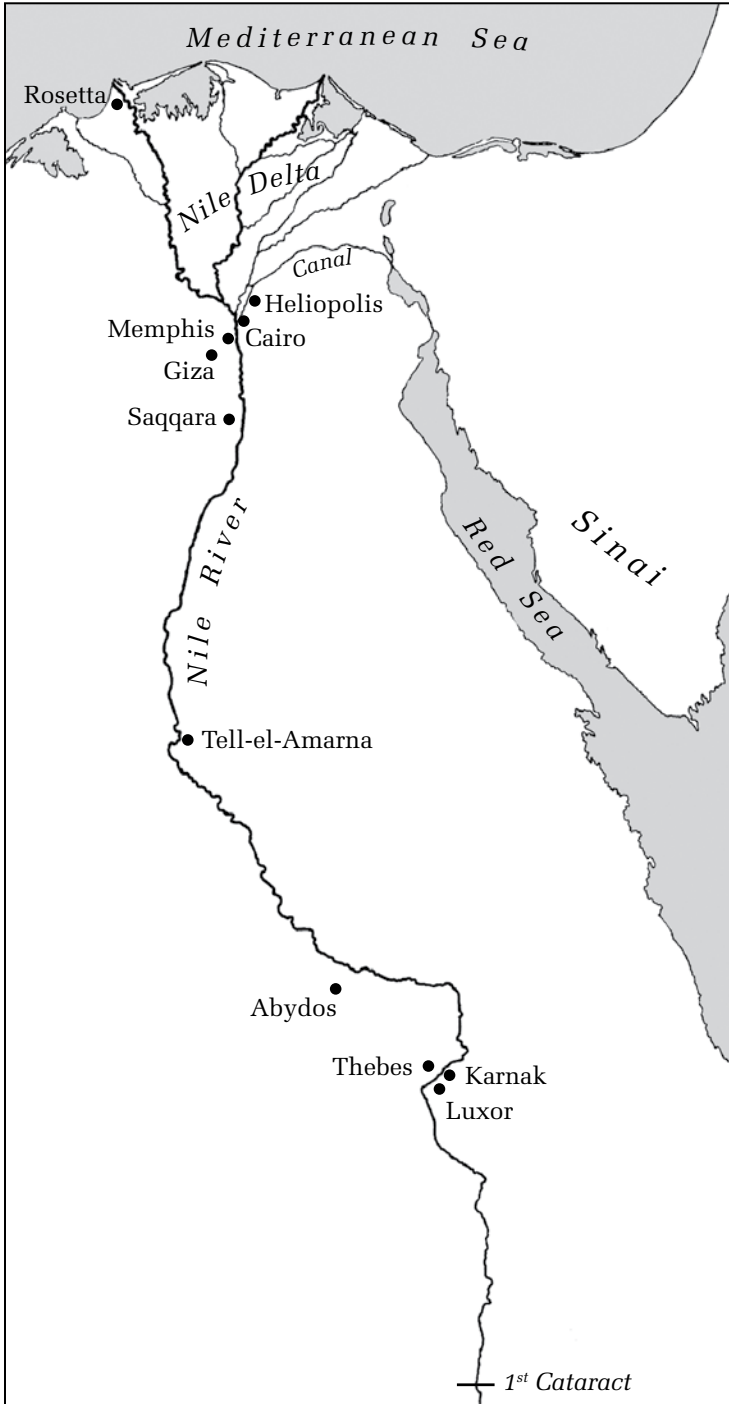


Egypt



CHAPTER ONE

THE LAND of EGYPT

EGYPT is one of the most interesting countries in the world. Its records are among the oldest, and it has had a long and wonderful history. This book is going to tell the story of those faraway days, thousands of years ago, in that interesting country, and we shall be able to learn how people lived then, how their houses were built and how they dressed, how they worked and traded and fought, how they amused themselves, and how they worshipped in their temples. In museums there are still to be seen many articles used by the Egyptians, things they had in their houses: jewelry, ornaments, weapons, and toys with which the children played. There is no other country in the world that can show us such ancient things as Egypt, and these things are not only interesting because they are old, but because they are the beginnings of many things that we use today: the first paper, the first writing, the first book, the first statue all came from Egypt.

Now, in every land, the shape of the country, the surroundings and the climate have had a great deal to do with the history of the people who lived there, and this is especially true of Egypt. If you look at the map, you will see that Egypt is a long and narrow country along the banks of the river Nile. Someone once described the shape of Egypt as being like that of a lily, the Nile being the long and crooked stem, and the Delta the flower. The Nile is about three thousand miles long, a little longer than the width across the Atlantic Ocean between Europe and America. Its source is in Victoria Nyanza in Central Africa, and it is known then as the White Nile; about thirteen hundred and fifty miles from the sea it is joined by the Blue Nile, and a hundred and forty miles further

on by the Atbara; after this junction the river flows on to the sea as a single stream, the Nile itself.

Egypt is very narrow compared to its length; it consists of the valley of the river and nothing more. Between the Nile and the Red Sea are the Arabian Mountains; they are wild and desolate and no Egyptian ever made them his home, but the region was used as a stone quarry, and there the Egyptians went to procure the great stones for their huge buildings. It was a dreary land, where famine and thirst and death reigned. Slaves were sent to work in the quarries, and many never returned. West of the Nile are the Libyan Mountains, just as desolate as the mountains in the east, and beyond these the land slopes down to the Desert of Sahara. The land of Egypt is, therefore, simply the strip of land lying on either bank of the Nile, about seven hundred miles in length, with desolate, lifeless mountains on each side as soon as the river valley is left behind. The width of the valley varies from ten to thirty miles; sometimes the mountains come so close to the river that there are only a few miles of fertile land on the bank. There is very little rain in Egypt, hardly any at all in Upper Egypt. The sky is a beautiful blue and the sun is always bright, so Egypt can be pictured as a bright shining river, with green banks, cliffs sloping up to the gray mountains, and brilliant undimmed sunshine over all.

An ancient Greek historian once said that "Egypt was the gift of the Nile." This saying is quite literally true, for it is the Nile that makes the country fertile. Perhaps you have already been wondering, how could anything grow in a country where it seldom or never rained? But in the mountains from which the Blue Nile and the Atbara come, there is a rainy season beginning about April. The rain comes down so heavily that the rivers rise and become very much swollen. The snows melt and all these waters rush into the main body of the stream, bringing with them rich