

ANCIENT EGYPT.*

FOR a century and more, archæologists have been devoting themselves to the exploration of Egypt and the decipherment of the inscriptions on monuments with ever-increasing ardor and success; a voluminous literature on the subject has been created, and now Dr. Budge, of the British Museum, has placed before us this work in eight volumes, embodying the latest results in Egyptology.

The first question that arises is, How early a date may be assigned to civilization in Egypt? This, as Dr. Budge shows, can be only approximately answered. The truth of the matter, he says in the preface, is that we shall never be able to construct an exact system of *chronology* until we have found a complete series of inscribed monuments of the kings of Egypt, with the lengths of their reigns.

Still, as the author observes, "in a modern work on the history of Egypt it is necessary to have some system of chronology," and "of all the systems hitherto propounded, that of the late Dr. Brugsch," he

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think, "has most to recommend it for practical purposes." Dr. Brugsch estimated that the duration of the dynastic period, beginning with Mena, or Menes, the first dynastic king known to us, and ending with the Ptolemaic period, was about 4500 years. This estimate adds 1500 years to that which once obtained, and leaves the unchronicled years before Menes a wide field for the imagination.

Who, as far as can be ascertained, were the aborigines of Egypt? Formerly it was customary to speak of the known ancient inhabitants of the country as "Egyptians," and rest content with that. It was not assumed that they were indigenous, but it was thought that nothing could be discovered about the people that had preceded them. Within the last twelve years, however, a flood of new light has been thrown upon the subject. About 1890, Egyptologists awakened to the fact that the natives were unearthing large quantities of pottery, some of which differed greatly in shape and ornamentation from any thitherto known. Inquiries having been instituted, it was learned that this peculiar kind of pottery was always yielded by a class of graves revealing a different mode of sepulture from that of the Egyptians of history. Interest in the subject was now thoroughly aroused; trained investigators set to work, and before long it was demonstrated that relics of an unknown people had been found. But who were they? and when did they live? The first to publish the results of his investigations was Professor Petrie, who contended that the people of the graves were the members of what he styled the "New Race," or "certain invaders of Egypt," whose remains could be "approximately" dated between 3300 and 3000 B. C. They had, he concluded, "destroyed or expelled the whole Egyptian people, and occupied the Thebaïd alone," and were, furthermore, "a branch of the same Libyan race that founded the Amorite power."

But, as Dr. Budge goes on to show, Professor Petrie's theory was soon overthrown by the eminent French Egyptologist, M. de Morgan, who, five years ago, published the second volume of his *Recherches sur les Origines de l'Egypte*. Professor Petrie had limited the domain of his "New Race" to Upper Egypt, but M. de Morgan made it clear that this people had occupied the whole valley of the Nile for nearly a thousand miles; that their civilization was inferior to that of the Egyptians of history; that their graves disclosed no traces of Egyptian influence and contained no Egyptian objects, and that there was evidence that the Egyptians had "borrowed largely from the industries of the 'New Race.'" The inevitable conclusion was that the Egyptians and the "New Race" had not dwelt together, but that one had preceded the other, and that, since the latter repre-

sented a lower stage of civilization, they must have been the earlier people, or those whom the Egyptians found when they entered the land. Thus, adopting the chronology of Dr. Brugsch, the predynastic population, incorrectly called the "New Race," must have existed at least before 4500 B. C., and their remains must be ranked among the most ancient known. Who they were will probably never be determined. Professor Petrie, as has been said, had thought they were Libyans; but this conclusion, M. de Morgan has proved to be well-nigh unwarranted. The only thing that can be safely said of them is that, relatively at least, they were the aborigines of Egypt.

Whence came the conquerors of the "New Race?" Undoubtedly from the East, and although it cannot be shown that the Egyptians drew their earliest culture from Babylonia, Dr. Budge says that "it is certain that many of the most important elements in Egyptian culture were brought into Egypt by a people who were not remotely connected with the Babylonians." The conquerors were probably of a "Proto-Semitic" origin, and, amalgamating with the "New Race," formed the Egyptians of history.

We have dwelt at some length on the results of recent investigations of predynastic remains, because it is this part of the general subject, the one, in fact, to which Dr. Budge's first volume is largely devoted, that just now is of greatest interest. When we come to the dynastic period, we are on much more familiar ground, and for the purposes of this notice need not follow it. It will suffice, then, to say that the author gives the reader a concise account of the history of Egypt to the time of the Roman occupation, embodying the results of older and more modern research, embellishing his pages with copious illustrations and inscriptions from the monuments, and now and then enlivening the narrative with quotations from ancient writers. His account of the Ptolemaic period is especially interesting, and his estimate of Cleopatra's ability as a politician and a ruler will be a revelation to those who have been accustomed to regard her only as a fickle wanton.