

Geology

There is no moisture in the air, no cloud in the sky; no mist veils the distance. One day follows another, each the counterpart of the preceding; until at length spring retires to make room for summer, and a fiercer light, a hotter sun, a longer day, show that the most enjoyable part of the year is gone by.

The geology of Egypt is simple. The entire flat country is alluvial. The hills on either side are, in the north, limestone, in the central region sandstone, and in the south granite and syenite. The granitic formation begins between the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth parallels, but occasional masses of primitive rock are intruded into the secondary regions, and these extend northward as far as lat. 27°10'. Above the rocks are, in many places, deposits of gravel and sand, the former hard, the latter loose and shifting.

A portion of the eastern desert is metalliferous. Gold is found even at the present day in small quantities, and seems anciently to have been more abundant. Copper, iron, and lead have been also met with in modern times, and one iron mine shows signs of having been anciently worked. Emeralds abound in the region about Mount Zabara, and the eastern desert further yields jaspers, carnelians, breccia verde, agates, chalcedonies, and rock-crystal. The flora of the country is not particularly interesting. Dom and date palms are the principal trees, the latter having a single tapering stem, the former dividing into branches.

The sycamore (*Ficus sycamorus*) is also tolerably common, as are several species of acacia. The acacia seyal, which furnishes the gum arable of commerce, is "a gnarled and thorny tree, somewhat like a solitary hawthorn in its habit and manner of growth, but much larger." Its height, when full grown, is from fifteen to twenty feet.