

THE PRINTING ART SUGGESTION BOOK

A MONTHLY JOURNAL PRESENTING HELPFUL
SUGGESTIONS AND NEW IDEAS AS TO
THE USE OF PAPERS, INKS
ENGRAVINGS, ETC.



APRIL, 1913
Vol. XI · No. 3

ISSUED THE FIFTEENTH OF EACH MONTH
BY THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.



Printed on HANCOCK COATED BOOK
White, 25 × 38 – 100 lbs. Manufactured by
Stone & Andrew, Inc., Boston and New York



THE ROAD TO LAKE MOMBASHA, N. Y.

Photo by Vernon Royle. Engraved by Cincinnati Process Engraving Co., Cincinnati, Ohio





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Annual Subscription in the United States and Canada, \$1.00; Foreign, \$2.00. Copy and cuts for advertisements should be received not later than the fifteenth of the month preceding the date of publication. Inserts should be delivered not later than the thirteenth of the month. Particulars as to size, style, quantity required, etc., given upon request. Advertising rate cards and further particulars forwarded on application

C. F. Whitmarsh, General Manager

The University Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.

VOLUME XI

APRIL, 1913

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PAPYRUS AND PARCHMENT*



HE graceful water-plant whose plummy, drooping heads were swayed by the breezes that ruffled the waters of the Nile was one of the most useful plants known to Egypt, in whose commerce it long held a leading place. As early as 2000 B. C., or five hundred years before Moses led the children of Israel out of bondage, there was made from its smooth green stems a material called by the same name, papyrus, a kind of crude paper, which came into universal use, and was so valuable and in such great demand that one of the kings proposed to maintain his army from the sale of this product alone. The plant was the familiar bulrush of the Nile, which grew in forest-like profusion along the banks of that mighty stream; and from its strong stems was woven the ark in which the infant Moses was hidden away "among the flags by the river's brink," and so saved from



Courtesy of Arthur L. Race Company, Brookline, Mass.

the death that menaced him under Pharaoh's cruel decree. The Egyptian papyrus was thus the means of preserving to the world the life of the greatest lawgiver of history. It has been equally instrumental in perpetuating the code of laws whose principles still serve as foundation for the jurisprudence of the leading nations of the earth, nearly four thousand years after they were first promulgated to his own people, the wandering tribes in the desert.

The papyrus, a tall, smooth-stemmed reed of triangular form, grew to a height of ten or fifteen feet, and terminated in a tufted plume of leaves and flowers. Like so many plants that grow beneath the ardent skies of the tropics, it had numerous uses. It was noted especially for the soft, cellular substance found in the interior of its stems, which was a common article of food, both cooked and in its natural state. It was employed also for the making of mats, sail-cloth, cordage, and wearing apparel;

while in Abyssinia, in whose marshes it is still to be found, boats were fashioned by weaving the stems closely together and covering them with a sort of resinous matter. At a very

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early day, judging from sculptures of the fourth dynasty, Egypt made a similar use of the papyrus, employing it in the construction of light skiffs suited to the navigation of the

removed, exposing an interior made up of numerous successive fiber layers, some twenty in number. These were separated with a pointed instrument, or needle, arranged side by side on a hard, smooth table, crossed at right angles with another set of slips placed above, and then dampened. After pressure had been applied for a number of hours, the sheets were taken out and rubbed with a piece of ivory, or with a smooth stone or shell, until the desired surface was obtained, when the process was complete, except for drying in the sun. The inner layers of the plant furnished the best product, the outer ones being coarse and suitable only for the making of cordage. Single sheets made in this way were fastened together, as many as might be required, to form the papyrus rolls, of which hundreds have been discovered in recent years. It is said that the Romans, when they undertook the manufacture of papyrus, made a great improvement in the sheets by sizing them with flour, to which a few drops of vinegar were added, and then beating the surface smooth. The Chinese, far away to the East, also learned some of the secrets of paper-making. It is believed that in early times they used silk as their basis, but later on they made the so-called rice-paper by a method similar to that employed in the manufacture of papyrus, deftly cutting a continuous slice from the pith of the papyrifera.



Courtesy of Macullar-Parker Co., Boston

pools and shallows of the Nile. It is believed that Isaiah referred to boats of this sort when he spoke of the "vessels of bulrushes upon the waters." But valuable as the papyrus was through these manifold uses, its enduring fame was due to an entirely different source. It held closely wrapped within its green stems the scrolls upon which, through hundreds of years, the history and literature of the world were to be written; and that fact alone was sufficient to engrave its name deeply on the thoughts and memories of men.

In the manufacture of this Egyptian paper, papyrus, the outer rind of the stem was first

number of words. The plant itself, called papyrus in the Latin tongue, byblos in the Greek, has given us the two words paper and bible. It is claimed further that the process of furrowing off the different layers of the pith gave us, through the Greek word *charasso* *χαρασσω*, to furrow, and the Greek and Latin *charta*, a piece of paper, our several words chart, card, carte blanche, and, of course, the "charta" of that famous document, Magna Charta, the great sheet-anchor of English liberties. In the course of manufacture, twenty sheets of papyrus were glued together into a scapus by the glutinatorie, the first known

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bookbinders, and then into a roll known as a volumer, from which we get our word volume. The city of Paris boasts a volumer of this sort, a papyrus manuscript, well preserved, which is thirty feet in length.

The rolls, or papyri, are said to have become known in Europe through the French expedition into Egypt in 1798, and specimens

has the largest collection of ancient papyri west of the Atlantic, consisting of three hundred complete pieces and hundreds of fragments, which were discovered by an Arab sheik while digging along the banks of the Nile.

Following the making of papyrus came the manufacture of parchment, the use of which in diplomas and certain public documents



A WILLOW-SHADED BYWAY

Engraved by Gatchel & Manning, Philadelphia

were reproduced in print by Cadet in 1805. The extent to which it was employed may be judged by the fact that nearly 1,800 rolls were unearthed in the ruins of Herculaneum, about the year 1753. The durability of this substance added greatly to its value, and it is claimed that the ancient papyrus manuscripts that have been properly preserved are almost as serviceable today as when first made. It is doubtful whether a similar statement can be made four thousand or even two thousand years hence in regard to many of the books printed on nineteenth-century paper. Chicago

continues to the present time. As the story runs, the invention of the new writing material was due to the spirit of rivalry between two cities of the ancient world. Attalus, king of Pergamus, was anxious to establish in his capital a library that would excel the splendid collection at Alexandria, but Egypt, having a monopoly of papyrus, refused to sell to him. But no monopoly of that day or this could ever control all the means of supplying man's needs. Nature is resourceful, and man, when driven by necessity, soon learns that her treasures are practically limitless. When

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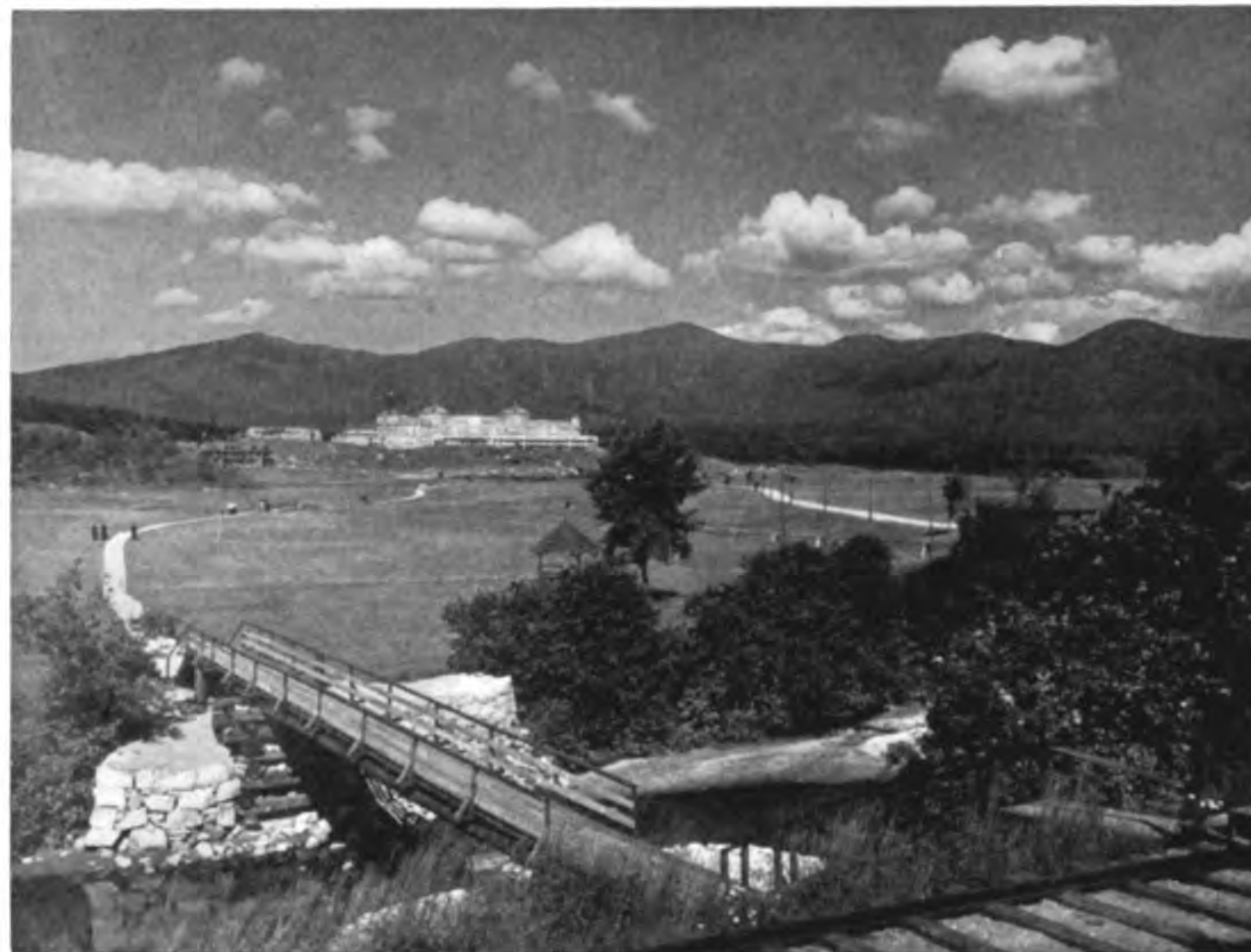
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