

It is the only river in the world which runs upwards of two thousand miles, in undiminished volume, without a tributary stream. It moves on its long course without the help of even a creek, tapped by innumerable canals and thirsty gardens with which it is fringed, absorbed by hot sand banks and hotter sun, and empties greater bulk at its mouth than it has between the cataracts. The products of Egypt are the gifts of this stream. The land on which the towns and hamlets of Egypt repose is foreign soil brought from the far south by the public carrier. For more than four thousand years he has faithfully brought his burden and deposited it at the feet of Egypt. The Rameses and the Ptolemies come and go, but the Nile remains unchanged.

To the traveller who wishes to glide into the memories of the past, there are sad changes in the surroundings of the ancient stream. Borne on its bosom, he would fain see, if only in fancy, some of the old scenes of which he has read: the foundling of the waters, the infant Moses, in his rush cradle; the Pharaohs sailing by in their brilliant pageantry; the "conqueror of the conquerors," Cleopatra, fanned by cupids and rowed with silver oars. Such lotus meditation, alas! is interrupted by the sound of a steam-engine pumping water, or the shrill whistle of a steambot on its way to the first cataract; and one wonders that such desecration does not bring the yellow Neptune and his Naiads out of their watery depths in protestation.

Herodotus was saved the task of telling the story of the steam engine on the Nile, and Haroun al Raschid the pain of singing it. The Caliph poet, with all his sacred fire, would hardly have succeeded in clothing it in the graceful garlands of his Oriental imagination. In a word, the old glamour which hung over these waters for thousands of years, has been dimmed by Papin, Watt and Fulton.

The crocodile no longer takes his nap undisturbed on the shores; the sacred ibis no more can wander in security among the lotus flowers along the borders. A monster of fire and smoke breaks the silence with a shriek, carrying the irrepressible *Howadji* of the red book and grey garb, who comes from the land of tall hats, tall chairs, tall beds, of awkward knives and forks, of bare heads, of mighty eaters of flesh and bibbers of wine—comes to build railways, cut canals, and excavate ruins, inevitable as Fate. O Haroun al Raschid! what would you say to this could you see it?

About three fourths of the population in Egypt are Arabs, or of Arabic origin. The remaining fourth is composed of Copts, Turks, Jews, Armenians Abyssinians, Nubians, Mamelukes, and Franks or Europeans. The Copts are natives of longer residence than any other race. They are believed to be the descendants of those patient and clever toilers who reared the massive monuments of four thousand years ago which to this day are a puzzle to the archæologue and historian. They are usually darker in skin and dress than they who are called Egyptians, that is, those of Arabic origin. The Copt is more sombre in expression, heavier in speech, and rather coarser in feature, than the Egyptian. He has lost his language and speaks Arabic, which is the tongue of Egypt. One of the Coptic bishops at my request wrote a line or two of Coptic character. He was considered learned, as but few are capable of doing this. The Copt is a bigoted Christian, who, from intolerance of other Christians, leans to the doctrines of the Koran. He frequently carries an ink-horn and pen in his waist sash, as he is generally a scribe or some way connected with commerce.