

AMERICA'S OLD MONUMENT.



Of all the sights the metropolis of America affords, I know of none of greater interest than that of the stately monument on Greynacke Knoll, Central Park—the obelisk. No student nor general reader who visits New York should fail to go to see America's Old Monument. The interest which he will feel in looking at it, and the incentive he will receive to learn more of the people who have left such splendid relics, will be increased by recalling something of the history of obelisks in general and of this one in particular. A page or two then on this subject may not be unwelcome to any reader of the OWL who hopes to visit New York some day.

The cold sombre head-stones in our cemeteries, commonly known as Egyptian monuments, are diminutive representations of the many ancient obelisks found on the banks of the noble Nile. These shafts are 8 or 10 feet square at the base, and 70 or 100 ft. high; they taper from the bottom and are crowned by a small pyramid, the whole being formed from a single block of granite. They stood for centuries before our era—some of them for thousands of years before; the one the visitor sees in Central Park stood for generations before the time of Moses, and in its shade the great lawgiver may have often sat. The deeply carved inscriptions with which these monoliths are covered and which in our progressive age have been deciphered are among the most ancient if not actually the most ancient records in the world.

These monuments were placed by the Pharaohs in pairs before the great temples of the sun, where they reminded those who entered of the greatness of their king and of his vast dominions. Some claim that the two obelisks before the temples suggested double spires for the churches of more modern times.

The theory has been advanced that the Egyptians cast these great monuments in a mould like bricks. The recent discovery, however, of a large obelisk at Syene, worked on three of its sides and adhering

to the solid rock by the fourth is sufficient to prove not only that they were quarried in one block, but that they were worked at the quarry to avoid transporting any superfluous stone. Close investigation has revealed the fact that the waters of the Nile were utilized to float the obelisks to their destinations, a canal is even found to have been dug from the river to the quarries, and another from the river to the site of every obelisk.

In the year 22, B.C. Augustus had removed to Alexandria two obelisks which had been standing for 16 centuries in front of the temple of the sun at Heliopolis, the On of the Bible. To these monuments were given the name of Cleopatra's Needle. One of them was taken to England a few years ago and set up at London, it is the other which faces the summit of Greynacke Knoll, Central Park, New York. A number of obelisks were, at an early date taken to Rome by the emperors. Paris procured herself an obelisk some years ago; several other large continental cities have done the same.

Khedive Ismael presented the City of New York with its obelisk—one of Cleopatra's Needles—in 1879. The present was accepted but some doubts were entertained as to the possibility of transporting it such a distance, especially when Mr Dixon, who had been awarded the contract for the removal of both Cleopatra's Needles, after having met with heavy pecuniary losses in the transportation of the London monument, refused to undertake to move an obelisk from Egypt to America. The American authorities made no further effort to have the Khedive's present brought to their shores, and it would have remained at Alexandria but for the generosity of Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt who paid the \$75,000 for which Commander Henry Goringe of the U. S. navy offered to bring over the obelisk.

The dimensions of this monolith, 67 ft. in height, one pair of opposite faces 8 ft. 3 in. at base and 5 ft. 3 in. at top, the other pair 8 ft. 3 in. at base and 5 ft. 4 in.