

General Monotony

Nor can Egypt, in the proper sense of the word, have ever been the home of red-deer, roes, or fallow-deer, of lions, bears, hyænas, lynxes, or rabbits. Animals of these classes may occasionally have appeared in the alluvial plain, but they would only be rare visitants driven by hunger from their true habitat in the Libyan or the Arabian uplands.

The crocodile, however, and the hippopotamus were actually hunted by the ancient Egyptians; and they further indulged their love of sport in the pursuits of fowling and fishing.

All kinds of waterfowl are at all seasons abundant in the Nile waters, and especially frequent the pools left by the retiring river—pelicans, geese, ducks, ibises, cranes, storks, herons, dotterels, kingfishers, and sea-swallows. Quails also arrive in great numbers in the month of March, though there are no pheasants, snipe, wood-cocks, nor partridges. Fish are very plentiful in the Nile and the canals derived from it; but there are not many kinds which afford much sport to the fisherman.

Altogether, Egypt is a land of tranquil monotony. The eye commonly travels either over a waste of waters, or over a green plain unbroken by elevations. The hills which inclose the Nile valley have level tops, and sides that are bare of trees, or shrubs, or flowers, or even mosses. The sky is generally cloudless. No fog or mist enwraps the distance in mystery; no rainstorm sweeps across the scene; no rainbow spans the empyrean; no shadows chase each other over the landscape. There is an entire absence of picturesque scenery.