

PART I.

GEOGRAPHY AND THE EXTERIOR.



CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

THE ancient Pyramids of Egypt form somewhat of a long clustering group, extending chiefly over about a degree of latitude, and in nearly a central division of the country, as regards North and South, or the Lower and Upper, or more properly Middle, Egypt.

One traveller has noted forty-five, another ninety-five; no less than one hundred and thirty are also mentioned as existing in the neighbourhood of Meroe, Noori, and Barkal in Ethiopia, though they ought, rightfully, to be classed under a very different head; and there may be, altogether, many more pyramids still, of various kinds, in one part or another of the long valley of the Nile. But when we extend the name to such large numbers, very inconsiderable, and often comparatively modern, structures are then included,

Pyramids
numerous
in Egypt.

2 *THE GREAT PYRAMID.*

and very wide variations allowed in form and material from the more typical examples.

Now it is precisely with these particular specimens, viz., the old examples of the country, and no others, that we have to do in this book; and selecting even further amongst them, we find, that of all the more important instances that have yet attracted the attention of mankind, there are none to equal the combined fame and antiquity of the several stone pyramids near Jizeh,¹ in view of the ancient Memphis, and not far from the present city of Cairo. They are situated on the western, or more thoroughly African and desert, side of the river, and form a most remarkable and prominent group; planted apparently on the very edge of the dry and rocky steppe, and overlooking on one side the sand-strewn wastes of the interior, and on the other the green and fertile plains of Nile, about 130 feet below them. But amongst these Jizeh Pyramids, again, there is one that transcends in importance all the rest; one that has been named for ages past “the Great Pyramid;” and which stands out distinct and distinguished from all its fellows, by its giant size, its wondrous internal structure, its superior and even exquisite finish, the deep

The group
at Jizeh
important.

One of them
more so than
all the rest.

¹ The following varieties of orthography, by different authors, may lead to the correct pronunciation, viz., Gyzeh, Ghizeh, Gizeh, Jeezeh, etc.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT. 3

mysteries of its origin, and the hitherto inscrutable destiny of its purpose.

With many of the smaller and later pyramids there is little doubt about their objects; for, built by the Egyptians as sepulchres for great Egyptian dead, such dead were buried in them, and with all the written particulars, pictorial accompaniments, and strange sepulchral adornments of that too graphic religion, which the fictile nation on the Nile ever delighted in. But as we approach, ascending the stream of time, in a chronological survey to "the Great Pyramid," Egyptian emblems are gradually left behind; and in and throughout that mighty builded mass, which all history and all tradition, both ancient and modern, agree in representing as the first and earliest in point of date of the whole Jizeh group,—we find in all its *finished* parts not a vestige of heathenism, nor the smallest indulgence in anything approaching to idolatry, not even the most distant allusion to the sun or moon, or any of the starry host of heaven.

Its anti-idolatrous character.

We have specified "finished parts," because in certain unfinished portions of the masonry discovered by Colonel Howard-Vyse in 1837, there are some rude markings for a temporary purpose to be presently explained; and we also except, as a matter of course, any

4 *THE GREAT PYRAMID.*

inscriptions inflicted on the Pyramid by modern travellers, even though they have attempted to write their names in the ancient hieroglyphics of the Egyptians. But with these simple exceptions we can most positively say, that both exterior and interior are indeed absolutely free from everything relating to idolatry in art or man's device; and from all those hieratic emblems which have utterly overlaid all Egyptian temples proper, as well as all their obelisks, sphinxes, statues, tombs, and whatever other monuments they, the Egyptians, have erected at any historical epoch in connexion with their peculiar, and, alas! degrading religion.

Ordinary
 Egyptian
 buildings all
 idolatrous.

Was Great
 Pyramid
 prior to the
 Egyptian
 religion?

Was the Great Pyramid, then, erected before the invention of hieroglyphics, and previous to the birth of the Egyptian religion?

No! there history, tradition, and recent exploratory discoveries, testified to by many travellers and antiquaries, are perfectly in accord; and assure us that the Egyptian nation was great, and its hieratic system largely developed at the time of the erection of the Great Pyramid; that that structure was even raised by the labour of the Egyptian population;¹ but under some

¹ This very important conclusion results from the "Quarry marks" of the workmen—see Col. Howard-Vyse's volumes—being found on parts of the stones left rough, and in places not intended to be seen. The marks are evidently in the Egyptian language or manner freely handled; and in

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT. 5

remarkable compulsion and constraint, which prevented them from putting their unmistakable and accustomed marks on the finished building, and identifying it in any manner direct or indirect with their impure and Pagan form of worship.

According to Manetho, Herodotus, and other ancient authorities, the Egyptians hated, and yet implicitly obeyed the power that made them work on the Great Pyramid; and when that power was again relaxed or removed, though they still hated its name to such a

No: and strange ancient testimony.

so far prove that they were put in by Egyptians. They are excessively rude, no doubt; but quite sufficient as checks for workmen, whereby to recognise a stone duly prepared at the quarry, and to see it placed in its intended position in the building.

That they were not meant as ornaments in the building, or put on when there, is abundantly evident by some of them being upside down, and some having been partly pared away in adjusting the stone into its position—(see Col. Howard-Vyse's plates of them)—and, finally, by the learned Mr. Birch's interpretation of a number of the marks, which seem from thence to be mostly dates, and directions to the workmen as to which stones were for the south, and which for the north, wall.

Hieratic quarry-marks on the stones.

These markings are now only discoverable in those notable chambers of construction opened by Col. Howard-Vyse above the "king's chamber" of the Great Pyramid. There also, you see the square holes in the stones, by which the heavy blocks were doubtless lifted to their places, and everything is left perfectly rough; for these chambers were sealed up, or had been built up in solid masonry, and were never intended to be used as chambers for human visitation or human purposes. In all the other chambers and passages, on the contrary, intended to be visited, the masonry is finished off with the skill and polish of a jeweller; and neither quarry marks nor "bat holes" nor hieroglyphics of any sort or kind are to be seen, excepting always those modern hieroglyphics which Dr. Lepsius in 1843 put up over the entrance into the Great Pyramid, "on a space five feet in breadth by four feet in height," in praise of the then Sovereign of Prussia, the "King Cliquot" of many a number of *Punch*.

6 *THE GREAT PYRAMID.*

degree as to forbear from even mentioning it,—yet with involuntary bending to the sway of a superior intelligence, they took to imitating, for their own purposes, a few of the features of that great work on which they had been employed so long; and began to adapt them, so far as they could be adapted, to their own favourite ends and occupations.¹

Great Pyramid often, but imperfectly copied.

Hence the numerous *quasi* copies, for *sepulchral* purposes, of the Great Pyramid, which are now to be observed along the banks of the Nile; though they seem always to betray more or less ignorance of its principal internal features, and are never found at any very great number of miles away from the site of the parent work. The architectural idea, indeed, though copied, yet never wholly took the fancy of the Egyptians; it had some grand suitabilities to their favourite employment of lasting sepulture, and the accompanying rites; so, with their inveterate taste for imitation, they tried what they knew of it, for that purpose; but it did

¹ Though the first of the Jizeh group, the Great Pyramid may have been preceded by several other fabrics, of which the remains are to be seen at a distance of a few miles away; and indicate them to have been at the best, but very imperfect embodiments of the true pyramidal idea; if indeed they are not, in several features, actually antagonistic thereto. These will be duly considered in their place, and need not be referred to further here, as they do not seem to have locally retained either favour or prestige after the erection of the Great Pyramid, by far the most perfect, as well as the largest, of all the Pyramids.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT. 7

not admit of their troops of priests, nor the seas of
 abject worshippers, with the facility of their own temples,
 and so, on the whole, they preferred them. Those more
 open and columned, as well as statued structures, accor-
 dingly, of their own entire invention and elaboration,
 are the only ones which we now find to hold an unin-
 interrupted reign, and to reflect themselves continuously
 in the placid stream of Nile, from one end of the long
 drawn land of Egypt to the other.

Pyramidal
 buildings
 not universal
 throughout
 Egypt.

Under whose direction, then, and for what purpose,
 was the Great Pyramid built, and under what sort of
 special compulsion was it, that the Egyptians laboured
 in a cause which they appreciated not, and gave their
 unrivalled mechanical skill for an end which they did
 not at the time understand, and which they never
 even came to understand in all subsequent ages?

Why, or by
 whom, was
 Great Pyra-
 mid built?

This is indeed a mystery of mysteries, but a noble one
 to inquire into. Theories without number have been
 tried, by ancient Greeks and mediæval Arabians, by
 Italians, French, English, Germans, and Americans;
 but the result has, up to the present time, been little
 more than this, that their authors are either found to
 be repeating idle tales told them by those who knew no
 more about the subject than themselves; or skipping
 all the really crucial points of application for their

Attempts to
 solve the
 question.

8 *THE GREAT PYRAMID.*

theories which they should have attended to ; or, finally, like some of the best and ablest men who have given themselves to the question, fairly admitting that they were entirely beaten.

Failure of
all previous
theories.

Hence the notion of temples to the sun and moon, or for sacred fire, or holy water, or burial-places of kings, or granaries for Joseph, or astronomical observatories, or places of resort for mankind in a second deluge, or of safety when the heavens should fall,—have been for a long time past proved untenable ; and the Great Pyramid stands out now, far more clearly than it did in the time of Herodotus, as a prehistoric monument of an eminently grand and pure conception ; and which, though in Egypt, is yet not of Egypt, and whose true explanation is still to come.

A new idea
produced by
Mr. John
Taylor.

Under these circumstances it is, that a new idea has been given to the world by Mr. John Taylor of London, in a book published four years ago.¹ He has not himself visited the Pyramids, but has been for thirty years past collecting and comparing all the published accounts of those who have ; and while so engaged, gradually and quite spontaneously, as he has described to me by letter, the new theory opened out before him. It was assisted perhaps by the point of view from whence he

¹ *The Great Pyramid, Why was it built ?*

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT. 9

commenced his researches, and which is simply this : That whereas other writers have generally esteemed that those unknown and mysterious persons who directed the building of the Pyramid, and to whom the Egyptians gave abominable characters, must, therefore, have been very bad indeed ; he, seeing how bad the Egyptians themselves were, thought, on the contrary, that those they hated (and could never sufficiently abuse) may perhaps have been very good, or, at all events, of a *different religious faith* from themselves ; and then following up this idea by what the Bible itself records touching the most vital and distinguishing part of the Israelites' religion, and which is described some centuries after the building of the Pyramid as notoriously an " abomination to the Egyptians,"—Mr. Taylor deduces reasons for believing, that the directors of the building of the Great Pyramid were of the *chosen race*, and in the line of, though preceding Abraham ; so early indeed as to be closer to Noah than to Abraham ; and had been enabled by divine favour to appreciate the appointed idea, as to the necessity of a sacrifice for a sin-offering,—an idea co-eval with Abel and Cain, but which no man of Egyptian born would ever contemplate with a moment's patience.

His idea traced to a peculiar point of origin.

On this groundwork it is that Mr. Taylor takes his

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Startling and
 important
 assertions by
 Mr. Taylor.

stand, and announces that he has discovered in the arrangements and measures of the Great Pyramid, as it now exists, certain scientific results, which speak of much more than, or rather something quite different from, human intelligence ; for not only do the results rise above, and far above, the extremely limited and almost infantine knowledge of science possessed by any of the Gentile nations of 4300 years ago,—the period usually agreed on by most men for the foundation of that Pyramid,—but they are also, in whatever they apply to, very essentially above the extremely advanced state of scientific knowledge in our own time as well.

Necessity for
 examining
 them tho-
 roughly.

This is indeed a bold assertion, but from its boldness capable of the completest refutation, if untrue ; for the science of the present day compared with that of only a few hundred years ago, is capable of giving out no uncertain sound, both as to fact, and order, and time of discovery : much more then when applied to what little was known of it, in those more remote epochs, before physical science had begun to be seriously cultivated at all.