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A BIOCOENOSE OF PAPYRUS HEADS (*Cyperus papyrus*)

Papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*) is of historical interest because it was used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans in making their writing parchments and has given us the word paper. Paper pulp is still obtained from papyrus and recently (S. and E. African Yearbook, p. 704) it was estimated that enough of the sedge existed at the mouth of the Umfolosi River, Zululand, to produce 100,000 tons of pulp annually.

Papyrus is widespread in Africa and occurs in several nearby regions (as Sicily and Palestine). Stretching along the upper White Nile River for roughly 250 miles, and extending laterally in places 200 miles, is a vast papyrus swamp called the Sudd which occupies an area of possibly 50,000 square miles. It lies entirely in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan west of Central

Abyssinia. The Sudd is probably one of the largest areas in the entire world dominated by a single sedge. In it papyrus forms a dense growth 8 to 15 feet high floating on the water or mud. Large rafts often break loose and float downstream or drift with the wind. Not only is navigation impeded or temporarily stopped but the evaporation from the swamp is so large as to materially lower the river level. The Sudd is treated by the Egyptians of lower Egypt as a vital problem since they depend upon the combined White and Blue Nile for their entire water supply. They keep a staff of men continually at work cutting drainage canals and attempting to keep these open. At the same time the swamp acts as a huge sponge to hold back the flow of water during the rains and to release it gradually during the dry sea-