

THE UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

NO. III—JAN.—FEB., 1891.

I. LITERARY.

OTHERWORLDLINESS IN ANCIENT EGYPT.

PROF. W. W. MOORE.

The land of Egypt is a picture of life in the midst of death. The narrow valley of the Nile teems with life from end to end, but it is shut in on both sides by the deadly desert. The people who of old occupied this rich green river bottom, a hundred times as long as it is wide, and flanked throughout its whole course by wastes of yellow sand, were observant, thoughtful, and in their way profoundly religious. This idea of life in the midst of death, of which their land itself was an ever present emblem, seems never to have been absent from their minds. No people perhaps in the history of this world ever lived so exclusively for another world; nor was this altogether to their credit, as we shall presently see. But the thought of death and a future life is a solemn thought, however much men may abuse it by making it the only incentive to righteousness. And therefore the overshadowing predominance of this thought in the minds of the ancient Egyptians gave to their civilization a grave and even sombre cast, and to their monuments that air of august solemnity, deepening even to gloom, which to this day distinguishes their melancholy magnificence from the ruins of any other civilization however stately.

THE SCARABAEUS.

Being sharp-sighted naturalists, the Egyptians seem to have been impressed at an early period of their history with the habits of a certain insect which is very common in their country, viz:—the beetle or scarab. They observed that the beetle deposited its eggs on the moist bank of the river, but instead of leaving them there to be swept away by the inundation or otherwise injuriously affected by the dampness, it enclosed

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

REV. R. L. DABNEY, D. D., LL.D.

The sun stood flaming o'er the western deep,
Dying its troops of clouds and purple plain ;
With red and gold ; while up the lower steep
Of Nebo, stole the slanting shade to gain
His naked brow. Then came there up to meet
The evening rays a reverend man, with step
Sedate, but grand ; and steadfast eyes which greet
The opposing sun, mournful yet strong to face
His fiercest beams. His locks and beard are white
As Hermon's crest, which props the northward sky ;
Yet limb and feature more instinct with might
Of manhood, and the soul that doth not die.
On topmost height he pauses, pedestal meet
For Israel's Prophet King, the goodliest man
Earth ever saw, since Adam from his seat
Reviewed his Paradise. Thus, he to scan
The scene stood long, then spake :—
The heritage
To Abram pledged I see ! Oh goodly land,
To which our Patriarchs turned from age to age
With longing faith, to which my guiding hand
Hath led the tribes, as sires their infant charge,
For forty weary years, through burning sands.
Thy face how grand, thy boundaries how large !
Not like those pastures where we wore the bonds
Of our disgrace, parched with torrid heats,
Or drenched with turbid floods. But thou dost drink
From crystal founts that hold their airy seats
In Heaven, fed from old ocean's farthest brink.
Thy features how harmonious, yet sublime !
Northward a wall of green, whose summits pierce
The lofty heavens, I see ; but ere they climb
Into the clouds, put on a robe diverse.
Can earth-born things assume a garb so pure ?
How do black scar, and tawny peak outvie
The fairest tints of cloudland, yet endure,
Unmoved amid their change, the while the sky
Doth kiss the earth ! 'Tis Hermon clad in snow,
Celestial raiment, woven of frozen dew,
(A sight which sweltering Egypt could not know.)
In awful beauty, here mine eye doth view
The Giant preacheth to thee, Oh my soul !
Thus must God's robe of heavenly righteousness,
Blood-washed, thine earthly soil of sin enroll,
Ere thou canst soar and meet the skies in peace.

This side the mighty ramparts' foot, behold
 The upper lake, mid its encircling hills,
 Gleams like a mirror, which enameled gold.
 Binds with its rim. Here Jordan lights
 His verdant vale with many a sinuous coil.
 Beyond, hills rise and fertile valleys spread
 And plains expand, teeming with wine and oil
 And plenteous corn; whose glittering streams are fed
 From springs perennial, mounts like billowy waves
 Which winter's breath congealed e'en as they rose
 I see: within whose veins and darkling caves
 Lie riches, matching what their fields enclose
 Iron and ruddy brass. Here at my feet
 Sheer down two thousand cubits, sullen sleeps
 The lake of doom, (hemmed in by borders meet
 Of savage crags and thunder riven heaps.)
 Above the *uncrowned* cities of the plain.
 Beyond those ridges spreads an azure band,
 Which shows us where old ocean doth restrain
 The western margin of the utmost land.
 Here is thy home, Oh Israel! here thy rest.
 In these green vales thy dwelling thou shalt plant,
 And on these swelling hills thy God hath blest,
 Here shalt thou guard the holy covenant
 I gave you, taught by future line of seers;
 While peace shall multiply thy teeming seed
 To fill the land, until the promised years
 Of Shiloh come whose hand divine shall lead
 Your hosts, and wield at once my kingly rod,
 The Prophets crook, and Aaron's censer lit
 With heavenly flame; and shed that awful blood
 (Which meaner streams where e'er our altars sit,
 Dimly foreshadow,) that shall cleanse the world.
 From yonder hills, with Israel's temple crowned,
 Messiah's flag of peace shall be unfurled,
 While earths remotest nations gather round
 To catch his gospel light, and learn his ways.
 The Sun of Righteousness shall on that hill,
 Hold his fixed zenith, and from thence his rays
 With light and holiness and peace shall fill
 All gentile lands, the foul and bloody seat
 Of the usurper Satan. Israel's race.
 Nation of Priests, shall lead their willing feet
 And cleansed hearts to seek Jehovah's face.
 All lands shall Canaan's be, and this our home
 Again the Paradise of God. But I,
 Such his decree! I must not hope to come
 To that good land; but look and long and die!
 Would it were mine (can mortals hearts suffice
 To check the wish) to lead my people still

In this, the crisis of their great emprise
 To prosperous ends, and so my charge fulfil.
 Across the stream, yon city of the Palms
 Pollutes its goodly seat with noisome sin.
 I hear its trumpets blow their loud alarms ;
 Its saucy warriors with defiant din
 Insult the air, and crowd the hither wall
 Like moiling ants : the blazonry of hell
 Inscribed on streamers, flags, and pennons tall.
 Likeness of Molock, Ashtaroth and Belle,
 And Dagon, Scaly God, affronts the skies,
 Thrusting incarnate fiends, who personate
 Murder and brutish lust, blaspheming lies,
 And rites obscene, into the holy state,
 Of our Jehovah. I, a dying man,
 Denounce your doom of death. Earth could not bear
 The sins of Sodom longer which out-ran
 God's longest patience—yours beyond compare
 Exceed your fathers'. See their ghastly tomb
 Beneath yon bitter waves, whose funeral stroke
 Measures the tread of your approaching doom.
 Fain would I live to see those ramparts broke.
 To head those martial hosts I taught to tame
 The rage of Sihon and of Bashan's king,
 Jehovah's banner, folds of cloud and flame,
 Should to the topmost sky their terrors fling.
 My great Lieutenant and my dog of war,
 Jephunneh's stalwart son, would I unlash.
 My trumpets' summons, Israel's fierce hurrah,
 And charge resistless, should these bulwarks dash
 Like flimsy shreds away ; whose wrecks should be
 Defiled graves forever for God's foes.
 Or if such moments must not come to me.
 In which the joy of battle overflows
 The hero's spirit, there were calm delights
 For which I yearned. I hoped to see the tribes,
 Seated in prosperous peace with ordered rights
 In this good land, where holy priests and scribes,
 Not Captains stern, should teach the milder ways
 Of love and faith ; and gentle evening Psalms
 Instead of trumpets blare should close the days,
 Swelled by sweet mothers sitting neath their palms,
 And childrens' voices soft. I thought to share
 The sacred rapture of that final feast,
 When all our hosts, purged from stains of war,
 Shall to the altar come with grateful breast
 In long procession, while the silvery note
 Of Levites horns, and choirs of chanting priests
 Make the high echoes of our anthem float
 From earth to Heavens own arch ; and smoking beasts

Of holocaust and incense pure shall raise
 Their cloudy columns, fragrant with our thanks,
 To speak to God a ransomed nations praise.
 When I had led my people's jubilee,
 Should come my rest, perpetual Sabbath rest,
 With brain and heart, and weary members free
 From those hard toils which had my life oppressed.
 The king in Jeshurun no more, but only one
 Among my equal brethren, should I dwell
 In my own modest home, my life-work done;
 And to my children's children daily tell
 God's works and laws; until, as yonder sun,
 Whose nether limb e'en now doth touch the deep,
 His toilsome race of power and splendor run,
 Sinks in his azure bed to quiet sleep
 Amid serenest lights; thus should I seek
 The grave, my couch of calm and glorious rest.
 But why this earth-born wish, as vain as weak!
 Against that fixed decree, that stern arrest
 Of hope and life? I must not cross this flood,
 Nor share those joys, debarred by my offense,
 Once small appearing; till thy chastening rod,
 Oh Father, taught me and the clearer sense,
 My conscience gains from heaven's approaching light,
 I bow my guilty head; for thou hadst placed
 My state so high, no trespass could be slight
 Which I might work, nor folly, which disgraced
 Thy power, deputed to my creature hand.
 Just is my sentence, black my sin with pride
 And heat, forgetful of thy strict command.
 So thy sole glory fain would I divide
 Betwixt myself and thee. Oh wish profane!
 As though thy rod of power were mine to wield.
 Blessed be God! 'tis not a wrathful blow
 Which smites my sin, but those soft strokes that yield
 Medicinal cure: And that blest stream which flows
 Along the ages from his smitten rock,
 Prefigured by the meaner blood we draw
 From dying substitutes of herd or flock,
 Hath washed me white from guilt of broken law.
 Thou chastening, pitying God, I bow to thee
 In peace supreme, my fond desire recall
 From earth and time, to find in Heaven and thee
 My home, my land, my church, my all in all!
 Now earth, and sea, and sky, and sun, farewell!
 I look my last, nor would the look renew.
 A fairer scene than Canaan casts its spell
 On my enraptured spirit. To my view
 A purer radiance rises, at whose beams
 Yon sinking orb looks dull. I see from whence

This flood ineffable of glory streams,
 Not by corporeal eyes, but inner sense
 Of spiritual sight, which to my soul reveals,
 The Heavenly gates, whiter than Hermon's snow,
 And loftier than his peaks. And from them peals
 Celestial harmony, whose accents flow
 In mingled strains, so soft, so high, so clear,
 Our Sanctuary's psalms, discordant sound.
 Earth, thou art naught. My ravished heart and ear
 Forget thy charms. Upon this verdant ground
 I lay me down, weak with excess of bliss,
 To drink the glory in with steady gaze.
 The vision brighter glows. What trance is this,
 Which thus exhausts my soul with glad amaze?
 I feel the fanning wings of Cherubim,
 I hear their voices whisper: 'Brother, come!'
 Now death, thou vanquished foe, lead me to Him
 Whose bosom is my everlasting home.

Moses dies. Satan appears rising from a dark ravine to seize his body, but Michael with a troop of Angels repulses him with majestic and grave rebuke; whereupon his company bear away the corpse to its burial, chanting a hymn to Messiah.

