A History Of Egypt, From The Earliest Times To The Persian Conquest

Breasted James Henry
The temple is of the Graeco-Roman age, but this colonnade is a fine example of the later rich and ornate plant-columns, which owe their origin to the earlier architects of the Saitic age.
A HISTORY OF EGYPT
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PERSIAN CONQUEST

BY
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PREFACE

The ever-increasing number of those who visit the Nile Valley with every recurring winter should alone form, it would seem, a sufficiently numerous public to call for the production of a modern history of Egypt. Besides these fortunate travellers, however, there is another growing circle of those who are beginning to realize the significance of the early East in the history of man. As the Nile poured its life-giving waters into the broad bosom of the Mediterranean, so from the civilization of the wonderful people who so early emerged from barbarism on the Nile shores, there emanated and found their way to southern Europe rich and diversified influences of culture to which we of the western world are still indebted. Had the Euphrates flowed into the Mediterranean likewise, our debt to Babylon would have been correspondingly as great as that which we owe the Nile Valley. It is to Egypt that we must look as the dominant power in the Mediterranean basin, whether by force of arms or by sheer weight of superior civilization throughout the earliest career of man in southern Europe, and for long after the archaic age had been superseded by higher culture: To us who are in civilization the children of early Europe, it is of vital interest to raise the curtain and peer beyond into the ages which bequeathed our forefathers so precious a legacy. Finally,
there is a third and possibly the most numerous class of those who desire an acquaintance with the history of Egypt, viz., the students of the Old Testament. All of these readers have been remembered in the composition of this book.

The plan adopted in the production of this history is one which will in some measure also condition its use. The sources from which our knowledge of the early career of the Nile Valley peoples is drawn are of the meagerest extent, and most inadequate in character. They will be found further discussed herein (pp. 23 f.), and in the author's *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. I, pp. 3–22. As used at the present day, in the historical workshop of the scholar, they are accessible chiefly in published form. These publications were in the vast majority of cases edited before the attainment of such epigraphic accuracy and care as are now deemed indispensable in the production of such work.¹ To copy an inscription of any kind with accuracy is not easy. So close and fine an observer of material documents as Ruskin could copy a short Latin inscription with surprising inaccuracy. In his incomparable *Mornings in Florence* he reproduces the brief inscription on the marble slab covering the tomb which he so admired in the church of Santa Croce; and in his copy of these eight short lines, which I compared with the original, he mis-spells one word, and omits two entire words ("et magister") of the mediæval Latin. This experience of the great art critic is not infrequently that of the schooled and careful paleographer as well. The best known of the