

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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THE LAND OF NILE.

Still through Egypt's desert places
Flows the lordly Nile
From its banks the great stone faces
Gaze with patient smile
Of the Pyramids Imperious
Pierce the cloudless skies,
And the Sphinx stares with mysteri-
ous,
Solemn, stony eyes
Longfellow

Next to the Holy Land itself—

Over whose acres walked those
blessed feet
Which eighteen hundred years ago
were nailed
For our advantage to the bitter
cross"—

there is no land of profounder interest to the Biblical or historical student than the old Land of Nile. The cradle of the world's earliest civilization, the museum of the world's most ancient art, the scene of some of the most stupendous events in the world's history, small wonder that it still exerts the spell of its fascination over tourists from every land. Still it attracts visitors from many a far-off clime, as it did when Thales and Herodotus and Ptolemy visited the "hundred-gated Thebes"—even then a city of old renown—and gazed in awe upon the pyramids, gray with the eld of a thousand years. Now, as then, a veil of mystery enwraps the Land of Nile. The mighty river, mother of Egypt, still keeps the secret of its hidden source. For two thousand miles it pours its flood—from the snow-capped mountains of Abyssinia to the rich plains of the Delta. Yet the secret of its origin is still guarded by the brooding centuries. Like the Sphinx of the desert, "staring straight on with calm eternal smile," yet keeping still its secret in its rocky heart, so the riddle of Egypt continues still unsolved. And like its great river is the civilization of Egypt. In all its course the Nile receives not, like other rivers, any great affluent. So the civilization of Egypt is indigenous. It springs up in its own native energy, and is not derived from that of any other lands. The Nile rescues from the vast desert, which sweeps over Northern Africa and Arabia a narrow riband of fertility in a vast desert of sterility. So the art and architecture and learning of Egypt flowed forth to civilize and enlighten other lands; and Phoenicia, Carthage, Greece, and even Rome derived the origin of their civilization from this old Land of Nile.

Yet that ancient civilization, in its religious aspects, was a very grovelling



EGYPTIAN WOMAN.

one. Their dog-headed, eagle-headed, ox-headed deities, Osiris, Isis, Orus, and their train—

"With monstrous shapes and sorceries abused
Fanatic Egypt and her priests to seek
Their wandering gods disguised
in brutish forms.
Rather than human."

Nay, more grovelling still, they worshipped even the leeks and onions which sprang from the rank ooze of the Nile, so as to make true the sneer of the Roman satirist—that "their gods grew in the gardens."

Nothing strikes one more in Egypt than the strange blending of the past and present, of the civilization of the nineteenth century before with that of the nineteenth century after Christ. The shriek of the iron horse may be heard at the base of the Pyramids, the throb of the iron steamer rolls the tranquil waters of the Nile against the tomb of Mizraim. The world's great highway of commerce lies through the ancient land of Ramses, and electric nerves make old mummied Egypt thrill with the vibrations of life from the busy marts of London and Liverpool, Paris and Marseilles.

MODES OF IRRIGATION.

The Rev. Dr. D. G. Sutherland thus describes the modes of irrigation in Egypt:

"The Barrage, or open break-

water of the Nile has been constructed at great expense to dam up the water of the river when there is danger of a scarcity. Here we first noticed the various devices for watering the land. The most primitive is the shadoof, a long pole supported by two uprights, having at one end a bucket suspended and on the other end a stone or lump of clay to balance it. It is an arrangement very similar to that used at Canadian wells in primitive times. Another mode of raising the water is where two men stand by a ditch, and by means of a leather or water-proof basket, dip up the water from the lower to the higher level. An improved plan is the sakteh or bullock-wheel, with an endless chain of buckets attached. Round and round goes the patient beast through the day, while his driver rests lazily in the shade, rousing himself occasionally to throw a chunk of mud at the beast to excite his flagging energies. The water thus thrown over the dyke is carried by small channels to all parts of the field or garden, the work being done chiefly with the foot. Hence comes the term "watering with the feet." This artificial irrigation is necessary during five or six months in the year."

In some cases the force of the current is used to turn a large wheel with buckets on its rim, which lift the water, as shown in our cut on fourth page.

Egyptian women of the higher

classes are almost always imprisoned in long veils of silk or muslin white, black or blue according to rank. The veil is divided about the forehead, and fastened with a pin of brass or silver, over the nose so as to leave the dark, restless and frightened eyes free to satisfy the curiosity. But the peasant women who do much of the field work cannot muffle themselves in such superfluous drapery, but are contented with a light covering for the head, as shown in the picture, their black hair hanging in braids down the neck. Those who can afford it wear a number of coins on the forehead, neck, or hanging from their ears. This often constitutes their entire fortune or dowry. Many of these have comely features, and give evidence of considerable strength of character. Most of them are, however, squalid, homely and worn with toil and hardship.

But we shall turn from the present to the remote past, which, in this old land, is brought before us with startling vividness.

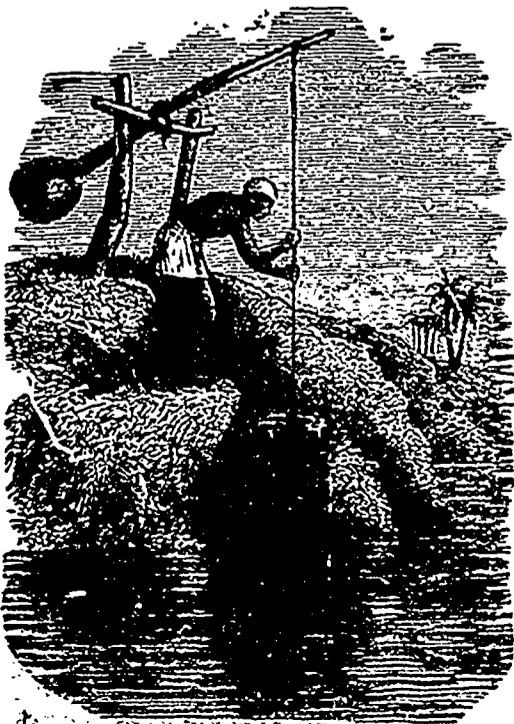
The Rev. George Bond, who has been face to face with the Pharaoh who oppressed the children of Israel, writes thus of the mummies and statues in the famous Boulak Museum, near Cairo:

"This noble institution is thrown open daily, free, and few European pilgrims leave Cairo without visiting it. Room after room, filled with superb and unique collections, arranged with admirable order and taste, open one from another; and once within the portal you are literally in a new world of life and industry and art, albeit that world is the oldest of the old.

THE OLDEST STATUE IN THE WORLD

"Here is a small statue, perhaps three feet high, and carved from some dark, hard wood. The face is evidently a portrait, it is full of life, of character, even of humour, an expression of good-natured content rests upon the smiling mouth, the eyes look out at you with an intelligence that seems to come from a living brain within. The face might be English or perhaps better German—a portrait of some quiet, self-contained and sensible German farmer—and it might have been carved, say ten years ago, the wood is so dark. Stop, my friend! You are looking at perhaps the oldest monument in the world. Long, long before the days when Abraham offered Isaac upon Moriah, or entertained his angel-guest

(Continued on next pag...)



THE SHADOOF.



WATER-WHEEL.