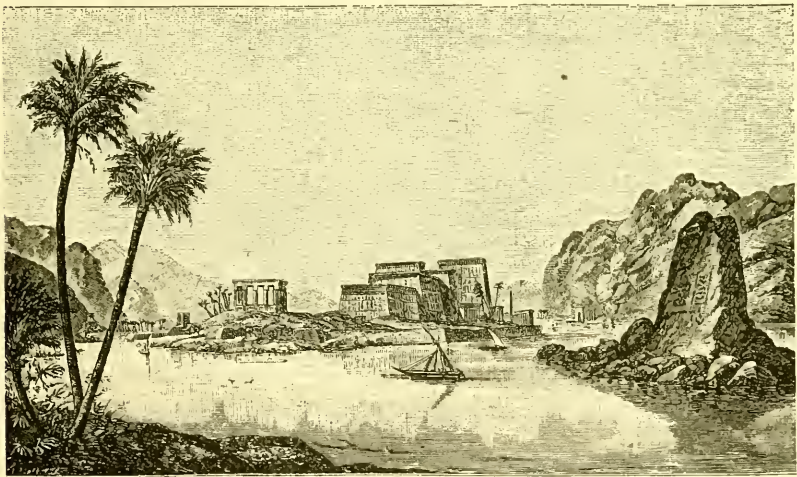


P'A-LEK.

BY THE EDITOR.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI! The most beautiful monument of Egyptian antiquity is wiped out from the face of the earth. P'a-lek or Philæ is submerged in the flood of the Nile and the highest buildings only appear above the surface of the water.



PHILÆ FROM THE NORTH. (After Langl.¹)

PHILÆ is the Hellenised form of the Egyptian PHILAK, a modification of PHALEK or PALEK which means "the Island of the End." "P" or "PH" is the article; "A" means "Island" and "LAK," "ceasing" or "finishing." Egyptian pilgrims called it by that name because here was the end and goal of their journey.

The island, the most southern of the several tombs of Osiris

¹ Reproduced from Erman's *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 8.

was sacred to the spouse of the god, to the divine wife and mother, Lady Isis, Queen of Heaven.

It is now known under its Greek name "Philæ" all over the civilised world but the natives of Egypt and Nubia call it Gezîret Anas-el-Wogûd after the hero of a love story in the "Arabian Nights."

And, indeed, the island has always been famous for the peculiar charm of its fairy tale atmosphere. Under the cloudless sky of Egypt it lay like a green emerald, all the more precious by the contrast to the bare gray rocks which surrounded its northern shore. As a gem is set on a silver foil, so it rises from the shining current



THE TEMPLE OF ISIS. — PANORAMA

of the mysterious river. The serene columns and temple walls, painted in gay colors, were fringed with lofty date palms, and the quietude of the near desert on either side of the granite bluffs made this fascinating spot a fit retreat for religious contemplation. A landscape poem, a hymn of adoration visualised, a dream of peace and bliss made real,—so Philæ appeared to many visitors that came from afar to worship the weird powers of the life and to be initiated into the mysteries which were confidently believed to give comfort in death, divine assistance to the soul in its journey through the land of shades, and strength to overcome the terrors of Hades.

A great dam at Assuan, which, it is hoped, will bring an annual increase to the Egyptian revenues of thirteen million dollars,

has there changed the valley of the river into a broad lake. A number of villages which dotted the banks are inundated, and one of the most sacred spots of pagan worship which has been visited by millions of worshippers in ancient days and remained down to modern times the goal of many thousands of curious travellers, scholars, and archæologists, is now fast becoming a booty of the floods. The water of the Nile now laves the columns of the temple walls, and the moisture creeps up to the mural paintings. It is only a question of time when they will be destroyed entirely and when the stones themselves will be underwashed and crumble away.



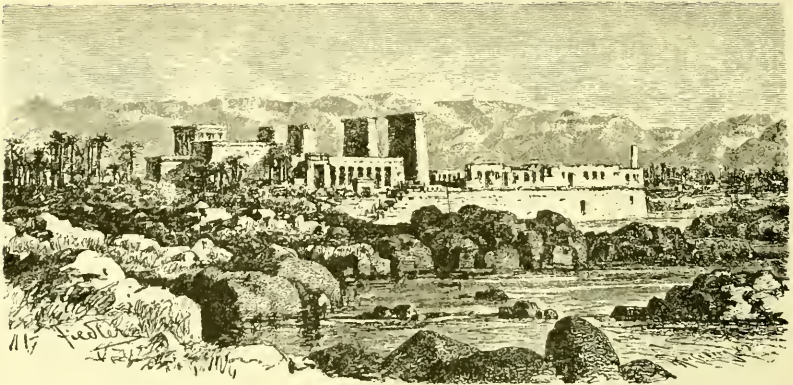
OF PHILÆ — THE KIOSK.

Philæ was a small granite island, only 1200 feet long and 450 feet broad, but it was famous on account of the sanctity of its ancient temple. Here, at the southern frontier of Egypt, remote from the turmoil of the busy world, must we seek the last resort of pagan devotees. This is the place where for several centuries after the rise of Christianity, in spite of the edicts of Theodosius prohibiting all pagan worship, the festival of Osiris continued to be celebrated, and where paganism had entrenched itself so strongly that it could be ousted only by force at a direct command of Emperor Justinian in the middle of the sixth century of the Christian era.

Philæ does not belong to Egypt proper. It is situated above the cataract at Assuan, in a district which was even in historical

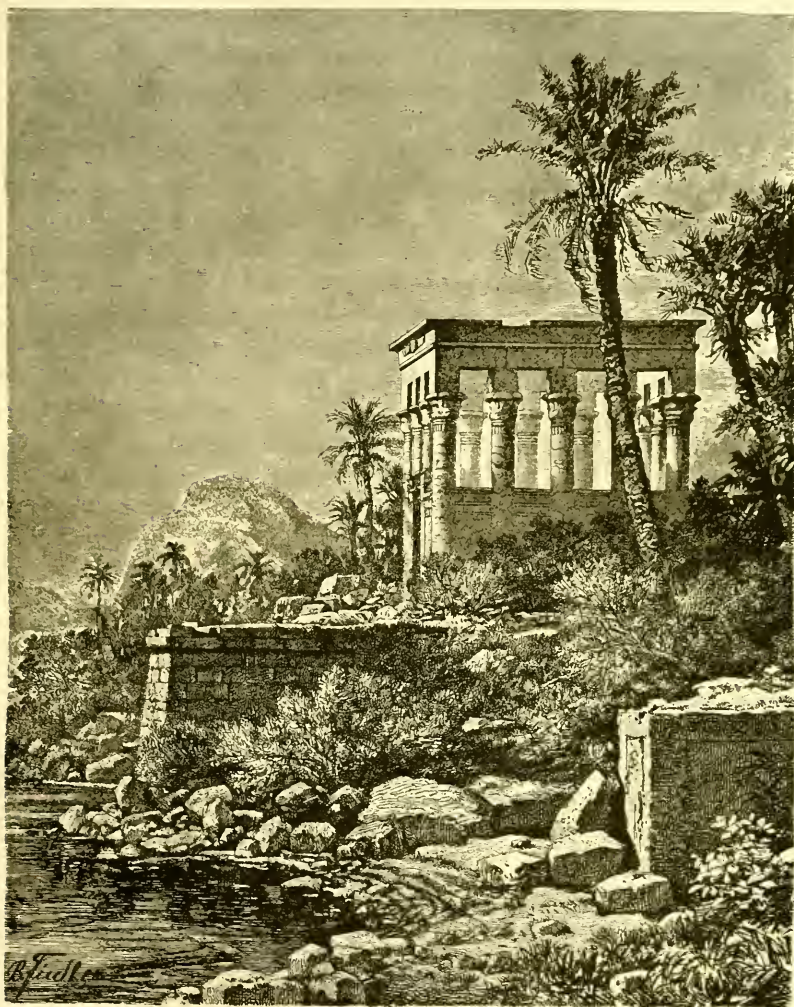


KING USIRTASEN'S STELE OF WADY HALFA.



PHILÆ FROM THE NORTHWEST.

times inhabited by savage tribes. The southern trade of the Egyptian inhabitants of Elephantine suffered much from deprivations until the kings of Egypt decided to establish their authority in this part of the country, and King Usirtasen I. of the twelfth dynasty



KIOSK OF PHILÆ, FROM THE NORTH.

(according to Budge about 2758 B. C.) succeeded in conquering the tribe of Konusit and extended the authority of the Pharaohs to Korosko, a place above the cataract of Wady Halfa, which is easily defended. There he built a fort on either bank of the Nile and

erected a triumphal stele in which he recorded his victory over the barbarians. Since then the sovereignty of Egypt in these parts remained forever firmly established.

Usirtasen's triumphal stele, which has been acquired by the Museum of Florence, has been repeatedly translated, first by Champollion, then by Rosellini, and finally by Berend.¹ The stele, which is dated the eighteenth year of Usirtasen,² commemorates a decisive victory over several negro tribes, the Kas, the Shemyk, the Khesaa, the Shat, the Akherkin, etc. It shows the King with a rope in his hand to which are attached ten names encircled in battlemented cartouches and mounted by the portraits of ten negro chiefs. The inscription declares that the King presented them bound and their arms tied on their backs before god Ammon and sacrificed them at the altar with his own hand.³

Philæ is situated within the territory conquered by Usirtasen I. and must have been used as a sacred spot since olden times, perhaps since the days of that great conqueror, but it is not mentioned before the reign of Nektanebas II., a king of the Thirtieth Dynasty who reigned in the middle of the fourth century B. C., when Egypt had lost its independence and had become a province of the Persian empire. It is touching to notice that the priests of Palek ignored the government of the foreign invader and clung to their legitimate king, recording his name as if he had ruled in fact, while we know that he was merely a private person and a powerless pretender.⁴

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

¹ *Principaux Monuments du Musée Egyptien de Florence*, pp. 51-52.

² The date is established by a fragment recently discovered by Captain Lyons.

³ See Budge, *History of Egypt*, Vol. I., p. 163, and Maspero, *Dawn of Civilisation*, p. 484.

⁴ *The Century Magazine* for October contains an illustrated article on "The Destruction of Philæ" by Alonzo Clark Robinson. The author denounces the destruction of the island as a "tragedy" and a "murder." He says: "The temple of Rameses III. at Thebes is more imposing, Karnak is larger, the Pyramids are older, the decorations which blaze upon the walls of Abydos are more varied and numerous, the pillars of Dendera excel in height and majesty; but Philæ was the most beautiful, the most loved."

The illustrations in *The Century Magazine* show the temple ruins in their present lamentable condition surrounded by the hostile waters of the risen river.