

## THE EARLY UNIVERSITY.

Homer had not yet sung the immortal Iliad and Odyssey. The glory of Solomon had not yet blazed in the Oriental world; Babylon and Nineveh with their gorgeous palaces had not as yet arisen to the meridian of their splendour, when "hundred-gated Thebes" upon the banks of the Nile was gay and sparkling in the glory of the Pharaohs, and famed far for her wisdom and learning. Heliopolis, also, in the north, and Memphis 'neath the solemn shade of the great pyramids, were the cradles of primeval culture. True, these seats of learning could hardly be styled as universities, but they came the nearest to such of the ancient schools. Rameses I. had founded a temple, grand in extent, and magnificent in workmanship. Under its roof sprang up a celebrated school endowed by Leti I. and sought after by hundreds of youth. Proud of her philosophical distinction, she gathered around her a great company of Egyptian sages, of astrologers, grammarians, mathematicians and doctors. Here the great Rameses II. was educated. The school was accessible to all grades of society and her sons arose to the highest ranks of learning.

Many years later, when the pageantry of the Pharaohs had long lost its lustre, another city of Egypt, emerging in a brilliant career, arose to proclaim her sovereignty in the world of thought, and founded what we may look back to as the first university. In the latter half of the fourth century, B. C., there shone 'neath the eastern sky a transcendent genius. The world lay at the feet of Alexander, his prestige was unique. After the subjugation of Phœnicia, this great conqueror, in 332, founded, through shrewd political tactics, the beautiful city of Alexandria, destined for a thousand years to live in strength and beauty, the emporium of eastern commerce. It was here, that, under the Ptolemies a bright flame of higher culture was lighted, which cast its influence over the entire Roman Empire, and now, after twenty centuries have passed away, "gives an all enduring lustre to her name."

Alexandria was the meeting place of the East and West; and here we behold the great foresight of her founder; but it was not merely on a commercial basis that the favoured city was to maintain pre-eminence. There was formed a stronger tie which bound the west to the east, contracted by the influence she exerted in intellectual and literary life. For the first time we discover a distinctness of form, an organization given to the higher educational course.

Within the columnar precincts of the temple of Serapis were created archives in which were stored, principally through the