

110918_notes about today's lesson:

During the lesson today, I mentioned a woman author whose book describing experiences in Egypt contained some interesting comments. I went on to mention I had found this book in the Digital Library of the University of Pennsylvania. I thought some of you might be interested in links to this author and to this particular book.

The author is Amelia Edwards.

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/edwards/edwards.html>

The book is "Pharaohs, Fellahs, and Explorers" New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891.

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/edwards/pharaohs/pharaohs.html>

And the specific section I referred to is in chapter 2 of this book, "The Buried Cities of Egypt".

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/edwards/pharaohs/pharaohs-2.html>

About halfway through chapter 2, we find her description of storage chambers in Pithom:

"The mounds of Maskhûtah, as shown in our illustration, may be described as a series of undulating sand hillocks. In the distance is seen the little railway station, now disused; and here and there a dark pit excavated in the middle distance marks one of the store-chambers, or cellars, opened by M. Naville. Not only these cellars, but also the great wall of circuit twenty-four feet in thickness, were probably the work of the oppressed Hebrews.

"These subterranean store-chambers, magazines, granaries, or whatever it may please us to call them, are solidly built square chambers of various sizes, divided by massive partition walls about ten feet in thickness, without doors or any kind of communication, evidently destined to be filled and emptied from the top by means of trap-doors and ladders. Except the corner occupied by the temple, the whole area of the great walled enclosure is honey-combed with these cellars.

"They are, as I have said, well and solidly built. The bricks are large, and are made of Nile mud pressed in a wooden mould and dried in the sun. Also they are bedded in with mortar, which is not common, the ordinary method being to bed them with mud, which dries immediately, and holds almost as tenaciously as mortar. And this reminds us that Pharaoh's overseers "made the children of Israel to serve with rigor, and made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar and in brick." We remember all the details of that pitiful story—how the straw became exhausted; how the poor souls were driven forth to gather in stubble for mixing with their clay; and yet how

they were required to give [as large a tally] of bricks at the end of each day's work as if the straw had been duly provided.

"Now, it is a very curious and interesting fact that the Pithom bricks are of three qualities. In the lower courses of these massive cellar walls they are mixed with chopped straw; higher up, when the straw may be supposed to have run short, the clay is found to be mixed with reeds—the same kind of reeds which grow to this day in the bed of the old Pharaonic canal, and which are translated as "stubble" in the Bible. Finally, when the last reeds were used up, the bricks of the uppermost courses consist of mere Nile mud, with no binding substance whatever.

"So here we have the whole pathetic Bible narrative surviving in solid evidence to the present time. We go down to the bottom of one of these cellars. We see the good bricks for which the straw was provided. Some few feet higher we see those for which the wretched Hebrews had to seek reeds, or stubble. We hear them cry aloud, "Can we make bricks without straw ?"

"Lastly, we see the bricks which they had to make, and did make, without straw, while their hands were bleeding and their hearts were breaking. Shakespeare, in one of his most familiar passages, tells us of "sermons in stones;" but here we have a sermon in bricks, and not only a sermon, but a practical historical commentary of the highest importance and interest."