

lower portion was first colonized ; and as the country formerly bore the name of Mizraim, the grandson of Ham, there can be little doubt that it was settled by the immediate descendants of that patriarch. After the confusion of tongues at Babel, and the consequent dispersion of the race, the family of Mizraim left the plains of Shinar, crossed what was afterward known as the Arabian Desert, skirted the southern extremity of Palestine, crossed the desert of Shur, and entered the valley of the Nile by way of the Isthmus of Suez. There they founded an empire and a civilization which has excited the admiration and the wonder of succeeding ages.

Egypt is emphatically the land of monuments. Next to the Nile, they form the chief feature of the country, as they stand in long procession on the banks of the river, witnesses of an unknown but profound antiquity. They are more abundant and more perfect than in any other country. "India, the battle-field of countless generations, has nothing to compare with them. Babylon and Nineveh wrote their history in perishable brick or alabaster ; but Egypt, attaining to a greater superiority in art, was provided at the same time with a material well-nigh indestructible, and a climate which could bid defiance to the ravages of time." Its monuments, constructed of granite, serpentine, or basalt, are of gigantic proportions, ornamented with sculptures and the most brilliant paintings. "With no frosts to splinter, no storms to batter, no moisture to nourish mosses and creepers, the ruins remain as new in appearance as if they were but of yesterday." The monuments are found throughout Egypt, and its former dependencies in Ethiopia and Libya. Besides statues, tablets, and obelisks, they consist of ruined temples, palaces, and especially of sepulchres. In the latter we find the richest treasures of Egyptian lore.

Still, these monuments enwrap themselves in mystery. They have a language as well as a story of their own. Strange characters are carved upon them, known to conceal a history which has perished from every other record. It is only within the present century that the key has been found to these mysterious archives, and their long-hidden annals are still being slowly and painfully deciphered. The way in which this key was discovered deserves at least a passing notice. During the occupation of Egypt by the French, in 1799, the troops were engaged in constructing a fort on the Rosetta branch of the Nile. In the course of their excavations an oblong