquity of the solid masonry, which might easily be repaired if it was considered worth while to reconstruct the reservoir. Above it to the right rose the high

mound upon which the modern village, looking almost like a fortress, is built; in rear of it are cactus-gardens, and the usual waste of brick-bats and pottery, while here and there the mud-brick walls of an old house crop out, among which I found a few fragments of blue and green glaze, interesting enough to carry away. From the highest mound of *débris* a magnificent view is obtained over the lake, with a rocky island in the middle, and the plain stretching away north-east and south-west far as the eye can reach. The Birket el Kurûn is steadily stealing away the good land from the country, either submerging it altogether, or impregnating it so abundantly with salt as to destroy its value for all purposes of cultivation. This arises from the fact that owing to an absence of a proper surveillance of irrigation in the Fayoum, about three times more water is allowed to run into the lake than the evaporation can carry off, as, owing to its depression below the level of the sea, it has no outlet. This water might be advantageously employed in irrigating land now unproductive for the lack of it. Instead of its superabundance being thus utilised, it is allowed to

submerge land which would otherwise be available for cultivation; and thus, so far from being a benefit to the country, it becomes an injury to it,—besides which, whenever water is allowed to stagnate in Egypt, it infiltrates for some distance beyond its margin, and the effect is to cause the saline qualities in the soil to rise to the surface. Owing to this double process of submergence and infiltration, it is calculated that about 10,000 acres which would otherwise have been available for sugar, belonging to the Daira Sanieh alone, are practically lost. There can be no doubt that an immense tract of land could be reclaimed from the lake without very much difficulty, which would in the first instance be available for rice, and by degrees become fit for cane. More cane-land is much wanted; for as it is, the sugar-factory can scarcely be made to pay its expenses, owing to the want of a sufficient quantity of cane, and in some years it works at a loss. At Masserah Edoud-dah, about three hours from Aboukser, there is a large sugar-factory which is permanently closed owing to this cause. Altogether, there are 76,000 acres of land in the Fayoum belonging to the Daira Sanieh, which might be largely

improved by a more careful rotation of crops, and increased by reclaiming land from the lake, and which no doubt is capable of being made a magnificent and profitable property. Besides the sugar-mill already alluded to at Masserah, there is a fine cotton-oil mill and gin at Edsa, not far from Medinet el Fayoum, which has not worked for two years; and also one at Tamyeh, on the north-eastern margin of the province, which is also standing idle. No doubt, under the improved system which is being introduced by the Commission that now administers the Daira Sanieh, the productive capacity of the property in the Fayoum will be largely increased. There are also 46,000 acres belonging to the department of the Domaines; so that altogether there are 122,000 acres of Government land in this province alone, the revenues of which are hypothecated to foreign creditors.

About half a mile from the factory, towards the lake, is a grove of date-trees overshadowing a house of unusual pretensions for this part of the country. I was introduced to the proprietor of it, and found to my surprise that he was the head sheikh of all the Bedouin

Arabs an both sides of the lake. The idea of a Bedouin sheikh living like a civilised being in a large whitewashed two-storeyed house was entirely new to me. He had fortunately not yet adopted a white waistcoat and lavender-coloured gloves, but retained his native garb in all its picturesqueness, which, however, was composed of the most costly material. His handsome Arab horse was gorgeously caparisoned, the bridle mounted with solid silver; and his groom carried an old-fashioned rifle richly inlaid. Though a man evidently mindful of the effect of external show, and somewhat of a "buck" in his personal attire, he retained under all circumstances an attitude of the most calm and dignified politeness; and it was impossible to judge from the imperturbable repose of his handsome features what was passing in his mind. He was a man about fifty years old, exercised a controlling influence over the Arab tribes for many miles round, and was possessed of great wealth, not merely in flocks and herds, but in land. The object of his visit to the factory on the occasion when I saw him was to be present at a dispute between some

Arabs and some *fellahin*, the nature of which also helps to illustrate how rapidly the introduction of the appliances of civilisation tends to change the habits of the wild sons of the desert. The whole party came up and argued their case in the presence of the Moufettish, whose guest I had become, for the governor had returned to Medinet. On the one side were a group of *fellahin*, the bloody shirt of one suggesting that he had got the worst of a recent scuffle; on the other, in marked contrast to these, with their haughty and defiant demeanour, stood four minor Arab sheikhs, all strikingly handsome men, with flowing *abeih* and creamy-white *herams*.

Between these angry disputants was seated the Moufettish, and at his side the chief sheikh, whose rich apparel and impassive demeanour I have already described. The villagers, it appeared, had contracted with the Moufettish to cut a certain amount of sugar-cane in a given time, and had engaged a number of Bedouins to supply camels, and otherwise assist in carrying out the operation, —making, in fact, a sub-contract with them, to which it was complained that they had not

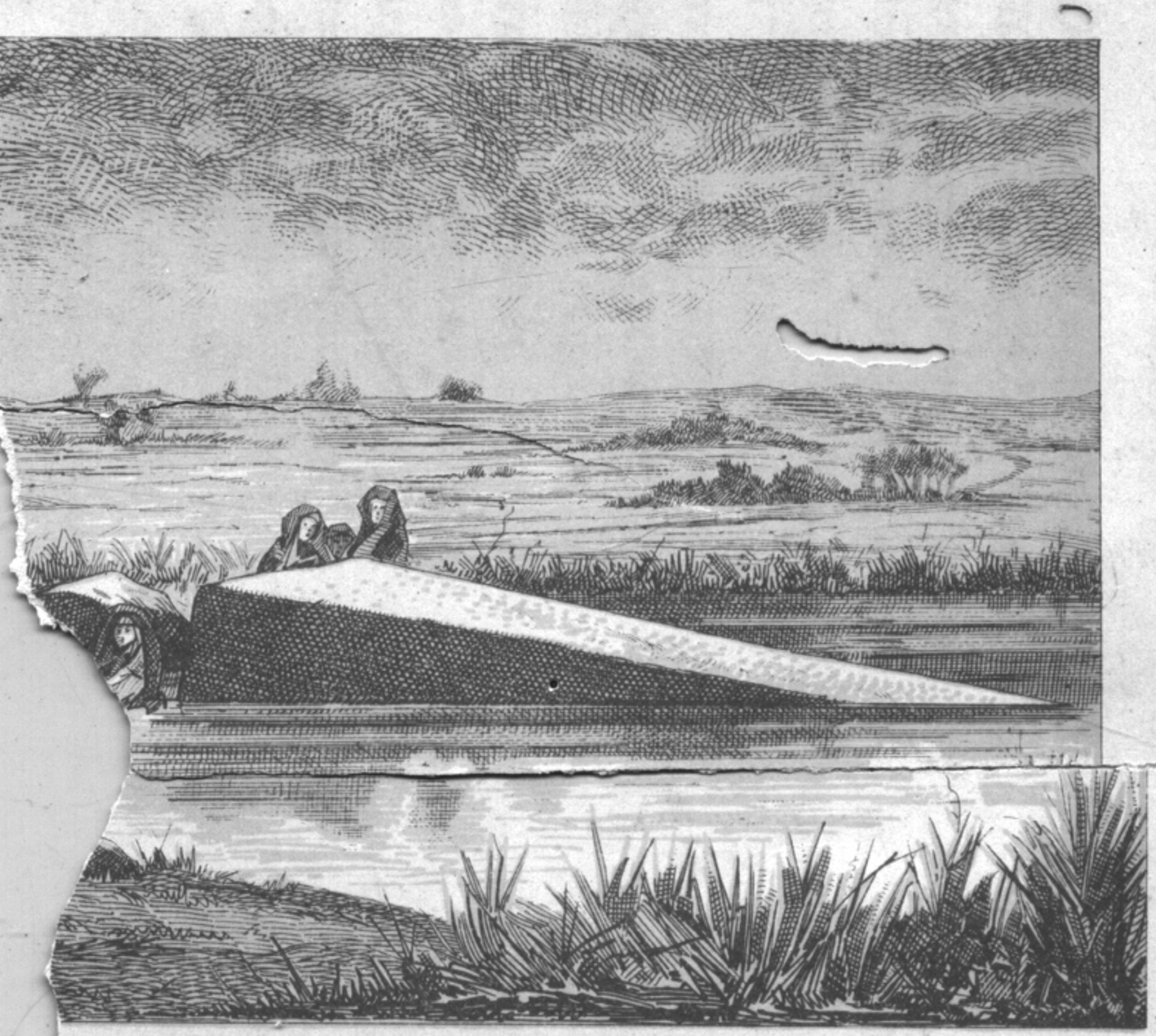
adhered, and had even beaten those who ventured to expostulate. The quarrel turned upon the amount and nature of the work which practically had been divided between them, and I failed to follow its intricacies sufficiently to know who were in the right —probably the *fellahin*,—but certainly, when Bedouin Arabs enter into contracts for harvesting cane for a steam sugar-factory, a change is coming over the spirit of their dream. To watch the eager and almost ferocious expression of their countenances as they argued their case with "beastly bellowings" and wild gesticulations, it was evident that it would take a long course of peaceful avocations before the change went beyond the spirit of the dream to the spirit of the man. I afterwards visited one of their encampments, where the usual tents were supplemented with huts and enclosures made of straw and cane-leaves; but they retained, nevertheless, their general gipsy and nomadic aspect.

On my return journey to Medinet the following day, I had the divaned waggon all to myself, and we reversed the operation of our

former experience. Starting with a long train of empty cane-trucks, we stopped at intervals and dropped them by twos and threes wherever the cane had been piled, to be picked up when the train went back the next day.

We tried, one afternoon, an experimental ride on camels, with a view of testing the merits of some saddles from the Soudan, which, we were assured, were especially comfortable. The object of our trip was to examine a prostrate obelisk, distant about three miles. The weather so far had been delightful, the thermometer seldom falling below 65°; and the gardens beneath our windows were redolent with the perfume of roses—for which the Fayoum was formerly so celebrated—in full bloom. On this afternoon, however, we had scarcely started when the weather changed, and before we reached our destination, a cold wind set in, accompanied by smart showers of rain, which made the poor camels shiver and tremble with anxiety as they staggered slowly over the smooth slippery mud. The experience was by no means agreeable to the riders, as the prospect of coming down headlong, camel and all, is quite a different sensation

from that which one feels under like conditions on horseback. It seems scarcely possible to fall from such a height without the certainty of breaking one's bones. When at last we reached the village of Biggig, we found our camel-men did not know the way, and we had to ask for a guide—a request which resulted in the greater proportion of the male population volunteering their services and accompanying us. We had quite a difficult ride across fields where there were no paths, and numerous ditches had to be crossed, before we found, half embedded in mud and water, the two huge fragments of this great monolith, one of which measures 26½ feet, and the other 16 feet 3 inches long. The face of the lower half, which is covered with hieroglyphics, measures 6 feet 9 inches at its lower end, and the sides are about 4 feet in width. At the upper part of the face are five compartments, one over the other, in each of which are figures of King Orsitarsen, also known as Amenemhat I., offering to two deities. This obelisk, which is of red porphyry, is contemporaneous with the one at Heliopolis, and was erected by the same king, the second of the twelfth dynasty, who reigned



E OBELISK NEAR EDGIB IN THE FAYOUM.

about 2440 years B.C., and about 140 years, therefore, before Amenemhat III., to whom I have already referred as the creator of the Labyrinth and the lake. It is evident, however, from the existence of this great monument, that the province was highly esteemed before his time; and the historical tradition is probably correct which attributes the reclaiming and conversion of the Fayoum to Phiops, the Mœris of the Greeks and Romans, who was the fourth king of the sixth dynasty, and lived about 3000 B.C. It is difficult to account for the isolated position of this obelisk. There is not a vestige of a ruin nearer than Arsinoë; and it must either have been dropped here on its way to that city, or possibly was an ornament to gardens which were a place of resort. Had there been a temple in the immediate vicinity, it could scarcely have disappeared without leaving a trace. As it is, the flat surface of the black soil is unbroken by any mound or tumulus; nor are there any fragments of granite or stone in the neighbourhood. It differs from other obelisks inasmuch as its summit is rounded, and not pointed, and in the breadth of its faces and sides being so

dissimilar. A groove has been cut in its apex, doubtless to hold an ornament like that at Heliopolis. In the hieroglyphics on the sides, the king is said to be beloved of Ptah and Mandoo, who, it is supposed, were the principal divinities of the place. Whatever may be its origin and meaning, there is something solemn and suggestive in the aspect of this great fractured block of history, traced with the records of extreme antiquity, and lying here neglected in a bean-field, a mile from any human habitation, an object of mystery and awe to the ignorant peasantry, and of speculation to ourselves, which will probably never be satisfied. It, at all events, disposes finally of a popular theory, that all the pyramids were on one side of the Nile, and all the obelisks on the other.

As we were neither of us in a condition, so far as strength was concerned, to walk back through the mud and rain, our return journey on our lofty animals was not a little perilous, the more especially as darkness came on before we reached home. Our way for the most part was along the slippery edge of a gully which cut through soft country. Sometimes

we took refuge in the young wheat-fields, to the intense indignation of the proprietors, who shouted angry remonstrances; sometimes we scrambled down into the bed of the *wady*, hoping to find safer travelling-ground. At last, wet and tired, after being four hours in the saddle, instead of two, as we expected, we reached the town just as our anxious friends had sent out their servants to look for us. After this experience we were obliged to give up our trip to Biahmu, a village about four miles to the north of Medinet, where the remains of two ancient monuments exist, the nature of which I was anxious to try and verify, as it is still a matter of dispute. Linant considers them the remains of the pyramids upon which were the statues of King Mœris and his consort, which Herodotus indicates as being in the middle of the lake. Lepsius describes them as built out of great massive blocks, of which the nuclei are still standing, but not in the centre of the almost rectangular enclosures, which, by their appearance, they seem to have originally occupied. While Linant makes these out-

square," Murray's 'Guide' makes them measure 65 feet by 45. Lepsius believes that the height of the central masses was never greater than it is now — viz., 23 feet — to which must be added a peculiar and somewhat projecting base of 7 feet. The foundations were on Nile mud, and the inclination of their angle 64°, which is steeper than that of ordinary pyramids, and hence he concludes against Linant Bey's hypothesis. On the other hand, the lower stones bear the traces of water—the Nile mud may have been Lake Mœris mud. There are no other remains within the area of the lake, and the remains of the dams would go to show that they stood in its extreme north-east angle. The fact that they were not ordinary pyramids, but rather pyramidal pedestals for statues, may account for the steeper inclination of their angles. At all events, the point is an interesting one, which a more thorough investigation would probably decide.

We should gladly have lingered longer in the Fayoum had it been in our power to take our tents and camels and wander about in search of the antique and the picturesque. Unfor-

tunately, our experience of camel-riding had proved too fatiguing, and we were obliged to substitute another project, which, however, proved scarcely less agreeable. We could not leave the Fayoum without wondering at the neglect of the tourist who has done Thebes, and Luxor, and the Second Cataract, and is looking for more worlds to conquer —of a region with so many attractions, and so accessible. The sportsman, the artist, and the archæologist will all find their tastes gratified in this charming oasis. The Birket el Kurûn offers, probably, better sport to the angler than he would find elsewhere in Egypt. In the thickets in some of the ravines are to be found wild boar; while lynxes, wolves, jackals, ichneumons, and hares are more or less abundant. Pelicans, wild geese, ducks, teal, and water-fowl of different varieties, frequent the marshy shores of the lake. The antiquarian would find Arsinoë, the Labyrinth, the Temple of Kasr Karoon, and the ruins on the western shores of the lake, full, not merely of interest, but of possible discoveries. At Senoeris there are the graves of the early Christians who are said to have

been martyred, and the peasantry have no scruple in exhuming them to satisfy the curiosity of the anthropologist who desires to have a specimen of an early Christian's skull, or the curious coffins in which their corpses were placed; while the fortress-like village of Tamiyeh, the thicket-clad gorge of Fidimin, and the broad precipitous *wady* at Nazlet, would offer subjects for the artist of a character not to be found elsewhere in Egypt. It is true that modern no less than ancient writers have in some respects exaggerated the luxuriance of the Fayoum. One writes of "a virgin forest," and of "orange-trees as big as oaks;" and another of "a plantation of opuntia, the growth of which is so gigantic as almost to resemble a forest," which I happened to see, and which certainly fell far short of this description: but in spite of all this, there can be no doubt that the Fayoum possesses a charm denied to any other section of the country, and its brawling streams and verdant recesses will well repay the traveller in search of "fresh fields and pastures new."

CHAPTER III.

OLD AND NEW.

THE more one sees of the "Land of Khemi," the more one is amazed at the extent of the remains which still exist awaiting a thorough examination, and which lie so temptingly strewn over the face of the country that it is almost an insult to them to leave them still unexplored. The mounds and cliffs seem to be crying out, "Come and dig,—we contain all the records of the ages; we only conceal the pages of ancient history which are still dark, because no one will take the trouble to turn us over; we can reveal the secrets of the little-known period when the shepherd-kings reigned over the land; we can throw light upon the obscure annals of the pontifical monarchs of the twenty-first dynasty; we can tell all about the seventh, eighth, ninth, and

tenth dynasties, of which no record whatever has yet been found upon any of the monuments; under these superincumbent masses of brickbats and potsherds, in rock-cut tombs and undiscovered *mastabas*, it is all written in imperishable letters,—only come and dig." It would be doing a gross injustice to the distinguished body of Egyptologists, from Champollion down to Mariette and Brugsch Pashas, to say that this appeal has not been responded to, and that in the great works at Sakkara, and the excavations which have taken place, a wonderful effort has not been made; but what strikes one is, that the task is so vast and endless—that in spite of all the time and money that have been already spent, so much remains to be done.[1] In fact one does not know which is most wonderful, what has been

[1] Since the above was written, Monsieur Maspero has opened a pyramid near Sakkara, containing discoveries of the utmost importance, as throwing light upon the unknown history of some of the earliest dynasties; while the highly interesting researches of Monsieur Emile Brugsch, in the neighbourhood of Thebes, has resulted in a *trouvaille* of the very highest interest, consisting of no fewer than 4000 objects, among which are thirty-six royal sarcophagi, with their inner cases and mummies intact, belonging to Pharaohs, queens, princes, princesses, and high priests of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-first dynasties.

achieved, or what yet remains to be accomplished. The ordinary tourist who visits the Boulak museum and the Necropolis of Sakkara, and then runs up to the First or the Second Cataract, is apt to think that the subject must be wellnigh exhausted; and is scarcely conscious of the fact that the banks of the Nile from Cairo to Thebes, between which he glides so rapidly in a Cook's steamer, or, more tranquilly, journeys in a *dahabeeya*, are strewn with the mounds of ancient cities, especially on the eastern shore, and that its cliffs are honeycombed with tombs. It was the knowledge of this fact which tempted us, in the most humble and unassuming manner, and without any pretensions to a knowledge of the subject, to try and see whether we could not discover something in a very small way, by poking about in a leisurely manner, from various centres on the banks of the river, where we were kindly provided with accommodation. Indeed, so far as our experience went, the hospitality of the Government was only equalled by that of private friends. To one of these, learned in the lore of the ancient Egyptians, we were indebted for our

first attempt, and in fact for the encouragement of any latent tendency we possessed towards researches, which, when once the taste for them is fully developed, becomes one of the most absorbing and interesting of pursuits.

About a hundred miles up the Nile from Cairo lies the small town of Feshn; here we were most kindly entertained by Monsieur Daninos, who is resident there, and who assisted the late Mariette Pasha in many of his earlier researches. On the opposite bank of the river, the limestone cliffs of the Jebel Thèr recede suddenly at a spot known to the natives as Haybee, near which there is a small hamlet of hovels, a grove of young date-trees, and the remains of a very ancient pier, which, in the days when there was an important town and fortress stretching along the shore, projected into the river. Near the stones that still mark its site we moored our bark, which was nothing more or less than a common village boat, in which we had crossed from the opposite bank in company with our erudite friend on archæological researches bent. He had given notice of our projected visit the day

before, and the sheikh of the neighbouring village, with a dozen or more of its male inhabitants, was on the bank awaiting our arrival. As soon as we got through the date-grove we came upon the mounds of an ancient town, whose name, as found in the hieroglyphics, was Isembheb. Scrambling over these, with eyes eagerly scanning the *débris* for coins, beads, and other relics, we followed our guides to a projecting shoulder of the mounds, beyond which they said there was a cave; but we had no sooner reached the brow, than we were arrested by the remarkable view which burst upon us. The recess had widened into an amphitheatre surrounded by limestone cliffs, which bore the marks of having been extensively quarried both in modern and ancient times, the trenches and cuttings increasing the quaint picturesqueness of the natural formation. Immediately to our left, and rising out of the mound on which we stood, was a cliff, partly faced and partly crowned with brick to a height of fifty feet, and about a hundred yards broad, the massive construction of crude brick presenting quite an imposing appearance. In other directions there were fragments of

similar buildings and walls, the whole suggesting the idea that in former years a fortress of considerable dimensions had been erected here to guard the passes to the river which break the cliffs behind. From the heights on which we stood, the view of these masses of masonry crowning the lofty mounds, together with the quarried precipices and the sharp outline of the ranges of desert mountain beyond, with the placid Nile, lined with palm-groves, sweeping beneath us, was striking in the extreme. When we had feasted our eyes upon it, we descended to the cave, the entrance to which we were disappointed to find was so choked with sand that it was with the greatest difficulty one of the Arabs squeezed himself into the bowels of the earth, where he stood every chance of being suffocated. On these occasions they always go in feet first, not merely in order to get as much air as possible, but because the passages are often so narrow and choked as to prevent their turning round. The man came to the surface in a few moments, saying that the passage was blocked; so we sent to the village for some mattocks, and went meanwhile to examine another cave,

The entrance to this was a little larger, but it presented more difficulties of excavation on account of the masses of rock by which it was encased. I managed to crawl in a short distance, feet first, but all progress was almost immediately blocked by a number of sarcophagi piled one upon the other. The lid of one was broken, and I poked my foot into it in the dark. There was something so very "uncanny" in the soft feeling of the mummy against it, that I drew it back with great alacrity. It was impossible to get the mummy out without a great expenditure of time and labour, as though the crack in the lid was big enough to allow of my foot passing in, the mummy could only have been got out piecemeal. Moreover, there is no particular interest attaching to fragments of a mummy. There were perhaps ornaments in the sarcophagus, but its position made it impossible either to get the lid off or to grub into its interior; so we abandoned it for the present, lest by spending too much time over it we might lose something that was more interesting, and proceeded to a third cave which was nearer the bank of the river. The entrance

to this was by a square hole in the face of the cliff, about five feet from its base. We put two Arabs in, very much as one would put ferrets into a rabbit-hole; and as they stayed in nearly half an hour we began to get alarmed, although they had lights. Finally they reappeared, thoroughly exhausted. They reported that, after squeezing along a narrow passage for about a hundred feet, they came to four chambers, opening into one another, but containing no sarcophagi. From these they ascended about ten feet by a perpendicular shaft, into a number of small chambers,—they could not tell how many on account of the bats, which they averred were so numerous as to prevent their making any observations. Of course all inquiry as to whether there were hieroglyphics on the walls was comparatively useless, as their accuracy could not be relied upon; but they declared most positively that there were none. Their account was, however, sufficiently interesting to tempt Daninos Bey to try his luck. I was unfortunately not strong enough to attempt the scramble. He soon reappeared in a half-stifled condition, saying that he had been obliged to come back for want of air,

and on account of the extreme narrowness of the passage, in which he was afraid of sticking permanently. Our exertions, though they had not so far been attended with any great success, had given us an appetite, so we adjourned to the date-grove for luncheon, sending the Arabs in search of bricks, if there were any stamped with hieroglyphics. In a short time they brought us several fragments, but Daninos Bey could make nothing of them, they were so imperfect. It was not until we reached the spot from which they had been taken that, by piecing the most perfect fragments together, and comparing several, he deciphered their meaning. The inscription read as follows :—

"Nouter-hon atep en Ammon
Pinedjem, pet our Khent Isis;'

which, being interpreted, signifies "Grand Priest of Ammon Pinedjem, Protector of the Grand Sanctuary of Isis." The bricks on which this inscription was stamped were about fifteen inches by nine, and the presumption is that this wall formed part of a temple dedicated to Isis, which was built by the pontiff-king Pinedjem, the third of the twenty-

first dynasty, who reigned about 1043 B.C.; and this hypothesis is borne out by the fact that the signification of the ancient Egyptian name of the town, Isembheb, is "the Isis of Heb," thus indicating that the locality was one sacred to the goddess, and adorned doubtless by a temple which had been erected in her honour by the priest-king Pinedjem. The history of the dynasty to which these kings belonged is so obscure that it would be most interesting if further light could be thrown upon it; and it is probable that these ruins conceal records which would be of great historical value. It would appear from what we do know, that during the dynasty of the Rameses they exercised supreme spiritual functions at Tanis, the Zoan of the Bible, in Lower Egypt, and at Thebes; and that when, owing to the weakness of the sixteenth and last Rameses, the high priest Herhôr, then chief prophet of Ammon, succeeded in overthrowing this dynasty, he established himself the throne of Egypt, and fixed the seat of government at Tanis; but the high priests of Thebes, in order to retain the spiritual supremacy of that ancient city, started a con-

temporaneous line, so that for some time Upper and Lower Egypt were governed independently of each other. Lepsius gives only three Tanite sovereigns and seven Theban, from which it would appear that a union must have taken place under the latter, who, however, seem to have reigned somewhat ingloriously. The most vigorous of them appear to have been Piankh and Pinedjem, who was possibly the Pharaoh with whom Solomon "made affinity" by marriage; "for Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife." And we read further that Solomon built a house especially for her, because she seems to have retained the religion of her royal father, the high priest of Ammon; therefore "Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come." It seems odd that it should not have struck Solomon that

if his wife was too unholy even to live in a sacred city, she was too unholy to be his wife; meantime his father-in-law, who, if he was not Pinedjem, was undoubtedly one of the priest-kings of Ammon, was celebrating mysterious rites, possibly in this very temple of Isis whose ruined walls we were now identifying. Nor did these religious scruples interfere with intimate relations being kept up between Egypt and Palestine during the reign of Solomon and these pontiff-kings, for we hear that "Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty." These commercial relations came to an end when Egypt was invaded by the Assyrians under Sheshong the First, and the dynasty of the Ammon monarchs was overthrown. This king is the Sesonchis of the Greeks, and the Shishak of the Bible, with whom Jeroboam took refuge when he fled from Rehoboam, and who afterwards "came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the

house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made." An inscription on one of the walls of the great hall at Karnak commemorates this campaign against Judah, and gives a list of the conquered towns and districts.

It is worthy of note that the modern name of bricks formed of clay, and not requiring straw, should be *haybee*, as we found no straw in the bricks of these ruins, which now bear the same name, though in some of the walls which formed its fortifications are layers of reeds in every fourth course, to serve as binders. The bricks on which we found the inscription of prophet of Pinedjem were burnt; so that Sir Gardner Wilkinson is mistaken when he says "that burnt bricks were not used in Egypt, and when found they are known to be of Roman time."[1] The rest of his notice on Egyptian brick-work, however, applies so accurately to those at Haybee—which, with the exception of those stamped, were all crude—that it is worth quoting.

[1] Wilkinson's Ancient Egyptians, ii. 194.

"Enclosures of gardens or granaries, sacred circuits surrounding the courts of temples, walls of fortresses or towns, dwelling-houses and tombs, and even some few of the temples themselves, were of crude brick, with stout columns and gateways; and so great was the demand, that the Government, foreseeing the profit to be obtained from a monopoly of them, undertook to supply the public at a moderate price, thus preventing all unauthorised persons from engaging in their manufacture. And in order more effectually to obtain this end, the seal of the king, or of some privileged person, was stamped upon the bricks at the time they were made; and bricks so marked are found both in public and private buildings, some having the ovals of a king, and some the names and titles of a priest, or other influential person. Those which bear no characters either form part of a tale, of which the first only were stamped, or were from the brick-fields of individuals who had obtained a licence from the Government to make them for their own consumption."

It is not unlikely that if excavations were prosecuted at Haybee, on a more extensive

scale than those at which we were present a month later, some still more interesting discoveries might be made, and light thrown upon the legends concerning the pontiff-kings of whose dynasties so little is known. I believe that Brugsch Pasha has visited the ruins, and found a brick or tablet of Thotmes the Third. There are also some figures in the museum at Cairo, which have been sent from Haybee; but they are not the result of organised examination, but of quarrying operations, undertaken for the construction of the sugar-factories on the other side of the river. When we got back to the first tomb we had visited, where we had set a couple of men to dig, we found that they had reached some sarcophagi; but they were too tightly wedged in, and our time was too limited, to render it possible to get at their contents. We afterwards found some mortuary chambers hewn in the rock; and upon the lintel over the entrance of one there was an inscription, but it was too much defaced to be deciphered. What we had done, however, seemed to Daninos Bey to be sufficiently encouraging to warrant his applying to Monsieur Maspero, director-gen-

eral of the museum at Boulak, for permission to commence excavations on a small scale, which that gentleman readily granted; and at these we were able to assist a few weeks later.

The sun was now sinking behind the Libyan hills, and we reluctantly wended our way to the river-bank, accompanied by a large retinue of native followers. It was our first experience of research of this description, and we had just done enough of it to whet our appetites, and encourage us to go higher up the river, in the hope of finding some spot which might offer attractions of the same description.

With this object principally in view, we fixed our headquarters at Minieh, a town of some importance about 160 miles up the river from Cairo, whose white houses and relatively imposing appearance are familiar to *dahabeeya* travellers and Cook's tourists. Our abode was on the bank of the river; and the arrival of a Cook's steamer, with its passengers streaming on shore for an hour, and then posting off not much wiser than when they came, was an event which reminded us from time to time that we were within the pale of modern civilisation.

Minieh is a town of about 20,000 inhabitants, the capital of the province, and residence of the *mudir*, and of the principal superintendent of the Daira Sanieh for Upper Egypt. The only foreigners resident here are two or three French employees connected with the large sugar-factory which stands near the palace of the Khedive on the banks of the river. To the south of the town are the beautiful and extensive gardens, belonging principally to Sultan Pasha, the largest landholder and most influential man in the province, whose palace by the water-side is quite an imposing feature; while the elaborate pleasure-grounds and gardens of the Khedive enclose the town on the north. It thus lies between the Nile in front, and the Ibrahimieh Canal in rear, with groves of dates and oranges, at once shady and odorous, on both flanks—and is one of the most agreeable residences on the river. Unfortunately, however, Minieh is not at present available as a place of residence to the ordinary tourist, unless he lives in a *dahabeeya*, or has tents, as it does not boast of a hotel. On the opposite or eastern side of the Nile, rises at a distance of about a mile from

the bank, the range of cliffs of nummulite limestone, with the precipitous sides and fantastic forms of which, the Nile traveller is so familiar. From time to time these cliffs are rent by gorges similar to the one we had already explored at Haybee; and in old time they were strategically of so much importance, that the remains of fortifications are nearly always to be found at them, and often the mounds and tombs, which indicate the previous existence of towns.

Nearly opposite the north end of Minieh was a gorge of this description, upon which we cast longing eyes, the more especially as we could find no mention of it in any guide-book; and we accordingly determined to make it the object of our first expedition. We were greeted on our arrival on the opposite shore by the sheikh of the small village at which we landed, and followed him under date-trees and across wheat-fields to the base of the cliff. As we approached it, we were startled by the excited exclamation on the part of my servant, Mohamet Achmet, who took a lively but somewhat ill-regulated interest in hieroglyphics, of "Dere's a 'scription;" and on looking

up incredulously, we observed, to our delight and surprise, a series of hieroglyphics and some pictorial representations cut on the wall of rock—which was here at least a hundred feet high—and about fifty feet from its base. I had, unfortunately, not brought my opera-glass, and could only make out the characters, some of which had been defaced by time, imperfectly. However, it looked as if it would be possible, by turning the angle of the gorge, to scramble along a narrow ledge which projected from the wall of rock, and so reach them. The face of the cliff—along the base of which we now walked for about half a mile—presented a most singular appearance: it was furrowed and pitted with holes, as though it had been afflicted in former ages by a virulent attack of smallpox; at its northern extremity, where it was cleft by the gorge, it was crowned by a projecting mass of rock, most fantastic in form; and immediately beneath this, and on the shoulder which formed one side of the gorge, we found the remains of an ancient town. Our first instinct before examining it, however, was to climb up the slope of brickbats and potsherds, until we

reached what we calculated to be the level of the inscription, and then to find the ledge by which it could be reached. This proved to be about two feet wide, with a horrible sloping surface of small limestone gravel, and after I had gone a few yards I found myself clutching too affectionately to the Arab in front of me for my peace of mind. I had overestimated my steadiness of head, and was compelled to beat a hasty and ignominious retreat. I was partially compensated for my humiliation and disappointment by the extreme interest and beauty of the view from this elevated spot. The amphitheatre was somewhat similar, but superior in ruggedness of outline and boldness of character generally to that of Haybee. Looking eastward, and bounding the prospect in that direction, at a distance of about half a mile, was a lofty cliff of natural rock—a projecting mass of which terminated abruptly on a lower ledge. Along the summit of this ridge, which, in its turn, ended in a precipice sixty or seventy feet high, ran a wall of crude brick showing sharply against the sky-line. As well as I could judge from the distance at which I was, it was from sixty to

seventy yards long, and from fifteen to twenty feet high, and was evidently part of the outer fortifications of the town. In all probability it formed a portion of the defensive system which is said to have been constructed by an ancient Egyptian queen, whose name was Delooka, and which extended from Assouan along the whole length of the valley of the Nile to the sea.

Diodorus says that Sesostris "erected a wall along the eastern side of Egypt to guard against the incursions of the Syrians and Arabs, which extended from Pelusium, by the desert, to Heliopolis, being in length 1500 stadia" (about 173 English miles). If this was necessary as far as Heliopolis, there is every reason to suppose that it was no less essential to the safety of the inhabitants further up the river, and that, as an additional security, those fortresses were built, the remains of which I have seen at Haybee, Tehneh, Kom el Kafara, and elsewhere on the eastern bank of the Nile. The Arabs told us there were no mounds of a town beyond the wall, but that there were caves in the cliffs beyond; and I have no doubt that they would repay investigation, as

this neighbourhood seems somehow to have escaped that careful examination which has been bestowed upon almost every mile of the Nile valley.

There were a few native huts among the mounds, and the "oldest inhabitant" told us that half a day's journey to the eastward there were two caves, the extent of which could never be explored, they were so vast. He declared that he himself had been with lights the better part of a day's journey in one of them. That in the limestone formation there may be natural caves of some extent which have been magnified by native imagination is highly probable, but I doubt whether they would repay a visit. The population of the place we were now exploring, which is called Kom el Kafara, assured us that though so near Minieh, they had never known of any foreigners having investigated the ruins. They could, in fact, only remember having once seen two who came to shoot. We made them collect all their treasures in the way of beads and coins, the former of which the women wear as necklaces, while the latter are kept by the men

money of some sort. On one of these necklaces I found a modern button, a modern glass bead, and a scarabæus. The woman was evidently under the impression that the latter was the least valuable of the three; she put a relatively high price on the button and the bead, but I got the scarabæus for twopence. The coins were comparatively modern, with Roman, Arabic, and Cufic inscriptions, but it by no means follows that they were picked up on the spot. In the low mud-wall of one of the huts was the fragment of a marble papyrus column about three feet high; near by in the mounds were two circular limestone plinths about four feet apart, and three feet in diameter, which probably supported the columns that formed the entrance to a temple; and a large circular block of carved marble was so embedded in the *débris* that we could not determine its exact size. The town was evidently a small one, probably not much more than a fortress, as the ruins only covered about 300 acres. Many of the walls of the houses, built of crude brick, were still standing; and on the edge of a rude mummy-pit we found a bundle still intact, and tightly corded up. This we

eagerly untied. The flax rope that bound it was as strong as the day it was first twisted round the brown linen wrappages, layer after layer of which we unwound, and which were also in very good preservation. The bundle, which was about eighteen inches in diameter, contained, when at last we reached its enclosure, a quantity of raw flax, a number of small bones of some animal, and some grains of wheat. There was no skull, and certainly not nearly the full complement of bones. After this we wandered over the mounds in search of antiques, but found nothing of any value. There were no fragments of glass, and only a few of coloured glazed pottery; but at last, to our joy, on turning over the largest bricks, we found some stamped with hieroglyphics. It took us some time to piece the most perfect of these together, and our former experience at Haybee enabled us, with the assistance of a hieroglyphic alphabet, to decipher it as follows—"Nouter-hon-atep, Ra-men-cheper," or "The High Priest of Ammon Ra-men-cheper." The interest of this discovery lay in the fact that Ra-men-cheper was the fourth king of the twenty-first dynasty; and I am not aware that

his name has been found upon any monument before. It was a curious thing that the brick we found at Haybee, sixty miles lower down the river on the same bank, in an almost exactly similar gorge, should have been inscribed with the name of his immediate predecessor, Pinedjem. We know nothing about Ra-men-cheper except his position in the royal lists; and it is possible that excavations here might reveal some interesting records of his reign, and of the dynasty of pontiff-kings to which he belonged.

At the mouth of the gorge, on its northern side, is the tomb of a sheikh; and below this, near a few date-trees, are two caves,—one natural, about twenty feet high, but of no great depth—and the other artificial, the entrance to which, cut into the solid rock, was twelve feet by six. The mortuary chamber within was forty feet long by ten wide, but there were no inscriptions on its rock sides; and at one corner was a perpendicular shaft, filled to within three feet of the top with sand. The roof of a lower chamber, which is usually the receptacle of sarcophagi, was just visible at this point, and we lighted some straw and found it was filled

with sand and rubbish to within a foot of the roof. Under these circumstances, further investigation, except with a gang of workmen, was impossible. We had done enough to prove the interest of the spot, and the only thing still remaining to be accomplished, short of excavation, was the deciphering of the inscription on the cliff. I revisited it some days after for this purpose, and this time succeeded in getting along the ledge to its base. I found it to be about thirty feet long and nine feet high. The name inscribed was that of Rameses the Third; but the upper parts of the figures were so mutilated that I was unable to conjecture what they might signify until I visited the cliffs near Tehneh, ten miles lower down the river. Here I saw, occupying the same position on the rock, what appeared to be the same three figures; but they were unmutilated, and have been decided, by those competent to form an opinion, to be a representation of Rameses the Third receiving a falchion from the hand of the crocodile-headed god Savak, or Savak-Ra, in the presence of Ammon. I feel little doubt that the figures at Kom el Kafara have the same signification.

The natives evidently regarded the inscription with a good deal of awe and superstition. The sheikh assured me that I should find the stone at the base of the inscription would give forth a hollow sound if I struck the rock, and told me that there was a mysterious cavern within, inhabited by *afrites* or devils, to which no entrance had been found, but that it was probably behind a curious stone, which he called a "monkey stone," the singular shape and black colour of which contrasted strangely with the white limestone. It looked like black basalt; but whether it was, or how it got there, I can form no definite opinion. It is certain, however, that, on striking the rock, I failed to make it emit a hollow sound. Rameses seems to have had a propensity, in which he has been imitated by the modern tourist, of writing his name on rocks, but he did it in a style so imperishable, that it has lasted just three thousand years; and perhaps, considering his great achievements both in war and peace, his vanity may be excused. He rivalled his great predecessor and relative, Rameses the Great, the Sesostris of the Greeks, in his conquests, in the benefits he conferred upon his country,

and in the monuments he left behind him. Of these, the temple of Medinet Habou, on the plain of Thebes, is perhaps the most remarkable. Among the inscriptions, there is one which mentions, for the first time in history, several of the nations of Europe; and his tomb is one of the finest of "the tombs of the kings."

I described these facts to the faithful Mohamet, who was extremely anxious to know the interpretation of the inscription he had been the first to point out, and who piloted me along the ledge to enable me to copy it. "This is the name of the great Rameses," I said. "You have heard of his tomb?" "Yes, sir," he promptly replied. "Captain Ramsay, I know—he one English gentleman; he not buried here—his tomb furder up."

While our experiences so far had satisfied us that the ancient land of Khemi was far from exhausted as a field for antiquarian research, we also found, in the phase through which the modern land of Egypt is passing, much to interest both in its political and material condition. Our mode of life brought us more closely into contact with the people of all classes than usually falls to the lot either of

the tourist hurrying to the First Cataract, or the valetudinarian leading a hotel life in Cairo.

I had myself visited Egypt upon eight previous occasions, on flying visits, and can therefore realise how erroneous is the impression produced upon the traveller who sees it for the first time from the windows of a railway carriage, or the deck of a *dahabeeya*. The squalid aspect of the mud-villages, the thinly clad ragged population clustered round the holes which serve for entrances into their dung-daubed hovels, and the poverty-stricken aspect of the population, would lead to a most incorrect conclusion, if it was formed entirely on outward appearances. And indeed there has been a time, and that not very remote, when the external aspect of the people did not belie their real condition; when they were thrashed and starved by a rapacious government, crying, like "the horse-leech, 'Give, give,'" and which never was satisfied. It is only since the expulsion of the late Khedive that a change has come over the spirit of their dream—a change so great that they are bewildered by its suddenness, and have not yet had time to alter the outward habits of the life to which they have

so long been accustomed, or to recover from the sense of fear and mistrust by which they were continually haunted. The character of the people has been created by long periods of misrule and oppression; qualities of apathy, suspicion, and deceit have been engendered, which it will take years of just and equitable administration to eradicate; and it will probably be long before they are stimulated by the steady improvement in their economical condition to rise to a higher conception of the comforts of daily life. No doubt the perfection of the climate tends to militate against any rapid change in this respect. The mud-huts are good enough for a country in which it never rains; the thin ragged gowns warm enough for a temperature which is always pleasant. The land is so fruitful that it does not require the amount of labour which is necessary upon a more ungrateful soil, to be made to yield of its abundance; and the people may have money enough in their pockets to build better houses and buy finer clothes, long before it will enter into their heads to do so.

There is a strong and very natural propensity to hoard among them; and the possession

of wealth having always been synonymous with persecution, when it was discovered, has led to habits of secrecy in regard to it; so that the first instinct of a peasant who, by some fortunate accident, acquires a sum of money, is to bury it, and not disclose its existence, even to his wife and family. Under the oven is a favourite hiding-place, as there is a certain security in a fire being generally burning over it. Even to the last, men have been known to guard the secret, dying with it unrevealed; and there can be little doubt that a good deal of money has been lost in this way, and that, if we add the stores of the ancients to those of modern times, the country must contain a considerable amount of hidden treasure. This is confirmed to some extent by the fact that the ideas of the peasantry are always running upon hidden treasure. I received a curious evidence of this upon one occasion when I was trying to induce a man to sell me some antiques which he had dug out of a mound. Among them he inadvertently said there was a large earthen jar—on which his wife interrupted him, and a violent argument took place between them. She objected strongly to her husband selling

the jar, on the ground that if it came to the ears of the Government they would certainly be accused of having stolen the treasure which it contained, and be forced to pay money by way of restitution.

In spite of all this suspicion and reluctance to reveal the possession of money, by spending it, we have but to look a little closely to see the evidences of an increasing material prosperity all through Egypt. In many of the smaller towns new houses are springing up rapidly; at Medinet el Fayoum, Minieh, Rhoda, and other places which I visited, this was observable. Land that had been allowed to run out was being taken back into cultivation. The Fayoum especially has taken a marvellous start within the last two years. I was, perhaps, the more struck by the marked evidences, everywhere visible, of a growing prosperity, by the contrast which the country afforded to Turkey, where I had passed the previous year. It was the difference between a house in process of construction and a house crumbling to decay. The unfortunate feature in the situation is, that the new house is being built under the very shadow of the old, by the same build-

ers who are actually engaged in helping to pull down the old, and who are only "constructing" in harmony now, from interested and private motives, which must conflict whenever the scramble begins for the remains of what they are about to demolish. Under these circumstances, though the present aspect is encouraging, the conviction that its prosperity depends upon a combination of external powers, with rival and selfish ends in view, seriously detracts from what would otherwise be a most hopeful prospect for the future. Hence it is probable that the unfortunate people will just have tasted enough of relief from oppression and of material prosperity, to make the relapse into the general chaos, that must ensue upon the dismemberment of Turkey, doubly painful to them; and they will find their suspicion and distrust of the future, and the sort of instinct which prevails that the present state of things is too good to last, well founded. Meantime they seem to believe in "making hay while the sun shines." Every man has already learnt exactly how much his annual tax amounts to, and refuses to be squeezed out of a piastre more. The old

officials, who used to line their pockets out of extortions from the peasantry, under pretext of collecting taxes, which varied with the squeezability of the tax-payer, can do so no longer without discovery; for the peasant has learnt from experience, to his astonishment, that appeal to the proper quarter secures protection and redress. A consciousness which is, on the other hand, apt to produce a reaction, and make him insubordinate and untractable in matters where he has certain duties to perform, and to which he was compelled in old days by a free use of the *kurbatch*.

In a country dependent for its prosperity upon its irrigation system being kept in good repair, it is evident that every human being is personally interested in the state of the sluices and irrigating canals; and from the earliest times the population were obliged to contribute their labour gratuitously for their preservation, just as in the United States every farm in the country is compelled to contribute its quota of labour, without payment, to the maintenance of the roads. The same system has always prevailed in Egypt; and the canals were kept up by a *corvée* of the inhabitants, who en-

deavoured, by every means in their power, to evade it, and were only compelled to obedience by the liberal use of the stick. Now, however, the use of the stick or *kurbatch* is abolished, but the men are none the less expected to keep the irrigation works in repair by gratuitous labour. In some *mudirates* the peasantry are compelled to work thus without payment on the dikes and canals for six months in the year, in others for one hundred and twenty days. Nor can they exempt themselves by payment,—as even, if the money were forthcoming, it would not be possible to find the requisite amount of labour. In addition to this, the men are often obliged to work at a distance of one or two days' journey from their homes, thus involving them in considerable extra expense, to escape which they not unfrequently bribe the minor employee. Indeed, although legally they cannot buy exemption, in practice it is not so very difficult; for money, skilfully applied, generally provides a means of escape from most dilemmas. 'It is evident that no people in the world will willingly stand being forced to work six months

are no longer bastinadoed into it, they are getting difficult to manage, and the canals are suffering in consequence. The simple and manifest solution of the difficulty would be to clean them by machinery. There is something at once grotesque and pathetic in this nineteenth century in the sight of five thousand men, almost entirely naked, standing waist-deep in the soft mud, and scooping it out with no better instrument than their hands. One can scarcely conceive a more disagreeable operation, though it reminds one how little the habits of the people are changed since those ancient times when the huge monuments, which at this day challenge our admiration, were created by the application of physical force upon a vast scale. By the introduction of dredgers this great multitude might be largely released, and enabled to devote themselves to the culture of their own lands. At the same time, the maintenance of dikes and other irrigation works would always render a certain amount of forced labour necessary; and though it is repugnant to our feelings to force them to work by beating them, still, as their own salvation depends upon their fulfil-

ling this duty, it is a question how far this sentiment should prevail in a matter of such vital interest to the country, among a population who have always been accustomed to this mode of coercion, and who feel no disgrace attaching to it. A curious illustration of this came under my notice while staying with a friend who was engaged in keeping the canals in good repair. A man who had persistently evaded his duties, seemed to be pricked by his conscience, and voluntarily came to him one day, and said that he was prepared to go to work on the canal, but that he could not do so without being compelled. He had never in his life worked on a canal until he had been beaten, and there was apparently something repugnant to his feelings in going to work upon one, even for pay, voluntarily; he therefore requested that a hundred blows of the *kurbatch* should be administered to him upon the soles of his feet. My friend reluctantly acceded to his request, thereby breaking the law; but the man received the required stimulus without a groan, and went to his work in a peaceful and contented frame of mind, as one who had relieved his conscience of a heavy

load. One could scarcely require a stronger proof of the extent to which a population may be *dénaturée* by a long course of oppression than this instance, which is perfectly authentic, furnishes.

From the illustration I have given of the value of the *kurbatch*, it will be seen that it has too strong a hold upon the people to be readily abandoned; and indeed, although it is nominally prohibited by law, its use is largely resorted to, *sub rosa*, by the native minor officials, more especially in the detection of crime. On one occasion, alighting from the train at a small town where I was going to spend a few days, I observed five prisoners, heavily chained by the neck and arms, being escorted by a guard of soldiers out of one of the rear carriages. The leading man was a negro, with by no means a bad cast of countenance, who was smiling defiantly at the crowd which had assembled to see them pass. The others followed his example in a display of contempt and indifference to their position, and some of them were truculent-looking fellows enough. On inquiring as to their crime, I was informed that a few days before they

had burglariously entered the house of a small Greek trader in the town, whom they had fired at and severely wounded, decamping with a considerable sum of money, shooting and killing on their way a policeman who attempted to interfere. It was suspected that they formed part of a large band who were credited with a series of burglaries and other acts of violence in the neighbourhood. They had been arrested owing to a curious train of circumstances too long to recount, but I was anxious to follow them to the office of the *vakil* in order to hear them cross-examined. I was requested, however, to refrain from doing so, as the authorities would have hesitated to apply the *kurbatch* in my presence; and without it, it would be impossible to discover the names and hiding-places of their accomplices, one of whom had been actually guilty of the murder. I was therefore obliged to content myself with receiving an accurate report of what passed from one who was present. He told me that the black man, who was one of the ringleaders, and had been a slave, received a hundred blows of the *kurbatch*, bellowing loudly during the whole of the process,

before he announced himself willing to confess. When he did so, his revelations were most important. All his comrades were similarly treated—one receiving in silence and in perfect indifference 1500 blows of the *kurbatch* without confessing. The executioner told my informant that the man's feet were so hard he felt as if he was beating iron. He was then put to various kinds of torture, but remained obdurate to the end. As a result of what was discovered, however, the remaining members of the band, numbering in all twenty-two, were arrested, and six murders, accompanied by assassination, were confessed with all their details, besides numerous minor offences. The fear of the peasantry, and their reluctance to testify in cases where the band is powerful and influential by virtue of its connection by blood with a large district of country, would have rendered it impossible to bring this gang of malefactors to justice without resorting to these severe measures. In the case in question, one girl proved an exception to this rule, and showed as much courage in giving her evidence as nerve and presence of mind at the time of the burglary.

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It seems that the black slave came to her, as she lay bound on the ground, for the purpose of cutting her throat; on which she said, "If you want to cut my throat in order to get my bracelets and earrings, here they are, and welcome. I only gave two piastres for the bracelets, and one for the earrings,"—and she took them off and threw them to him; on which the chief of the band, picking them up, threw them back to her with the remark, "We don't want your false rubbish," and called off his black comrade. They were really solid gold, and the clever wench saved her life and her jewels by her ready wit. Not uncommonly the police are in league with the robbers; and this must have been the case in this instance, for out of 110 town guardians, only two were proved to have been on duty on the night of the occurrence, and of these one was shot. Hence there was no possibility of instituting a pursuit at the time.

It is an unfortunate fact that the common people seem to get demoralised in proportion as they are brought in contact with foreigners. Thus the servants in the large towns, and the Nile boatmen, are among the

most dishonest classes in the population. An instance of the moral code prevalent among the latter came under my notice one day, when we were lying wind-bound, moored to a sandy islet in the river. A large *dahabeeya*, laden with grain, came and moored alongside, and I observed the crew busy, apparently throwing the grain in the air to clean it. Upon my inquiring why they chose the time and place for this operation, I was informed that the boat was consigned to some foreign house in Cairo, but that the Reis was making a little speculation out of the cargo on his own account, and having sold some of it at a neighbouring town, was now engaged making up the deficient weight with fine sand. When the whole was thoroughly mixed he would damp it a little, so as to increase the bulk and weight of his cargo to the requisite extent. This proceeding was carried on openly under the eyes of our crew, who considered it a perfectly natural one. Merchants who are conversant with frauds of this kind, constantly practised by the crews of Nile boats, usually send a trustworthy person with their cargoes, as watchman. The great amount of European

travel on the river of late years, the lavish expenditure of *backsheesh*, and the opportunities which exist for swindling the unsophisticated traveller, have made the Nile boatmen a greedy, rapacious, and, unless they are kept well in hand, an insolent class of the community. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the people are peaceable and easily managed, contented with little, and grateful for kind treatment, though lacking in enterprise or energy,—a defect which, however, may rather be due to a long course of bad government than to the inherent absence of those qualities. Now that they are regularly paid for their day's labour by the Daira Sanieh and Domaine administrations, they show themselves industrious enough; and there is no difficulty in getting labour where they feel they can rely upon the *mouffetish*. There is, however, a great contrast in the methods in which the estates of the Daira Sanieh are administered, depending on the individual capacity and honesty of the *mouffetishes*. Each of these functionaries administers a *teftish* or farm, varying in size from 10,000 to 50,000 acres,—the whole Daira Sanieh lands amounting to about half a million

of acres. Of these, 200,000 lie in a strip extending for eighty miles along the banks of the Nile to a point about twenty miles above Minieh; 50,000 are situated above Luxor; 76,000 are in the Fayoum; and the rest in Lower Egypt. On this land there are 375 miles of agricultural railway, the plant, rolling stock, and appurtenances of which are valued at about a million sterling. There are nine sugar-mills in operation, and three in full working order, but these latter are closed for want of a sufficient supply of cane. These mills are valued at about £200,000 apiece; and there is one which is not quite finished, but the building materials for it are all on the spot. Besides the sugar, there are sundry cotton-mills, which are not at work. The ex-Khedive is responsible for all this extravagance of investment in machinery; and it is melancholy to see the quantity of good material, of great value, lying about the fields, which is destined never to be used. Huge iron wheels, boilers, cylinders, fragments of steam-ploughs, seem to strew the country; while the long iron funnels of the sugar-factories disfigure it. If these returned a

large profit on the expenses of working them, it would be some consolation; but at present the Daira lands do not do much more than pay their expenses, together with the charges upon them, and in some years do not do that. This is to some extent due to defective cultivation. The furrows in which the cane is planted are not nearly deep enough; the rows, unlike those I have seen in the Southern States of America, are single instead of double, and are only about half as far apart; and the cane is not banked up. The present administration has no doubt much to contend with. First, it has the legacy of all the corruption and evils which tainted every department under the late Government, and these were especially rife in the Daira Sanieh, which offered an exceptionally good field for plunder; then it has to bear the pressure of the bondholders, who cannot wait for a process of reform, or submit to the trying of experiments which are incidental to a new system, but which must of necessity take time and money. It may be that by degrees these experiments may be introduced; for there can be no doubt that, with certain changes in the

present system, and a judicious expenditure of capital, especially on irrigation works, the Daira Sanieh property might be made to yield a very large return. It is due to Ismail Pasha to acknowledge that he planned a system of irrigation which possesses great merit, and which only requires to be perfected to confer a still greater benefit upon the country than it already does. With a view of completely controlling and utilising to their fullest extent the waters of the Nile, he constructed the canal known as the Ibrahimieh Canal, which is called after his son. It runs parallel with the Nile, and generally within a mile distant from it, and extends from a little above Rhoda to Beni-Suef. It was originally intended to carry it into the Nile below that place, but instead of this it dwindles away to nothing, and the canal to a great extent fails to do the work for which it was designed, and be a large full-flowing river throughout its whole course. One of the most important public works awaiting accomplishment is the completion of this canal. In addition to this most valuable adjunct to the system of irrigation, the late Khedive built a huge dike, also extending

from Rhoda to Beni-Suef, a distance of more than a hundred miles; and the land between the Ibrahimieh Canal and this dike, on the other side of which is the level watered by the Bahr Youssef, forms the finest cultivable area of the western bank of the Nile for that distance. It is divided into basins, into which the water is conducted by the canal. These basins store the inundation for as long a time as is required, and the ceremony of opening the sluice-gates to admit the water from one *mudirate* to another is quite an imposing function. The two *mudirs* meet at the gate, and the one formally hands over the water to the other, who signs a written receipt for it. The only natural overflows which now take place are that of the waters of the Nile over the narrow strip on its right bank, and that of the Bahr Youssef, which runs behind the dike. The whole of the rest of the country is divided into basins which are flooded as desired; and the impression of one's youth, therefore, that the whole country was submerged at once by uncontrolled inundation is erroneous. It is a question whether this plan of storing the water and allowing it to

stagnate before it is led on into other basins, does not deprive it of its fertilising qualities, as it necessarily has not so much mud to deposit as the constant fresh supply that came down with the natural overflow. This would not be the case if the Ibrahimieh Canal was finished, as the waters would then run off, and the fresh flood could be carried over the land. As it is, the stagnation of the water produces infiltration, which causes the saline properties in the soil to rise. Partly owing to this cause, partly to the exhausting qualities of sugar-cane and the neglect of a proper rotation of crops, and partly to the deleterious effects in the long-run of the nitrous soil that is excavated from the old mounds and used as manure,—the land will lose much of its productive capacity ere long, unless steps are taken to remedy these evils. Altogether, the system not only of irrigation but of cultivation might without much difficulty be improved; and there can be no doubt that the introduction of foreign enterprise and capital would develop the resources of the country with far greater rapidity and success than a Government department can do it, however well ad-

ministered. Unfortunately there seems a disposition on the part of the Government to exclude agricultural enterprise, for fear, possibly, of the foreign influence which must follow in its train,—and perhaps one can hardly blame them. What with their Domaine lands hypothecated to foreigners in one direction, and their Daira Sanieh lands in another, and all the principal departments of the Government under foreign control, one has no reason to wonder at a reluctance to see foreigners appropriating the very soil. I only know of one instance of a considerable tract of land being farmed by a private individual who is a foreigner, and he has no cause to regret his venture; but he has had much prejudice to contend with on the part of the natives, and had great difficulty in making his purchase in the first instance.

This prejudice, so far as the peasantry are concerned, is soon overcome. They have every reason to be thankful for the system under which the Government is at present administered; and foreigners, and especially English, are decidedly popular among them. Among the upper classes the sentiment is

different. The Turkish official element is as bitterly opposed to the foreigner as in Turkey itself; whilst the sympathy of the higher officials of Egyptian origin, and of the Copts, is French rather than English. This is partly owing to the great preponderance of the French population in Egypt over the English, to the much greater proportion of employees in the Government service which belong to the former nationality, and to the fact that the official language is French. All the Arab papers in the country but one, support the French. In fact, Egypt is becoming rapidly Frenchified morally, and under the present contrivance of an Anglo-French administration French influence must inevitably go on increasing. But in Egypt, as elsewhere in Eastern countries under the domination of the Porte, a feeling of national independence is gradually growing. This is the case both in Egypt and Syria, though from the fact that both countries have lost all traditions of a national independent existence, it is a plant of slow and tender growth, and will not dare to find expression until the central Turkish power is shaken to its foundations. I think we may then see,

both in Syria and Egypt, an anti-Turkish movement, which the old conquering race, whose supremacy is now only based upon its *prestige*, will be no longer able to resist. When such a movement takes place, the relations that these two countries hold towards England and France will have to be determined, and it will probably then be found that the best solution would be an arrangement by which Syria, excluding Palestine, should be placed under the protectorate of France, and Egypt under that of England. The national party in both countries would hail such a change with delight, and indeed are already so far familiarised with the idea of obtaining their freedom from the domination of Turkey by some arrangement of the Western Powers, that the only practical difficulties in the way of a solution in this sense would arise, not from the countries to be dealt with, but from the suspicions and jealousies of those great Powers whose function it must be ere long to shape their destinies.

CHAPTER IV.

SOCIETY IN THE PROVINCES.

LIFE in Minieh in the month of March left nothing to be desired for those whose tastes were moderate, and who were in search rather of repose than of excitement. The climate was soft and temperate; the view from our place of residence over the Nile, with precipitous limestone cliffs rising out of the palm-trees, presented a constantly renewing variety of marvellous effects of light and shade, which it was a continual source of delight to watch and attempt to put on paper. The neighbourhood abounded, besides, in picturesque sketches; while our rooms were ever fragrant with the odours of the orange and lemon groves in full bloom, by which they were surrounded. Though the bazaar was by no means so picturesque and characteristic as that of Medinet el Fayoum, it

was much better supplied; and so far as the necessaries of life were concerned, we were far better off. The town presents quite an imposing effect from the river, with its white mansions lining the bank; and the palace of the Khedive is one of the handsomest buildings of the kind out of Cairo. There are two or three mosques, which are chiefly interesting from the fact of their columns being taken from old Græco-Roman ruins of towns in the neighbourhood, and presenting an unusual variety of style of capital. One that has completely fallen into decay is especially picturesque: half-a-dozen beautiful little Corinthian columns rise out of a mass of rubbish; and on a neighbouring roof immediately above them an ox is perpetually turning a *sakkya*, which supplies the adjoining baths with water. There does not seem to have been any city of importance here in ancient times—the capital of the Nome of Hermopolis Parva, in which it was situated, lying a few miles to the south at the village of Taha el Amoodaya, where some mounds mark its site. Leo Africanus says that Minieh was built in the time of the Moslems by Khasseeb, who was appointed governor under

the Khalifat of Baghdad. He also observes that "it abounds in every kind of fruits, and boasts many handsome buildings and the remains of ancient Egyptian monuments," which have certainly now disappeared.

So far as society was concerned, we had the opportunity of moving in the most fashionable native *set*, which, however, has always the disadvantage of being confined exclusively to the male sex; so that the hospitality of which we were the recipients, whether it took the form of visits or dinners, became somewhat monotonous. We were also most kindly furnished with gaily caparisoned donkeys for afternoon rides. One of these was a very proud animal, which was of a pure Mecca breed, and had cost his owner £80. Besides being a most persistent brayer, he had a loud and unpleasant manner of wheezing, or rather grunting, as he walked, which made me suppose he was broken-winded or asthmatic. So far from this being the case, I was assured that this wheezing was a highly esteemed quality in an ass, and was produced by a diet of ham, of which he was very fond, and which caused him to grunt like a pig when he walked, at-

tracting universal attention: thus when we rode through the bazaar our donkey heralded his approach from afar in a proud and ostentatious manner, and so proclaimed both his own value and the distinction of his rider. He seemed to delight in these manifestations in crowded places, thus confirming my impression that donkeys are vain creatures by nature —a belief which it will be remembered that Huc says is entertained by the Chinese, who prove it by tying a stone to their tails when they begin to bray, which gives them such a feeling of humiliation that they instantly subside into a mortified silence. I often felt inclined to try the experiment with my wheezing friend, who had a habit of constantly stopping suddenly, and indulging in the most prolonged and portentous bray, during which time all attempts to induce him to move on were ineffectual. At other times he pulled at his bit, in his eagerness and impetuosity, like a high-mettled charger.

The most interesting social entertainment to which we were invited while at Minieh, was a festivity on the occasion of the marriage of the son and daughter of the two richest and

most influential Copts in the place. The ceremony is generally performed in church late on Sunday night; but on Saturday evening wedding festivities take place both in the houses of the bride and bridegroom. The sexes, however, are not allowed to mingle, but the women have theirs in their own separate apartments. At eight o'clock in the evening I followed my guide through the tortuous, unlighted streets of the town to the house of the bride's father. Here I was received by the old gentleman, and ushered into the inner court crowded with guests, beyond which a select circle was collected in the small reception-room. I found the governor of the province and all the principal officials assembled here. The whole of the ground floor was brilliantly lighted; and though all wore the red fez cap or *tarboosh*, the costume of the most aristocratic portion of the assembly was more or less Europeanised. When all had seated themselves on chairs round the room, and had partaken of the due allowance of sherbet and coffee, the performances commenced by the introduction of a dancing-girl, gorgeously attired in crim-

son satin and brocade, abundantly spangled with tinsel, and adorned with jewels of some value. Masses of gold ornaments like coins were attached to her flowing tresses, and jingled on her back whenever she moved. In her dress, however, one could remark the growing influence of European habits: the gauzy loose trousers of the Ghawazee of old days have given place to a full skirt reaching almost to the ground; her feet, instead of being bare, were shod with Parisian *brodequins*; and under her small jacket was a chemise-like garment of tolerable thickness, which was also an innovation adapted to imported notions of decency. Her dancing was of the character usual in the East, excepting that the attitudes were considerably modified, and a general air of propriety prevailed, which was also a decidedly modern improvement. It is said that the modern Egyptian dance is an inheritance bequeathed by the ancients, whose priestesses in the temples dedicated to Hathor, the Egyptian Venus, indulged in religious exercises, which finally degenerated in purity and dignity; so that a return to these qualities is scarcely to be regretted. The

march of civilisation has now so far advanced, that the native band and dance were, after the first performance, abandoned for bad European music by native artists, to which the Egyptian girl did her best to waltz without a partner, with a step which certainly had nothing in common with the *trois temps*. She was succeeded by a characteristic Arab concert —the orchestra being composed of four men, one of whom played a sort of zither, another reed-pipes, another a tom-tom, while the fourth trusted entirely to his vocal powers for contributing to the general harmony, which it was necessary to be an Arab to appreciate. When the wild discordant strains raised by this quartette ceased, we were treated to a performance of a very novel and grotesque kind. A loud "tintamarre" was heard in the street, and a procession, which was accompanied by shouts of laughter from the spectators outside, entered the house. It consisted of what was intended to represent an awkward squad of raw recruits. The officer in command was dressed in British uniform, but his men wore tall fool's caps of paper, and were otherwise fantastically attired. The principal performer was a clown, who,

it appears, is celebrated in the town for his talents for mimicry and disguise. He kept the assembly in roars of laughter by his absurd attempts to obey words of command and learn his drill, and by the insubordinate witticisms to which he gave vent. Suddenly some crackers were let off, supposed to represent file-firing, and a sham fight ensued, which resulted in the mock death of one of the soldiers, who lay stiff in the middle of the room, while his companions retired to prepare for the next act in the comedy.

This consisted in their return, a few minutes later, in the character of Coptic priests, whose function it was to perform the last rites over the dead man. The buffoon was now disguised as a Church dignitary, with long white drapery, cap, and turban, and with a flowing beard; and with book and candle, followed by his attendants, he solemnly approached the dead man, and then suddenly burst forth with an imitation of the Coptic funeral service, which was an irresistibly ludicrous travesty of a grave function. It was a blasphemous and disagreeable proceeding; but the imitation of the Coptic method of nasal chanting

by a man who was not uttering a word of the language, was so clever that the audience rolled in their seats with laughter. Our host, however, apparently had not been prepared for the scene, and it was brought to a somewhat sudden close, to my great relief, for the reason, as I was informed on inquiry, that the archbishop, who was to perform the marriage ceremony next evening, might be offended if he heard that the most sacred rites of his Church had been parodied in the house of the bride's father the night before.

The dancing-girl was repeating her performance in a somewhat less constrained manner when I left the entertainment, which I understood was protracted until an early hour in the morning. I declined to make a night of it by going to the house of the bridegroom, where similar festivities were being carried on.

On the following night I witnessed the marriage of a peasant couple, which took place about ten o'clock, and which was, in some respects, more interesting than the aristocratic wedding that succeeded it at midnight.

In the centre of the church, benches were

arranged so as to form three sides of a square. In the middle of the centre bench sat the bride and bridegroom, side by side, their bare feet dangling about six inches from the ground. The male friends extended from him to the right, and the female from her to the left. As they were of the *fellah* class, the women's faces were uncovered, and they wore the blue gown and head-gear common to the country people. The bride, however, was an exception; her face was entirely concealed by a red cotton handkerchief strained so tightly across it that it was a mystery how she could draw a breath.

The bridegroom, who was quite a youth, looked excessively shy and uncomfortable, and held a white handkerchief persistently to his mouth, as if he was suffering from toothache. At first I thought he was; but as, when his hands were otherwise engaged, he held his handkerchief in his teeth, I concluded that it was only modesty. All, priest included, had bare feet, and were most poorly clad.

The ecclesiastic who performed the ceremony occupied evidently a very subordinate position in the Church, and his principal object

seemed to be to finish the operation as speedily as possible and get paid for it. He seated himself on a low chair in front of the happy couple, pulled a Coptic prayer-book out of his breast, and gave the signal to his attendants to commence operations; on which a man, squatting on his heels behind his chair, clashed a huge pair of cymbals, and half-a-dozen others in a like attitude set up a lugubrious chant in a loud nasal voice. Whenever they paused, the women ranged on the benches burst forth in a shrill scream, with a quaver or ululation resembling the note of the screech-owl. This is accomplished by moving the tongue rapidly between the lips while screaming, and is the cry of female rejoicing common to Moslems and Christians alike throughout the East. It is called the *zalghoot*. It had a wild, barbaric effect, as from time to time it broke in upon the uncouth chanting and clanging cymbals of the choir. Then the priest took up his part, and read the service at racing speed, with exactly the intonation so well given by the burlesque actor the night before.

All this time men were talking and laughing loudly; babies were crying; and every now

and then the priest would stop, apparently to hold a little general conversation with those nearest to him on the topics of the day.

Anything more irreverent, or less like a religious ceremony, it would be difficult to imagine. In the midst of it all, and *apropos* to nothing particular, the priest seized the bridegroom's left hand, and put a ring upon his little finger. After some more chanting, reading, screeching, and general conversation, he took a phial, which I presumed contained holy water, and crossed the foreheads of the bride and bridegroom with its contents. He then opened the robe of the latter in front, and made another cross on his breast; and then, baring his arms, made crosses on them. After another interlude, he took off the bridegroom's red cap and put a white one under it, and replaced the red one. Again, after an interval, he produced a black cord, which he bound round the body of the bridegroom, under his outer garment; then taking off the red cap again, he tied a piece of scarlet thread round his head, and did the same to the bride, who must long since have been nearly stifled. All this time the audience were chattering, and

holding little tallow-dips, which cast a sickly light over the scene.

In spite of the rapidity with which the service was read, what with chanting and talking, and the perpetual recurrence of "Kyrie Eleison," followed by the *zalghoot*, at least an hour elapsed before the priest seized the heads of the bride and bridegroom, apparently with the view of knocking them together. However, he contented himself with pressing them against one another, and waving his hand over them, which, I presume, was a blessing. He then untied the cords and threads which he had fastened round them —meaning, I suppose, that another and spiritual knot had been tied—and then abruptly snatched the handkerchief out of the bridegroom's mouth, and spread it over his own knees. For the first time there was a silence, as of hushed expectation; then some silver coins, amounting, I should say, to about ten shillings, were dropped into the handkerchief, and the priest rose solemnly, put some of the money in his pocket, and proceeded to distribute the rest among the minor officials, on

dispute as to how the filthy lucre should be divided. It seemed to me that the man with the cymbals got less than his share, and he appeared to be of the same opinion; while a villanous-looking old creature, who acted as a sort of beadle, endeavoured to grab the whole. The priest, who had had the first pull, seemed to be a good deal abused by the others for having taken too much; but order was somehow at last restored, and the bridegroom got up and walked to the door. The bride, however, seemed more difficult to deal with: what she wanted I could not discover, but her mother and two or three other women seemed to be packing her up in some mysterious way against her will. She was a slight little thing, and they rolled her about on the bench like a bale of goods. At last, in the midst of her struggles, a man, I presume her father, rushed in, put her on his shoulder, and carried her off, followed by the rest of the women, two of whom scrambled upon a flat platform on the back of a squatting camel; the bride was wedged in between them. The animal gave a lurch forward, and I thought they were all going over his head—then a

lurch backward, and they seemed all about to be precipitated over his tail,—and so he gained his feet, and stalked off with his precious burden, just in time to make way for the procession of the aristocratic bride, at whose house I had been the night before.

First came iron cradles with flaming wood torches, then the discordant band of European music, then magnificent glass chandeliers carried on poles between men, then coloured lanterns, then the bride's father attended by his friends, then more glass chandeliers and coloured lanterns; then the bride on foot in a brilliant costume of red satin, her face masked with white silk covered with lace, attended by her female relatives gorgeously mantled and lightly veiled. Veiling, indeed, is only an act of conformity and convenience, and is not a custom otherwise enjoined upon Copts.

All this time there was a perpetual firing of guns and screaming of women, and we all crowded back again into the church, which in the interval had been brilliantly lighted up. We had now to wait for the bridegroom to arrive with his procession, likewise a noisy

and highly illuminated performance. Then no less a person than the archbishop himself, in full canonicals of white and gold, entered to perform the ceremony; but the prospect at midnight of another hour and a half of intoning in an unknown tongue, amid the clash of discordant musical instruments, and the chants of nasal male voices, and the shrill screams of female ones, appalled me. I had seen enough to satisfy me that there are more kinds of Christianity in the world than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

While the marriage ceremonies of the Copts are thus celebrated with all the ostentation and display possible, their funerals, as well as those of the Moslems, are not less important functions, and take place on the opposite side of the river. It is said that it was a habit of the ancient Egyptians to transport their dead across the Nile for burial, and that this gave rise to the old legend of Charon and the Styx. Whether this is so or not, the practice obtains to the present day; and two immense cemeteries—one Christian and one Moslem—are among the most interesting places to visit on the eastern bank. The corpses are ferried

over from the south of the town; and upon more than one occasion I was present when boat-loads of wailing women were conveyed across, waving their mourning scarfs, and making the air resound with their plaintive cries. One day we went across to the Copt village, or rather monastery, adjoining the cemetery—for there are few inhabitants in the little hamlet that surrounds the church and adjacent building who have not ecclesiastical functions of some sort—and we found it far more interesting than we had any reason to anticipate. The village is situated under the cliff about a mile from the river, and is approached by a picturesque two-arched bridge of ancient construction which spans a dry canal. To the north of the monastery lies the cemetery, covering an area of several hundred acres. The dome-shaped rooms, like large bee-hives, are closely packed together, and serve as mortuary chambers in which the relatives of the deceased come to lament—a custom that has probably descended from the times of the ancient Egyptians, whose tombs always had chambers attached for this purpose. The Copts were very proud of the fact

that their cemetery was open to Christians of all denominations, and pointed out the grave of a Catholic who had availed himself of the privilege of a Christian resting-place. Indeed Mohamet, my servant — whose knowledge of human nature was more correct than his theology — in order to give me an idea of the general spirit of toleration which pervaded this community of ecclesiastics, said, that if you only paid them, they would bury here French, English, Jews, or any *other* Christians. As ecclesiastics their greed was only equal to their grease, as we found out when we had finished seeing their church. This was approached by a flight of steps that led down as if to a cellar; then we traversed an underground passage about seven yards long and two wide, in which was an old stone font, and found ourselves in the church, which was hewn out of the solid rock. The nave, which was like a gigantic well, measuring thirty-six feet by twenty-one, was artificially roofed over, at a height of about forty feet, by a depressed dome, level with the earth's surface. It was separated from the aisles and chancel by plain brick columns, which were more for ornament

than for use, as the solid rock formed their roof, and required no support. As the only light was admitted from the dome, and that part of the cavern which represented the chancel was forty-eight feet long, it was so dark that we needed the aid of a number of tallow-dips to see the altar-screen, which was of some kind of brown wood inlaid with ebony and ivory, with a few rough Scriptural representations above. The apse was an innermost recess hewn still deeper into the rock, containing the altar—as usual a square block, like those, according to the tradition of Biblical design, employed in the worship of Baal. The font in use was not the one in the passage, but one sunk in the floor in the centre of the nave, near the mouth of an old well, by the side of which was an ancient stone basin. A couple of rude representations of geese in white plaster adorned the lower part of the dome, but we were assured they were of modern origin. However this may be, the ancient character of the place was unmistakable; it had originally, doubtless, served the ancient Egyptians for tombs and mortuary chambers, and had been taken possession of by the early

Christians during the period when persecution necessitated their religious services being conducted with secrecy, and had remained a Christian place of worship ever since. On leaving the church, our eyes having by this time become accustomed to the general gloom, we observed a stair winding upwards to the left of the entry passage, and on ascending it, found ourselves confronted by a locked door, the key of which the priests presently brought, and ushered us into a small chamber almost on a level with the surface of the ground, that contained nothing but an oven in which the sacramental bread is baked. At the side of it was a shaft cut out of the stone, now blocked with rubbish, but which descended into what had probably been a mortuary chamber. About this time we became conscious that we had chosen a wrong day to pay our visit to this Coptic holy place. Experience has since convinced us that on Saturday Coptic fleas are especially voracious. They have been deprived of sustenance since the previous Sunday, and rush at the unwary visitor towards the end of the week with a ferocity which is truly appalling. On a Sunday afternoon, after

they have been gorged during morning service, one may satisfy one's archæological propensities with comparative impunity, but every day after that increases the risk. We left Deyr el Nasara, nevertheless, well satisfied with the chance that had revealed to us a spot so characteristic, and the existence of which, until we actually reached it, we so little suspected.

Indeed the banks of the Nile are replete with objects of interest of this sort which are not even in the guide-books, although it must be said for Murray that his descriptions are careful and exhaustive. It is, moreover, to be remembered, that Nile tourists travel either in Cook's steamers, in which case they only stop to visit places which Cook thinks worth seeing—or they go in their own *dahabeeyas*, in which case they stop as little as possible on the way up, so as to take advantage of the wind; and on the way down they have been surfeited with the wonders of Thebes, Luxor, and the majestic remains from Dendera upwards, and the descent of the river becomes so wearisome, that they do not think it worth while to stop to explore ruins that can offer nothing so attractive as

those which they have seen. They thus pass places on their way up and down the river that, under other circumstances, could not fail to attract their attention.

There is, for instance, about ten miles below Minieh, a village called Tehneh, where the magnificent range of the Jebel Teyr is cleft by a gorge, and a fragment of the cliff stands isolated from the rest of the mountain, rearing its ragged crest to a height of about 200 feet above the level of the river, its serrated flanks perforated with rock-tombs, and its projecting ledges affording as wild and desolate a prospect eastwards as though one was in the heart of the Sahara. Here a *wady* about three miles long, with a bed half a mile wide of white sand, is enclosed by an amphitheatre of limestone rock, rent with fissures, and rising into fantastic crags and pinnacles. If we scramble up the steep shoulder, which is covered with the mounds of an ancient Egyptian town, and enter the first cave we come to, we find that the outer chamber is about 40 feet square. Beyond it is a second smaller one, and in the floor is a hole just large enough to admit a man. Upon the rock by the side of

this hole, on the occasion of my visit, was a heap of the guano of bats and a piece of rope. Upon asking the Sheikh el Beled, who had accompanied us, the meaning of this, he said that a man was at that moment in the bowels of the mountain collecting guano, and that the hole was an entrance to subterranean corridors in which you might journey for hours. As it occurred to me that they might lead to chambers or tombs used by the ancients as yet undiscovered, I insisted, in spite of much opposition, in being lowered into the chasm—a proceeding which did not altogether suit Mohamet, though he was ashamed to manifest any reluctance to assist me in exploring these subterranean regions. It was scarcely necessary to have taken the trouble to tie the rope under my armpits, as I had only begun to swing freely in the darkness, and had hardly been let down twenty feet, when I touched bottom. Then Mohamet was lowered down, and then a couple of candles. We had scarcely lighted these when a wild-looking bearded creature, with nothing on but a rag, made his appearance, looking very much scared at our apparition, crawling

towards us on hands and knees out of the gloom. We were glad to have him for a guide, and told him to turn round and lead the way. For the first twenty yards or so we were obliged to crawl, but after this the passage became about 6 feet high and 3 feet wide. It was evidently a natural rift in the rock, and I soon began to despair of finding anything. However, I went on until I was literally overpowered and driven back by the bats. They charged us in dense whirring battalions, banging into one's face, putting out the candles, thumping on one's head, and creating as much draught as if a fanning-machine was at work. At the same time, the pungent odour of the guano was becoming overpowering—it was as though one was being corked up in a bottle of sal-ammoniac—and made my nose and eyes smart, to say nothing of the unpleasantness of inhaling it. I had now paced the distance from the entrance-hole, and found it to be a hundred yards. The guide assured me that it was half-way to the end of the passage, and that there were no other corridors or chambers of any sort, but plenty more bats. I therefore

decided to beat a retreat, and had to stand another charge from them as they flew back to their innermost recesses—finally regaining the earth's surface, to the great relief of the Sheikh el Beled, who seemed to think that some disaster was certain to happen to me, for which he would have been held personally responsible. Passing round the shoulder of the cliff, and scrambling up the face of the rock, we now came to another grotto, on one side of the floor of which was a carved figure in a flowing robe, standing before something which is supposed to be an altar, and holding in one hand what may possibly be some twigs, and in the other what, for anything that appears to the contrary, may be incense; but all this requires an effort of imagination to decide. On the other side is a snake, probably the Uræus serpent of Horus, twined round a staff. One is forcibly reminded by it of the serpent of brass which Moses made and set upon a pole, thus probably appealing to an emblem with which the Israelites were familiar, when they were called upon by an act of faith to believe in its healing power. In like manner Aaron, when he yielded to the

solicitations of the people "to make them gods which should go before them," adopted the one with which both he and his countrymen were most familiar,—the golden calf or the holy sun-bull of Osiris, which was worshipped at Heliopolis, where Moses himself, in his younger days, had been a priest. This bull, Mnenis, is represented in the Egyptian paintings as being of gold,[1] and was undoubtedly identical with the golden calves, the worship of which King Jeroboam established in Bethel and in Dan after his return from his sojourn in Egypt—saying, as he did so, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings xii. 28). There can be little doubt, could we only read them aright, that these stones of Egypt contain many interesting sermons. Over the door of this same tomb is the winged disc of Horus, under which emblem he represents the resurrection of the dawn from darkness. Within were twenty figures, in the same low relief, in a more or less perfect state of preservation. Some of them were so mutilated that it was impossible to discover for whom they were

[1] Champollion, 'Pantheon,' Pl. 38.

intended; but among the least destroyed it was easy to recognise Isis giving sustenance to Horus, Anubis, Thoth, and one or two others. At the back of the headland of rock in which these tombs are situated is a tablet on which are sculptured two figures, apparently in Roman attire, holding horses. Passing from the isolated rock to the main cliff, we observe upon its face the representation of Rameses III. receiving the falchion from Savak, to which I have already referred as being apparently identical with the one I had found at Kom el Kafara; but here there is no corresponding inscription of his name in full as at the latter place.

In the face of the cliff on the opposite side of the gorge, and not far from a collection of hovels appropriated to the residence of a small Copt population, is a grotto with a pylon façade carved out of the rock. Here there were evidently granite columns on each side of the door, but of these only one remains. Within is a procession of deities very much resembling those in the cave before mentioned, and over the door is the representation of a ship. The traces of hieroglyphics remain on the door-

jambs, but they are too much effaced to be decipherable. Indeed the nature of the rock is not such as to resist the ravages of time and the ignorant peasantry. This grotto is approached by a flight of fourteen rock-cut steps, that rise out of the *débris* which conceal the rest. It seems that there is a superstition among the Copts that a visit by a newly married couple to this cave will exercise a beneficial influence upon their married life.

Over another rough-hewn cave is an inscription in Greek, which runs as follows: "For the welfare of King Ptolemy, the god Epiphanes, the great Eucharistes, Acoris the son of Ergeus to Isis, Mochias, Soteira." When we had exhausted the sights of Tehneh, we adjourned to the yard — it could hardly be considered a house—of the Sheikh el Beled, to drink what he called coffee. While we partook of his detestable beverage, he informed us that he, together with all the male population of the village, with the exception of the Copts, were Bedouin Arabs of the Beni Aughba tribe, who had emigrated from the Hejaz, not far from Mecca, about 150 years ago. He said they had lived here in

tents at first, but finally decided upon building houses and becoming sedentary. They had no objection to taking wives from the *fellahin*, but would not allow their own women to marry peasants. They seemed rather proud of the high degree of civilisation they had attained, and especially of having acquired a strongly developed taste for *backsheesh*.

Following the range northwards, we reach in about two miles another gorge, with another amphitheatre of limestone cliffs, some more grottoes in the rock, the mounds of a small ancient town, the traces of a wall which once defended the pass from desert incursions, and two wretched native villages picturesquely huddled among the rocks, containing a squalid population of what Mohamet called "mixings," by which he meant mingled Moslems and Copts. I only entered four or five of the rock-tombs here, but in none of them were there any inscriptions. In the largest were a couple of mummy-pits filled with rubbish to within about six feet of the surface. They had evidently been despoiled of their contents, much to Mohamet's disgust, who always manifested the keenness of a sleuth-hound

when it became the question of a search for what he called "dead men's boxes." The most interesting ruin in this place was that of the wall which extended from the base of a precipitous rock on one side of the gorge to that of one on the other, a distance of about a third of a mile. The modern villages were built of the crude bricks of which it had originally been composed, and the only trace of it left is a long mound of dried mud and brick-bats. There is no indication of its having been prolonged in either direction, or of having formed part of that built by the Queen Delooka—unless, indeed, she built it in patches across the different gorges which debouch into the Nile valley. That the object of this one was to protect the small town, the mounds of which still remain within its *enceinte*, was very evident. It is to be inferred from the way in which all these ravines were fortified, that the nomad population who in old time peopled the desert between the Nile and the Red Sea, were far more predatory and warlike in their habits than those who now range over these sandy wastes.

Floating rapidly down with the stream beneath the beetling cliffs of the Jebel Teyr, with

the Coptic monastery of Deyr el Adra perched upon its dizzy edge, we pass the grandest bit of Nile scenery between Cairo and Siout, and where the range recedes from the river at the Wady ed Deyr, approach another most interesting and rarely visited spot. The river here bends away to the westward, past Semaloot and Golosaneh, leaving a small shallow branch to follow its old course, thus forming a large island. If we leave our *dahabeeya* at the latter place, a cruise of a little more than an hour with a fresh breeze in a small boat takes us to the retired village of Surarieh, nestling amid its palm-groves; and just beyond it a spur from the limestone ridge comes down to the river, rounding which, we find ourselves on the mounds of an old city. This time it is thoroughly ancient Egyptian. Here is no waste of potsherds to indicate that at some later date it was built upon by the Greeks or Romans; the tumuli are all formed of crude brick, out of which crops the straw by which it was formerly cemented. Here, too, are traces of the old wall defending the gorge; and round its southern shoulder we come upon range after range of quarry, the mountain look-

ing as if it had been cut out in square slices like a cheese. At the base of some rocks half hidden with sand, two black holes appear, evidently grottoes, and we have to cross half a mile of desert to get to them. Crawling in upon hands and knees, we find one to contain three small rock-cut chambers without inscriptions. Climbing over the rock in which they are hewn, we are startled by what at first seems a temple of great dimensions standing out in solitary grandeur on the waste of sand. It is a solid mass of hewn rock, the ground-plan of which at present is somewhat of an L-shape, but which appears to be all that has escaped being blasted away of a huge square portico that had originally been pierced from back to front and from side to side, each of the existing sides having an immense portal about 25 feet wide and as many in height. The elevation of the rock, which has been roughly hewn, is about 40 feet, and the length of the longest side 33 yards. Its sides bear the marks of recent blasting; and some quarrying which was apparently being now prosecuted, though there were no workmen visible, revealed the white cleanly cut lime-

stone rock extending for about six feet down into the sand. It is probable, therefore, that if its base was cleared, the meaning of this monument would become apparent. There is no inscription or carving upon it; but that it was fashioned with design out of the rock *in situ*, seems to me probable. Just opposite to this mass, a large square cave has been hollowed out of the range, and the fragment of a gigantic column, about four feet long, which had been carved out of the living rock, depends from the roof at the entrance; the rest of it has been blasted away in modern times. The view from the interior of this cave, with the great impending mass above, the carved rock beyond, and the Nile valley seen in the distance through its portal, was altogether unique. As I was looking at it, a pair of wild geese that had made their nest in a hole in the rock just over my head, flew away with loud cries; they were as startled as I was by our unexpected proximity. I now went in search of the temple which Lepsius mentions, and the existence of which does not appear to have been known prior to his visit. It is situated within a hundred yards of the rock gateway,

and cut out of the ledge of rock upon which the latter stands. According to Lepsius, the hieroglyphics upon its walls state that it was dedicated by Meneptah, the son of Rameses II., and the king under whom the exodus of the Jews took place, to the Egyptian Venus (Hathor). The three colossal figures in the niche at the end of the temple were too mutilated to tell much of a tale, but the small ones at the sides were more distinct. I was not sufficiently an Egyptologist, unfortunately, to discover the meaning of the legend which these eight or ten kings, gods and goddesses, by their various attitudes, mean to convey. Lepsius says that further on are groups of tombs which have hitherto received scarcely any notice, though from their extreme antiquity they are peculiarly interesting. The sun was blazing with such intensity upon the desert on the day of my visit, that I was obliged to abandon the idea of prosecuting my examination of the range any further; but the quarry trended away to the eastward for a long distance. On the side of the rock near the temple, the omnipresent Rameses III. has cut his ovals, and has again represented him-

self in close confabulation with the crocodile-headed god Savak. Standing on the top of the rock, and facing the quarry, I had occasion to call to Mohamet, and was startled by hearing his name returned in a loud and marvellously distinct echo. He and the Reis were so delighted with the phenomenon, that they continued to experiment upon it for some time. In the village of Surarieh is a modern tomb of some pretensions, erected to a certain Sheikh Halid, of the Bedawee sect of dervishes, who was so celebrated for his sanctity, that, though he died only a few years ago, his tomb has already become a spot to which pilgrimages are annually made. Near here, I met a very ancient dame whose necklace attracted my attention; it was composed of beads found in the mounds, of simple but undoubted ancient Egyptian manufacture. Although they were the collection of a lifetime, I induced her to part with them for a consideration. Beyond this, I did not succeed in obtaining any antiquities from the peasants, though I think it highly probable, from the extremely ancient character of the mounds, that they would reward excavation. To the

north of Surarieh are the mounds of other towns, and quarries and tombs in the range, especially in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Hassan. All this region is deserving of a more thorough examination than it has yet received, but I was unable at the time to prosecute my researches any further in this direction.

One of the largest landed proprietors, and at the same time the most influential magnate at Minieh, told us that his country-house, which was situated on the eastern bank of the river a little higher up, was surrounded by many objects of interest, and not merely invited us to pay it a visit, but offered to lend us his *dahabeeya* for further explorations up the river. We were delighted to accept his hospitality, and started one morning in his handsomely equipped boat for his estate. It was only about three miles above the Coptic village we had already visited, and we arrived early in the day, and were received at the entrance to the handsome gardens belonging to our host, which extended to the river-bank. They consisted of groves of oranges and lemons, of trellises covered with vines,

of acres of figs, pomegranates, apricots, and peaches, the whole overshadowed by date-trees, and in the midst of them a square summer *kiosk*, with a handsome central hall and sleeping apartments at each angle, decorated with furniture of Parisian *mode*. Here donkeys were assembled for the conveyance of the party to a gorge in the mountain, in which was an ancient quarry. We rode between the precipitous cliffs until the ascending ravine ended in an amphitheatre, in the centre of which was a cave about fifty feet wide at the entrance. It was not more than thirty feet deep by twenty across, and at its further end was a niche with an old Christian painting above it. It had evidently been used, like the church at Deyr el Nasara, as a place of worship, but was now not only abandoned but defaced by quarryings still in progress—two pilasters by which it had been ornamented having quite recently been blasted out. We were told that not far from this quarry, in the desert to the eastward, were remains of an alabaster quarry which had been extensively worked at some former period; and this information was verified by the great quantities

of fragments of carved alabaster which we discovered at the mounds of a small ancient town that we now visited. These consisted of pieces of alabaster cups and vases, and we picked up a number of beautiful little stems like miniature columns two and three inches long, the exact use of which we could not determine. We also found some ancient alabaster draughtmen, which we could identify by those we afterwards saw in the museum at Boulak on the draught-boards. There were also some carved blocks of limestone that seemed to have formed part of a temple. A little beyond these remains is the extensive modern Moslem cemetery of Zowyeh el Miuteen—where a funeral was going on at the time of our visit—which covers a very large area of ground. It is quite in the desert; and behind rise some cliffs, in which are rock-cut tombs, with the ruin-covered promontory of Kom Ahmar, or the "Red Mound," projecting into the Nile. Lepsius visited these tombs, and says of them:—

"So little has been said by others, besides, on most of the monuments of Central Egypt, that almost everything we found here was

new to me. I therefore was not a little astonished when we discovered at Zowyeh el Miuteen a series of nineteen rock-tombs, all of them bearing inscriptions which informed us who were their inhabitants, and belonging to the old time of the sixth dynasty, therefore extending almost to the period of the great Pyramids. Five of them contain more than once the shield of Makrobioten Apappus Pepi, who is said to have lived to the age of 106 years, and to have reigned 100 years; and in another Cheops is mentioned. Apart from these, there is also a single grave from the period of Rameses."

It was hard work scrambling up to these rarely visited tombs, and I was obliged to content myself with two or three. The inscriptions were being wantonly defaced by the native quarrymen, who were blasting out one of the tombs when we were there, and who, when they are not engaged in wholesale destruction, seem to amuse themselves by picking out the coloured representations with their chisels, so that in one tomb which was probably highly ornamented when Lepsius saw it, nothing now remains. One of the best

representations which we have of an ancient Egyptian ship in full sail is yet visible in one of these chambers; but if the work of demolition continues, it will not long survive the others. The tombs I visited were about twenty feet by fifteen, and six feet high, the roofs covered with hieroglyphics; and I think it probable that there are many still undiscovered which may contain untouched sarcophagi. The neighbourhood was evidently used in old days as an extensive burying-ground; for we saw plenty of mummy-cloth lying about, and perhaps the tradition has clung to it ever since, which may account for the large Copt and Moslem cemeteries in the immediate vicinity: the latter is a veritable city of the dead. Three times a-year the Moslems come over and spend a week making ceremonious lamentations over the tombs of their ancestors. The mounds of Kom Ahmar must be familiar to the Nile tourist, as they form a striking feature in the scenery, with their crumbling red-brick walls crowning the promontory to a height of at least fifty feet above the level of the river; they are also abundantly strewn with fragments of objects of alabaster, and it

is highly probable that these remains mark the site of the ancient city of Alabastron. Among other curiosities, I picked up here a deformed image in copper, which represented the god Bes—a sort of ancient Egyptian "Worth" who presided over the toilet of the ladies.

Our dinner was prepared at the family mansion of our host, in which he had been born, which was situated in the village of Nezlet es Sowyeh, the houses of which clustered round it like a brood of chickens under the wings of a hen. It contrasted most favourably with Egyptian villages generally, in the cleanliness of the streets and the neatness of the houses; and the mosque and school, which he had built, proved that even here wealth was felt to entail its responsibilities, and that our entertainer had been mindful of the moral and intellectual condition of his dependants. His wealth, which was very considerable, consisted largely in landed property, —his estates on the banks of the Nile, comprising some 4000 acres. The crop which he found the most profitable was sugar-cane; and his principal overseer hinted, with some

triumph, that he was more successful in its cultivation than the Daira Sanieh. Our dinner was served *à la Turca*, upon a round table, with flat loaves of bread for plates, and fingers for knives and forks; but notwithstanding this primitive method of grappling with it, to which we had by this time become accustomed, the repast was abundant, and excellently cooked. Altogether we saw enough of life in an Egyptian country-house to convince us that it could be made pleasant enough, provided one did not require any other society but that of one's own wife or wives. As a rule, those who can afford it have several town and country houses, with a wife in each, thus securing to themselves a harmonious establishment at each place. Persons who are unable to afford this luxury find it better to confine themselves to one wife, especially if she is still young, as domestic comfort is hopeless with two or more young wives in the same harem. We were furnished by our host with an introduction to one of his relatives, at El Kurm—a village about twelve miles higher up the river—which we reached in the afternoon of the following day, and were most cor-

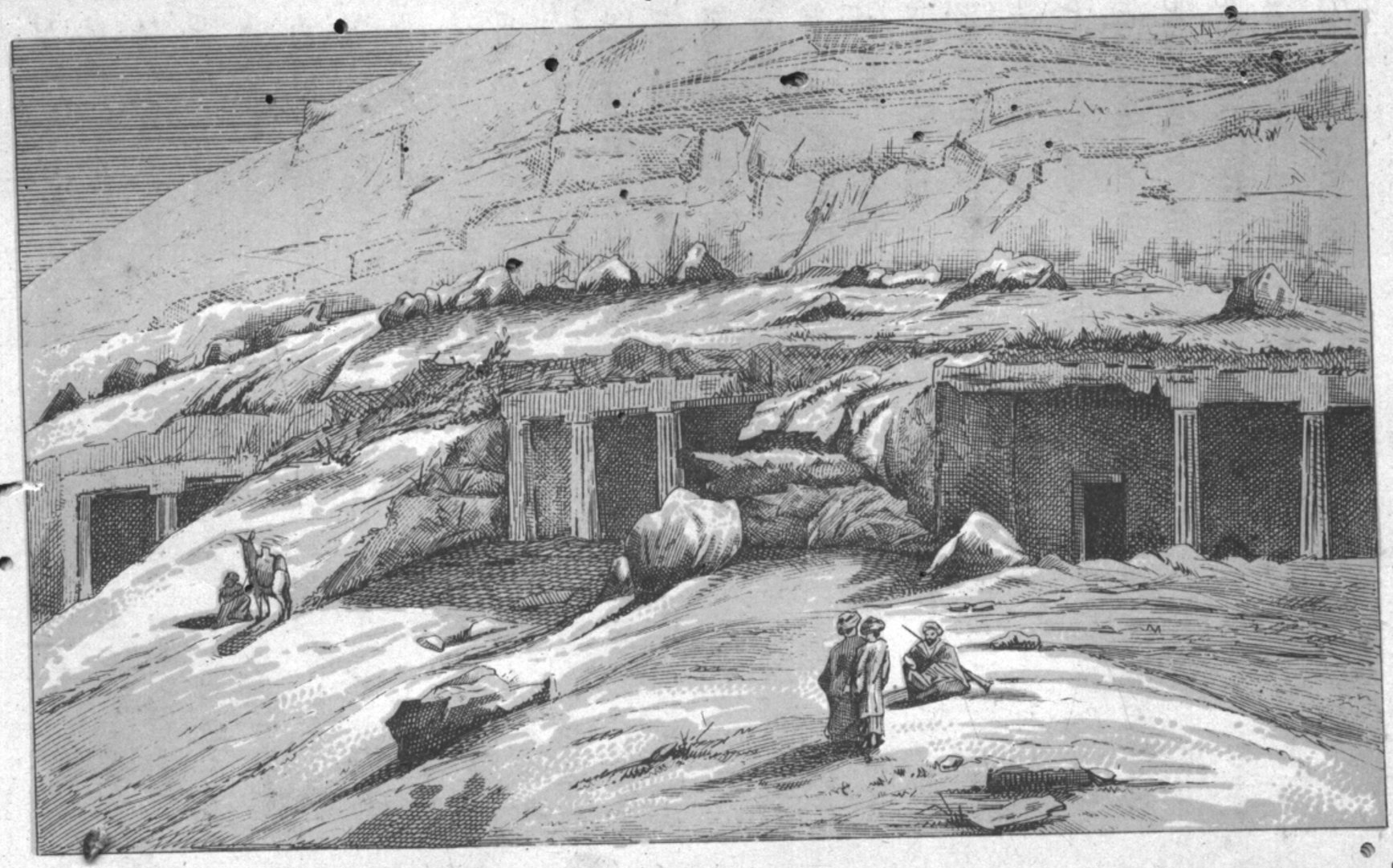
dially received by a handsome young man, who was in the act of building himself a mansion on the bank, to which, as it was nearly finished, he invited us. Here we found assembled the *kadi*, the Sheikh el Beled, and sundry other notables, who all sat in a circle, and smoked cigarettes and sipped coffee; but the figure that immediately arrested our attention was a remarkably silent, dignified individual, of about fifty, who smoked the old-fashioned *chibouk*, and had altogether the tranquil air of the Eastern *grand seigneur*, rarely to be met with in these degenerate days. This proved to be no less a personage than Hassabalu Abou Sakr, the sheikh of all the Bedouin tribes who wander over the desert between the Nile and the Red Sea, from Suez to Kosseir. Even he was becoming tainted by civilisation; for he told us he lived in a house lower down the river, and only took his tents and made his circuit through the tribes once every two or three years. He assured us, that, if need be, he could call out 4000 fighting men.

We made arrangements with our host—who insisted upon sending down an ample dinner, ready cooked, to our *dahabeeya*—to visit the

celebrated tombs of Beni Hassan the next morning, and were just retiring to rest when we were roused by the cries of women, the screaming of children, the oaths of men, and the barking of dogs on the bank above us. I immediately rushed out to ascertain the cause of the riot, and found that apparently the whole village, of all ages and both sexes, had turned out to have a free fight on the open space under the date-trees on the river-bank. I forthwith sent to our friend to tell him what was going on, and some men armed with authority and sticks soon appeared upon the scene and put a stop to the row. I am bound to say that the women seemed the most active combatants, and the most reluctant to give in. I discovered afterwards that the quarrel had originated in a domestic squabble, which had culminated in the husband beating his wife, on which her relatives interfered, and the whole village took sides. I asked whether there was much wife-beating among the natives of Egypt; and from what I could learn, it seems to be almost as common a pastime with them as it is with the natives of England. On the following morning we pulled across

the river, accompanied by our entertainer and all his guests of the night before, and our picturesque cavalcade soon scrambled up the cliff to the tombs of Beni Hassan, which are too familiar to Nile tourists to need description; but they were still objects of mystery and wonder to those by whom I was accompanied, though they lived in their immediate neighbourhood. They clustered round in a most attentive and interested group, when, standing amid the handsome columns in the tomb of Ameni, I explained to them his history, finally reading to them the translation of the inscription in hieroglyphics (out of Murray), in which this distinguished administrator says :—

"The hungry did not exist in my time, even when there were years of famine. For, behold, I ploughed all the fields of Sah to its frontiers both north and south; thus I found food for its inhabitants, and I gave them whatever it produced. There were no hungry people in it. I gave equally to the widow as to the married woman. I did not prefer a great personage to a humble man in all that I gave away; and when the inundations of the Nile



TOMBS OF BENI HASSAN.

were great, he who sowed was master of his crop. I kept back nothing for myself from the revenues of the land."

The impartiality and disinterestedness of these sentiments were received with loud marks of approval, and my swarthy friends went from one cave to the other examining and discussing the various hieroglyphics and pictorial representations, now that they had some one to explain them, as keenly interested as if they had been a party of British tourists instead of residents on the spot. As the Sheikh el Beled of the village of Beni Hassan itself was with us, I called his attention to the wanton destruction of these most interesting illustrations of the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians at the hands, not only of foreign travellers, but of the natives, and implored him to use his authority to put a stop to it as far as it lay in his power; but I fear, unless the Government take the matter in hand, there will be very little remaining, a few years hence, of the marvellous and minute records which this most ancient people have left of their daily lives and avocations. While we were discussing this subject our luncheon

arrived, which was contained in a large circular basket, and consisted of a lamb cooked whole, peacefully reclining upon a layer of flat loaves of bread. Indeed nothing could exceed the kindness and hospitality of our host, who, during the whole time of our stay, insisted upon providing the necessary means of locomotion and all our meals. We parted from him with many mutual expressions of regret and goodwill, and made a prosperous run the same evening to the charmingly situated little town of Rhoda, where we proposed staying for a few days.

Between Cairo and Luxor there is no spot on the Nile which is held by the natives in such high estimation for the purity of the air and the salubrity of the climate as Rhoda. Situated at the end of a long reach of the river, it receives the full force of the north wind, and even in summer it is said to be cooler than any other place in Upper Egypt. We seemed conscious of a remarkably invigorating quality in the air, and this agreeable attribute was enhanced by the beauty of our surroundings. Here, as in Minieh, we lived in a bower of orange-blossoms, the garden was

shaded, and the river-bank was lined with umbrageous trees, under which it was delightful to sit at all hours of the day. Indeed a roof promised to become a superfluity in our existence; breathing the pure air, and trying to assimilate its health-giving properties, seemed occupation enough. In fact I cannot imagine a spot better suited for the invalid; all that is wanted to make it a place of popular resort for strangers is a hotel of some sort. My experience of the Fayoum, and of Central Egypt between Cairo and Siout, convinces me that, so soon as accommodation is provided, the valley of the Nile and the oasis are destined to become a favourite winter resort for invalids. I feel no doubt that it would be a most profitable speculation to open small hotels at Medinet el Fayoum, Rhoda, and other places on the river. The experiments of hotels at Helwan and Luxor which have already been made, have proved so successful that it is a matter of astonishment that nothing has yet been accomplished in this direction, the more especially as of late years Cairo has become decidedly unhealthy, and has lost much of its old charm, both in point of climate and

of that oriental *cachet* which was its great attraction. Rhoda not only possesses beauty of scenery, and an exceptionally good climate, but is surrounded by objects of archæological and historical interest. Immediately opposite are the ruins of the ancient city of Antinoë, called by the Emperor Hadrian who founded it, after his favourite youth Antinous, who plunged into the Nile and drowned himself at this spot, in the belief, based on an oracular prediction, that the sacrifice of what was most dear to his imperial master would bring him back the good fortune which seemed to have abandoned him. A little higher up are the grottoes of Jebel Aboolfeda and Tel Amarna. Indeed the mountains here are honeycombed with a most interesting series of tombs, containing pictorial representations, which have never been thoroughly explored; and I regretted that the operation was too laborious to enable us to undertake it, as some of the most interesting and least known objects lie at a distance of several miles from the river. While the east bank is thus prolific in antiquarian remains, the west bank offers similar attractions within easy distance from Rhoda.

Here are the mounds of Ashmoneyn, the site of the ancient city of Hermopolis Magna, the capital of the Nome; and the Libyan hills beyond it are perforated with tombs. An attempt to describe in detail all that may be seen from Rhoda would only weary the reader—nor need the traveller who makes it his headquarters expect to find monuments equalling in extent or grandeur those of Thebes or Luxor; but as a centre of operations for investigation and research, it possesses the combined merits of being convenient, healthful, and beautiful. From the numerous houses I saw in process of erection, I should say that the town was also prosperous. It contains a population of about 3000 inhabitants, and besides a very handsome palace belonging to the Khedive, boasts a large sugar-manufactory.

I was present here at the important function of the launch of one of the largest description of Nile boats, which are used for traffic purposes by the Daira Sanieh, and the ceremony was one at which a large number of the villagers assisted. Considering it evidently a sort of *fête*, they came down with banners, dancing-girls, music, and a large band of workmen,

and cheered the labours of the latter as, in true old Egyptian style, they went to work to launch the boat by the appliance of physical force alone. The superintendent of their efforts was evidently of opinion that backs were made before levers, and that the true way to launch a boat was, not to allow her to glide into the water stern first, but to push her down the ways sidewise by the sheer force of a united shove. In order to get her to move at all, however, he commenced operations by rocking her to an extent that made her seams crack and the whole boat bend and creak ominously. When she was sufficiently loosened and weakened generally by this operation, the music struck up, the flags waved, the dancing-girls danced, and the whole two hundred men placing their backs beneath the boat, lifted up their voices in a loud groan of concentrated effort; then she moved an inch, and everybody rested, and collected round the girls, who were dressed in long flowing robes, and not in the usual tight-fitting bodice and loose trousers of the *ghawazie*. They were abundantly decorated with jewels in the shape of necklaces, bangles, ear-rings, and nose-rings,

and doubtless lightened the labours of the workmen by their entertainment. The launch of the craft, diversified by this "fantasia"—by numerous slips of the stern, which would go down more rapidly than the bows—by sundry hitches, in which neither bows nor stern would move at all—and then by unexpected slides, when she threatened to topple over prematurely into the river—lasted just ten hours. However, it was accomplished with great triumph and beating of drums at last, and then the procession marched back to the village to reward themselves for the labours of the day by more terpsichorean *divertissement.*

Meantime I had been gazing with longing eyes at the mounds of the ancient Antinoë, just visible through the date-trees on the opposite side of the river, and decided to make an examination of them the object of my next expedition.

CHAPTER V.

EXCAVATIONS AT ISEMBHEB.

THE mounds that mark the site of the ancient city of Antinoë cover a vast area of ground, with even a greater profusion than usual of the brickbats and potsherds which indicate ruins of a Roman period. There does not seem to have been any certainty until recently that the city founded by the Emperor Hadrian in commemoration of the suicide of his favourite, was built upon the remains of an ancient Egyptian town, and these ruins were consequently supposed to offer but little inducement for examination, as being of comparatively modern date. They were, however, upon a vast and splendid scale: only a few years ago whole streets of columns still remained to bear witness to its ancient magnificence; and we have in books of travel of

comparatively recent date, pictures of triumphal arches, temples, and public buildings, which have all been carried away for building purposes within the last ten years, and scarcely a vestige of which now remains. I counted three columns still erect, one of which was fluted, and many fragments of sculpture lying about; but all the grandest monuments had been broken up and built into the walls of the sugar-factories.

The mounds all bear the distinctive characteristics of a later civilisation than that of the Egyptians. There is an absence of rags and mummy-cloth, and a superabundance of broken pottery and glass, which one would expect to find in the capital of the Antinoite Nome. There can be little doubt that these mounds occupy the site of the ancient city of Besa, famed for its oracle; and Aboolfeda tells us that the Nubian geographer Edressee speaks of it as "an ancient city remarkable for the fertility of its land, and said by common report to be the city of the magicians, who were sent from thence by Pharaoh." It was only last year that the dust-sifters, in their excavations for manure, revealed the existence of

fourteen pillars of an Egyptian temple of the time of Rameses II., which is, however, with the exception of its upper portion, still completely covered by the mounds. The capitals of ten columns, which form two sides of a square, are now exposed to view, and are formed of lotus-buds, upon which are the ovals of Rameses II. in coloured hieroglyphics, with a blue border above them. Besides the ten columns, four others, just appearing above the *débris*, evidently formed the peristyle. The columns of the remaining two sides are still buried in the mounds, but it is almost certain that they will be found standing erect. From the proportions of the capitals and upper part of the columns which are visible, it is probable that their total height is about twenty feet. A very little expense will suffice to lay bare the remains of the whole edifice; and it is to be hoped that excavations may ere long be undertaken which may reveal further monuments of ancient art thus buried beneath the mounds of the Roman city. I unearthed here some almost perfect *amphoræ*; and the villagers who live on the edge of the remains flocked round me with coins, beads, &c., which

they had picked up, when they found I was looking for antiquities; but all they had to offer was of Roman date, with the exception of some singular specimens of glass mosaic, something like the pattern of a cashmere shawl, which I have never seen anything like elsewhere, and which is not only extremely beautiful, but displayed a very high degree of art. The old woman from whom I purchased it thought herself well paid with a silver piastre worth twopence.

About four miles to the westward of Rhoda is the site of the once important city of Hermopolis Magna, the capital of the Hermopolitan Nome; and the agricultural railway which intersects the Daira Sanieh sugar-estates in all directions runs close past it. The Moufettishes have a very convenient method of superintending the work in the more distant part of the lands by means of small single-horse tram-carriages. In a vehicle of this description we took a drive to the mounds that mark the position of the ancient city. Here we were met by the local superintendent with donkeys, and scrambled over the *débris* and tumuli, which reminded me very

much of those of Arsinoë in the Fayoum. Like those of Antinoë, they had been searched in all directions for blocks of stone with which to construct the sugar-factories. In one place I saw twelve porphyry columns erect that had escaped the sacrilege, but the massive stone-work of an old Egyptian temple had not been so fortunate. Of this edifice, which must have been on a grand scale, only two plinths remained, the diameter of which was twelve feet, and the height three feet. They were covered with hieroglyphics and the ovals of Philip Aridæus, the titular successor of Alexander the Great, so that it dated from the commencement of the Ptolemaic period; but the rest of this temple, we were told, formed part of the foundations of the sugar-factory. I saw one mass of granite, covered with hieroglyphics, in the streets of Rhoda, evidently waiting till it was wanted for building purposes. The historian of future ages, grubbing amongst the iron boilers, shafts, and wheels which are characteristic of the age in which we live, will be puzzled to account for the presence of these immense blocks traced with the records of a civilisation four thousand years older, and will

either come to the conclusion that the ancient Egyptians used steam-engines, or that hieroglyphics were the ornaments with which we covered our sugar-factories. It is heart-breaking to think how much injury has been done to the antiquities of Egypt within the last ten years by the reckless destruction of its monuments in order to make sugar more cheaply. A gentleman who had been resident at Minieh ten years ago, informed me that he had seen a beautiful naked figure of Antinous, carved in white marble, brought over from the ruins of the city, and condemned to be pounded into fragments in order to form part of the foundations. It was such an exquisite piece of sculpture that he almost went on his knees to the Moufettish of that date to spare it, promising that if he would only give him time he would purchase it for a large sum of money. The Egyptian official, however, desirous of proving his zeal in the cause of Western civilisation and his incorruptibility, was inexorable; and the statue was dashed to pieces then and there, and pounded into the foundations of the sugar-factory, as an evidence of his comprehension

of the utilitarian spirit of the age, and his sympathies with the advanced ideas of the late Khedive. At the same time, a stone inscribed with three languages, which might have proved of immense historical value, was broken up by this enlightened official, who also found sarcophagi very useful for building purposes—the workmen engaged in making the excavations ruthlessly blasting the tombs covered with hieroglyphics, and flinging the mummies into the Nile after appropriating whatever they found of value in the coffins. Nor has this work altogether stopped: at Surarieh they are blasting within a few feet of the tablets on which the figures of Rameses and the god Savak are delineated, and the little temple I had visited is evidently doomed. Tombs and temples offer greater facilities for blasting than the smooth surface of the rock, which quarrymen are not slow to discover—to say nothing of the hope of finding treasure. The great majority of the sugar-factories on the west side of the river have thus been constructed from the monuments of the past; and during the last ten years more of the ancient Egyptian sculptures have been destroyed under

the influence of the mechanical genius of the nineteenth century, and the pressure of money-making, than during the ten preceding centuries, when it was left to the tender mercies of a more barbarous age. Monsieur Maspero, the able and energetic successor of the late Marietta Pasha, is, however, using his utmost efforts to put a stop to the work of destruction. Prior to this time it has chiefly been in the interests of the Mohammedan religion that ancient temples have been demolished, and the mosques are abundantly furnished with the columns and other fragments of a bygone architecture. Thus at Ashmoneyn there was a most picturesque old ruined mosque with an Arabic inscription on its wall, which dated back to the first century of the Hegira, in which I counted no fewer than thirty-one marble columns with Corinthian capitals, two of which near the pulpit were beautifully carved and fluted. While we were drinking coffee at the house of the Sheikh el Beled, waiting for any antiquities that the villagers might produce, a man came staggering up with a colossal head of a Roman emperor upon his shoulders, which he flung down at our feet, and then placed it on its

crown for us to admire. When, amid the laughter of the bystanders, we turned it right side up, we found it was a piece of sculpture in perfect preservation, so far as the hair, beard, and features were concerned, but too massive a piece of work for us to carry away. The old Egyptian name for this place is Schmum, from which the modern appellation is derived. It was presided over by the god Thoth, the Hermes of the Greeks, amongst whose functions it was, to record in the infernal regions the result of the weighing of hearts, to keep a register of the trials of the dead, and to exhort their souls to return to the radiant spirit of the universe. In the Libyan hills, a few miles to the west of the ancient city, its necropolis was situated among the rocks; and the tombs here would still offer a rich harvest to the antiquary. I did not, however, visit them, for I was obliged to go to Cairo before returning to Haybee, where the friend with whom I had originally visited that interesting locality had obtained permission from Monsieur Maspero, in consequence of the indications we had found there, to commence excavating on a small scale;

and I was anxious to be present at the operations.

On my way back up the Nile I visited the site of the ancient city of Aphroditopolis, distant forty miles from Cairo, on the margin of the desert, about two miles from the river. The modern village of Atfieh, which is perched upon its mounds, is a populous place, and the houses are built on the highest of the tumuli, sixty or seventy feet above the level of the plain. Not only do they cover the mounds, which would probably be the most worth excavating, but the present inhabitants actually live in the shells of the ancient houses. In places, the dust-sifters, after having by their labours revealed the standing walls of an old house, and cleared it of the fine dust they value so much, have ended by living in it; so that the singular sight may be witnessed of the people of modern Atfieh occupying the identical houses that once sheltered the ancient population who aforetime inhabited Aphroditopolis. The city was then the capital of a Nome of the same name, and had succeeded to the ancient city of Hathor, the Egyptian Venus, to whom also was sacred the white

cow, which, as Strabo tells us, was worshipped here. Here also Horus, the son of Isis, was more highly revered than in any other Nome. The nature of the remains which still exist here, shows that at one period it must have boasted many handsome temples and other buildings.

Even under its present phase the aspect of the place is extremely picturesque and a minute examination of the houses in which the population live would probably reward the effort. Even during the hurried visit that I made, I found many interesting traces of the past. In an old ruined mosque is a stone with the name of Rameses II. In the courtyard of a private house I found a sarcophagus on which were some nearly obliterated hieroglyphics. The large block of stone that formed the threshold to the door of another house, also plainly bore the traces of an inscription nearly effaced by the friction of feet. In the walls of another was the fragment of an old papyrus column; the steps up to a third consisted of a couple of Corinthian capitals. In a garden was a large block of carved stone, only the upper half of which

was visible, and the use of which I failed to discover. Under a small stack of straw, which a man pulled down when he saw I was in quest of objects of this description, I found a sphinx about two feet long, the features of the face unfortunately a good deal destroyed, and too heavy an object to carry away. I also found another piece of carving, which I have not been able to place historically. It seems to belong to no special school of ornamentation, or rather disfiguration. It is the hideous head of a monster, with perfectly round eyes, and black stones let in for the pupils, and round nostrils, and a circle for a mouth, and long ears in the shape of leaves, with other leaves round the head as a general setting. Altogether it was about the size and had something of the grotesque character of a feline gargoyle, but it was too rude to be the production of a very high form of art. The man who showed it to me called it a "monkey stone." I also found here one or two old pottery vases in a perfect state of preservation. I caused some perturbation by taking a sketch of the sphinx, as the people thought I was doing so with the view of informing the

Government that they were concealing something of value.

About ten miles higher up the river there is an isolated fortress-like construction, which, on the occasion when I had previously passed it, I felt a curiosity to visit, as I observed some low mounds behind it; and it altogether seemed a spot where something unexpected might turn up. Its small round cupolas, and the solid wall by which it was girdled, indicated pretty clearly its sacred character; and I expected, when I landed and presented myself at the ruined archway by which it was entered, to be received by an austere Coptic monk. So far from this being the case, we were instantly surrounded by a *posse* of garrulous and rather handsome women. Not a man was to be seen in the place. The gateway was formed partly of the fragments of an old column and partly of brick. Outside the wall a projection from the limestone rock on which the building was constructed had been hewn at some very remote period into a small cistern. The door was so massive that it was difficult to swing it to and fro, and it was formed of two blocks of wood studded with

nails. Followed by an ever-increasing crówd of women and children, we went on till we entered a court in which were the fragments of three porphyry columns—the plinths standing on the bare rock, in the positions apparently that they had occupied when the temple which they supported was erected. The Corinthian capitals and columns were lying in the court, one part of which had been screened off with brick pillars to form the Coptic church, which boasted a dilapidated altar-screen of inlaid wood and ivory, and an altar very much out of repair. Still no man appeared, and I began to wonder whether the women were some new specimens of nuns, when an extremely venerable half-blind old priest tottered up. From him I learned that the columns had been there from time immemorial, and that the convent itself was of extreme antiquity, but that the greater part of the monks had moved to the monastery of St Anthony, in the desert near the shores of the Red Sea, distant four days' caravan-journey, which contained about sixty celibate monks; that all the land in the neighbourhood belonged to the latter; and that the in-

habitants of this monastery, which was also called St Anthony, cultivated it for them, and sent them the produce. He told me that there were seven Coptic priests here, and that they were all married. Besides these, the male population consisted of about fifty cultivators of the soil—lay brothers, I imagine, whom I do not venture to accuse of being very much married, though the female population certainly exceeded fifty, and were very prolific. Altogether, at least a hundred and fifty men, women, and children occupied the crowd of little houses which were encircled by the massive wall. We explored the narrow lanes that divided them, but could find nothing else worthy of notice, nor had the mounds in the neighbourhood produced any antiques. At the back of the monastery is a cemetery which is supplied with corpses by persons who die in the Copt villages on the west bank of the river, and who, according to the custom that prevails both among Moslems and Copts, like to be ferried across the river after death.

The monastery of St Anthony, to which this is affiliated, is credited with being the oldest in Egypt, and indeed one of the earliest

foundations of this description in the world. From what the old priest, however, told us, the tradition evidently exists that the original monastery of St Anthony was the one we visited; and this will probably be found correct. About 300 A.D., the anchorite St Anthony established himself as a hermit in the hills just to the east of Aphroditopolis; and in those days his reputation for sanctity was so great that numerous pilgrims visited his cell, and Aphroditopolis acquired quite a celebrity from the proximity of the holy man. Nothing is more likely than that, on his death, a monastery dedicated to him should have been founded in the immediate vicinity of the spot which he had sanctified by his life; and that, owing to persecutions or other causes, it should have been moved at a later period to an inaccessible part of the desert.

When we reached Haybee, we found that the excavations had been commenced a day or two prior to our arrival, at an immense cemetery of rude mummy-pits, at a distance of about three miles to the eastward, the existence of which had been discovered, not long before, by an Arab, whose foot sank into a

hole. They had since been examined and rifled by the peasants, who hoped to find treasure; but our investigations proved that nothing of any value was likely to be found there. The burying-ground was evidently of the poorer classes; and beyond a few rude wooden masks, some painted fragments of wooden coffins, and mummy-nets composed of small green porcelain beads, nothing of interest was discovered; and it was determined to begin digging immediately beneath the massive structure in brick, that apparently formed part of the *enceinte* in which the ancient temple of Isis was situated, in the hope of coming upon the relics of that edifice. Instead of this we dropped, about six feet below the surface of the earth, upon the entrance to a mummy-pit, into which, as soon as a sufficiently large hole had been made to admit of the passage of a man's body, I descended with candles. The scramble was a most disagreeable and difficult one. The rough unhewn stone roofing was seldom more than three feet from the floor of the pit, which was thickly strewn with the mummies of human bodies. Among these one had to grope about

on one's hands and knees. Sometimes I was obliged to assume an even more prostrate attitude, and pull myself over the bones, and skulls, and rags, lying almost flat upon them. In this way I advanced into the bowels of the earth, for a distance, as nearly as I could calculate, of thirty-five yards. I had no difficulty in breathing, although there was a peculiar and indescribable odour, perfectly free, however, from the taint of corruption. The pits had evidently been visited and rifled at some very remote period. The sarcophagi were broken into fragments, and, in most cases, the bodies had been taken from them, and were lying more or less in a disrupted condition, by their sides. At last I arrived at a small circular chamber, in which were a great many fragments of wooden coffins and one sarcophagus, the lid of which had been broken in the middle; but the body, beautifully packed, was undisturbed. Only about a foot of the central part of it was visible, the head and the feet being concealed by what remained of the stone coffin. I could not, therefore, make out whether it was a male or a female; but being attracted by what appeared a piece of white

cloth, covered with characters, sewn on the body, I put my hand upon it, and it instantly sank into a mass of powder. After this I did not like to grope about in the dark near the mummy's head, where objects of interest are usually found; but I feel convinced that they had been abstracted, as the whole pit had evidently been thoroughly searched over; but it must have been very long ago, as the six feet of solid soil above it was undisturbed before we began to dig. At one side of the circular chamber was a neatly hewn receptacle, about seven feet square, the entrance to which was a hole two feet square, through which I looked; but it contained nothing but bones, skulls, and mummy-cloth: the only object I found was a sort of urn of red pottery, of a very coarse description, thirteen inches in diameter, and the same in height. This I brought to the surface with me, arriving there in a state of extreme fatigue and prostration. We dug down in two or three other places in this neighbourhood, and in each case came upon mummy-pits; but they did not even contain sarcophagi, and were probably those used by the less wealthy part of the com-

munity. It was becoming manifest, from the extent of the necropolis, that a temple of great importance must have stood in the immediate neighbourhood, round which people had been buried for successive ages, until the whole place was undermined, and space had become so scarce that the later bodies had been buried near the surface. Some of these we found only two feet down; and a method of sepulture had been adopted which, so far as I am aware, has never before been noticed in the case of Egyptian mummies. Instead of being placed in stone and wooden coffins, the bodies in this case, after being embalmed and swathed in mummy-cloth, were neatly packed in cradles made out of the branches of palm-leaves beautifully bound together with flax string. The process of mummification had been the rude one of plunging the corpse into a preparation of boiling bitumen,—a system resorted to by poor people, and by the Egyptians generally of a later period, when the original and costly art of embalming seems to have been superseded by this more simple but less effective process. The consequence was, that in no case did I see any of the features well pre-

served; and with the exception of one woman's feet, which remained beautifully perfect, the flesh was a black bituminous compound that crumbled rapidly to the touch. I also found a wig of long black hair in a good state of preservation. Mohamet had a habit of plunging his hand into the mummies' stomachs, under the impression that they kept their jewels there. I tried to break him of it, but he none the less surreptitiously persisted in the practice. In some cases the twisted coloured cords, and the thick linen cloths in which the mummy was wrapped, were as strong and well preserved as on the first day of their use. We were more anxious to find inscriptions or architectural remains than mummy jewels or ornaments, and determined to open a trench at the spot where we had originally found the ovals of King Pinadjem and the mention of the grand sanctuary of Isis on the burnt bricks. We only had a force of ten men, so the work was slow and most unsatisfactory. When we had got down about eight feet we came to the end of the burnt brick, but the unburnt commenced and seemed interminable. After digging on hori-

zontally at a width of three feet for some yards, we again came to unburnt brick; we then struck at right angles, and always with the same result,—whichever way we went, nothing but brick, burnt or unburnt. We had hoped to find that these bricks composed the walls of temples or houses; but they must either have formed part of some solid substructure, upon which an edifice or monument had been erected, or else the massive walls of an *enceinte* that enclosed the whole area in which the temple was placed. That Haybee was at one period a most important centre of Isis-worship, we found enough to prove, as among the burnt bricks we found the words Isembheb, or "The Isis of Heb," and the ovals of Ramenkheper. He was the fifth pontiff-monarch of the twenty-first dynasty, whose ovals I had already found on the bricks sixty miles higher up the river at Kom el Kafara. Whether a grand sanctuary had been established here at an earlier date, or whether the importance of Haybee as a locality sacred to the worship of Isis dates only from the reigns of those kings who have thus identified their names with her temple,

we have as yet no means of determining; but the inscriptions on the bricks, the *enceinte* of masonry of immense thickness with which the natural cliffs were faced, and the extent of the necropolis, all go to prove that the city of Isembheb was a great centre of Isis-worship, and flourished especially during the twenty-first dynasty, or about 1100 years B.C. In order to discover the thickness of the brick-facing to the cliff, we dug into it at its base, and found it to be about ten feet; but in other places it was much thicker.

We also dug down into the brick at the top of the cliff for about eight feet without coming to the rock. We extracted, however, at least a bushel of ears of thrashed barley, which had apparently been used as a cement, and a large solid block of wood perforated at both ends, which had been built in with the brick. To look for the temple of Isis in this great stack of brickwork with only ten men, was like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. We had no clue where to begin, and the result of each day's work was simply to stack a heap of bricks outside the well from which they had been taken, and the solid walls of which were

still composed of them. While the men were working, I explored the mounds in every direction. They covered an area of rock about half a mile long by a quarter of a mile wide; this had been quarried into within the last ten years for the purpose of getting stone for the sugar-factories on the other side of the river. The blasting had revealed the openings of rock-tombs which had been entered by the workmen employed, and the sarcophagi had been destroyed in the hope of finding treasure. We were assured by the natives on the spot that many objects of value had thus been obtained; but their assertions must always be accepted with considerable reserve in matters of this sort. I penetrated into several of these caves, the entrances to which were generally filled with sand, but were known to the peasants. One of these into which I crawled contained several large chambers, and among the broken pieces of wooden coffin I found a very fairly preserved mask, the eyes painted white and black, and the rest of the face very slightly tinted. When I emerged to the surface after the scramble among legs, and arms, and ribs, I

found grouped round the small hole that formed the entrance, a native gentleman with a sun-umbrella, two native ladies, and a male friend carrying a lantern. They were mere *fellahîn*; and the women, one of whom was young and pretty, were not so particular as they might have been about covering their faces. As from the presence of the lantern they seemed to have some design on the mummy-pit, I asked them what they wanted; and I was informed in the most delicate manner possible by the leading personage, that he was looking for an easily accessible tomb into which the young and pretty woman might enter. She meantime coyly cast her eyes first upon the ground, and then wistfully into the hole from which I had just emerged upon all-fours. "Sir," said my informant, "she has at present the misfortune of being childless, but half an hour alone in one of these caves will put that all right." I explained that I knew of others more easy to get into, to which I recommended her to repair; and the party trotted off, apparently convinced that a short period of seclusion in a mummy-pit was an infallible receipt for a son and heir. I found that this

superstition was a very common one among the peasants, and I had hardly reached the boat when I became aware of another quite as singular. A furious fight was going on between two of the crew, who were so exasperated against each other that they were separated with some difficulty. On inquiring into the cause of the quarrel, I was informed that one of them had shortly before arrived with a mummy's hand, which he had put into a cupboard used by the crew for stowing away food and other things. One of them had objected to its being put there, and hence the row. I naturally inquired what he wanted the hand for, and was told, to put it under his left arm as a cure against fever. I cross-examined Mohamet in regard to this, and found that he had himself secured a foot, but he admitted that he doubted its efficacy: he had no doubt, from repeated experience, about the hand. He had a friend in Cairo who had one, and he always borrowed it and put it under his left arm when he had fever with unvarying success; but he never tried a foot. I asked him whether the hand of any dead man would do; but he said it must be a mummy's, and in

a good state of preservation; bones were of no use. One of the most interesting câves I examined was also the most difficult to enter. The roof had sunk so much that it rested on the upper tier of sarcophagi, and these were so close together that I had first to send a man in, then lie down on my side and make him draw me by my legs between two sarcophagi, which were just far enough apart to admit the passage of a thin man, and then only after a jam that threatened to rub the buttons off one's waistcoat. When I did get in, and could raise myself to my knees, I found sarcophagi everywhere. The stone faces on some of their lids were most striking in their majestic repose. Out of about thirty, I could only find six which had not been broken into either at the side or the lid; but the spoilers had been contented with thrusting in their hands, as in no case had the mummies been abstracted. Nor, what disappointed me most, was a trace of inscription to be found anywhere.

We now took the men off burrowing uselessly among the bricks, to dig in the neighbourhood of this cave, in the hope of finding another that had never been entered. This

we were fortunate enough to do; and the chambers which contained the coffins were spacious enough to stand upright in. In order to reach the farthest, it was necessary to descend a shaft for a few feet; and then, on entering this last receptacle, the problem suggested itself of how the sarcophagi had ever been placed there. It was impossible to lower them down the shaft, which was too narrow to admit them, and all round was the smooth limestone rock. Six of the most promising-looking sarcophagi were opened in the upper and lower chambers. On the lid of one was a magnificently sculptured head of a man; and when the lid was removed, the contents did not belie the promise of the exterior. It was the mummy of a giant, but only the black bituminous flesh adhered to the huge bones. The bone of the skull was thicker than I have seen in that of any human being before. There was no inscription anywhere, nor did the sarcophagus contain anything but the body. Near it were three Canopian vases of alabaster about a foot high. The lid of one consisted of a carved human head, another was a jackal's head, and the third that of a

cynocephalus. There should have been a fourth with the head of a hawk, but this was missing. They should, moreover, have been all of the same shape; but one differed from the others, suggesting the idea that they had not been specially made for the deceased, but possibly obtained from some other tombs. It was, at all events, contrary to the usual practice that the set should neither have been uniform nor complete: nor did they contain any remains; but these may have disappeared with time. The Canopian vases were used to contain the heart, viscera, and intestines of the deceased. After they had been embalmed and placed within them, the priest elevated them to the sun, making use of the following invocation: "O thou Sun, our sovereign Lord, and all ye deities who have given life to man, receive me, and grant me an abode with the eternal gods. During the whole course of my life I have scrupulously worshipped the gods my fathers taught me to adore. I have ever honoured my parents who begat this body. I have killed no one; I have defrauded no one; nor have I done an injury to any man: and if I have committed any

other fault during my life, either in eating or drinking, it has not been done for myself, but for these things." The four heads on the lid represent respectively the four genii of Amenthi—the Egyptian infernal regions. It was after the body had been deprived of these parts that the actual process of embalming took place, which consisted in steeping it for seventy days in natron, after which it was taken out and carefully wrapped, every member separately, in cloths—those of the finest texture inside. During the whole time that the body was being soaked in the natron, the relatives of the deceased mourned for him; and it is remarkable that in the account we have of the embalming of Jacob by Joseph, the period of mourning tallies exactly with that which we know from Egyptian sources was the time during which the steeping process lasted. We read that "Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days."

Nothing more was found in these caves, and nothing in the other sarcophagi, beyond a small papyrus roll, which was apparently a charm, as the string by which it hung round the child's neck in whose coffin it was found, remained attached. It was impossible, in the absence of inscriptions, to determine the date of these mummies; but the fact that the former did not exist is rather in favour of the antiquity of the latter, as just in proportion as we go backwards in Egyptian history do hieroglyphics on the coffins and ornaments inside become rare. Circumstances now compelled us to terminate our researches, which had been disappointing on the whole. They had, however, revealed three facts of interest: first, that this locality must undoubtedly have been a spot of great sanctity, at which the worship of Isis was celebrated at a "grand sanctuary" during the twenty-first dynasty; secondly, that there existed a mode of sepulture in cradles made of the stems of palm-leaves, not hitherto known to have been practised by the Egyptians; and thirdly, that there are sarcophagi, which we opened and examined, carved with great care, and there-

fore the tombs evidently of people of importance, destitute alike of those relics and inscriptions that are almost invariably to be found with similar monuments. Excepting the Canopian vases, which were sent to the museum at Boulak, we had nothing to carry away with us as mementoes of our labours except palm-branch cradles containing mummies; and these are too cumbrous as articles of baggage, and too inconvenient as curiosities after one has got them safely home, to be desirable possessions. Considering the precautions which the ancient Egyptians adopted to preserve the material parts of their being in a proper condition for their souls to re-enter when the moment of resurrection arrived, it seems rather hard that the elaborate process they adopted to give effect to this cherished belief should be thus ruthlessly sacrificed in the interest of history and science. There was something painful in disturbing a poor body that had been hermetically sealed up in a stone box, waiting to rise, for three thousand years, in a state of tolerable preservation, and taking away his skull because of its unusual thickness; and for some time after my Haybee

researches, I could not shake off the feeling of being somewhat of a "body-snatcher."

Perhaps the most remarkable experiences which have befallen the human remains of an ancient race, occurred to some mummies that were taken to Paris, subsequently to the occupation of Egypt under the first Napoleon, and placed in the Louvre. After the curiosity in regard to them had worn off, they became a nuisance, and, owing to the peculiar conditions of climate, in the course of years slightly offensive. They had been stowed away in the garrets of the Louvre, and the curators had year after year been endeavouring to solve the problem of how they could most decently be got rid of, when the revolution of 1830 broke out. As every one will remember, many of the heroes of that episode fell in the court of the Louvre. When the curators observed that graves were being dug for distinguished patriots and republicans under their very noses, the brilliant idea occurred to them to slip surreptitiously into the same resting-places the bodies of the ancient Egyptians which had for so long been a cause of embarrassment to them. With the inspiration of genius they

seized the opportunity, and thus associated the past and the present of two great nations by a common sepulture of those who had been distinguished members of both. But the honour which had thus been conferred upon the mummies was nothing to what was yet in store for them. When the glorious days of 1848 arrived, it was decided to exhume the heroes who had been buried in the court of the Louvre, and remove them with great pomp and ceremony to the Place de la Bastille. The secret of the mummies' burial had been well kept; and when they were disinterred with their companions of modern date, to the superficial observer there was nothing to distinguish their bones from those of an ordinary French republican. They were therefore all exhumed together, and formed the most interesting, and possibly most respectable, part of the procession which traversed Paris on that occasion. Then magnificent funeral orations were made over them by fervid orators, who little suspected whose bones they were thus honouring; and to this day these mummies are awaiting the final moment under the Column of July. Meantime, according to the

ancient belief of the Egyptians, the remarkable adventures which have thus befallen these bodies have been narrowly watched by their souls; for it was the idea of the Egyptians that the soul retained the warmest interest in the body after death — not merely from a natural feeling of affection and sympathy for a shell, so to speak, which one has inhabited once, and would under certain altered conditions inhabit again, but because it was all that the individual could leave for the world to remember him by; and hence he was desirous that his body should be preserved in as perfect a state as possible, and under such conditions of splendour and durability as befitted earthly remains which were ultimately destined to immortality.

It was natural that those living on earth should regard these embalmed memorials with the utmost respect and veneration; and they therefore from time to time repaired to the tombs of their deceased relatives and placed small statuettes there, just as persons in the present day cover the graves of those who have passed away with *immortelles*. Quantities of these have been found in the tombs,

and are to be seen in every good collection of Egyptian antiquities, and can indeed be obtained without difficulty at curiosity shops; but an erroneous idea often prevails regarding them among collectors, who are under the impression that they were presiding genii of some sort. They invariably represent the deceased person as he is supposed to be at present, in an intermediate condition somewhat resembling purgatory, or the Hades of the Greeks; and he therefore bears not his own form, but that of Osiris, under whose special protection he is, and hence he is called an Osirian. This accounts for the exact similarity of all these figures, which are of every size, most usually of green porcelain. The hands of the Osirian are folded on his breast, and clasp the implements of labour; at his back hangs a little bag of grain,—the seeds which it contains represent the good deeds of his earthly life, which he goes to sow in the Elysian fields, where the object of his labour is, with the help of Osiris, the final overcoming of evil by good work. The Osirian is generally styled "illuminated," and is regarded as having been justified before God by Osiris,

who, when on earth, was, with Isis and Horus, a manifestation of the Divine Trinity—Amon, Maut, and Khons. He was slain by his son Typhon, who became the principle of darkness, as Osiris is the principle of light, and now acts the part of judge and protector of the dead in the other world. Thus we have the expression occasionally occurring in the Egyptian mythology—if mythology it can be called—"justified in Osiris."

The statuettes are covered with hieroglyphics, varying but little in signification, and extracted from the Book of the Dead, or funereal ritual. The sentences selected are those when the soul in Hades addresses his shade, called Ushabti, an intermediate form of the being between the soul and the body, which is supposed to guard the latter on earth. The shade occasionally responds, assenting to the propositions of the soul, which are conveyed in ideas of great beauty. Thus the inscription on one in my possession is in memory of a gentleman attached to the Court of Psametik, the founder of the twenty-sixth dynasty, who was named by Sardanapalus, after the conquest of Egypt, governor at

Thebes, and who afterwards made himself king. The date of the statuette would therefore be about 660 B.C. The inscription runs as follows :—

"The illuminated, Osirian *attaché*-royal of Psametik at Thebes, Cheotep. He says, 'O Ushabti, I, the *attaché*-royal at Thebes, Cheotep, am able to do the necessary work in the Elysian fields,—to carry the sand from the east to the west.

"'See how he has overcome evil.

"'To fertilise the fields; to conduct water through the streams, renewing it. I am taking care.

"'Yes—thou—to all eternity.'"

The fact that we should have opened six sarcophagi without finding one of these statuettes was, I believe, unprecedented in investigations of this description.

I suppose the result of any attempt to arrive at some definite idea of the religion of an ancient people by a study of the imperfect records and monuments of it which they may have left, depends very much upon the attitude of mind and theological prejudices which influence those who investigate it; and that if a philosophical commission were appointed two thousand years hence to report upon the

religion of ancient Europe, an examination of the pictures of the Trinity, of the Madonna and Child, of the Scriptural illustrations upon the stained glass of the ruined cathedrals, of the shrines of saints, of crucifixes, relics, and such fragments of the Bible—and especially of the Old Testament—as had survived the wreck of ages, supposing they could be preserved for so long a period,—would lead them to construct a theology very different from the Christian religion, even as it exists at the present day in its purest form. They might possibly refer to it as a polytheistic or a pagan system penetrated with a very high moral quality, but nevertheless debased by many superstitions, degrading alike to the Creator and His worshippers. We are in the same difficulty in regard to the religion of the ancient Egyptians. If we assume the records of it which have descended to us to possess an esoteric meaning, they may contain a morality as pure, and a theology as profound, as any by which it has been succeeded. If we regard only its exoteric aspect, it possesses little claim upon our religious sentiments. Many of its external observances present a marvellous sim-

ilarity to those of the Hebrews, which may possibly be accounted for to a great extent by the residence of the latter in Egypt. Thus, if we compare the ten Hermetic books relating to the Egyptian priesthood, with those of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, we find a remarkable agreement in ceremonial observance. The Egyptian altars of sacrifice may be seen in the Boulak museum; and we know that the laws concerning the choice of victims, purification, the dress of the priests, and the regulations to be observed by them while officiating, all bear so striking a resemblance to the Mosaic ceremonial, that we can scarcely suppose it to have been fortuitous.

Wilkinson gives us in his book an illustration of "one of the sacred boats or arks with two figures representing cherubim," and he tells us that the overshadowing wings were those of two figures of the goddess Truth. "This ark," he remarks, "was carried with great pomp by the priests, a certain number being selected for that duty, who, supporting it on their shoulders by means of long staves passing through metal rings by the side of the sledge on which it stood, brought it into

the temple, where it was placed on the stand or table, in order that the prescribed ceremonies might be performed before it." The stand was also carried in the procession by another set of priests following the shrine, by means of similar staves. The same is said to have been the custom of the Jews in some of their religious processions, as in carrying the ark "to its place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, when the Temple was built by Solomon."[1] The analogy might be extended to great length, not merely in the ceremonial but in the moral code, as showing the influence which their sojourn in Egypt exercised over the religious observances of the Jews and their leader—as, for instance, in the mention of three out of the Ten Commandments already alluded to in the invocation to the Sun, and in some of the sentences contained in the code of justification. "I have not moved my neighbour's landmark; I have not caused my neighbour to shed tears," recall the Mosaic injunctions, "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark;"[2] "Thou

[1] The Ancient Egyptians, i. 268. By Sir G. Wilkinson.

[2] Deuteronomy xix. 14.

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[1] Indeed it is certain that Moses,—who, we are told, was learned in all the knowledge of the Egyptians—who, according to Philo and Clemens of Alexandria, had studied their hieroglyphics, and had been a priest of the Temple of the Sun himself,—was not ignorant of the purer or more internal side of the Egyptian theology. He must have known that its apparent polytheism was only symbolical, and that it was a pure monotheism,—that is to say, that it consisted in a belief in one God, whose qualities and attributes were personified by a corresponding number of active agents or obedient divinities. These, when they were represented by objects in nature, became objects of worship. Thus the sun, the moon, the hawk, the king, the bull, the beetle, all typified attributes, or were, in the modern parlance of Swedenborg, "correspondences;" but while the learned only regarded them as such, the common people invested them with a divine character, and ultimately became worshippers of them.

It is recorded that the Roman travellers of

[1] Leviticus xix. 18.

ancient times were entirely unable to reconcile the advanced culture and philosophy of the Egyptians with much that appeared to them degrading in their religion. Thus, on visiting their temples, and marvelling at the majestic beauty of their architecture, and the taste and harmony which characterised the decoration of their courts and chambers, they were disgusted, on arriving at the innermost sanctuary, and being allowed to peep round the corner of the veil of the temple, to find, instead of the magnificent statue of a god, as they expected, a solitary live animal, of a species common to the country, reclining upon a gorgeous carpet, and ornamented with jewels. The Egyptians explained the anomaly by affirming that it was more honourable to the Deity to worship him through an emblem pervaded with His life, breathing with His breath, and fashioned by His hand, than to invest a block of dead matter, formed by the skill of man into a human likeness with the attributes of Deity, and to worship Him in it. Again, the Deity, or divine abstraction, which in the belief of the early Egyptians appears to have been bisexual in character,

divine father and mother in one, latterly became subdivided into an infinite number of divinities, almost each attribute becoming a separate god or goddess. Thus we have as separate names for Isis—Maut, the Universal Mother; Neith, the Maternal Virgin; Athyr, the Mother of God; Hathor, the Model of Mothers — the Mysterious Mother of the World,—and other names, signifying respectively, the Soul of the Universe, or "World's Soul," the Queen of Justice, the Mirror of Virtue, the Queen of Heaven, and so forth. All these names had really reference as much to one goddess, who was at the same time God, as similar names refer only in one phase of Christianity to the Virgin Mary; but they became in process of time many goddesses, —and so with the attributes of Amon the Creator, who as Amon-ra became the "Light of the World," and as Osiris incarnated himself upon it. We can well understand why Moses, who had seen the abuses which grew out of this system of appealing to the imagination of the masses, should insist, as the fundamental principle of the purer religion which he felt himself divinely commissioned to im-

part to his people, upon the belief in one God alone; why he should denounce the worship of graven images, or hieroglyphics; and why he should take every precaution to prevent his people from sliding back into the polytheistic abuses to which it is evident they clung for many years after deliverance from Egypt,—at the same time giving them a legal and ceremonial code more or less analogous to that with which they had been familiar. What does strike one as remarkable is, that all reference to that future life which played so great a part in the Egyptian theology, should have been entirely omitted from that of Moses. We hear nothing of any ritual of burial, or of any importance being attached to the condition either of the body or the soul after death. There can be no doubt that during the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt they practised the Egyptian mode of sepulture: Jacob and Joseph, we know, were both embalmed; and we read at a later time "that the manner of the Jews" was to bury the body wound in linen cloths with spices. The whole theory of embalming was based upon the immortality of the soul. We cannot but

suppose that the Israelites while in Egypt believed in a future state of rewards and punishments, all reference to which is omitted in the new theology instituted by Moses. We have representations on the sides of Egyptian tombs of souls being literally weighed in the balance and found wanting; but this idea, so familiar to the Jews while in Egypt, seems to have dropped out of their religious belief until it was revived by our Saviour 1500 years after they had left it. While, however, the Hebrew lawgiver dilates so amply upon the duties and observances which should regulate the conduct and worship of his people on earth, to the exclusion of all reference to a hereafter, we find that in his cosmogony a certain analogy exists between his account of the creation of the world and the fall of man, with the belief which was entertained by the Egyptians. In one of the Hermetic books—which, according to Champollion and other Egyptologists, have preserved for us more accurately than can be found elsewhere the psychological and cosmological doctrines of the most ancient people—a conversation is

Divine Intelligence, and Thoth, the Human Intelligence, — the former revealing to the latter, for the salvation of the human race, the origin of the soul, its destiny, its duties, and the penalties and rewards in store for it,— which I think so interesting that I venture to quote it. Thoth desires to know the nature of things which exist, and to know God. Pimander accedes to his request, and proceeds to show him the primeval condition of nature. Presenting himself as "a fearful shade in oblique folds, he assumed a moist character, and moved with a horrible sound; smoke escaped from it, accompanied by noise. Out of this noise came a voice, which seemed to me to be the voice of Light. And the Word issued from this voice of Light. This Word was sustained by a principle of moisture, and there arose from it fire, which, clear and light, was lost in the atmosphere. The light here, like the Spirit, occupies the space between the water and the fire. And the earth and the waters were so intermingled that the surface of the earth, enveloped by the waters, was nowhere apparent. They were both moved by the Word of the Spirit, be-

cause it was suspended above them; and at this moment Pimander said, 'Hast thou understood the signification of this apparition?' I answered, 'I shall know it.' He added, 'I am this Light. I am Intelligence,—I am thy God; and I am more ancient than the principle of moisture which escapes from the shades. I am the germ of Thought,—the resplendent Word—the Son of God. I say to thee, believe that that which sees and understands in thee is the Word of the Master, and is the Thought which is God the Father. They are in no wise separate, and their union is life. . . . The operating Intelligence and the Word, enclosing circles, compose a mechanism which revolves with immense velocity from the beginning to the end, without having beginning or end. It is from the totality of these circles that the inferior elements were drawn. The earth engendered the animals which were in her—the quadrupeds, &c.; . . . only the Intelligence, Father of all, who is life and light, procreated man like to Himself, and received him as His son; for he was beautiful, and was the image of his Father. . . . But man having seen in his

Father the creator of all things, desired also to create, and he rushed from the contemplation of his Father into the sphere of generation. He desired to penetrate into the circles and to rupture their circumference; and having had power over mortal and unreasoning animals, he raised himself and stepped out of the bosom of harmony, penetrating and destroying the power of the circles. Man became enamoured of nature, and thus was born a form of being deprived of reason; . . . but of all earthly animals man alone is gifted with a double existence, mortal by his body, immortal by his real essence. As an immortal, everything was subject to him, while other living beings obeyed the law of destiny. Thus man was a superior harmony; but having willed to penetrate into it, he fell into slavery."

I am assured by a friend who was for many years connected with the Egyptian department in the Louvre, that there is there, on the lid of a mummy-coffin—which dates many years before the time of Moses—a representation of a woman under the form of a serpent handing an apple to a man; but I am not aware of any

Egyptian theological legend explaining the incident. It is, indeed, difficult to estimate the extent of the influence which the religion and philosophy of the most ancient people have exercised upon the moral instincts and metaphysical thoughts of the most highly cultured of the early races of the world. The holy singers of antiquity, Orpheus, Musæus, Melampus, and Eumolpus, acquired in Egypt their theological wisdom. Lycurgus and Solon introduced into their fatherland all the wise regulations they there became acquainted with. It was in Egypt that Archimedes invented his celebrated water-screw, and applied it to the irrigation of the land. Pythagoras was a long time in Egypt, and it is fair to assume that his doctrine of the immortality of the soul was derived from a theology in which the existence of the spirit of man in a future state played so prominent a part. The houses in Heliopolis in which Plato and the mathematician Eudoxus lived for thirteen years were shown to Strabo; and in the philosophy of the former, we have abundant evidence of the inspiration of Egyptian theology—for in it we find the dogma enunciated that, as the mas-

culine and feminine principles pervaded the world, they must ascend to the Creator, who must have been male and female in one; hence we have Isis under the form of Neith forming one with Amon, and out of their dual nature generating the dual principle of the universe — a principle which Plato adopts when he makes Aristophanes say, in his 'Symposium,'—

"In the first place, the sexes were originally three in number—not two, as they are now. There was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature which had once a real existence, but is now lost. . . . There was a time, I say, when the two were one; but now, because of the wickedness of mankind, God has dispersed us as the Arcadians were dispersed into villages by the Lacedæmonians."

Moses too, when he says in his account of the creation of the world that God said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image and after *our* likeness," and "male and female created He them," suggests the same train of thought; for the creation of the woman as a separate individual took place some time afterwards.

Carrying this principle into inanimate nature, the Egyptians considered the air male because it produced the wind, and female because it was cloudy and inert. They called the sea male water, and every other kind of water female water; fire which burns with flame male fire, and light without heat female fire; uncultivable land they called male earth, and cultivable land female earth.

Again, the immaculate virgin Neith — of whom it was written over the temple dedicated to her at Sais, "The fruit which I have conceived is the sun"—may have originated an idea which extended through Asia, and have been developed under another form in Maya, the virgin mother of Buddha.

So, standing on the ruins of the temple where in former ages the worship of the divine creatrix Isis was celebrated, one was led to connect the early ideas which sprang from her worship, which pervaded all religions and philosophies, and were perpetuated in temples dedicated to her in more modern countries, and the traditions and names of which exist even to the present day. Thus she had her temples at Benevento and at

Pompeii; and the village of Issy, near Paris, is called after a temple which once existed there in her honour.

Regarded from this point of view, Egyptology is a science which possesses a far deeper signification than any mere archæological, historical, or antiquarian interest which may attach to it; and the old land of Khemi may contain monuments and graven records, still to be discovered, destined to throw light upon those mysterious problems which have in all ages agitated the bosom of humanity.

THE END.

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