

THE SARCOPHAGUS OF OIMENEPTAH I.

ON THE TOMB.

IN October, 1815, the enterprising traveller Belzoni was in Thebes. with a party of labourers in his service exploring the ruins, and more particularly searching for tombs on the western bank of the Nile. On the 16th of the month, he directed his men to open the earth at the foot of one of the hills in the Biban el Molook, or Valley of Kings' Tombs, in the very bed of a watercourse, down which, when the rain falls, a torrent of water rushes towards the Nile. Their labours were soon rewarded by their finding in this unlikely spot that the ground had been before opened. They continued their work on the 17th and 18th; and on the latter day, a day memorable in the history of Egyptian discoveries, they came upon the entrance of an unusually important tomb eighteen feet below the surface of the ground. Having made an opening through the rubbish, and descended the first staircase, our discoverer reached the first corridor or passage, thirty-six feet long.

A second staircase of twenty-three feet and a second sculptured corridor of thirty-seven feet led into a small room, marked A in our plan and section, Fig. 1. This was about thirteen feet square. It was also a well or pit thirty feet deep, crossing the footpath of an intruder into the tomb, so as to bar his further progress, and also formed to catch any water that might drain into the tomb from the surface of the earth.

On the opposite side of this pit was a small opening of less than a yard square, through which some former intruder had entered; and in the pit were the two rope ladders by the help of which he had passed it, first descending to the bottom, and then ascending on the other side.

B

This small opening had been broken through the wall by which the entrance to the rooms beyond had been carefully closed after the body had been placed in what was meant for its last resting-place.

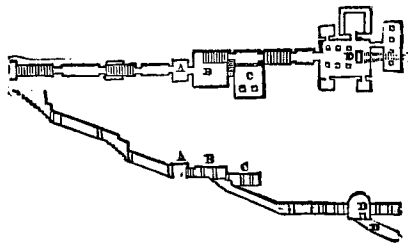


Fig. 1. Plan and Section of the Tomb.

On passing this pit or well, the discoverer entered the first grand hall marked B in our plan and section. This is about twenty-six feet square, and its roof is upheld by four pillars. Beyond this is a second hall, of about the same size, marked c. From this there was no outlet. Returning, therefore, into the first hall, he descended a third staircase of thirteen feet, and passed along a corridor of thirty-six feet, and a fourth staircase of seventeen feet, and crossed a small room of twenty-four feet by thirteen. He then entered the third and principal hall, of which the first half is upheld by six columns, and the second half has an arched roof. This hall, including its two parts, is fifty-eight feet long by twenty-seven feet wide. In the second half of this hall, under the vaulted roof, marked D in our plan and section, stood the sarcophagus. Whether the king was buried in this is unknown, because it had already been violently opened and its cover broken to pieces, and no remains of the body were found there when Belzoni reached it.

Out of this hall there are six passages. On each side are two smaller rooms, in which were some wooden statues four feet high, with a circular hollow inside as if to contain a roll of papyrus. At the end is a room, in which was found the mummy of a bull, buried there probably at the same time with the king, and a countless number of small wooden figures of mummies six or eight inches long, with some few made of baked clay, with a surface of glazed blue. One of these wooden figures, bearing this king's name, is published in Egyptian

Inscriptions, Plate 71. One of blue porcelain, which may also have been found in the tomb, is in the British Museum.

The total length of the passages, from the surface of the ground to the room which held the sarcophagus, is three hundred and twenty feet, and their perpendicular depth one hundred and eighty feet. And lastly, from the floor beneath the sarcophagus descended another staircase three hundred feet in length, so far blocked up with rubbish that it has never been explored to the end.

Among the mythological sculptures on the walls of the tomb, we will mention one class as important, because less common than the others. They represent the king affectionately embracing the gods; see Fig. 2, where he throws his arms round the god Osiris. Most of the ancient Pagan nations boasted that they were beloved by their gods; the Egyptian kings styled themselves—some “Beloved by Amun,” some “Beloved by Pthah,” and some “Beloved by Neith;” but in this sculpture, the king, in a less usual way, declares that he loves the god in return for the blessings granted to him. His son also, the great Rameses II., who is usually styled Amunmai, or Beloved by Amun, is in the same way sometimes styled Miamun, or Lover of Amun. This throws much credit upon the religious feelings of the Egyptians. We afterwards, in Alexandria, meet with the name Philammon, a translation of this last name; but out of Egypt, it is not till after the spread of Christianity that we meet with names showing that their bearers felt any love for their gods.

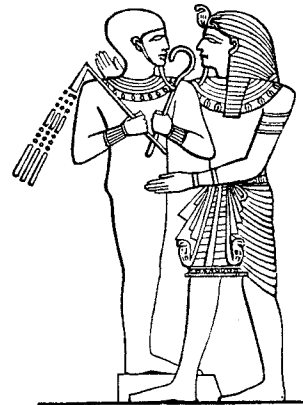


Fig. 2.

Other sculptures on the walls are nearly the same as those which we now examine at our leisure on the sarcophagus.

The sarcophagus, for the sake of which this beautiful tomb had been tunnelled into the limestone rock, and the broken pieces of its cover, Belzoni removed and brought to England. After some little time, Sir John Soane bought it of him, and then presented it to the nation, together with the other architectural and antiquarian objects in his museum.

Together with the broken pieces of the lid, Belzoni brought out of the tomb a piece of alabaster, part of a square box or chest, ornamented with a female figure, standing at the corner, whose arms are stretched out backwards, so that each arm lies on one of the two sides, which join and make the corner of the box. This, however, can have formed no part of the sarcophagus.

ON THE KING'S NAMES.

Both of the names of this king are variously spelt upon the sarcophagus, and yet more variously upon his other monuments. In Plate 19 we have given five ways of spelling his first name, Nos. 77–81, and nine of spelling his second name, Nos. 82–90. The second name is that to which we attempt to give a sound, because it is that which is used by the Greek writers. On our sarcophagus it always has the sitting figure of Osiris, crowned with the mitre; having a ball upon the top, and two wings or side pieces, as in Nos. 82, 87, 88, and 89. But the earlier forms of the name have the sitting figure of Anubis, with the head of a square-eared dog, as in Nos. 84, 85, and 86. On some change of religious opinion this square-eared dog was no longer popular, and in the name, No. 90, from the Flaminian obelisk at Rome, we see how his figure was cut out, and covered up by the figure of a hawk-headed god. This change of feeling towards the square-eared dog took place in Thebes in the middle of this reign. It did not take place so soon in Ethiopia. In the temples of Abousimbel made in the next reign the square-eared dog at first received his due honour, though his name and figure were afterwards cut out by the chisel, probably before the end of that reign. The change of this character in Oimeneptah's name made little change in its sound, as the figure of Anubis was an A, and the Osiris an O. Manetho calls this king Amenophath, which agrees very well with name No. 84, spelling it Pthah, A, I, M, N, and reading it Aimenepthah. It will be observed that in so reading it we remove the word "Pthah" from the beginning to the end of the name. For this we have full authority in the other kings' names. Those of Hophra,

Nephra, Menophra, Mykera, and others, all have the syllable "Ra" first among the hieroglyphical characters within the ovals, while it ends the names as they are written by the Greek authors. But we prefer calling our king by the name No. 82, which is the later form, Oi-men-ptah or Oimeneptah. This would seem to have been the name read to Diodorus Siculus, except that his interpreter gave to the figure of Osiris the force of Os, and read it Osi-men-ptah, which Diodorus wrote Osymandyas. Eratosthenes writes this same name Cho-mae-phtha, and translates it, "The world beloved by Hephæstus." This is to be explained, first from the Egyptian use of a guttural, a doubtful breathing, between Ch and Th, which led the interpreter to pronounce our O as Cho, and which also led him to translate it as Tho, *the world*. And again it needs, as the further explanation, that we take into account their slovenly habit of not pronouncing the N at the end of a syllable. This is seen on comparing our first names, No. 79 and No. 80, one of which has an N in the syllable MEN, and the other has not. The square-eared dog was the Abyssinian

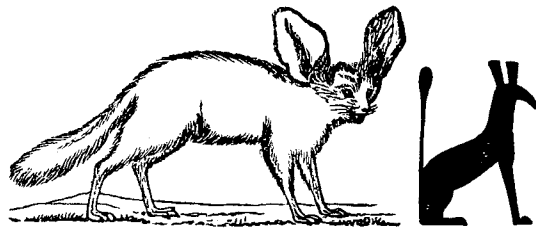


Fig. 3. The Fenek.

Fenek of Fig. 3; and by the side of it is the hieroglyphic copied from it by the Egyptian sculptor.

The name No. 86 is larger than the rest, and is Amunmai Aimenepthah. The name No. 85 is a contraction of this; and without the help of the former, the latter could hardly be explained.

In the first name, No. 79, the sitting figure is the goddess Me, or Mo, *Truth*; and the whole may, perhaps, be read Memenra. But as the Greek authors do not use this name, its force is of less importance. The change in the order of the characters in the names No. 80 and

No. 81 shows great irregularity in the way of writing; as does the separation between the letters M and N in some of the second names; while in others these letters come together. In the names No. 77 and No. 78 we have some additional characters, of which the sound is uncertain; but those in No. 77 may be translated, "Approved by the god Ra;" and those in No. 78, "son of the god Ra."

In the Appendix will be seen three lists of the names of the great kings of Egypt, ending with that of Rameses II.; the first from Eratosthenes, the second from the sculptured monuments, and the third from Manetho. By a comparison of all the names, it can be shown that our king is the one named Amenophath by Manetho, and Chomaepthah by Eratosthenes; and hence arises the support to our reading his name Oimeneptah.

ON THE AGE OF THE SARCOPHAGUS.

The dates in the earlier part of Egyptian history are very uncertain. They rest, in the first place, on a recorded Babylonian eclipse of the moon, which happened in the year B.C. 721, the first year of the reign of the Babylonian king, Mardoc Empadus, or Berodach Baladan. While this king was reigning in Babylon, Hezekiah was reigning in Judea, and Tirhakah in Egypt, as we learn from 2 Kings xix., xx.

From this period we count backwards along the reigns of the Jewish kings, till we come to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who was reigning at the same time with Shishank of Bubastis, king of Egypt. (See 1 Kings xiv.) Shishank was the first king of Lower Egypt who made himself master of the whole kingdom after the fall of the great Theban monarchy. This was about the year B.C. 975.

Thus far we have travelled backwards along the stream of time with tolerable certainty; but here doubt begins. Before the time of Shishank, Egypt had been governed for about twenty reigns, or 500 years, by the great Theban kings, who made the statues and built the temples for which the valley of the Nile is so remarkable. One of these was our Oimeneptah I., the father of Rameses II. Of those less important

kings, who reigned before these twenty, we have not now to speak ; our difficulty lies with the unimportant kings who reigned after them, because their want of importance leaves us unable to count the reigns between our Oimeneptah and Shishank of the year B.C. 975. It is probable that most of those who followed Rameses V. were not kings of Egypt, though they used the title, but were only the chief priests or magistrates of Thebes, while Shishank and his successors were reigning over the kingdom. If this be granted, then Oimeneptah I. and seven or eight successors may have filled by their reigns the two centuries before Shishank ; and our king may have died and been buried in our sarcophagus not necessarily earlier than the year B.C. 1175.

We have also a second train of reasoning by which we can support the above, and which helps us to fix upon B.C. 1175 for the age of the sarcophagus. The Alexandrian astronomers and writers on the almanac, in the second century after the Christian era, tell us that the epoch of four times 365 years before the year A.D. 138, or the year B.C. 1322. was called the era of Menophra. If we now look through the list of Theban kings, we find that Thothmosis III. bore that name in his first oval, and he may perhaps be the king, from the beginning of whose reign these years were counted. Oimeneptah I. was his sixth successor, and again allowing twenty-five years to a reign, seven reigns will bring us to B.C. 1147 for the death of Oimeneptah I. In the present state of our knowledge greater certainty or greater exactness cannot be hoped for.

A third train of reasoning, leading to the same opinion, is founded on the belief that Zerah the Cushite, who invaded Judea in the year B.C. 944 (see 2 Chron. xiv.), was a king of Upper Egypt, called an Ethiopian or Cushite, to distinguish him from Shishank and his son, who were of Mitzraim or Lower Egypt. Ze-Ra, or *Son of the Sun*, is the common title of all the Egyptian kings ; Rameses VII. is the only king who can in that half-century be believed to have had rule over both Upper and Lower Egypt ; and Rameses VII. was the ninth in succession after Oimeneptah I. If, therefore, the one lived in the year B.C. 944, the other may have lived about B.C. 1175, as before conjectured.

The Appendix, with the hieroglyphical names of the great Theban kings, will help to explain this king's place in the series of the great builders of the Egyptian monuments.

ON THE BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS OF THIS KING.

THE TEMPLE OF ERREBEK.

Errebek, or, without the Arabic article, Re-bek, *the City of the Sun*, is the name of a village and ruined temple in the district of Gournou, the most northerly part of Thebes, on the west bank of the river. The temple was begun by this king, Oimeneptah I., and finished by his son, Rameses II. Its plan will explain the greater number of the Egyptian temples. (See Fig. 4.)

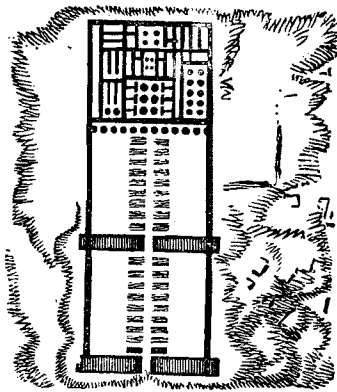


Fig. 4. Plan of the Temple of Errebek.

It was entered through a doorway, formed of two large square-built towers. This opened into a courtyard, which was crossed through an avenue of sphinxes, nine on each side. This led to a second doorway between two other large towers, and this into a second courtyard of the same size as the last, which was crossed through a second avenue of eighteen sphinxes. This led to the grand portico of ten columns in a row, upholding a flat roof. (See Fig. 5.) Every column is in imitation of a stick or post, formed by tying together several stalks of papyrus, of which the unopened buds

form the capital. The bands which tie them together are immediately below the capital. At the bottom are seen the leaves which enclose the stalk of the natural plant. Each column stands on a flat round base. The chief room in the covered part of the temple is the hall, whose roof is supported by six columns. Out of this various smaller rooms opened, in which dwelt the priests, and, at times, perhaps the king. It was dedicated to Amun-Ra, *the Sun*, the king of the gods, and to his son Chonso. The whole of the walls are covered with painted sculptures, representing the religious ceremonies, and chiefly the king making his offerings to the gods on behalf of the nation.

THE SARCOPHAGUS OF OIMENEPHTAH I.

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When this temple was built, the architectural custom had not yet been introduced of placing a low wall between each pair of columns, to

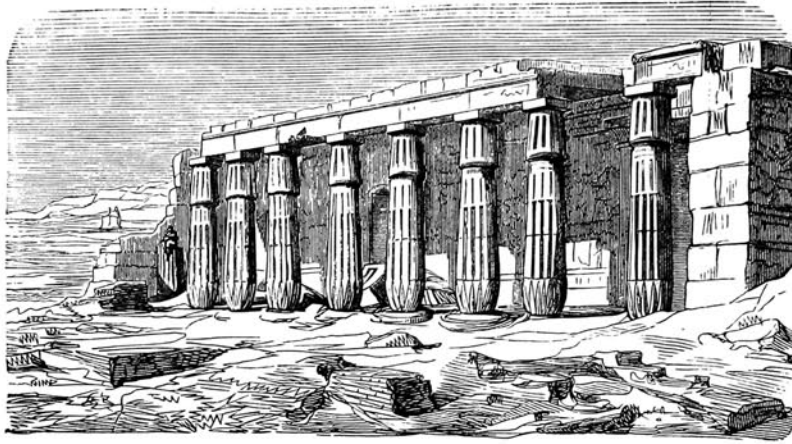


Fig. 5. Portico of Errebek.

bar the gaze of the people on the outside. This change of style in the building came into use in the next reign; and it shows an increased claim of power by the priests, who thereby made the separation between themselves and the laity more marked.

THE HALL OF COLUMNS AT KARNAK.

The old temple of Karnak was the work of many reigns. The oldest part is that built by Osirtesen I. Other kings added largely to it, and ornamented it with sculpture, statues, and obelisks. When Amunothph III. added the two solid towers which are now in the middle of it, and against which the great hall was afterwards built, he may be supposed to have completed it with these as its entrance towers. But Oimeneptah I. conceived the bold idea of doubling its size, by adding a new building in front, leaving the older to be the inner courts and halls. He began the great Hall of Columns, more than one hundred in number; and though he did not live to complete it, but left that task to his son, Rameses II., yet we may be sure that the large court which Rameses

c

and his successors added in front of the hall was part of Oimeneptah's design. (See Fig. 6.)

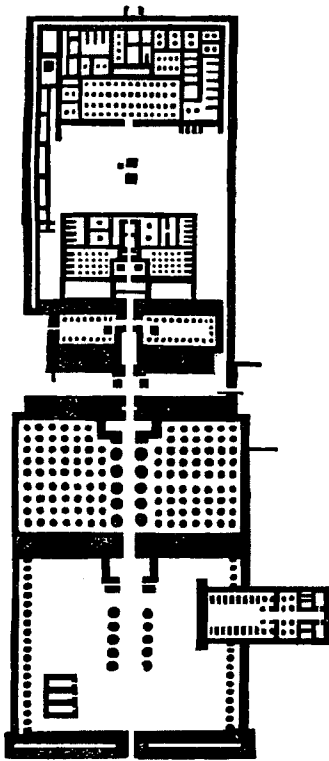


Fig. 6. Temple of Karnak.

On each side of the walk, down the middle of the hall, is a row of five columns, of the largest size. These are 66 feet in height, and 12 feet in diameter. On each side of these, in each half of the hall, stand sixty-one smaller columns. These are 42 feet high, and 9 feet in diameter. Fig. 7 is a view along the hall between two rows of columns; those on the right are the five which form one of the middle rows; and those on the left are part of the side row next to the middle. Every column is in imitation of a plant of papyrus, of gigantic thickness; the larger columns have the capital in imitation of the flower when full blown (see Fig. 8), and the smaller columns have the capital copied from the unopened bud of the same flower (See Fig. 9.)

THE BUILDINGS IN ABYDOS.

At the city of This, called by the Greeks Abydos, this king began two important buildings, both of which he left unfinished, and they were finished by his son. One was a palace, called by Pliny (lib. v. 11) the Palace of Memnon, meaning of Miamun, or Rameses II.; and the other was a temple dedicated to the god Osiris. Abydos, or This, had been the capital of a little kingdom, and when it became subject to the kings of Thebes, it was a second capital. It was here, in the temple of Osiris, that Rameses II. set up the Historical Tablet, a list of his predecessors on the throne, which is now in the British Museum. It is from this tablet that we have copied, in our Appendix, the first names of the last seventeen kings, those of Rameses II. and his sixteen predecessors.