

# **CURIOSITIES OF EGYPT**

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Curiosities of Egypt by Various

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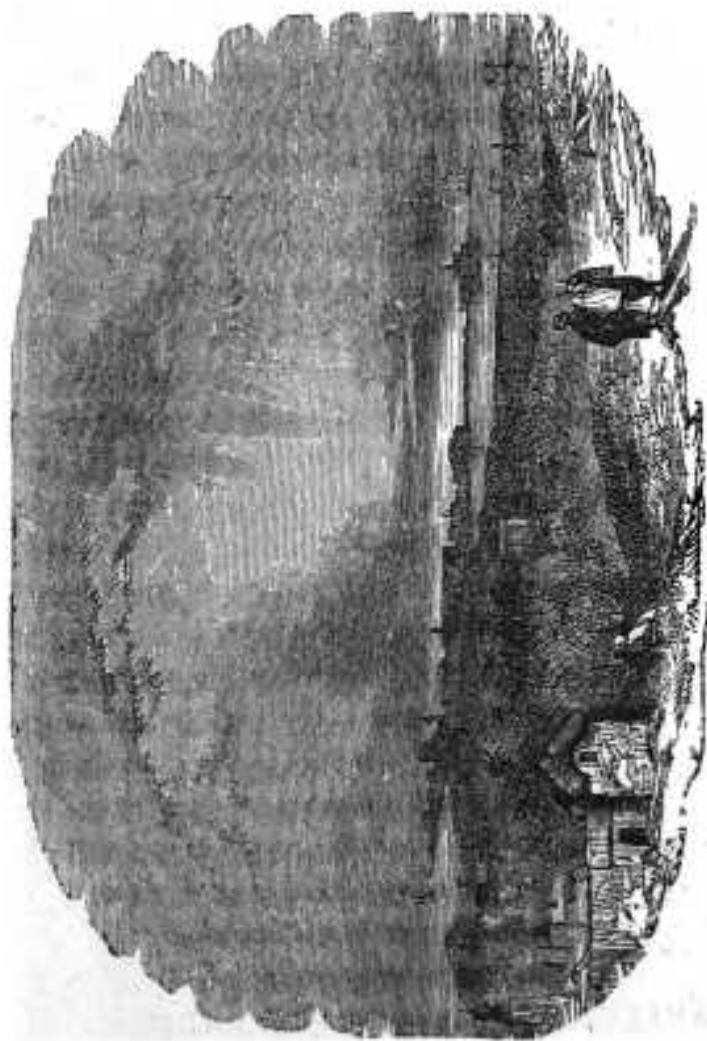
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**VARIOUS**

**CURIOSITIES  
OF EGYPT**





Alexandria. See p. 87.

*J. Quincy Jr.*

CURIOSITIES

OF

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## CHAPTER I.

THE NILE—ITS GENERAL APPEARANCE, RISE, AND CATA-  
RACTS—A VOYAGE ON THAT RIVER—THE CASES—  
PLANTS, QUADRUPEDS, AND INSECTS—MAGNIFICENT  
REMAINS OF ANCIENT GRANDEUR.

WHO has not heard of the Nile? From the high chains of Abyssinia, and the still loftier Mountains of the Moon that traverse Central Africa, numerous and ample streams descend, which, long before entering Egypt, form a river of the first magnitude. In its whole progress, the Nile does not receive the tribute of a single rivulet, yet so vast is its original store, that it reaches the Mediterranean, and pours a mighty stream into its waters. For many hundred miles, in the upper part of its course, confined as it is by high and rocky banks, the Nile is merely bordered by a brilliant belt of fertility, the

sandy waste stretching indefinitely on both sides: this is Nubia. Having passed the barrier of the cataracts, the Nile passes through a broad valley between mountains of some height, and on its banks are many shaded and inundated tracts, yielding products of considerable value: this is Upper Egypt. Emerging now from these mountains, the Nile enters a flat and extensive plain, where it separates, and, divided into two great streams, with various intersecting branches, enters Media: this is Lower Egypt. Thus Egypt exists solely by the Nile, and within the range of its action.

This great river has been emphatically called "the gift" of the country, consisting as it does of a spacious valley, bounded by mountains and deserts. When visited in the dry season, the eye beholds only a vast and dreary plain, shut in by bare and whitish elevations, over which a few trees and withered shrubs are scattered. But on the 18th or 19th of June, the waters begin to rise, and continue to increase till September, when they have attained their greatest height. And now the country resembles an immense lake;

and, amidst its waters, appear occasional patches of date and fig-trees, and also of acacias, tamarisks and willows. The fall of the waters is as gradual as the rise; and behind them are left the rich deposits of alluvial soil, in which spring up harvests so redundant as not to be surpassed in any region of the globe.

Much has been written about the Cataracts of Egypt, but the impression frequently produced is at variance with the fact. Leaving Assouan, the granite islets become every moment more frequent, and more boldly picturesque. Around, the wild duck and heron are flying; and the fisherman is diving and running about the rocks, traversing the stream in every direction. The single trunk of the palm-tree forms his raft; and, through round, he contrives to make it a seat, and to find a rest for his feet also. His bundle is on his head; his pipe in his mouth; his dirk tied to his arm; and, paddling with his hands, he manages not merely to retain his position, but even to ascend the stream. The river now finds its way between a small island and some blocks of granite, which cause a fall