

produced by Egyptian art. About three miles below the cataract is the island of Elephantine, and it is at this point that Egypt proper begins. Syene, its frontier town, now called Assouan, stands on the right bank of the river, and is noted for its splendid granite quarries. At this point the valley has a width of only two miles. On the east lies the Arabian Desert, divided from the Nile valley by a range of limestone hills. On the west, beyond another rocky chain, stretches the Sahara, or Great Desert of Libya. In the depression between these ridges flows the Nile. Sometimes there is a space between the river and the hills of several miles, sometimes of only a few yards. Immediately above the blue waters of the river—blue by contrast with the darker colours around—rises a bank of black mud, which, after the inundation, is clothed in the brightest verdure, "like an emerald set in the bosom of the desert." That strip of verdure, with an average width of seven miles, is Egypt; and to have lived below the cataracts, and drunk the waters of the Nile, was to be an Egyptian.

From Assouan to Cairo, a distance of six hundred and twenty-nine miles, the valley is limited to an average width of seven miles, forming a strip of verdure drawn across the desert, like a ribbon, with the Nile for a central thread. Under the Pharaohs the upper valley was known as the "Southern region," and formed a distinct government from the "Northern region." The Greeks and Romans divided the upper valley into the Thebais and the Heptanomis, nearly corresponding to the modern divisions of Upper and Central Egypt. Upper Egypt is the most southerly portion. Its capital, Thebes, that magnificent city of whose hundred gates Homer sang, was the No or No-Ammon of the prophecies. Middle Egypt was anciently called Heptanomis, because divided into seven *nomes*, or districts. Its capital, situated at the apex of the Delta, was Memphis, the Noph of the Prophet Jeremiah, whose prediction, "Noph shall be laid waste," has been fulfilled to the very letter. On the right bank of the river stands the modern city of Cairo; and nearly opposite, on the left bank, a salient angle of the Libyan hills serves as a pedestal to the eternal Pyramids, whose gigantic shadows the setting sun flings far over the groves of palm-trees that now cover the space where Memphis stood.

The civilization of Lower Egypt is more ancient, as shown by the monuments, than that of Upper Egypt. This proves that the