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John Ward
Excerpt
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PYRAMIDS AND PROGRESS.



CHAPTER I.

THE DOORWAYS OF EGYPT.



FROM THE PORTRAIT BUST OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.
(Found at Alexandria ; now in the British Museum.)

PORT SAÏD—THE SUEZ CANAL—TANIS—ISMAILIA—PITHOM—
TEL-EL-KEBIR—ZAGAZIG—
ALEXANDRIA—NAUCRATIS—SAIS—CAIRO.

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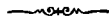
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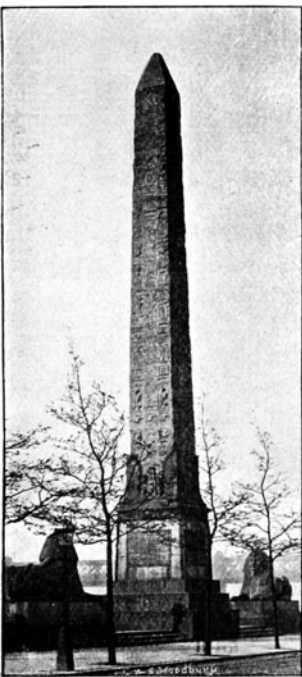
PYRAMIDS AND PROGRESS;

SKETCHES FROM EGYPT.



CHAPTER I.

THE DOORWAYS OF EGYPT.



CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE,
 LONDON.

ROSETTA and Damietta, in modern days good Mediterranean harbours, have silted up, as in ancient times still older ports on other mouths of the Nile had done. Several of the old branches of the river have disappeared by the same process. There were in olden times seven arms of the Nile. Now only two remain, and they do not occupy their ancient channels. As the river bed rises three or four inches in a century, owing to its annual deposit of mud, and the canals and embankments were neglected for more than a thousand years, the face of the country and the outlets of the Nile flood have undergone continual changes. Egypt must now be entered from the north by Port Saïd or Alexandria. There is not very much in either place to interest the tourist or to tempt him to make any prolonged stay. Port Saïd is not in fact an Egyptian town at all; it is a port on the Suez Canal, a mere station on the highway to India, China, or Australia. In ancient days, a great city existed on the coast, some twenty miles to the east of the northern outlet of the Suez Canal. In the days of the prophet Ezekiel it was known as Sin, and being called by

him "the strength of Egypt," it was possibly an important frontier fortress. In classic times it was known as Pelusium. An arm of the ancient Nile supplied it with sweet water to give it life. But the Pelusiatic branch of the river was lost by the neglect of Mohammedan rulers; it was allowed to silt up, and the city became uninhabitable. Its site is now a pestilential swamp, but immense mounds covering the ancient ruins testify to its former extent and

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PORT SAÏD: THE HARBOUR,
 Looking south over the Suez Canal and eastern desert.

importance. The Suez Canal effectually cuts off the old connection with the Nile, the water of life, and Pelusium can never rise again. It was the frontier fortress of Egypt, and here the great Roman general Pompey met his death ingloriously. The site of Pelusium is utterly deserted; neither human beings nor cattle can exist in the neighbourhood owing to the want of fresh water.

The numerous vessels going to the Orient offer temptations to the Egyptian tourist to enter the country by the Suez Canal, and as no direct line of steamers yet connects London with Alexandria, ninety out of a hundred visitors to the Nile every year enter Egypt by Port Saïd, where passenger ships, bound for distant lands, arrive almost every day. So some description of that remarkable port should be given. It was, a few years ago, the most rowdy and undesirable seaport in the world, as Rudyard Kipling has graphically told us. But it has mended its ways, and to the passing stranger has outwardly a most respectable appearance. There is now a good hotel—The Eastern Exchange—clean, moderate, and excellent. The rooms are not encumbered with furniture, but this is rather an advantage than otherwise. The building is very lofty, but there is a “lift” to every floor, and the view from the top storey is wonderful indeed. From that point the Suez Canal can be seen for miles, and the melancholy desert, which it intersects, seems spread out like a great map. The piers and lighthouses which guard the entrances to the canal lie far below—the whole thing looks unnatural, impossible, Utopian. Far away, on the

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western horizon of Lake Menzaleh, can be seen the mounds which mark the sites of long-lost cities, now drowned out by the neglect of ancient canals or the banks that may have confined the river to its channel. Most of the wide expanse of Lake Menzaleh, now covered frequently with picturesque fleets of fishing-boats, and teeming with aquatic fowl of many species, was a wide stretch of cultivated land, intersected by numerous canals, and full of towns and villages. (Some day, when reservoirs and barrages have doubled the wealth of the banks of the upper Nile valley, British engineers may teach the Egyptians how to reclaim Lake Menzaleh, as is being done with Aboukir Bay on the other side of Alexandria.) M. Mariette was fortunate in discovering



ANCIENT SUEZ CANAL USED BY SETI I.,
As depicted on the walls of Karnak (Thebes).

in some of those far-off mounds the ancient site of Zoan* of the Bible, the Tanis of the Greeks.† They were afterwards again excavated by Professor Petrie for the Egypt Exploration Fund. Later discoveries of Tahpanhes or Tehaphnehes,‡ the Greek Daphnæ, in the Delta, not far from the lake, were also published. I am permitted to give some reproductions from this excellent society's volumes which may be interesting; but ordinary travellers are not likely to visit the locality, which is rather a pestilential one. The enormous ruins show what a vast city stood here, and the terrible destruction that has fallen upon it is difficult to understand. The prophet Jeremiah was a prisoner here, and Petrie's discoveries included the finding of "a great

* Zoan, on the Tanitic mouth of the Nile, was about 30 miles distant from Sin or Pelusium, at the W. end of a rich plain of pasturable marshes, watered by four branches of the Nile, which, perhaps, was called the "Field of Zoan" (Ps. 78. 12, 13).

† Messrs. Eyre & Spottiswoode have recently issued an admirable illustrated volume by the Rev. C. J. Ball, *Light from the East*, which adds much information to the Biblical mention of this wonderful old city.

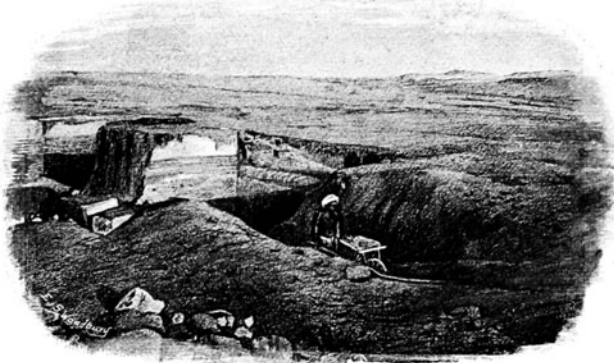
‡ Tahpanhes in Jeremiah (43. 7-9), Tehaphnehes in Ezekiel (30. 18); the Pelusian Daphnæ of Herodotus (ii. 30, 154; see 107), who describes it as the Eastern frontier fortress of Psammitichus, the founder of the xxvth dynasty of Pharaohs, who garrisoned it with Greek mercenaries encamped on each side of the Pelusiac mouth of the Nile

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open-air platform of brickwork," which may be the very pavement at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes to which Jeremiah pointed, foretelling that Nebuchadrezzar as conqueror should set his throne and spread his royal pavilion over it. The greatest statue of Ramses II., a hundred feet high, was at this city; nothing now remains but fragments—it is pulverized. When entire, this must have been a wonderful object, seen all over the level Delta, asserting the visible power of this great king, the Sesostris of the Greeks.

The ground floor of The Eastern Exchange contains a bazaar, where every possible want of the traveller—clothing, food of all sorts, liquors, sweets, literature, crockery, everything—can be had as cheap and as good as in London. In fact, Port Said is not half a bad place to pass a day in—waiting for your ship—but two days would be too long. The canal is a mere ditch cut out

by dredges through the level sandy desert, or through the marshes of the great salt-water lagoon of Lake Menzaleh. Yet, though monotonous, the passage through the fifty miles of artificial channel from Port Saïd to Lake Timseh should be made once, for there is nothing like it in the world.



PITHOM: ONE OF THE STORE CITIES

Built for Ramses II. by the Israelites; discovered by Dr. Naville.

Lake Timseh is a pretty sheet of blue water: here a steam launch conveys passengers from the steamers to Ismailia, about a mile from the line of the canal. Lake Timseh was formerly fresh water, and its name implies that it was the abode of crocodiles. These creatures have now deserted Egypt, and are only occasionally seen in Nubian waters; they do not understand steamboats, which disturb their gentle nature. Ismailia was designed, by the first Khedive who gave it his name, to be a great city, and the unbuilt streets cover a large space. But its time has not yet come, and at present it is a most desolate place, which one leaves as soon as possible. For those who are compelled to remain a few hours, there are the beautiful gardens of the Khedive's palace, where orange and lemon trees, palms, bananas, and all sorts of fruit flourish exceedingly. Lovely roses and every flower will grow here luxuriantly; for Ismailia is supplied by

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ISMAILIA—LAND OF GOSHEN—PITHOM.

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the "Sweet Water Canal," which brings health and life from the great Nile to make the desert blossom as the rose. This channel was made to supply the workers on the Suez Canal, and Port Saïd, Ismailia, and Suez, with fresh water. While it was being made the engineers came upon the ancient course of the Canal of the Pharaohs which connected the Nile and the Red Sea. This great work was in full operation four thousand years ago, but had been forgotten for ages; many doubted if it had ever existed, though it was mentioned by ancient authors. But a plan of the canal, engraved by King Seti I. on the temple wall at Karnak, is still to be seen there. Seti only claims to have used it; it existed long before his time. It is represented as full of crocodiles, to show that it was a fresh water channel, and there were locks, bridges, and barracks along its banks. The surrounding country



COLOSSAL HAWK, PITHOM.
 (Now in the Park, Ismailia.)

—now desert and deserted—was the once fertile Land of Goshen, where the Hebrews lived for centuries, and reared their flocks and herds, developing from a poor wandering tribe into a rich people, the founders of an important nation. This canal also, like everything else under Moslem rule, was neglected, and the whole of the once fertile Land of Goshen went back to desert. The treasure cities of Pithom and Raamses, which the Bible tells us were built for Pharaoh by the Hebrews, were in this neighbourhood. Pithom was discovered in 1883 by Dr. Naville for the Egypt Exploration Fund.* The exact site of "Raamses" has not yet been found. The mounds of grey rubbish beyond the railway station of Zagazig mark the site of the ancient city of Bubastis.† The mounds were well explored by Dr. Naville some years since, and his researches fill one of the volumes published by the Egypt Exploration Fund. Some interesting carved



TRIAD.
 (Now in the Park, Ismailia.)

* The results of this wonderful discovery, and the proof of the line of flight of the Israelites towards the Red Sea, were published in the first volume of the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1885. I give reproductions of some of Dr. Naville's very interesting plates.

† The Pi-Beseth of Ezek. 30. 17, now *Tel Basta*; the Egyptian Pi-Bast, *i.e.* house of the goddess Bast, on the Tanitic Nile, about halfway between Pelusium and Memphis, was the key to the route to Syria. On the national religious festivals held here see Herod. ii. 59, 60.

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stones from Pithom and Tanis are preserved in a little park at Ismailia. The sweet-water channel is now being extended by the British engineers into a wide canal, large enough to supply Nile water to the whole district, and in a few years the Land of Goshen may recover its ancient fertility.* As fast as our engineers supply water, there are fellaheen ready to undertake its reclamation. It takes several seasons to wash the salt out of the soil, during which time no taxes are charged, and rent only begins after a crop has been raised. The railway from Ismailia to Cairo runs through this territory. The first station is Tel-el-Kebir, where our soldiers crushed Arabi's rebellion in 1882. The little graveyard, beautifully tended and walled round, contains the bones of many of our soldiers who fell on that day. After Zagazig we pass Benha, now celebrated for its oranges and grapes. Near this we see, close to the railway, the mounds which mark the site of the ancient city of



HEAD OF AMENEMHAT I.
He erected great buildings at
Tanis and Bubastis.

Anthribis. Soon the Pyramids of Gizeh come into sight on the horizon, and we run into the station of Cairo.

But, if selection can be made, Alexandria is the proper doorway of Egypt. But there is little to be seen of the works of the Pharaohs, for the city can boast no great antiquity; as its name implies, it was the creation of Alexander the Great. Before his time the Egyptians had no great ports on the Mediterranean, and no desire for any. Their policy was to exclude foreigners from their country. As long as this seclusive policy was carried out strictly and literally they had been safe from invasion, and their wonderful civilisation went on developing for many thousand years, unseen and unknown by the outer world. The Persian conquest gave them a rude awakening, and undoubtedly retarded the progress of their ancient civilisation. Thenceforth they had to keep up standing armies on their frontiers, and to enlist from Europe and Asia Minor mercenaries skilled in the peculiarities of foreign warfare. Thus the Greeks got a footing in Egypt, at least in the northern part, for they were excluded from Thebes and Upper Egypt for a lengthened period. Herodotus was enabled by this partial intercourse with Greece to travel in Egypt, but he never got any

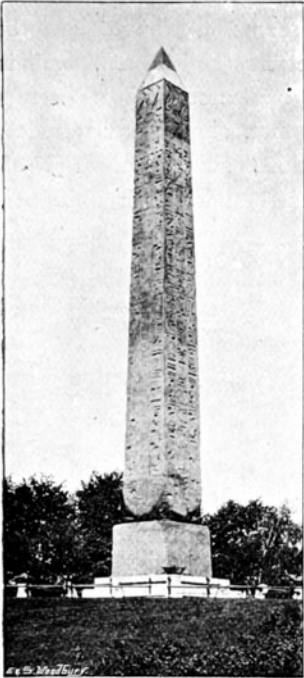
* Major Brown, R.E., has just published (Stanford) a very interesting little volume on the "Land of Goshen." He, as the Chief Director of Irrigation, is much interested in the recovery of the fertility of this district. An antiquarian as well as an engineer, he is the highest authority on the subject.

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ALEXANDER THE GREAT—ALEXANDRIA.

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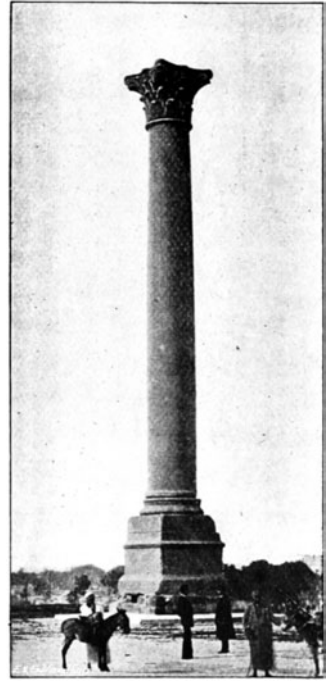
farther than the Delta, Memphis, Pyramids, and Fayum. His account of what he saw took the European world by surprise; they had never before heard of the wonders of Egypt, which had been a closed land to them. The Hebrews



CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE.
 (Now in Central Park, New York.)

had had dealings with the Egyptians about 1,000 years before, when a Semitic race known as the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings* had held the land in bondage for some 600 years. These Hyksos were expelled, and this was how a new Pharaoh came into power, who had no sympathies with the Hebrews, and "knew not Joseph." Besides, in those days the Hebrew records, telling of the wonderful adventures of the Patriarchs in Egypt were probably not accessible to the Greeks and quite unknown to them. Alexander vanquished the Persian conquerors of Egypt, seized the country, and at once determined to make a great port in Egypt to intercept all the trade of Asia and Africa. He is said to have himself laid out the ground plan of the city. His power was short-lived, but Alexandria was a great city when Alexander

died and his general, the first Ptolemy, became sovereign of the country. Alexandria was the finest port in the world, and during several centuries the city grew in splendour. It tapped all the riches coming from the far East, until the whole commerce of the world seemed to pass through it. The early Ptolemies possessed enormous wealth, as their plentiful gold coinage testifies. The number of temples rebuilt by these Greek rulers, which are computed to have cost many millions sterling, show their politic protection of its ancient faith. Half of the temples now existing in Egypt were built by



POMPEY'S PILLAR, ALEXANDRIA.
 Made from an Egyptian obelisk.

* So named from a fragment of Manetho; cf. Herod. ii. 128. See the Article and series of Illustrations of these invaders in Ball's *Light from the East*, pp. 78-81 (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1899).

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the Ptolemies. They were restorations mainly of older structures, copied in a coarser style of work. Many temples that were re-built by the Greek rulers have been destroyed in this century under Moslem rule. Under the Romans, Alexandria was an enormous city, full of splendid buildings.

With the decline of the Roman power trade seems to have left the place; its great schools of philosophy, art, and letters languished, and in the midst of this decadence the great library was neglected and dispersed, some say maliciously burnt. Alexandria, when the Roman empire was divided, came under the rule of Byzantium and its inglorious succession of weak emperors, Christian only in name, and its fortunes waned under their influence.



THE PORT OF ALEXANDRIA: THE MODERN HARBOUR.

Then came the blighting rule of the Moslem. The canals were allowed to silt up, Alexandria no longer got water from the Nile, became a heap of ruins, and was fast becoming another Pelusium. But Mehemet Ali's genius saw that this was the proper site for the port of his regenerated Egypt. Accordingly in one year the tyrant made the Mahmoudieh Canal, thirty miles long, but at an enormous outlay of human life, 25,000 souls having perished at the work. But the canal saved the city, and Alexandria, restored to life by the Nile, again became the great seaport of the East and West. Modern engineering skill restored the harbour to usefulness, and once again it became