

EGYPT AND THE PENTATEUCH.

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THE history of a country is usually associated with the course of its principal rivers. This is pre-eminently true of Egypt, whose very existence depends upon the Nile. Any reference, therefore, to the monuments of ancient Egypt, as throwing light upon the Pentateuch, would be incomplete without some account of its grand and mysterious river.

In the region of Central Africa, directly under the equator, and in latitude 33° east from Greenwich, lie the now celebrated twin lakes, Victoria and Albert N'yanza. The Victoria may be briefly described as a fresh water sea, three thousand five hundred feet above the ocean level, fed by the almost incessant equatorial rains. Its southern boundary is some three degrees south of the equator, from which point it stretches northward a distance of two hundred and eighty miles. About midway of the northern shore the waters find an outlet, where they break in miniature cascades over the rocky barrier. These rapids mark the spot where the "strange, long wandering Nile" begins its journey of three thousand geographical miles.*

During the first half of its journey the Nile receives many tributaries, chiefly from the west; but between 16° and 18° north latitude two powerful rivers flow in from the east, carrying with them the principal drainage of the high table-lands of Abyssinia. The second of these rivers—the Atbara—forms a junction with the Nile at Berber, and from thence the entire drainage is conveyed to the Mediterranean, without any further tributary, through a course of nearly fifteen hundred miles.

The current of the Nile is broken by several rapids, the last of which occurs in latitude 24°, and only about half a degree north of the Tropic of Cancer. At this spot the bed of the river is traversed by a ridge of rose-coloured granite, from whence came the rich materials for the statues, columns, and obelisks, so abundantly

* I am aware that recent discoveries throw doubt upon the statement that the Victoria Lake is the absolute *source* of the Nile. But assuredly this is the highest point to which the stream itself has yet been traced.