BOOK XVII.

SUMMARY.

The Seventeenth Book contains the whole of Egypt and Africa.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN we were describing Arabia, we included in the description the gulfs which compress and make it a peninsula, namely the Gulfs of Arabia and of Persis. We described at the same time some parts of Egypt, and those of Ethiopia, inhabited by the Troglodytæ, and by the people situated next to them, extending to the confines of the Cinnamon country.[1]

We are now to describe the remaining parts contiguous to these nations, and situated about the Nile. We shall then give an account of Africa, which remains to complete this treatise on Geography.

And here we must previously adduce the opinions of Eratosthenes.

2. He says, that the Nile is distant from the Arabian Gulf towards the west 1000 stadia, and that it resembles (in its course) the letter N reversed. For after flowing, he says, about 2700 stadia from Meroë towards the north, it turns again to the south, and to the winter sunset, continuing its course for about 3700 stadia, when it is almost in the latitude of the places about Meroë. Then entering far into Africa, and having made another bend, it flows towards the north, a distance of 5300 stadia, to the great cataract ;[2] and inclining a little to the east, traverses a distance of 1200 stadia to the smaller cataract at Syene,[3] and 5300 stadia more to the sea.[4]

[1] B. xvi. c. iv, § 2 and § 14. [2] Genadil. [3] Assouan.

[4] Thus Eratosthenes calculated, in following the windings of the Nile, 12,900 stadia, which is 7900 stadia more than he calculated in a straight line, as he made the distance between the same points (Meroë and Syene, b. ii. c. v. § 7) to be 5000 stadia. M. Falconer suspects that there is an

Two rivers empty themselves into it, which issue out of some lakes towards the east, and encircle Meroë, a consider-

error in the text; but the error lies further off. I believe that it is attributable to Eratosthenes himself, and that that geographer did nothing more than convert the days' marches into stadia. According to Pliny, Timosthenes, commander of the fleet of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and consequently anterior to Eratosthenes, said that from Syene to Meroë was a march of 60 days; and this statement agrees tolerably well with that of Herodotus, who calculated 56 days' march between Elephantina and Meroë, besides a small distance the extent of which he does not state.

Procopius, a learned writer, estimates a day's march at 210 stadia; and the employment of this value, in the whole course of his history, proves that it was generally adopted. Now, if we multiply 60 by 210, we shall have 12,600 stadia, and dividing 12,900 by 60, we have 215 stadia, or nearly the amount of a day's march according to Procopius. I am therefore of opinion that Eratosthenes did nothing more than multiply 210 or 215 by the number of 60 days, furnished by Timosthenes; and as the excessive length of 12,900 stadia could not agree with the 5000 stadia, which he had calculated in a straight line for the same interval, he imagined this great difference arose from the excessive winding course of the Nile; consequently he supposed the Nile to change frequently the direction of its course.

This opinion had its influence in the construction of Ptolemy's map, which presents to us nearly all the inflexions which Eratosthenes imagined; in calculating the intervals of positions assigned by Ptolemy along the river, we find a total of 1260 minutes; and adding about $\frac{1}{6}$ for the small windings, we have a total of 1470 minutes, which are equal to 12,400 stadia of the module (700 to the degree) adopted by that geographer.

According to this hypothesis, the distance in Strabo will be thus divided: Setting out from Meroë, the Nile runs,

			days.
1.	2700	stadia to the north	12·8
2.	3700	to the S. and S. W.	17·6
3.	5300	to the N. $\frac{1}{4}$ E.	25
4.	1200	to the N.	5·7
			61·1

which nearly corresponds with the account of Timosthenes. The number of days corresponds tolerably well with the distance given by the explorers sent by Nero for the discovery of Meroë: they reported the distance to be 873 miles. If we divide this number by 60, we shall have for the day's mean march 14·55 Roman miles, or 11·64 geographical miles, which is in fact the day's mean march, according to Major Rennell. *Letronne.*

In carefully measuring, upon a large map of Egypt in 47 sheets, the course of the Nile through all its windings, and with the compass opened to 1000 metres, I find—

able island.[1] One of these rivers is called Astaboras,[2] flowing along the eastern side of the island. The other is the Astapus, or, as some call it, Astasobas. But the Astapus[3] is said to be another river, which issues out of some lakes on the south, and that this river forms nearly the body of the (stream of the) Nile, which flows in a straight line, and that it is filled by the summer rains; that above the confluence of the Astaboras and the Nile, at the distance of 700 stadia, is Meroë, a city having the same name as the island; and that there is another island above Meroë, occupied by the fugitive Egyptians, who revolted in the time of Psammitichus,[4] and are called Sembritæ, or foreigners. Their sovereign is a queen, but they obey the king of Meroë.

The lower parts of the country on each side Meroë, along the Nile towards the Red Sea, are occupied by Megabari and Blemmyes, who are subject to the Ethiopians, and border upon the Egyptians; about the sea are Troglodytæ. The Troglodytæ, in the latitude of Meroë, are distant ten or twelve days' journey from the Nile. On the left of the course of the Nile live Nubæ in Libya, a populous nation. They begin

	metres.
From the middle of Syene to Luxor in the ancient territory of Thebes	218,900
From Luxor to Becous situated at the point of the Delta	727,500
From Becous following the Damietta branch to that city	234,000
	1,180,400

This measure reduced to mean degrees of the earth equals 637° 25′, and represents 5312 stadia of 500 (to the degree). I certainly did not expect to find such an agreement between the new and the ancient measures. The periodic rising of the Nile, I think, must have produced, since the time of Eratosthenes, some partial changes in the windings of the river; but we must acknowledge that these changes, for greater or for less, compensate one another on the whole.

We observe, moreover, as I have already often observed, that the use of the stadium of 500 to the degree is anterior to the Alexandrine school; for at the time of Eratosthenes the stadium of 700 was more particularly made use of in Egypt. *Gossellin.*

[1] Although generally described as an island, it was, like Mesopotamia, a district included between rivers: the city Meroë was situated in lat. 16° 44.

[2] Tacazze.

[3] Bahr-el-Azrek, or Blue river.

[4] See b. xvi. c. iv. § 8, and Herod. ii. 30, who calls the Sembritæ, Automoloi, that is, persons who had voluntarily quitted their abode.

from Meroë, and extend as far as the bends (of the river). They are not subject to the Ethiopians, but live independently, being distributed into several sovereignties.

The extent of Egypt along the sea, from the Pelusiac to the Canobic mouth, is 1300 stadia.

Such is the account of Eratosthenes.

3. We must, however, enter into a further detail of particulars. And first, we must speak of the parts about Egypt, proceeding from those that are better known to those which follow next in order.

The Nile produces some common effects in this and the contiguous tract of country, namely, that of the Ethiopians above it, in watering them at the time of its rise, and leaving those parts only habitable which have been covered by the inundation; it intersects the higher lands, and all the tract elevated above its current on both sides, which however are uninhabited and a desert, from an absolute want of water. But the Nile does not traverse the whole of Ethiopia, nor alone, nor in a straight line, nor a country which is well inhabited. But Egypt it traverses both alone and entirely, and in a straight line, from the lesser cataract above Syene and Elephantina, (which are the boundaries of Egypt and Ethiopia,) to the mouths by which it discharges itself into the sea. The Ethiopians at present lead for the most part a wandering life, and are destitute of the means of subsistence, on account of the barrenness of the soil, the disadvantages of climate, and their great distance from us.

Now the contrary is the case with the Egyptians in all these respects. For they have lived from the first under a regular form of government, they were a people of civilized manners, and were settled in a well-known country; their institutions have been recorded and mentioned in terms of praise, for they seemed to have availed themselves of the fertility of their country in the best possible manner by the partition of it (and by the classification of persons) which they adopted, and by their general care.

When they had appointed a king, they divided the people into three classes, into soldiers, husbandmen, and priests. The latter had the care of everything relating to sacred things (of the gods), the others of what related to man; some had the

management of warlike affairs, others attended to the concerns of peace, the cultivation of the ground, and the practice of the arts, from which the king derived his revenue.

The priests devoted themselves to the study of philosophy and astronomy, and were companions of the kings.

The country was at first divided into nomes.[1] The Thebaïs contained ten, the Delta ten, and the intermediate tract sixteen. But according to some writers, all the nomes together amounted to the number of chambers in the Labyrinth. Now these were less than thirty [six]. The nomes were again divided into other sections. The greater number of the nomes were distributed into toparchies, and these again into other sections ; the smallest portions were the arouræ.

An exact and minute division of the country was required by the frequent confusion of boundaries occasioned at the time of the rise of the Nile, which takes away, adds, and alters the various shapes of the bounds, and obliterates other marks by which the property of one person is distinguished

[1] The Nile valley was parcelled out into a number of cantons, varying in size and number. Each of these cantons was called a nome (*νομὸς*) by the Greeks, "præfectura oppidorum" by the Romans. Each had its civil governor, the Nomarch, who collected the crown revenues, and presided in the local capital and chief court of justice. Each nome too had its separate priesthood, its temple, chief and inferior towns, its magistrates, registration and peculiar creed, ceremonies and customs ; and each was apparently independent of every other nome. At certain seasons, delegates from the various cantons met in the palace of the Labyrinth, for consultation on public affairs (b. xvii. c. i. § 37). According to Diodorus, the nomes date from Sesostris. But they did not originate from that monarch, but emanated probably from the distinctions of animal worship; and the extent of the local worship probably determined the boundary of the nome. Thus in the nome of Thebaïs, where the ram-headed deity was worshipped, the sheep was sacred, the goat was eaten and sacrificed: in that of Mendes, where the goat was worshipped, the sheep was a victim and an article of food. Again, in the nome of Ombos, divine honours were paid to the crocodile: in that of Tentyra, it was hunted and abominated : and between Ombos and Tentyra there existed an internecine feud.

> Ardet adhuc Ombos et Tentyra : summus utrinque
> Inde furor vulgo, quod numina vicinorum
> Odit uterque locus, cum solos credat habendos
> Esse deos, quos ipse colit. Juv. xv. 35.

The extent and number of the nomes cannot be ascertained. They probably varied with the political state of Egypt. See *Smith*, art. Ægyptus.

from that of another. It was consequently necessary to measure the land repeatedly. Hence it is said geometry originated here, as the art of keeping accounts and arithmetic originated with the Phœnicians, in consequence of their commerce.[1]

As the whole population of the country, so the separate population in each nome, was divided into three classes ; the territory also was divided into three equal portions.

The attention and care bestowed upon the Nile is so great as to cause industry to triumph over nature. The ground by nature, and still more by being supplied with water, produces a great abundance of fruits. By nature also a greater rise of the river irrigates a larger tract of land; but industry has completely succeeded in rectifying the deficiency of nature, so that in seasons when the rise of the river has been less than usual, as large a portion of the country is irrigated by means of canals and embankments, as in seasons when the rise of the river has been greater.

Before the times of Petronius there was the greatest plenty, and the rise of the river was the greatest when it rose to the height of fourteen cubits; but when it rose to eight only, a famine ensued. During the government of Petronius, however, when the Nile rose twelve cubits only, there was a most abundant crop; and once when it mounted to eight only, no famine followed. Such then is the nature of this provision for the physical state of the country. We shall now proceed to the next particulars.

4. The Nile, when it leaves the boundaries of Ethiopia, flows in a straight line towards the north, to the tract called the Delta, then "cloven at the head," (according to the expression of Plato,) makes this point the vertex, as it were, of a triangle, the sides of which are formed by the streams, which separate on each side, and extend to the sea, one on the right hand to Pelusium, the other on the left to Canobus and the neighbouring Heracleium, as it is called ; the base is the coast lying between Pelusium and the Heracleium.

An island was therefore formed by the sea and by both streams of the river, which is called Delta from the resemblance of its shape to the letter (Δ) of that name. The spot at the vertex of the triangle has the same appellation, because it is

[1] See b. xvi. c. ii. § 24.

the beginning of the above-mentioned triangular figure. The village, also, situated upon it is called Delta.

These then are two mouths of the Nile, one of which is called the Pelusiac, the other the Canobic and Heracleiotic mouth. Between these are five other outlets, some of which are considerable, but the greater part are of inferior importance. For many others branch off from the principal streams, and are distributed over the whole of the island of the Delta, and form many streams and islands; so that the whole Delta is accessible to boats, one canal succeeding another, and navigated with so much ease, that some persons make use of rafts [1] floated on earthen pots, to transport them from place to place.

The whole island is about 3000 stadia in circumference, and is called, as also the lower country, with the land on the opposite sides of the streams, the Delta.

But at the time of the rising of the Nile, the whole country is covered, and resembles a sea, except the inhabited spots, which are situated upon natural hills or mounds; and considerable cities and villages appear like islands in the distant prospect.

The water, after having continued on the ground more than forty days in summer, then subsides by degrees, in the same manner as it rose. In sixty days the plain is entirely exposed to view, and dries up. The sooner the land is dry, so much the sooner the ploughing and sowing are accomplished, and it dries earlier in those parts where the heat is greater.

The country above the Delta is irrigated in the same manner, except that the river flows in a straight line to the distance of about 4000 stadia in one channel, unless where some island intervenes, the most considerable of which comprises the Heracleiotic Nome; or, where it is diverted by a canal into a large lake, or a tract of country which it is capable of irrigating, as the lake Mœris and the Arsinoïte Nome, or where the canals discharge themselves into the Mareotis.

[1] In the text *ὀστράκινα πορθμεῖα* "earthen-ware ferry boats." The translation is not literal, but a paraphrase.

Hac sævit rabie imbelle et inutile vulgus
Parvula fictilibus solitum dare vela phaselis,
Et brevibus pictæ remis incumbere testæ.
Juv. xv. 126.

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