

SECOND AND THIRD PYRAMIDS OF GIZEH
(View from the east. From a photograph)

CHAPTER II

EGYPT

About 5000-525 B.C.

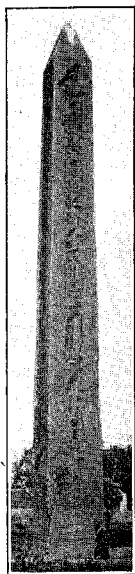
I. LAND AND PEOPLE; POLITICAL HISTORY

II. Physical Features and their Influence. — The progress of mankind depends largely on country and surroundings. And of all the region round the Mediterranean none is so favored by nature as the valley of the Nile River in northeastern Africa. Egypt, the lower part of this valley, extends from the First Cataract to the sea. It is seven hundred miles long, and averages through most of its course less than ten miles in width. It is therefore one of the smallest countries in the world. Its area is about that of the state of Maryland. A hundred miles before the river reaches the sea, it divides into several channels, and the valley broadens into the Delta. Every summer, swollen by the rains and melting snows of the country in which it rises, the Nile overflows the valley; and when in early December the water returns to the channel, it leaves the land fertilized with a rich coat of earth. In fact, the entire soil is composed of mud deposited in this manner. The land therefore

is wonderfully fertile. With little labor a man can raise each year three crops of grain, grasses, flax, and vegetables. Wheat yields a hundred fold. The mountains produce an abundance of building stones and various kinds of metal. Commerce, too, is easy. The Nile forms a natural waterway for domestic trade. For foreign commerce it is a great advantage that the country lies at the meeting of three continents and borders on two navigable seas. The warm climate makes little clothing necessary; the rainless sky preserves the works of men from decay; and the mountain chains and deserts on both sides protect the people from invading armies. With her natural resources and her situation, it is no wonder that Egypt became the birthplace of civilization.

12. Remains of Ancient Civilization ; Writing. — The traveller in Egypt is astonished at the great number and size of the ancient monuments. In various parts of the valley he finds obelisks, colossal statues, the ruins of vast temples, and, grandest of all, the pyramids. These and other monuments will be described in this chapter. Nowhere else have the ancients built so magnificently, and nowhere have their works been so well preserved. The good condition of the monuments is due not only to their substantial character, but to the dryness of the atmosphere.

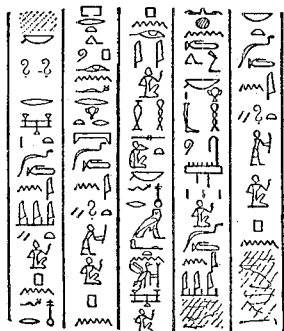
On many of these monuments are inscribed lines of strange characters. Till about a hundred years ago, no one could make them out, and the history and life of the country remained, therefore, largely a mystery. The key was discovered by means of an inscription on what is known as the Rosetta stone. In Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, 1798, while some of his men were digging to lay the foundation of a fort, they came upon this stone. It is of black basalt and is covered with an inscription. It was named after the place where the soldiers found it — on the Rosetta branch of the Nile in the Delta. The credit for deciphering it is due chiefly to Cham-



AN OBELISK
(From a photograph)

pol/li-on, a French scholar. It was found to contain a public document in Egyptian, with a Greek translation added. By means of the translation Champollion and other scholars were enabled with great difficulty to decipher the Egyptian. Most of the inscriptions can now be read, and through them the details of Egyptian life and history may be studied.

In their earliest writing objects were represented by pictures. A disk \odot stood for the sun, and a crescent C for the moon. From pictures they passed to symbols; the disk of the sun suggested day, and an axe γ god. In course of time they invented letters representing each a single sound. From them they might easily have made a phonetic alphabet like ours; but they were too conservative for so great an improvement. They continued, therefore, to use their pictures and symbols, mingling them with the new phonetic letters.



EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING

As the priests always used these early, difficult characters for religious purposes, they are called hieroglyphs — sacred inscriptions. A running style, however, came into use in literature and business. On the Rosetta stone, mentioned above, the inscription in the Egyptian language is written first in hieroglyphs and below in the common running style.

13. The People : Origin and Earliest States (to about 3400 B.C.). — The ancient Egyptians, in common with the other inhabitants of northern Africa,

were Hamites.¹ Their language is related to the Semitic. Evidently in prehistoric times Semites invaded the Nile valley and mingled with the natives. The civilization was not imported, however, but grew up in the country. Through archaeology² we may trace its progress from the early stone age — that is, from the time men began to make implements of stone. Nothing strikes us as remarkable in this development till we come to the beginnings of agriculture and the founding of states. Men could fish on

¹ § 9.

² § 4.

the Nile and hunt among the marshes of its valley, independently of one another. The nature of the country, however, compelled them, if they were to live there in considerable numbers, to resort to farming. This step could not be taken without draining the marshes and irrigating the fields. For so great an enterprise coöperation was necessary. This need brought the state into being. The whole course of the Nile through Egypt came to be held by small states, each occupying the entire width of the valley and a few miles of its length. Each was ruled by a king, whose first duty was to control the waters by canals and dikes, so as to make life possible. The need of enforcing strict coöperation among the people in these labors rendered him absolute and reduced his subjects to a condition but little better than slavery. Gradually war and conquest united the petty kingdoms, until there came to be but one.



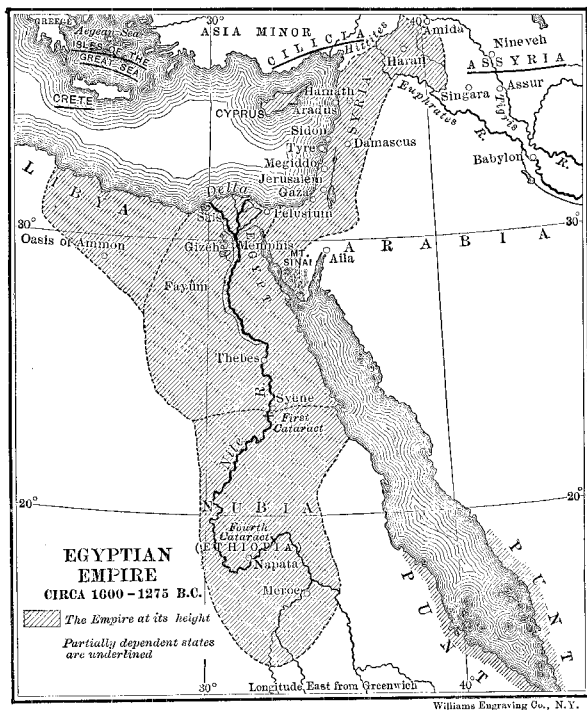
THE SPHINX OF GIZEH
(From a photograph)

These political events were accompanied by a great development of culture. We may safely say that about 5000 B.C. the Egyptians had emerged from barbarism. Before the close of the period (3400) their civilization had taken on the character which it maintained thereafter with little change.

14. **The Old Kingdom; the Pharaohs of Memphis (3400-2100 B.C.).** — Among the many titles of the Egyptian king, the one by

which he is still commonly known is Pharaoh. The term signifies "Great House," applied to him as a compliment by his subjects. From earliest known times he was looked upon as a god. The Pharaoh who completed the unification of the country was Me'nes (3400 B.C.). He and his successors were great rulers, who gave their country prosperity.

Memphis is said to have been founded by Menes. It became the capital of the kingdom about 3000 B.C. Among the Pha-



araohs who resided here were the builders of the three pyramids at Gizeh (Gee' zeh), in the cemetery of their capital. They will be described below.¹ Near this group is the famous sphinx, a gigantic, human-headed lion, carved from a hard, fine rock.

¹ § 27.

For six centuries the Pharaohs of Memphis ruled Egypt with great success. Through internal improvements and foreign commerce they increased the wealth of the country. Afterward the kings grew too feeble to hold the provinces of the state together, and a long period of confusion and strife resulted. Memphis declined and ceased to be the capital.

15. The Middle Kingdom (2160-1788 B.C.). — Then a new line of kings restored order, and made Thebes the capital. They began the period of the Middle Kingdom. The Pharaohs of this age conquered Nubia, south of Egypt, and worked the gold mines of that country. They carried on an extensive trade with Syria,¹ and with the Aegean region.² They beautified their cities with temples. The art and literature of this age were therefore looked upon as classic — as offering perfect models for all who worked in these fields.

16. Internal Dissolution; the Hyksos (1788-1580 B.C.). — Again the kings became feeble and the country fell into anarchy. Agriculture and the industries were nearly ruined through the neglect of the government. In this time of dissolution and weakness a horde of strangers, known as Hyksos, invaded and conquered Egypt. They plundered the country, burned cities, and slew the inhabitants without mercy. Most probably they were Semites, who had conquered Syria before passing on to Egypt. From what quarter they invaded Syria we do not know.³ After about a century of rule their power had so declined that they were defeated and driven out by a noble of Thebes at the head of an army.

17. The New Kingdom: the Empire (1580-945 B.C.). — The deliverer of his country became king, the founder of a line of able rulers. With him began the period described as the New Kingdom. The invasion of strangers had shaken Egypt out of the ruts in which she had long been moving. Not content with self-protection, she now became ambitious for foreign conquests. The early kings of the period reorganized the army and made it far more effective. The Hyksos had introduced horses into the country, and the kings were therefore in a position to add war chariots to their army. They conquered Syria and the upper Nile valley far to

¹ § 47.

² § 83.

³ The idea that Hyksos means "shepherd kings" has been abandoned by scholars.

the south of Egypt. The greatest of these warrior kings was Thothmes III. His realm extended from the Euphrates River to the Fourth Cataract on the Nile. Down to this time Egypt had been merely a kingdom—a single country ruled by a monarch. Through the acquisition of foreign territory it became an empire.

Meanwhile the merchants were trading with all the known world and importing the products of distant regions.¹ Industry thrived. The Pharaohs attended carefully to internal improvements. They made Thebes a magnificent city, adorned with obelisks, colossal statues, and temples. No other city of the time could compare with it in splendor.

In spite of all this magnificence, the mind of the Egyptians had long ceased to invent. From about 1400 B.C. the civilization rapidly declined. There were to be brief periods of recovery; but the vitality of the race was exhausted and its greatness lived only in history. The country found a powerful enemy in the Hittites, a warlike people of Asia Minor. They wrested from Egypt all northern Syria. Ra-me'ses II in sixteen years of hard fighting stayed their conquest. He then divided Syria with them by treaty. The document has been preserved, and is the oldest existing treaty between two nations (1272 B.C.).

Rameses was a great builder. Throughout Egypt he repaired old temples and erected new ones. The proud monarch had his sculptors make many enormous statues of himself that all might duly appreciate his great majesty. Following the custom of covering walls and columns with pictures and writing, he took especial pleasure in representing his personal combats with the Hittites. Some believe that he was the Pharaoh who oppressed the Hebrews² then in Egypt.



MUMMY OF RAMESES II
(From a photograph)

¹ § 21.

² § 52.

18. Foreign Invasions and Conquests (945-525 B.C.). — During their wars the Pharaohs had depended more and more on mercenary troops, recruited from foreign nations. As the government again became weak, a leader of some Libyan mercenaries usurped the throne (945 B.C.). Under the line of foreign rulers thus established the people were greatly oppressed, and the condition of the country was extremely wretched. Meantime Nubia revolted, and her kings got control of a large part of Egypt. Weakened by misrule and strife, the country nearly as far as Thebes fell under the power of Assyria.¹

Egypt remained a part of the Assyrian empire but a few years (670-663 B.C.). Psam-met'i-chus, assuming the crown, freed his country from the foreign yoke, and gave it peace under his strong rule. His capital was Sa'is in the western part of the Delta. It became a splendid city, whereas Thebes sank to decay. As the new Pharaoh and his successors depended greatly on Greek mercenaries, they treated the Greeks liberally. Many came to trade in the country, and they were allowed to found a colony at one of the mouths of the Nile.² Other Greeks came to see the wonders of the country and to take home some of its wisdom. During the long rule of the Pharaohs of Sais, Egypt was prosperous at home and respected among foreign nations. Finally it was conquered by Cambyses, king of Persia, and annexed to his empire (525 B.C.; § 64).

19. Summary of Political History. — (1) In the fifth millennium (5000-4000) B.C. the Egyptians had already emerged from barbarism, and were founding small states and tilling the soil. (2) Before the end of the fourth millennium (3400) the whole country was united under one strong government. (3) The Pharaohs of Memphis were the most powerful of the Old Kingdom (3400-2160). They were the builders of the great pyramids. The era closed in weakness and decay. Memphis declined. (4) Then came the period of the Middle Kingdom (2160-1788), with Thebes for the capital. The age is noted for conquest, commerce, internal improvements, and the establishment of a great system of irrigation. It was the classic period of Egyptian history. (5) Again followed a time of decline (1788-1580), in which the Hyksos conquered the country.

During their century of rule the Egyptians came into close contact with Asia, introduced the horse, and developed a military spirit. (6) In the period of the New Kingdom which followed (1580-945), the Pharaohs conquered Nubia to the Fourth Cataract and all Syria, thus creating an empire. This age, too, is famous for commerce and public works. (7) Then followed a time of decay and of foreign invasion and conquest (945-525), interrupted by a century and a half of freedom and prosperity under the Pharaohs of Sais. (8) For a long time after the Persian conquest (525) the history of Egypt merges in that of other countries.

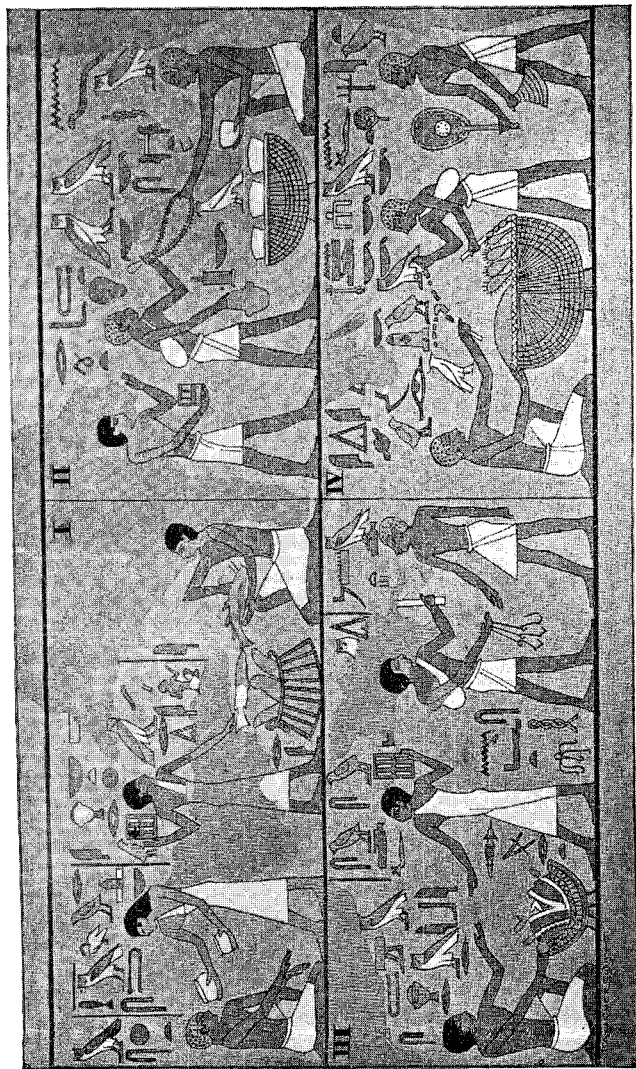
20. The Dynasties. — Man'e-tho, an Egyptian priest who lived in the third century B.C., wrote a history of his country in the Greek language. Though the book disappeared, abstracts were made of it, and some quotations taken, by later writers. The dates thus handed down are helpful, though often proved inaccurate by better sources. Manetho divided the history of the Pharaohs into royal lines or dynasties. From Menes to the Persian conquest are twenty-six. A list of the principal dynasties for reference is given below, as they are used for dating in all works on Egypt.

- I. Old Kingdom, 3400-2160, dynasties I-X.
Pyramid builders, 2900-2750, dynasty IV.
- II. Middle Kingdom, 2160-1788, dynasties XI, XII.
Most famous rulers of the period, 2000-1788, dynasty XII.
- III. Dissolution; the Hyksos, 1788-1580, dynasties XIII-XVII.
- IV. New Kingdom, 1580-945, dynasties, XVIII-XXI.
The great conquerors and rulers, 1580-1350, dynasty XVIII.
- V. Foreign Invasions and Conquests, 945-525, dynasties XXII-XXVI.
Restoration under the Pharaohs of Sais, 663-525, dynasty XXVI.

II. CIVILIZATION

21. Classes and Occupations: the Poor and Middle Classes. — Throughout their history most of the people were poor. They lived in mud huts and dressed in a single cotton garment. While the mother carried water, ground meal between two stones, baked bread in the ashes, sewed, spun, and wove, the father worked all day in the field or at his trade. He toiled under a master who beat him for the slightest mistake or inattention to duty.

The miserable huts of the poor were crowded closely together along the narrow, crooked lanes. The houses of the tradesmen were in another quarter. They were larger, and were made of



EGYPTIAN MARKET SCENES

- I. A woman bringing two jars of perfumes to barter for wares. A woman with something in a box to trade for fish. II. A man bartering the contents of a jar for a necklace. III. The man on his knees seems to be selling bracelets and necklaces; a woman, box in hand, has come to purchase. A man selling fish-hooks. IV. A man with wheat and onions in a basket; two purchasers — one with a fan, the other with a fan and a fire ventilator.

brick and better furnished. There were as many trades as among us. Each manufacturer had slaves working under him, and he generally retailed his own produce. In the market-place provisions were kept for sale in large baskets resting on the ground, and people brought various articles, usually of their own make, to barter for grain, vegetables, fish, and meat. Near the provision market was the bazaar, in which were displayed for sale all kinds of manufactured wares, both native and imported from Nubia, Arabia, Babylon, Syria, and the islands of the Aegean Sea. There were embroideries, fine linens, jewelry, scented woods and gums, coral and amber, glassware, and beautiful pottery.

The poor as well as the rich had a lively imagination, a ready wit, and strong social qualities. Often the workmen squandered their month's wages in a fortnight, and were driven by starvation to strike. But a fresh supply of provisions quieted them and sent them back to their work. They were a patient people and obedient to their superiors. They had boundless reverence for the god Pharaoh.¹ Under these circumstances no other government than absolute monarchy was ever dreamed of.

22. The Soldiers. — When left to themselves, the people were happy. But when Pharaoh chose the strongest and best men to toil for him in building a pyramid or a temple, they felt it a grievous affliction. Still harder was the enlistment of soldiers for an invasion of Nubia or Syria; for the people loved peace, and they knew well that few of those who went forth to war ever returned. The peasants had to enlist when called, and there came to be in addition a class of men who made a living as soldiers. Pharaoh, who owned all the land, granted each soldier about eight acres on which to live free from rent. The holders of these lots paid for the use of them by service in the army when needed. The king hired many soldiers, too, from Libya, Greece, and other foreign lands.

23. Education; Scribes and Officials. — Children usually remained in the class of their parents. But it was possible through education to rise in the world. If a boy showed remarkable talent and ambition, his parents, however poor, might be sufficiently self-sacrificing to send him to school and pay his tuition. From

¹ § 14.

six or eight to twelve years of age he studied elementary reading, writing, and arithmetic. Then he was placed as an apprentice in the office of a scribe. On the completion of this training he was sure of employment as a scribe by some private person or official, and with genius and industry he could rise to a place next to Pharaoh.

The officials formed a hereditary nobility, recruited to some extent from the lower classes, as described above. All necessarily had some education. Pharaoh surrounded himself with a host of officials, some to administer justice, others to supervise the erection and care of the public works, or to make the biennial census and assessment of property throughout the kingdom, or to collect and manage the revenue. Each district, or province, of the kingdom had its local government and officials subject to Pharaoh. Generally the officials were at the same time priests. They could be found not only at the king's court and in the capitals of the provinces, but in every nook and corner of the realm. When not controlled by a strong king, they were often corrupt and oppressive, and their misrule hastened the downfall of their country.

24. Religion. — We cannot understand the Egyptian without making ourselves acquainted with his religion, which controlled his thoughts and actions. He believed in a countless number of good and evil spirits, each one of which lived in a mountain or rock, a tree or river, a star, the moon, the sun, or some other object. Only the greater and more powerful of these spirits he looked upon as gods. His deities had the forms not only of men and women, but also of birds, fishes, crocodiles, cats, dogs, and cattle.

25. The Temple. — Expense and care were necessary to secure the favor of the gods. Each deity required a temple as a dwelling. Patterned after the house of the chief or king, it was originally a single room containing the image of the deity and simply furnished. But gradually, as the wealth and power of the priests grew, the temple was enlarged. Rooms for the storage of the furniture, treasures, and sacred tools and vessels were added to the original chapel. Outside were open court-yards and corridors of gigantic columns leading to vast gateways. The temple of Am'mon at Thebes was the work of a succession of kings. When finished it was the most stupendous temple the world has known. Travellers still



HALL OF COLUMNS IN THE TEMPLE OF AMMON, THEBES
(From a photograph)

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our Website :

www.Brainfly.net

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :

Brainfly Inc.

5100 Garfield Ave. #46

Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net