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THE RED RIVER NILE.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLANATION OF A MIRACLE.

Accounting For the Processes by Which the Water Turned to Blood at the Command of Moses—A Plant May Have Been the Natural Element Employed.

The account of the turning of the waters of the Nile into blood is found in Exodus vii, 16-25. At the command of God, Moses stretched out the symbolic rod, itself a miraculous portent, over the waters and smote the Nile in the sight of Pharaoh. "And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that were in the river died, and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river." The miracle extended to all the canals and reservoirs and even domestic supplies of Egypt, as verse 19 says, "Upon their streams (canals), upon their rivers (branches of the Nile), upon their ponds (or lakes) and upon all their pools of water (reservoirs) and upon the water both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone"—that is, the stone cisterns at the corners of the streets, and the domestic vessels in the houses. In this account, may not one say in passing that, in the very description of the operation of the plague, the historian proves his intimate acquaintance with the details of the geography of Egypt and of the home life of its people, which is strongly presumptive of personal observation of what he describes? Is there anything like it today in the phenomena of the Nile—that is, is there any natural condition of the Nile which the miracle could lay hold of and by intensification produce the plague?

For answer, says a writer in an English periodical, let me begin with a quotation from Osburn's "Monumental History of Egypt." It will lead up to the full explanation. "The sun," says Mr. Osburn, "was just rising over the Arabian hills, and I was surprised to see that the moment its beams struck the water a deep red reflection was caused. The intensity of the red grew with the increase of the light, so that even before the disk of the sun had risen completely above the hills the Nile offered the appearance of a river of blood. Suspecting some illusion, I rose quickly and, leaning over the side of the boat, found my first impression confirmed. The entire mass of the waters was opaque and of a dark red, more like blood than anything else to which I could compare it. At the same time, I saw that the river had risen some inches during the night, and the Arabs came to tell me it was the red Nile."

I do not use this common phenomenon of the Nile as an explanation of the plague, because the red Nile, although it has the appearance of blood, has none of the other deadly effects of the miracle. On the contrary, it is said that the waters of the red Nile are specially delicious and refreshing. But yet it does point us in the direction we must go for our geographical identification of the natural phenomenon and the miraculous plague, for the reddening material which is in the change and which may be healthy in a degree of moderation may become fatal when present in an excess such as the plague takes for granted. The question is, Is there what may be called a blood material present in the common phenomenon, and is there any proof that it can assume such deadly intensification as is seen in the miracle?

The naturalist Ehrenberg has investigated the cause of this blood appearance of the Nile and has shown that it arises from the presence, not of mud, as was for a long time supposed, but of infusoria and minute cryptogamous plants of a red color. As soon as we know this we can see the operation of the miracle—its operation, though, of course, not its originating power—for one of these plants is the alga, and the algæ, so minute in itself (there are from 46,656,000,000,000 to 884,736,000,000,000 of plants in a cubic inch), is capable of the most astonishing reproductiveness. It increases so rapidly that it actually flows. The whole bay of the Red sea in 1823 was turned to the color of blood by its presence, and the Elbe seemed to run blood from the same cause at the beginning of this century. Imagine, then, this alga, stimulated by divine power to an abnormal excess, increasing so as not only to color the water, but to possess it, to thicken it indeed into the consistency of blood with frightful productiveness, and then you have the plague.

An illustration of such a fact is quoted by Geikie from Siliman's Journal. He says that there is an account of a fountain in a cave in South America which flowed like blood, whose fluid seemed to grow solid, and when it was placed in bottles it worked in them and burst them, and dogs could eat it, and did so greedily. The miracle of Moses only needed to intensify the flowing increase of the alga to something like this degree, and then we reach the condition of the recorded plague, for it is certain that the Nile has been known not only to have the same look, but also to have been bloodlike and to have remained fetid for months.—Washington Star.

SKELETON IN ARMOR.

An Uncanny Relic of Colonial Days Found In Virginia.

There is an uncanny relic of colonial barbarity on exhibition at Colonial Beach, Va., a summer resort about 65 miles down the Potomac, which may soon be added to the curiosities of the National museum. It is in a tent in front of Wood's hotel, presided over by William Henry Harrison Cawood, the discoverer and owner of the horrible looking object.

The relic in question is a human skeleton incased in an iron armor or frame. The metal is nearly eaten away with the rust of ages and most of the bones have fallen from the rude casement. The skull and leg bones remain in the cage, however, and it would require the services of a blacksmith to remove them.

Mr. Cawood was a road overseer in King George county, Va., several months ago, and while engaged with a gang of laborers in repairing a roadway in that historical old bailiwick the skeleton in armor was unearthed. The workmen were cutting for dirt with hoes in an old field to fill up a hole in the highway when one of them struck an iron substance a short distance beneath the surface. When unearthed, it proved to be the rusted armor, or cage, containing the skeleton of a man who in life was over six feet in height. As soon as the air came in contact with the skeleton some of the bones fell away. The skull, however, remained firm in the crown piece. Near the cage were found four plain brass buttons the size of a half dollar. This led some people to believe that the skeleton was that of an English or Spanish officer of colonial days, who was welded into the iron frame, hung on a gibbet or tree and allowed to starve to death in public.

Another theory is that it was a pirate, who, with his rakish craft, infested the waters of the lower Potomac and Chesapeake bay and preyed upon incoming merchantmen. Others believe that the skeleton was that of an Indian chief named Passpatawnsie, who massacred and robbed the early settlers. His bloodthirsty disposition gained for him the appellation of "the fierce chief."

Old settlers in King George county believe Cawood's find was the remains of "the fierce chief." They say the outraged settlers seized the red man, and, while alive, had blacksmiths build about him the roughly constructed frame or cage. He was then hanged to the limb of a tree or gibbet and allowed to perish.

The records of all the counties in the northern neck of Virginia have been searched as far back as 1650 to see if anything could be learned of this terrible instrument of torture, but nothing could be found that would throw any light upon it. King George was taken from Richmond county, which is the oldest organized bailiwick in the northern neck of Virginia. The counties of Richmond, King George, Westmoreland, Lancaster and Northumberland comprise the northern neck. They lie between the Potomac and Rappahanock rivers. They have been under both Spanish and English rule. The records of all of them were searched back to 1650, it is said, without avail.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

A Historic Whist Hand.

One of the historic hands at whist was once held by the duke of Cumberland—a hand which at first glance seemed to be absolutely unbeatable, but which did not take a trick. The duke held ace, king, queen and knave in one plain suit; ace, king, queen in another; ace and king in the third; while in trumps he held king, knave, nine and seven (of clubs). Yet with this perfectly magnificent hand and the lead, leading also quite correctly, he did not make a single trick.

This seems incredible, but the solution of the problem is readily seen by the following facts: The four trumps lying just over those held by the Duke of Cumberland—viz, the ace, queen, ten and eight—were on his left, with nine diamonds, while on his right were five small trumps. He led a trump, which was taken on his left, and a diamond led—trumped on his right. Another trump was led through him, which was similarly taken, and another diamond led, which was also trumped on his right.

Another trump led through the duke caused his last trump but one to fall. The last was then extracted by the player on his left. The duke had now no diamonds, that being the suit of which he had held only the ace and king. Then the diamonds on his left were as good as trumps and made all the remaining tricks. The duke is said to have lost a wager of £20,000 in connection with this hand.—Pearson's Weekly.

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Under and by virtue of authority contained in a bill of sale from J. W. Willis to A. G. Pascault, assignee, I will offer at public auction on the

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WEDNESDAY, NOV. 11th, 1896,

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ORDER NISI.

Alexis G. Pascault, Trustee,
vs.
Charles M. Jump and wife.

In the Circuit Court for Talbot County.
In Equity.

Ordered by the Circuit Court for Talbot county this 23d day of October, A. D. 1896, that the sale of the property mentioned in these proceedings made and reported by Alexis G. Pascault, Trustee, be ratified and confirmed, unless cause to the contrary thereof be shown on or before the 21st day of December next; provided, a copy of this order be inserted in some newspaper printed in Talbot county once in each of three successive weeks before the 23d day of November next.

The report states the amount of sales to be $8048.44.

WILFRED BATEMAN, Clerk.
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