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978-1-108-07617-3 - The Temple of Mut in Asher: An Account of the Excavation of the Temple and of the Religious Representations and Objects Found Therein, as Illustrating the History of Egypt and the Main Religious Ideas of the Egyptians

Margaret Benson and Janet Gourlay

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The large-scale scientific investigation of Egyptian antiquities by Western scholars began as an unintended consequence of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt during which, in 1799, the Rosetta Stone was discovered. The military expedition was accompanied by French scholars, whose reports prompted a wave of enthusiasm that swept across Europe and North America resulting in the Egyptian Revival style in art and architecture. Increasing numbers of tourists visited Egypt, eager to see the marvels being revealed by archaeological excavation. Writers and booksellers responded to this growing interest with publications ranging from technical site reports to tourist guidebooks and from children's histories to theories identifying the pyramids as repositories of esoteric knowledge. This series reissues a wide selection of such books. They reveal the gradual change from the 'tomb-robbing' approach of early excavators to the highly organised and systematic approach of Flinders Petrie, the 'father of Egyptology', and include early accounts of the decipherment of the hieroglyphic script.

### **The Temple of Mut in Asher**

Margaret Benson (1865–1916), the fourth of six children of the archbishop of Canterbury E.W. Benson, was a brilliant scholar at Oxford who found an escape from the conventional life of housekeeping for her father when she travelled to Egypt for her health in 1895. She obtained permission to excavate a site, of which she candidly admits that the authorities had no expectations (or they would not have entrusted it to such inexperienced amateurs). She and her close friend Janet Gourlay (1863–1912), who had briefly studied archaeology under Flinders Petrie, published this account of their discoveries at the temple of Mut at Karnak in 1899. It contains an overview of the site and its context in Egyptian history, with an account of the three seasons of excavation and a section on Egyptian religion. The highly illustrated book concludes with translations of the many inscriptions found in the temple remains.

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JANET GOURLAY



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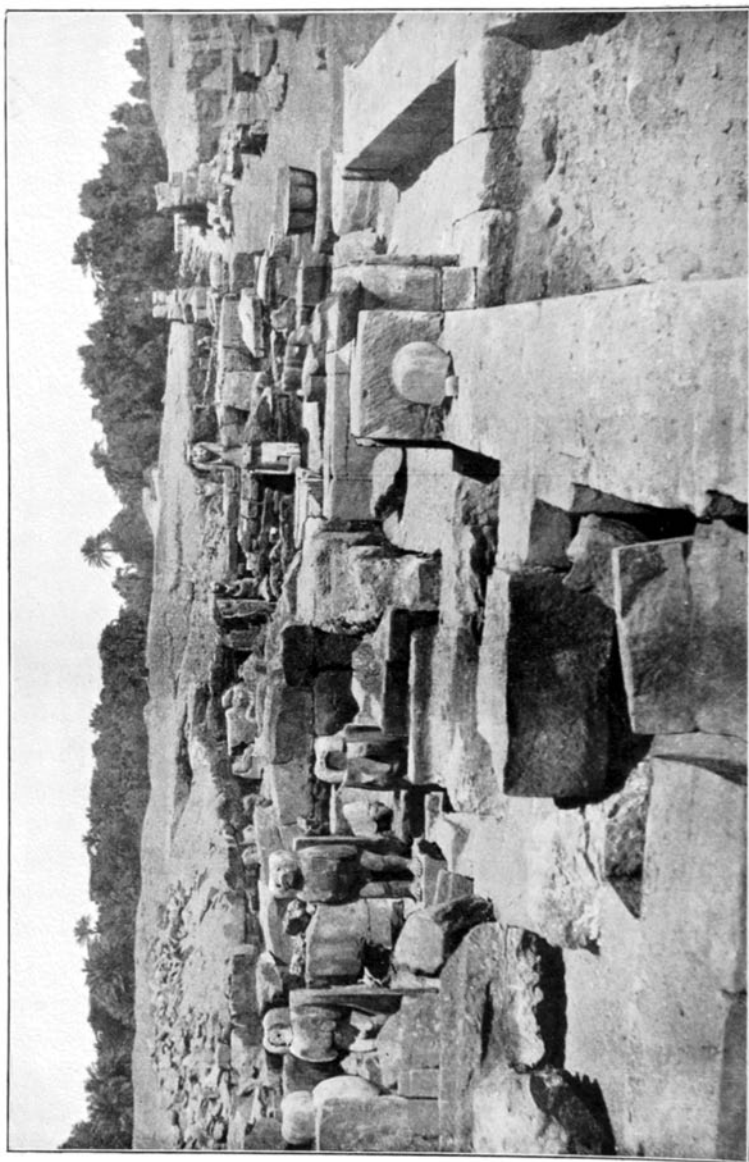
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PLATE I.



*Frontispiece.*

TEMPLE OF MUT.

*Photograph by A. Beato, Luxor.*

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AND OF THE RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATIONS AND  
OBJECTS FOUND THEREIN, AS ILLUSTRATING THE  
HISTORY OF EGYPT AND THE MAIN RELIGIOUS  
IDEAS OF THE EGYPTIANS

BY MARGARET BENSON AND JANET GOURLAY

THE INSCRIPTIONS AND TRANSLATIONS BY  
PERCY E. NEWBERRY

WITH PLANS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON  
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1899

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## P R E F A C E.



IT has been said that a book, like a joke, confesses failure in offering an explanation of itself, yet the account of an excavation undertaken by amateurs would seem to demand some sort of apology.

Our first intention was not ambitious. We were desirous of clearing a picturesque site. We were frankly warned that we should make no discoveries; indeed if any had been anticipated it was unlikely that the clearance would have been entrusted to inexperienced direction. Thus we began without any idea of publishing an account of our work. If we had had any such intention we should have kept completer records, and might have ordered many things differently.

We began our second season in the same mind, but unexpected discoveries demanded publication, and the third year added more material. Our idea then was not so much to publish our undertaking as

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to preserve the names and histories that Egypt had committed to our charge.

We intended therefore at first to put forth these results simply for the use of the expert. Treasure-trove, whether of great or of little value, is the property of the nation, and we desired faithfully to render to those who could better use them the little treasures of history unexpectedly committed to us.

It is easy to remit to the authorities of state a golden torque or a pot of coins by the simple methods of civilisation and the parcel post, but to register results so that they may be of use is more difficult, and the only way in which this could be done without undue risk seemed to be by a book which should combine the necessary facts in an available form for the expert, with an account of our undertaking and its results, for those who, without technical knowledge, feel the fascination and interest of Egypt.

For the latter class of readers we have given a short sketch of the history of Egypt during the lifetime of our temple. The new and wonderful discoveries of 1897–8, which have made the “mythical” ancient kingdom a reality and have even thrown light on prehistoric Egypt, do not therefore concern us, for the epoch to which our earliest discoveries belong begins with the 12th dynasty. In order to have any

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comprehension of the purposes of the temple and of the statues it is necessary also to have some idea of the religious theories of the Egyptians; we have therefore added in briefest outline an account of some parts of that religion.

Our chief authority for the historical part has been, to the end of the 18th dynasty, Professor W. M. F. Petrie's 'History of Egypt'; in addition to which, for the reign of Hatshepsut, we have used M. Naville's publications on Deir el Bahari; and from the 19th dynasty onward Professor Wiedemann's 'Aegyptische Geschichte.' In the study of the religion we have mainly used Professor Petrie's 'Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt,' and Wiedemann's 'Religion of the Ancient Egyptians.' Other authorities are also referred to, and we have been allowed to make use of an article in the *Edinburgh Review*.

It is difficult to think that, in any other undertaking, mere tyros should have met with such generous and kindly help from experts in the subject, whose time and thoughts moreover were already sufficiently occupied with important work. Among many who have helped us our thanks are first due to M. Naville, but for whose help and encouragement the work would never have been begun, and whose advice was always open to us in

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## PREFACE.

all difficulties ; to Professor Flinders Petrie, who has not only looked over the chapters on the religion and history but has given us important and most helpful suggestions ; and to Mr. F. Ll. Griffith, for the use of a yet unpublished translation. We have to thank M. de Morgan's liberality for the first permission to excavate given to women in Egypt. Some of the most important photographs were taken by Brugsch Bey, who in all the dealings we have had with him has been most considerate. Dr. Borchardt kindly and promptly supplied whatever information we asked for, and M. Daressy's courtesy made the difficulties of the first year much lighter than they would otherwise have been. In the work of superintendence we have to acknowledge much help, notably from Colonel Esdaile in the second and third years, and from Miss Katharine Gent (Mrs. Lea) in the first, and we are indebted to Mr. Hogarth for advice in the direction of the work. Mr. Henry Gourlay helped us largely with our funds ; Mrs. Benson with money and personal supervision ; Mr. Mackirdy, who visited Luxor in our third year, gave us a subscription ; Mr. E. F. Benson, besides helping us with a subscription and constant and experienced superintendence, drew the map, and gave us notes and measurements from which the plan of the temple has been produced.

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The photographs for the most part have been done by friends whose names are given, and the vulture (Mut) on the cover has been traced from Mr. Howard Carter's drawing of a scene in the shrine of Anubis at Deir el Bahari.

Mr. Newberry's translations of the inscriptions—the most essential part of the publication—speak for themselves, but we desire here to thank him most warmly for the generosity which has placed his scholarship at our service, for advice, suggestions, and correction, and for the unwearied kindness which he has shown us throughout.

But even thanks would be ungrateful if we did not first emphatically say that no responsibility for mistakes and omissions in work, for error in fact, or unfounded theory, can be laid at the door of those who have helped us. All such failures must be set down to ourselves, to our inexperience, and to certain special difficulties of circumstance. Work was more than once interrupted by illness, which made it impossible, above all in the plan of the temple, to register details as fully as we could have wished. Thus the positions of the pillars in the outer court are taken from James Burton's plan, as our own measurements were not complete. We should have wished also if we had had more time to show the places of the statues wherever they seemed to be *in situ*.

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Above all, we should have wished to finish completely the excavation, to clear away the banks of earth which may yet hide treasures of the past, to dredge the lake, or dig, when it was especially low, for statues and monuments which may have been thrown into it.

The limits of time and the interruption of work rendered it impossible to verify our results on the spot after completion of the report. We have however attempted to carry out the work in such a way that though much we hope may be added in the future we trust that little need be altered.

Thus although for the moment we have not finished the excavation, we have thought it better to put forth the book, incomplete as it is, rather than let what has been reclaimed from a buried past fall again into oblivion.

MARGARET BENSON.

JANET GOURLAY.

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