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ART. I.—ANCIENT EGYPT UNDER THE
PHARAOHS.

Ancient Egypt under the Pharaohs. By John Kenrick, M.A.
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EGYPT has been, from the days of Herodotus to the present, regarded as a country of marvels, and frequented by curious travellers from every nation. The Greek and Roman visited it to contemplate the remains of a greatness as much anterior to theirs, as theirs is to our own. It was to them what Greece and Italy are to us, the resort of the tourist and the scholar. Greek and Roman have long passed away, but Egypt remains with its temples and pyramids not yet overthrown, and its hieroglyphics still sharp and fresh; and, strange as it may seem, the modern English party who hire their kandja on the Nile for a pleasure-trip to the second Cataract, go to view the very same objects which attracted the tourists of two thousand years ago; to gaze at the same ruins, or read the same inscriptions which the cicerone-priest interpreted to Germanicus, or wonder with Adrian or Strabo, how the colossal Memnon could greet so musically the rising sun. Nor is it the ruins alone which give to this remarkable land its interest and charm. Its singular physical features; its wondrous river, to which it owes not only its fertility, but its very soil; its mysterious wisdom, which once drew

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to its seats of learning Solon and Pythagoras and Plato; its history, decyphered sufficiently to show that it was the seat of the most ancient known civilization of our race; all these things have imparted, and will continue to impart, unusual interest to the ancient people of the valley of the Nile.

Till within the last half century, however, the treasures of Egyptian antiquity have been in great measure mute and meaningless to the student and the historian: though the monuments were covered with records, no one was found who could read them. It was not till the commencement of the present century, when the French expedition lent to the solution of the Egyptian problem the rarely allied troops of Science and War, that the key to the sacred character was found. Since that time, the researches of both individual travellers and national expeditions have been constantly adding to the stock of materials. Philologists too and antiquaries have applied themselves with vigour to the work of arrangement, comparison and induction, and that with so much success, that the "stone-engraved words" which had been as a sealed book for at least twenty centuries, may now be considered as open for our perusal. Still, the knowledge drawn from them has been accessible to a very small number even of the educated. Spread over numerous and often expensive works of travels or antiquities, or scattered through transactions of learned societies or isolated private communications, the newly recovered lore of Egypt has been almost confined to those who have chosen it as their special study. Little had been done, except in the works of Sir G. Wilkinson, and the Chevalier Bunsen, to present a general view of the subject; and of these, admirable as they both are, the former is principally descriptive, the latter philological, and addressed rather to the learned than the general reader. Mr. Kenrick's object in the work before us has been to supply this important want, by reviewing the progress of Egyptian discovery, and presenting in a clear, concise and untechnical form, an account of its results. It is matter of no small congratulation that a task demanding so many difficult and various qualifications, should have been undertaken by one so eminent both in classical and Egyptian scholarship, as the editor of the *Egypt of Herodotus* is

known to be, and who unites to great attainments, the scarcely less important requisites of a sound and cautious judgment, and a style unsurpassed in elegance and clearness. We feel that we are in the hands a guide, who will have weighed in the balance every statement that he makes, and having no favourite theory of his own to support, will convey to us with impartiality those conclusions, and those only, which the evidence has warranted.

The work is divided into two main parts, the Description, occupying the first volume and a small part of the second; and the History. The Description embraces not only the physical features and remaining monuments of the country, but its climate, productions and inhabitants, with their manners and customs, theology, philosophy and laws; giving on each of these subjects the best and latest information. Nor is it, as, from the mass of materials which must have been elaborated, might well have been expected, a dry abstract or abridgment of the statements of others. It has the vigour and freshness of originality. We confess to having been surprised at the attractiveness with which the author has invested the product of so much labour and erudition. Not having ourselves made Egyptian antiquity our special study, and judging from the impression which an attempt to peruse Bunsen's work had made upon us, as well as from the known learning of our author, we began the work with the certainty that we should find in it most valuable instruction indeed, (and in this we were not disappointed,) but we did not expect to be particularly charmed or interested; in this, therefore, we were most agreeably surprised, and we think that our experience in this respect will be that of very many readers.

Mr. Kenrick naturally begins his description by an account of the valley of the Nile itself. He thus speaks of the remarkable relation between the river and the country.

“The geography and history of every country are closely connected with the origin and course of its rivers. In cold and humid climates like our own, their neighbourhood may have been avoided by the early inhabitants, who found more healthy abodes on the open sides of the hills. But in the East, where many months succeed each other without any supply of rain, the vicinity of a peren-

nial stream is the first condition of a settled and civilized life. The history of the world begins on the banks of the great rivers of China, India, Assyria and Egypt. The Nile, however, holds a far more important relation to the country through which it flows than any other river of the world. The courses of the Rhine, the Danube, or the Rhone, are only lines on the surface of Germany or France; the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris were a very small part of the dominions of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings; but the banks of the Nile *are* Egypt and Nubia. To live below the Cataracts, and to drink of its waters, was, according to the Oracle of Ammon, to be an Egyptian. Upwards or downwards, it is through the valley of the Nile that civilization and conquest have taken their course. We should, therefore, naturally begin by tracing it from its origin to the Sea. But this is still impracticable. The Mesopotamian rivers have been followed to their sources, amidst the mountains of Armenia and Kurdistan; the traveller has even penetrated to the place where the Ganges bursts forth from the everlasting snows of the Himalaya; but the sacred river of Egypt still conceals its true fountains. The question which Herodotus asked of the priests of Egypt, and Alexander of the Oracle of Ammon; which learned curiosity has so often addressed to geographical science, has been only partially answered. We must, therefore, begin our survey from the confluence of the two tributaries, whose united stream has been known in all ages as **THE NILE.**"

From the junction then of the Blue and the White Nile at Kartoum, the description of the river properly begins. Even were it better known than it is above this point, it formed no part of either ancient or modern Egypt. Our author, accordingly, was not called upon to enter at any length into the question of its sources. He contents himself with sketching briefly but clearly, the story of the progressive steps towards the solution of that most singular geographical problem, the discovery of the origin of the stream, which, though it has nurtured on its banks the earliest civilization of our race, has veiled its sources from the researches even of the latest.

Following the downward course of the river, our attention is drawn both to the features of the country through which it flows, and to the successive monuments upon its banks. A detailed account of these was of course inadmissible; both from the space it would have occupied, and from the necessary insufficiency of all verbal description to convey any just idea of the forms or the effects of archi-

ecture. But all that is needed for understanding the nature and design of these monuments, or that has a bearing on the history of their builders, is abundantly given; and to Memphis and the Pyramids, as also to the magnificent structures of Thebes, so important to the historian and the antiquary, separate chapters are devoted. We subjoin the description of the famous colossi of the plain of Thebes.

“ In the direction of the river, and separated from the ruins (of the Amenopheion), by a space of 1,200 feet, are the two colossal statues, called by the natives *Tama* and *Chama*, of which the most northern is the vocal Memnon. They tower above the plain, apparently unconnected with any building. But such a state of insulation would not agree with the practice of the Egyptians; and it appears from inspection, that they are exactly in the line of the front of the Amenopheion; the fragments of two statues of gritstone, and another colossus of crystalline limestone, are found in the intermediate space. Hence it is probable that the vocal Memnon and its companion formed the commencement of a dromos, extending to the palace of the king, whose name they bear.

These statues, including the pedestal, are sixty feet in height; the pedestal is thirteen feet: but more than half of it is buried in the alluvial soil. The material is a coarse hard breccia, in which agatized pebbles or chalcedonies are intermixed, found above the limestone in the Mokattam hills at Gebel-Ah-mar. The southern is formed of one entire block; but the northern had been already broken in the time of Strabo, either by an earthquake in the year 27 B.C., or by the Persians; and in this state it remained till after the age of Domitian, when Juvenal refers to its mutilated state. It was subsequently repaired, probably in the age of Severus, by five separate pieces of sandstone: but there is no inscription to record by whom the reparation was made. The lower part of the body, the arms which are resting on the knees, and the legs and feet, are of the original material. A line of hieroglyphics at the back contains the name of the king Amunoph. That the northern statue was the vocal Memnon is attested by a multitude of inscriptions on the legs, some in the Greek, some in the Latin language. They are chiefly of the time of Adrian, who, with his empress Sabina, visited the statue; some few of that of Nero, Vespasian, and Domitian; one on the pedestal, of the thirteenth consulship of Antoninus. The sound was commonly heard at the first hour of the day, sometimes a little later; a few, among whom were Vibius Maximus and two other præfects of Egypt, were honoured with its repetition, while others came three times before their curiosity was gratified.

The sophist Callistratus adds a circumstance, no doubt of his own invention, that at sunset the statue uttered a mournful sound, as a farewell to the light. How the effect was produced we can only conjecture. It resembled, according to Pausanias, the breaking of an overstretched musical string; according to Strabo, the noise produced by a slight blow; an inscription quoted by Sir G. Wilkinson assimilates it to the sound of brass. This was confirmed by a curious experiment. He ascended the statue, and struck with a small hammer a sonorous block which lies in its lap; and inquiring of the Arabs below what they heard, they replied, 'You are striking brass.' The French Commission, having observed that about the hour of sunrise sounds issued from the ruins of Thebes, conjectured that they might be produced by the sudden change of temperature in the stone; but the fact must be better ascertained before any explanation can be built upon it. If fraud were practised, it belonged to the times when the Egyptian character had been debased by conquest and oppression, and the diffusion of its corrupt superstition through the Roman empire had degraded its ministers into jugglers. There is no proof that the statue was supposed to utter any sounds even in the Ptolemaic times."

The most remarkable phenomenon of Egypt, and that which enables the river not only to fertilize but annually to renew the soil, is the inundation. To us, who are aware of its cause, there is nothing marvellous in this; but to the ancients, who were ignorant of the existence of a rainy season within the tropics, it presented difficulties more embarrassing than even the discovery of the fountains of the stream itself. Herodotus inquired of the priests how it was that the Nile had a nature contrary to all other rivers. From them he could get no information, but various hypotheses had been proposed by Greeks, which are interesting as showing the state of natural philosophy at that time. Thales supposed that there was no real increase of the waters, but that the Etesian winds, blowing from the north, in summer, full upon the mouth of the river, prevented their discharge, and threw them back upon the low grounds of Egypt. Others attributed its rise to a connection with the Ocean, which was conceived to flow round the South of Libya, and had had its waters sweetened by long exposure to the sun. The most correct theory was that of Anaxagoras, who supposed that it was caused by the melting of the snows upon the high moun-

tains of Ethiopia. But this is rejected by Herodotus as absurd; for how, says he, since it flows from a hotter to a colder region, from a region indeed so hot that the inhabitants become black from the excessive temperature, can it flow from snow? Supposing this refutation unanswerable, and conceiving it to be but fair that one who cavils at the explanations of others should not decline to venture one himself, the old historian states it as his opinion, that the Nile overflows in summer because, in winter, the sun being driven by storms from his former course to the upper parts of Libya, there dries up the streams which feed it; thus making the body of waters less in winter, and, by contrast, greater in summer, than the average. The true cause was not assigned till the second century *b.c.*, by Agatharchides of Cnidus. We are, however, inclined to think that even yet the question of old Herodotus has not been considered in its full extent, and that there is more in what he calls the "contrary nature" of the Nile, than can be altogether explained by his ignorance of other great tropical streams. For though the phenomena of a periodical inundation are not peculiar to the Nile, it is a fact that they occur in it with greater regularity, and to a greater extent than in any other stream. And there are characteristics belonging to it, which fully account for this, and make it really, what Herodotus supposed it to be, a unique and exceptional river. And these have, we think, been scarcely brought forward with sufficient prominence in accounting for the inundation. They are, First, that the Nile is the only great river in the world, which flows at the same time from South to North, and from a tropical to an extra-tropical region; Secondly, that while the tributaries of its upper course are unusually numerous and large, it is the only great river in the world which has no tributaries in its whole middle and lower course. From the junction of the Atbara or Tacazzè in lat. 17 deg. N. to its mouths in lat. 32 deg., a distance of 1,500 miles, it is not joined by a single tributary stream. The vast majority of its waters, indeed, come from a point much nearer the Equator; from the Blue, and still more from the White, Nile, which unite in lat. 13 deg., and together drain a surface equal to the whole of Hindostan. Now the result of these things is, that the sources and upper course of the river are subject to entirely different

conditions of climate and seasons, from its middle and lower. The upper course, exclusively within the tropics, and receiving the tropical rains over a surface of almost unknown extent, furnishes an enormous mass of water, and this by the peculiarly isolated character of the remainder of the channel is conveyed northward, through 15 degrees of latitude, to the plains of Lower Egypt. Thus the phenomena of the tropics are transferred, unmodified and undiminished, far up into the temperate zone; and the Delta on the shores of the Mediterranean is watered by the floods which fell in the latitude of the Equator.

We can do little more than indicate the rich variety of information contained in the chapters on the social and intellectual culture of the Egyptians. Suffice it to say in general, that the author has with admirable judgment selected from the abundant stores of materials which the tombs and temples furnish, all that is essential to be known. Their agriculture, commerce, and mechanical and industrial arts; their warfare, domestic life, amusements and dress; their architecture, sculpture, painting and music, are successively passed under review, and each by the skill with which it is treated is made to contribute some instructive trait to the general delineation of this singular people. We think the general impression conveyed by this part of the work is, that Egyptian art and science have been somewhat overrated, and that the ponderous magnitude of their monuments, as well as the profusion of pictorial ornament which covers them, has led to too high an estimate of both their mechanical and artistic skill. Travellers, it is true, are tolerably unanimous in attributing to their architectural remains a character of sublimity. But it is well known that mere magnitude of dimension, though combined with the rudest workmanship, is often sufficient for producing this effect, by the idea of power which it suggests. Thus, Stonehenge is said to be sublime, and our most eloquent writer on the æsthetics of architecture has said that even a flat wall, if of unusual size, is a most effective architectural feature. It has, we conceive, yet to be shown that the Egyptian temples did not owe their imposing effect quite as much to mere massiveness and size, as to proportion or design.

To skill in delineative art they can still less lay claim. The conventional stiffness of their profile figures indicates a rudimentary stage of art, from which, either from actual incapacity, or from fixed habit, they were doomed never to advance. The effects of light and shadow, or the blending of colours into each other, they seem not to have attempted.

Of perspective they had no idea, and the expedients to which they had recourse when the subject required a representation of things seen obliquely, are very amusing. Thus in a funeral procession of boats, those which lie behind the line next the spectator are lifted up, so as to be completely clear of the intervening figures, and a strip of water, cut off square, and of the same length as the boat, is duly drawn under each. To give the idea of a canal or a fishpond, the surface of the water is raised up and turned perpendicularly towards the spectator. In battle-scenes, which are their most spirited productions, where the genius of the artist was unfettered by the restrictions of sacerdotal conventionalism, the superior prowess of the king is indicated by his gigantic size; and his exploits are as much exaggerated as his dimensions, as where he is shown grasping whole troops of his enemies by the hair, or crushing them under his chariot wheels. Sculpture was brought by them to a much higher degree of perfection than drawing. The same stereotyped rigidity of form and attitude is indeed everywhere observable, but it cannot be denied that the enormous size and immoveable serenity of expression of their colossal statues have much of the sublime.

It is in mechanical science, however, that the Egyptians have been commonly supposed to have made the greatest advances. The enormous masses of their columns and statues, and, above all, of the pyramids, have been accepted as irrefragable evidence of pre-eminent mechanical skill. But it would appear that even here we have attributed to science what was due to mere strength. Herodotus and Diodorus give differing accounts of the manner in which the pyramids were constructed, but neither of them shows any application of engineering skill. No representations of the ordinary contrivances of capstan or pulley are found. On the other hand we have a representation of the moving of a colossal statue, which is effected by the main strength

of 172 men, without any aid from machines. Pliny says 120,000 men were employed to raise an obelisk at Thebes. In fact, the very simplest machinery, combined with unlimited command of human power, is sufficient for the greatest works which Egypt exhibits.

One of the most interesting chapters of the work is on the art of writing, and the progress made by modern philologists in decyphering the hieroglyphic characters. That a language and character, which had not only been in use for more than twenty centuries, but of which more inscriptions remain than of perhaps all other ancient languages, should have been utterly lost, is of itself a singular fact; but having been lost, its recovery is one of the greatest triumphs of philologic sagacity and skill. Before the end of the last century, many attempts had been made, founded chiefly on the notices of the hieroglyphic system which occur in several ancient writers, but unsuccessfully. Herodotus, Diodorus and others probably knew nothing themselves of the character; and Horapollo, whose *Hieroglyphica* is a professed treatise on the subject, not only erroneously represents the system as entirely symbolical, but gives many false explanations of the symbols which are used. It was, therefore, not surprising, that, following these guides, modern investigators should have been led in a wrong direction. The only ancient author who has left a really correct account of the principle of hieroglyphic writing, is Clemens Alexandrinus, about the end of the second century A.D. It is now seen that he mentions all the modes in which the characters are employed, and, among them, the phonetic or alphabetic, the most important of all; but it was not till this phonetic use was discovered independently, that the passage in Clemens was itself understood. The real key to the discovery was the Rosetta trilingual inscription. Its value was at once recognised, and attempts immediately made to decipher the hieroglyphic and enchorial by means of the Greek. It was not however till 1818, that Young, after unsuccessful attempts to read the enchorial, applied himself to the hieroglyphic, and made out a list of about 200 characters with their explanations, the majority of which were failures. Two very important points, however, were ascertained by him, viz., that the oval rings contained proper names; and

that female names are distinguished by the addition of an egg and a semicircle. He also first discovered that some of the marks represent sounds only, though in assigning these he was not very successful. His discovery was followed up by Champollion, with greater success, and by comparing the Rosetta stone with the obelisk of Philæ, he at length obtained an alphabet, by whose aid he proceeded to read names with a rapidity which showed that the true key was in his hands. That Champollion profited by the earlier discoveries of Young there can be little doubt; but it is equally true, says Mr. Kenrick, that the discovery as Young left it would have been productive of little benefit. As amended by Champollion, it has unlocked the long-closed chambers of Egyptian archæology. The whole of the account given of the hieroglyphic system, as now ascertained, is very interesting; we have only room for one extract.

“ When we analyse a hieroglyphical inscription, we find that its characters are used in three different ways. First, that which Champollion calls the *figurative*; but which we prefer to call the *pictorial*, since figurative in English has the same meaning of *tropical* or *symbolical*. In this case the delineation of an object is designed to convey to the mind the idea of that object and nothing more; and were the whole inscription made up of such delineations, it would be a picture writing like that of the Mexicans. It is one of the circumstances in the description of Clemens, which prevented the nature of Egyptian writing from being understood, that he includes this in the general appellation of symbolical, as in the case of a disk for the sun, and a crescent for the moon, distinguishing it as ‘ that kind of the symbolical which produces its effect directly by imitation.’ This pictorial representation sometimes stands instead of a phonetic name for an object; but the most common use is to make the phonetic group of characters more intelligible, by being subjoined to them. Thus to the names of individuals the figure of a man is subjoined; to the characters which express the words for *name, wine, eagle, grapes, egg, statue, ear, wall, ass, milk*, and others, figures are added, forming what Champollion calls the *determinative* of that group of characters. To *ran*, name, is subjoined the shield, or ring, in which proper names are generally enclosed; to *erp*, wine, two jars, &c. In a similar way, a man dancing is subjoined to the verb signifying that act; a woman on her knees, with a child, to the verb signifying to nourish or bring up: a man erect, with outstretched hand, to the verb which signifies to call

upon. Sometimes the figure is only partially given, the head or limbs being substituted for the whole body. This mode of fixing the sense of a particular group of characters was especially convenient in a system of writing, which did not mark, either by points or intervals, the commencement of one word and the termination of another.

“The second use of the hieroglyphical writing is the *symbolical*, in which the object delineated is not meant to convey to the mind simply the idea of itself, but of something associated with and suggested by it. Thus a crescent is used to denote a month, because, no doubt, originally, the Egyptian month was lunar; the palm to denote a year, because, it is said, the tree puts forth a branch every month; the vulpanser or goose of the Nile, a son, because the bird is remarkable for its filial affection; a stretched-out hand, the action of giving; two legs, verbs of motion, &c., &c.

“Of that more deep and far-fetched symbolism, which constituted what Clemens calls the enigmatical kind, modern research into the hieroglyphics has revealed very little. The examples which he himself gives, the representation of the course of the stars by a serpent, and of the sun by a scarabæus, are not confirmed by the monuments. Plutarch tells us that on the propylon of the temple at Saïs were inscribed a child and an old man, a hawk, a fish, and a hippopotamus; that the hawk denoted a god, the fish, hatred, and the hippopotamus, impudence; and that the whole together was to be read, ‘Ye who are being born and ye who are about to die, the god hates impudence.’ Such a condensation of symbolical meaning would approach the enigmatical, and we cannot pronounce that the Egyptians never expressed themselves in this way; but we do not find examples of it in their monuments, and it is very foreign to the character of the hieroglyphical writing. As far as it has been hitherto explained, there are in it very few symbols for the expression of abstract conceptions and propositions connected with them by material objects. We may turn page after page of Champollion’s Dictionary of Hieroglyphics, and find no signs but such as are pictorial or phonetic.

“The last-mentioned class, the phonetic (the first in the enumeration of Clemens), is really by far the most extensive. The greater part of the characters of which a hieroglyphical inscription is made up, are as truly *letters*, as if it were Greek or English; and as discovery has extended itself, signs, supposed to be symbolical, have shown themselves to be phonetic.”

But though the general principle, and the significations of a great majority of the characters, are known to us, there remain many obscurities, both as to the words represented

and their interpretation. The theological and mystical nature of much of the hieroglyphic literature renders its decyphering particularly difficult. Even in the inscriptions accompanying historical subjects, where the scene presented materially aids the interpreter, many conjectural renderings are assigned, which require additional evidence to confirm. For these reasons, the author has, with characteristic caution, preferred not to depend on the hieroglyphics in expounding the theological dogmas of the Egyptians, and made but sparing use of them even in the historical portion of his work.

From the concurring accounts which have come down to us in the historians, confirmed most amply by innumerable monuments, it is certain that of all the influences which swayed the Egyptian mind the most universal and permanent was theology. This then becomes a subject of special interest, and we naturally expect to find in their theology some elements of sufficient spirituality or power, to account for this extraordinary influence, and the unexampled authority of the priesthood. What was the secret of this authority? Was it the purity of their doctrine or the sanctity of their lives? Or was it the slavish subservience of a "dedita superstitionibus gens," gradually induced by the arts of priestcraft, and perpetuated by the thousand observances of a complicated and debasing ritual? We confess that to us the latter is the more probable solution, and we think it is confirmed not only by the monuments, but by the accounts of historians such as Herodotus and Diodorus.

It may be said that the high reputation enjoyed by the wisdom of the Egyptians in ancient times, when Hebrew lawgivers and Grecian sages sat at the feet of the priests of Heliopolis, contradicts such a conclusion, and indicates a system of surpassing spirituality or profundity. But we do not see this. That Egyptian learning was much anterior to either the Hebrew or the Greek, we know; and this of itself would account for all the facts which need to be explained. Even supposing them to have originated the doctrine of the metempsychosis,—which we do not care to dispute,—or of the immortality of the soul; there was, so far as we know, nothing in their teachings on these subjects more spiritual or pure than is found in the simple faith of the aborigines

of America, who not only believe in a future life, but in a Great Spirit who is the Father of all mankind. Has it ever been shown that either Pythagoras, or Plato, or Moses, derived from Egypt higher or loftier notions of Deity, or the mode of pleasing or worshipping him, or a purer morality, or a truer theory of the universe? Or are not the chief points derived by both Moses and Pythagoras, matters of ascetic observance or outward ritual, such as the prohibition of woollen garments or unclean articles of food?

No people have left behind them so many illustrations and detailed pictures of their ritual and their divinities, as the Egyptians. But when we endeavour to penetrate to the conceptions which these symbolized, we meet with insuperable difficulties. It is possible indeed that the ritual may have expressed, to the initiated, doctrines of deep or solemn import; but there is little evidence that it was so, and there is much evidence that to the mass of the people its effects were degrading. The account of Herodotus, whose candour and deep reverence for everything connected with religion quite preclude any suspicion of intentional mis-representation, points to a religion as debasingly superstitious as the present idolatry of the Hindus. There are, indeed, sacred traditions which he says he was not permitted to disclose; but they were evidently tales of the sufferings of the Gods, or revolting circumstances connected with their history, and, if told, would rather lower than raise our estimate of the religion they belonged to.

With respect to the Egyptian divinities, no satisfactory arrangement has yet been made of them; and the obscurities and contradictions met with on every hand, in attempting to reduce them to a system, seem insuperable. It appears doubtful whether their Pantheon was ever systematically or uniformly conceived. It is best explained by the supposition (strongly confirmed by Herodotus), that it was the result of numerous local systems, agreeing (as would be the case with one people) in the general conception, but differing in the particular deities they adopted, or the ritual they observed. On this point Mr. Kenrick observes,—

“ Such an origin will best explain the extraordinary intermixture and confusion of the characters and functions of the Egyptian gods. In their visible symbols, and in their names, they appear at first sight

to be distinct, and there is usually some office prominently assigned to every one; but on further examination we find that each assumes, occasionally, the attributes of the others, and that a permanent line of demarcation cannot be drawn between them. Those which appear usually in an inferior rank are at times invested with the titles of supreme divinity. This, too, was a natural consequence of a local origin; to the people of each nome their own special god would become the chief object of worship; the inhabitant of the Thebais would attribute to his Amun, of Memphis to his Ptah, of Saïs to his Neith, the offices and operation of the head of the system. And besides this, reflecting men would naturally endeavour to bring back the diversity of persons and attributes in the popular theology to the idea of a primitive and controlling unity. For we find everywhere in the ancient civilized world, a belief in one supreme power, co-existing with polytheism, either as the result of a primæval revelation of this doctrine, or of that conviction of a unity of purpose and administration, which forces itself upon the mind, from its own consciousness of a moral and intellectual unity, and from the observation of the external world."

The Author then enters at some length into the description of the Egyptian Pantheon, noticing the threefold division, mentioned by Herodotus only, into a first set of eight Gods, a second of twelve, and a third, posterior to these, of indefinite number, to which Osiris belonged. The Osirian myth and its supposed signification is, as its importance demands, very fully treated of. The reason why Osiris and Isis were worshipped alike by all the Egyptians, while other deities were merely local, was probably that they more distinctly and palpably personify the parts and elements of the natural world, the Nile, the earth, the sun, the sea. And from this general prevalence of their worship it was that they became to foreigners the representatives of the whole Egyptian theology. On the causes of the extraordinary spread of the worship of these divinities in later times, so as, among the Romans, almost to displace the native religion, Mr. Kenrick does not enter. It might, at first sight, be thought that this must have arisen from its superior purity or spirituality recommending it to minds which had outgrown the absurdities of the older faith. But when we look at the state of morals in the Roman Empire, at that period, and observe the classes among whom, according to Horace and Juvenal, Isis seems to have found her most numerous votaries,

we cannot adopt such a conclusion. We are inclined rather to attribute it to the idea, that the mysteries into which the worshipper was initiated would, like the Orphic or Eleusinian mysteries among the Greeks, or the ascetic practices among Roman Catholics, procure for him some peculiar privilege or blessing; and also to the interest excited and kept up by the various observances prescribed.

The following valuable observations, on the claim of the Egyptians to a doctrine which must lie at the foundation of all real religion, will be read with interest. They conclude the first section of the very instructive chapter on Religion.

“ We can find no sufficient evidence for the opinion, that the various gods of Egypt are but symbols and personifications of the attributes and powers of one Being, whom the priests, if not the people, recognised as the only true God. This opinion seems to have been adopted not so much from any direct evidence, as from its appearing the necessary consequence of another assumption, that the doctrine of the Unity of God, being the primæval belief of mankind, must have been held by the original population of Egypt. The only approach to the idea of Unity which we find is that the functions of a supreme God appear to be assigned to subordinate deities, as if all were really the manifestation of one power. Of the ancients, some represent the Egyptians as believing in no other gods than the elements of nature and the heavenly bodies: others, as being the source whence Orpheus and Pythagoras derived their doctrine that God dwells in the world as the soul in the human body. Each opinion may have been held in Egypt when the Greeks became acquainted with it, and the partisans of each have claimed it to be the genuine sense of their religion. The recognition of God, however, as the intellectual principle, wholly distinct from matter, which presided over creation (the clear doctrine of the Hebrew Scriptures), appears to have been, as regards the Pagan world, the original and independent merit of the school of Anaxagoras. This is the only kind of monotheism which has any definite character or moral value; the rest are a pantheism, which is easily changed into polytheism on the one side or atheism on the other.”

The second section of this chapter (the 21st) treats of the sacrifices and priesthood of the Egyptians; the third, of their doctrine of a future life. When we speak of this

doctrine as held by ancient nations, we are apt to assume in their ideas too great a similarity with our own. We believe that after death the soul enters on a state not only of retribution, but of greatly enlarged powers both of activity and consciousness. But among the ancients these points were very imperfectly held. Even the Jews, till, at the Captivity, they became acquainted with the Zoroastrian doctrine of a resurrection, conceived of the grave as a place in which the souls of the dead reposed in a state of inactivity and unconsciousness,* and the condition of the dead, as described by Homer, is not very different.† That the future world was one of retribution for mankind generally, was a comparatively late conception among the Greeks, nor was it ever held by them with that distinctness and universality with which it is taught in the Christian Scriptures. Among the Egyptians we find various forms of the doctrine of a future life. One was that of the Transmigration of Souls; and it is from them that Pythagoras is said to have derived his Metempsychosis. With this was combined, to some extent, the idea of punishment and reward, and there was indeed a formal judgment, in which the soul appeared before Osiris, to answer for its sins committed in the body. Representations of this judgment scene are found in the tombs, and on the papyri enclosed with the mummies.

But in uniting these various ideas into one consistent doctrine on the subject, there are many difficulties and contradictions. Not the least are those suggested by the practice of embalming, and the elaborate ornamentation of the tombs of the deceased. What object could they have in these, if the soul, at death, was doomed to make the round of Transmigration on earth, or entered a state of retribution in another world? On this subject Mr. Kenrick remarks :—

“ If it be true that the original reason for embalmmnt was that the soul was believed not to quit the body till the body decayed, and might be detained in a state of consciousness while that change could be averted, we can understand the extraordinary pains which

* 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. Is. xiv. 9; xxxviii. 18. † Odys. xi. 141, 151.
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they bestowed in ornamenting their tombs and covering their walls with paintings, exhibiting the scenes of daily life; not merely those in which the deceased had been personally engaged; for the variety found in a simple tomb precludes this idea; but all that could recal to him the remembrance of his actual experience. They could minister nothing to the gratification of the living, since they would be seen only when a new tenant was added to the occupants of the sepulchre. The reason which they assigned for bestowing so much more pains upon their tombs than upon their dwellings, was, that the tomb was man's everlasting habitation, the house only his temporary lodging. But had it been a popular belief that the soul was either entirely detached from the body, or performing its rounds through those of inferior animals, such a conception of the tomb could scarcely have originated."

These discrepancies seem too serious to admit of their having co-existed in the same faith, and we must, therefore, suppose that they belonged to different periods, or were held by different classes of minds. The author continues—

"It would be vain to endeavour to combine these different statements and indications of opinion, into a system which should represent the defined and universal belief of the Egyptian people. We can distinguish with some certainty the philosophical dogma of transmigration, the religious doctrine of retribution, and the popular belief of the continued existence of the soul, still dwelling in the undecayed body. But other differences must have existed. Our first impulse is to think of the dead as extinct, and their condition as one of mere negation, rest and silence; and this view ever returns and obtrudes itself, even amidst conceptions and modes of speech derived from the belief in their continued existence. The popular and the philosophical doctrine could not remain side by side for centuries, without attempts being made to reconcile them, which became a fresh source of variety. Not only is a future state of retribution the universal belief of Christendom, but this belief is founded upon express revelation; yet how variously has it been conceived! A millenium on earth; purgatory or the sleep of the soul between death and the general resurrection; the eternal suffering, final extinction, or final restitution of the wicked;—these are only some of the diversities of opinion to which this doctrine has given rise. It must be ever so in regard to what lies wholly beyond the sphere of sense and personal experience. We need not wonder, therefore, if we cannot frame a conception of the Egyptian belief on this subject, which shall explain everything, from writings

which have been only partially preserved, and monuments as yet very imperfectly understood."

The latter or historical portion of the work, which we must now, however briefly, notice, has both presented to the author a more formidable task, and to the general reader a result upon the whole less satisfactory and complete than the former. This, however, does not lessen its value to the historical student, who will not fail to receive with grateful appreciation from so high and trustworthy a source, the clear and lucid statement here given of what has hitherto been done, and can be considered as really known, on the subject.

That the national as well as the monumental antiquity of Egypt ascends higher than that of any other people, has been long acknowledged. The most modern of the three periods into which its history has been divided is contemporary with the earliest dawn of Grecian history. The most ancient reaches back to a period almost coeval with the ordinarily received date of the Creation itself. But the history and chronology of these periods have been until lately so fragmentary and uncertain, that to reconstruct them on an authentic basis would be like the recovery of an earlier volume of the world's annals; a volume valuable not only as extending our view far back into the darkness of ante-historic times, but as throwing important light on the earliest history of the civilization of mankind. It is, therefore, not surprising that this task should have been undertaken with more than common zeal, and have enlisted the efforts and scholarship of some of the highest minds.

It would be impossible, in the short space which remains to us, to enter at any length on the discussion of the apparently insuperable difficulties which have hitherto prevented this reconstruction. We shall content ourselves with briefly indicating their nature, and the advances that have been made towards their removal, referring those who may wish to pursue the question further, to the admirable statement of it given by Mr. Kenrick, in his introductory chapter on the authorities for Egyptian History.

These may be classed under two heads. First, the ancient Greek writers, Herodotus and Diodorus, who have both written professed histories of Egypt. Herodotus is,

indeed, the earliest extant writer on Egypt; and his general truthfulness leaves no room to doubt that he relates fairly what he heard. Yet it is not till he arrives at the eighth century B. C., soon after which the intercourse between Greeks and Egyptians began, that his narrative can be received as authentic: its earlier portion abounds in statements, which, even taken alone, are manifestly mythical.

A similarly unhistorical complexion belongs to the work of Diodorus; and besides the inherent difficulties presented by these historians independently, there is this additional one, that in many important points of chronology and succession of the kings, they greatly differ from each other. Now the vagueness and inconsistencies of these histories might perhaps be accounted for on the very probable supposition, that in those later periods of the monarchy, when Herodotus wrote, and still more in the time of Diodorus, a popular history had been formed, sufficient, without adhering to written or monumental authority, to satisfy the curiosity of travellers by furnishing them with the names of the founders of public works, or a few of the most prominent events of the whole history. Could we suppose that Herodotus derived his information mainly from such merely popular sources, there would be nothing remarkable in the vagueness of his chronology, or the leaning to the marvellous in his narrative. But we find him declaring that he has undertaken long journies for the express purpose of collecting evidence from the best sources, and he repeatedly refers to the priests as his authority, who as a body, says our author, must in this age have retained the knowledge of the hieroglyphical character, and an ample religious and antiquarian literature. "I can only explain this," he continues, "by supposing that the priests with whom he conversed were of a very subordinate rank, and ignorant of the antiquities of their country, who had framed for the use of their visitors such a history as would satisfy their curiosity and excite their imagination, without overburdening their memory with names."

The second class of authorities are those drawn from native sources, and are of two kinds, literary and monumental. Of the former, the principal are Manetho and

Eratosthenes. They are both later than Herodotus, but, for the chronology, of far higher value. When, under the Ptolemies, Greek learning was domiciled in Egypt, it was likely that the priests should wish to present the annals of their country in a more authentic form than Herodotus had done; and one of them, Manetho, priest of Isis at Sebennytus, published, about 300 B. C., several works on the theology and history of Egypt, with the intention of correcting the errors of Herodotus. Of most of these works there remain only fragments, preserved as quotations by later writers, Heathen, Jewish, and Christian. But one work, his "Dynasties," has come down to us tolerably entire, though with some corruptions. It consists of tables of kings, arranged in thirty dynasties, commencing with Menes, the first mortal king, and ending with Nectanebus, the last of the Pharaohs, in 339 B. C. As all the various ancient writers who have quoted Manetho, speak with great respect of his learning and faithfulness; as he must have been acquainted with hieroglyphics, and have enjoyed every advantage of position and opportunity; and, finally, as his lists have recently been extensively and unexpectedly confirmed by the monuments, we are warranted in considering him as the highest and safest authority to follow. But there is one remarkable difficulty. Syncellus, who has preserved these lists, tells us that according to both Manetho and the old Egyptian chronicle, they extend over a period of 113 generations, or 3,555 years; but when we add up the years of the separate reigns, the sum is found to amount (according to the different readings of the text) to between 4,685 and 5,049, a difference of nearly 1,500 years!

Eratosthenes, whom Bunsen calls the most illustrious, next to Aristotle, of all the Greek men of learning, and who was at the head of the library of Alexandria, drew up, in the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes, and by his order, a list of Theban or Egyptian kings, which, beginning with Menes, includes thirty-eight names, and extends over a space of 1,075 years. This would bring us down to about the end of the twelfth dynasty of Manetho, and we should, of course, expect the names and dates of the kings, so far, to correspond with his. But, alas! they are found, upon comparison, not to coincide. The number is greater, and

the names, with some exceptions, different. Here, then, is a difficulty of the most serious character. How shall we reconcile these two authorities, who, singly, would seem to demand implicit credit, but, compared together, prove each other in the wrong? Of their discrepancies no satisfactory explanation has yet been given, and it has been usual to sacrifice one or other of them, according as a longer or a shorter chronology has been preferred.

One solution has, however, been offered, which, for its happy ingenuity, claims mention. Bunsen observed, that where a correspondence between these two authorities exists, it always occurs in those dynasties which Manetho calls Theban or Memphite: and that in the other dynasties, even where the names of the kings are lost, the numbers show that no correspondence existed. Now, as Thebes and Memphis were the capitals of Upper and Lower Egypt, he was hence led to conjecture that these alone were the properly Egyptian dynasties, that the others (Xoites, Elephantinites, Heracleopolites) were collateral, and, as it were, provincial dynasties, not exercising any supremacy over Egypt, and being thus contemporaneous with the Theban and Memphite kings, do not enter into the chronological reckoning. To support this hypothesis, it was necessary to show, that the names of Eratosthenes may all be found in the lists of Manetho. This Bunsen has attempted. With surprising learning and sagacity, he tries to account for the discrepancies between names, by differences of orthography, errors of transcription, or corruption of the text: and where these are insufficient, makes free use of critical conjecture. To so great an extent has he used this, that Mr. Kenrick thinks his conclusions cannot be received without distrust, and, accordingly, in his own treatment of the history, he makes no use of them, but assumes the dynasties of Manetho to be successive, unless where some independent evidence of error can be shown. He admits, however, that no great reliance can be placed on a chronology which professes to ascend to the very point where mortals succeeded Gods upon the throne of Egypt.

There remains yet another class of authorities, by which, indeed, all the others must ultimately be tested; that of the monuments and papyri. Lists of sovereigns

have been found written on this material in the hieratic character; and one of these, strongly recalling the papyrus out of which the priests read to Herodotus the names of 330 kings, and, doubtless, a document of the same kind, is preserved in the Museum at Turin. It contained, when entire, the names of about 250 kings, of which 119 are still tolerably legible. Unfortunately the difficulty occasioned by the discrepancy between Manetho and Eratosthenes is not removed, but increased, by the discovery of this document. There are two other monuments bearing on the chronology of the kings, which will probably prove of great value, known as the Tablets of Abydos and Karnak. The former was found on the wall of a temple in Upper Egypt, and represents Rameses the Great sitting on his throne, and contemplating a list of the titular shields of fifty-two of his predecessors. By comparison with other monuments, a few of these have been recognized as corresponding with the lists of Manetho, but the majority of them present discrepancies hitherto inexplicable. The tablet of Karnak represents Thothmes III. offering gifts to a series of sixty-one kings, disposed in four lines round the walls of a chamber. Now Thothmes is the forty-fourth king on the tablet of Abydos, and we should, therefore, naturally expect to find, that the forty-three which precede him would correspond with his predecessors on that tablet. But here, too, Egyptologists were doomed to be disappointed; no one of the known predecessors of Thothmes in the eighteenth dynasty is found upon it. Yet it is not without traces of connection with other monuments; and though, as yet, the perplexing want of coincidence between them seems rather to add to, than remove, the interminable difficulties of the subject, it is possible that light may break on us from monuments yet to be discovered, interpreted by the aid of a maturer philology. For the present, the lists of Manetho must remain the basis of a provisional chronology, as being on the whole the most reliable authority. That changes will ultimately be made in them, there can be little doubt. But many years may intervene before this can be ventured on, and not till then will the historical portion of this work be superseded. The ethnographical

and descriptive portions will not even then be less valuable; and we believe that these volumes will long be the favourite and standard authority on the subject of Ancient Egypt, and win for their author, both as a scholar and a historian, a prominent and enduring place in our literature.