

**SYNOPSIS OF THE CONTENTS OF
THE BRITISH MUSEUM.
DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL
ANTIQUITIES: EGYPTIAN
GALLERIES. VESTIBULE**

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Synopsis of the contents of the British Museum. Department of Oriental Antiquities: Egyptian galleries. Vestibule by Various

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VARIOUS

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SYNOPSIS OF THE CONTENTS

OF THE

BRITISH MUSEUM. *Dept. of*
= Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities.
1925-4

DEPARTMENT OF

ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES:

EGYPTIAN GALLERIES.

VESTIBULE.

LONDON:

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1874.

NOTE.—Each object in the galleries has a number attached to it, with a description of its purport and the dynasty under which it was made; when known, the place where it was found is also added, and if presented to the Museum, the name of the donor, and the date when given.

S. BIRCH.



A GUIDE
TO THE
EGYPTIAN GALLERIES.

THE larger monuments of the Egyptian collections are exhibited on the ground floor of the Museum. They are placed in the rooms of the West Wing, comprising the Northern and Southern Galleries leading to the Northern Vestibule. Their arrangement is on the whole chronological, the oldest monuments being placed in the North Wing and the Vestibule. The visitor, after passing the entrance door of the Museum and traversing the Græco-Roman Room, comes to the South Gallery, in which are placed, first the later monuments of the 3rd and 4th cent. A.D., then the monuments of the Greek and Roman period, of the New and Middle Empire, and finally those of the oldest period. The statues and other larger monuments are arranged in two rows down the centre of the gallery, or are placed against the pilasters at the sides and in the centre of the recesses. The principal ones are mounted on pedestals of red Aberdeen granite, some are placed on tables of the same material, and a few smaller objects of stone and other materials are exhibited in two tables in the Northern Gallery, having been placed there to relieve the cases of the Egyptian Rooms, already crowded with objects of the classes to which they belong. Most of the objects of the fine magnesian limestone are placed under glass, in order to protect them from the effects of the atmosphere. The sepulchral tablets and some other smaller objects are placed on the shelves of the recesses, two of which run along each recess. These shelves are numbered, and each object exhibited has a number attached to it

1855. 1/18. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100

and a descriptive label, indicating its subject and, as far as possible, its age. As however considerable diversity prevails in the views entertained of Egyptian chronology, the dynasty, and not the date before the Christian era, is alone given, exact periods of reign being undetermined earlier than that of Tirbakah or Taharka of the 25th dynasty. The objects in this portion of the Egyptian collections are not of a nature so miscellaneous as those in the Egyptian Rooms, which contain the smaller specimens illustrative of the Pantheon, history, private life, arts and sciences, and sepulchral rites, ceremonies, and tombs. Many objects in the Egyptian Rooms are of an ethnographical character. The larger objects on the ground-floor are principally the remains of temples and tombs, and illustrate the religion, history, arts of painting and sculpture, and the relative state of the civilization as shown by the more imposing and colossal works of Egyptian art. Some of the largest monuments of Egyptian art, excepting obelisks, which have been transported to Europe, are to be seen in these galleries.

The objects in the galleries have been principally acquired through collectors of antiquities, or by donations made to the public. Among the objects are those obtained by purchase from Mr. Salt in 1821, others presented by Sir Gardner Wilkinson in 1834, purchases made at Mr. Burton's sale in 1836, others purchased of S. Anastasi in 1839 and 1857, of the Earl of Belmore in 1857, and of Mr. Hay in 1868; donations made by Messrs. Salt and Burckhardt in 1817, by the Duke of Northumberland in 1835, by Mr. Harris in 1840, Earl Spencer in 1805, E. Fletcher in 1844, S. Sharpe in 1866; objects taken at Alexandria in 1801, and presented by George III., and others by H. M. Queen Victoria.

The religion of Egypt was a polytheism, represented by local groups of deities. The idea of a single deity self-existing or self-produced was involved in the conception of some of the principal gods, who are said to have given birth to, produced, or created mankind, all beings or things. Other deities were thought to have been produced by or to have emanated from themselves, while the inferior gods were the children of the principal deities and the goddesses their wives. The deities consisted of several classes: the celestial, or those who were the lords

of heaven, the terrestrial, who ruled over the earth, and the infernal, or those who presided over or were attached to the Hades, *Kar-neter*, and the future state. Many deities of inferior power were personifications of different powers or principles—the senses, faculties, places, things, and attributes—or were the attendant ministers of the principal gods. The greater number were more or less connected with the solar worship, and represented the Sun in his different passages of the upper hemisphere, or Heaven, and of the lower hemisphere, or Hades. To the Sun belonged most of the deities of Thebes, Heliopolis, and other sites. At a subsequent period the gods were divided into three orders, the first or highest consisting of eight deities, who were different according to the traditions of Memphis and Thebes. Those of Memphis were, 1, Ptah, the Hephaistos or Vulcan of the Egyptians; 2, Shu; 3, Tefnu; 4, Seb; 5, Nut; 6, Osiris; 7, Isis and Horus; 8, Athor. The Theban gods of the first order were, 1, Amen-Ra; 2, Mentu; 3, Atum; 4, Shu and Tefnu; 5, Seb; 6, Osiris; 7, Set and Nephthys; 8, Ilorus and Athor. The gods of the second order were twelve in number; Thoth, or Hermes, and Anup, or Anubis, have been supposed to be of their number, as also Hercules. A third order of gods, was said to comprise Osiris, who appears in the first order. Besides this arrangement many of the local groups comprised a principal deity, with other members of his family. At Memphis the local god consisted of Ptah, a demiurgos, the creator of the *kosmos* or universe, the goddess Sekhet, Bast, also called the *Merienptah*, "beloved of Ptah," his wife, and his son Nefer Atum. The local deities of Thebes were Amen-Ra, the king of the gods, lord of Heaven, and Theban Jupiter, his wife Mut, Neith, the Egyptian Minerva, and Khonsu, a lunar god, his son. At Abydos the local deities were Osiris, his wife Isis, his sister Nephthys, and their sons Horus and Anubis. At Elephantine the deities were Khnum, a demiurgos, creator of mankind and president of the waters, the goddess Anuke, the Egyptian Juno, Sati, or the Egyptian Vesta, and their child Hak. A goddess of the same name also appears at an early period as companion of Khnum or Chnoumis. Each principal *nome* or city had its local group of deities, but at a later period some of one series were allied with those of another, and the

worship of Osiris was universal. The deities are of the human type, either dressed in the ordinary tunic *shenti*, or else enveloped in bandages like a mummy. They are distinguished when in the human form by their head-dress; but the heads of animals are substituted for some, as the head of a ram for the god Khnum, of a jackal for Anubis, of the bird ibis for Thoth, of a hawk for Ra, the Sun, and Har or Horus.

Subordinate to the worship of the principal gods was that of the sacred animals which were the supposed incarnations of these deities. These were kept in the shrines or other parts of the temples, and priests attached to the care of some of them. The principal of these animals were the cynocephalus, or dog-headed ape, sacred to Thoth and Khons, worshipped at Thebes and Hermopolis; the lion, sacred to Horus, at Leontopolis and Heliopolis; the jackal, sacred to Anubis, at Lycopolis; the wolf, sacred to Osiris, at the same town; the dog at Cynopolis; the cat, sacred to the goddess Bast, at Bubastis. The bull Apis, supposed to be the second life or incarnation of Ptah, was worshipped at Memphis; the bull Mnevis, sacred to Ra or Atum, at Heliopolis; another bull called Netos at the same place, and Pacis, a bull sacred to Amen-Horus at Hermonthis; the antelope at Coptos, the ibex, sacred to Amen-Ra, at Thebes; the white cow, sacred to Athor, the goddess of beauty and supposed mother of the sun, at Hermonthis and Atarbechis; the sheep at Sais, the ram, emblem of Amen-Ra in his character of Khnum, or Chnumis, at Thebes; the hippopotamus, a Typhonian animal, in the Papremite *nome*; the ichneumon at Heracleopolis; the shrew-mouse, emblem of Horus, at Athribis; the eagle or hawk, sacred to Ra and Horus, at Thebes; the sparrowhawk, emblem of the same god, at Heracleopolis; the raven at the emerald mines near Coptos, the vulture at Eileithyia; the ibis, sacred to Thoth, at Hermopolis; the goose, emblem of the god Seb, at Thebes; the crocodile, sacred animal, and emblem of the god Sebak, at Arsinoe, Ombos, Coptos, and Thebes; the lotus fish, emblem of Athor, at Latopolis; the oxyrrhynchus in a *nome* of that name; another kind of fish, the *mæotes*, at Elephantine; the eel, sacred to Hapi or the Nile. Snakes were worshipped at Thebes, and also the scarabæus. Even plants were sacred to certain deities, as were emblems, such as the Tat, or so-called nilometer

the emblem of stability; while combinations of animal and human forms represented them, as the Sphinx, which represented the god Harmachis, or the sun in the horizon, and the gryphon, emblem of the god Mentu. These animals after death were embalmed, wrapped up in bandages, and buried in the neighbourhood of the temples, and many examples of them will be found in the cases of the Egyptian Rooms on the upper floor of the Museum.

The reigns of the gods were supposed to have preceded those of mortals, and the period of many thousand years of their sway to have passed over the land of Egypt prior to the 1st dynasty. Ptah, or Hephaistos, is supposed to have reigned nine thousand years, and Ra, or Helios, about one thousand; others more or less. Their orders or ranks were succeeded by the reigns of the demi-gods and the Nekues, or Manes, and lastly by the followers of Horus. The actual history of the country begins with Menes, the first king of the thirty-one dynasties which reigned over Egypt till the conquest of Alexander the Great. Although no monuments of the age of Menes are known to exist, his name is found at the beginning of all the lists of kings recorded on the monuments. According to the traditions, he constructed a dyke at Memphis, of which he was founder, and turned the course of the Nile. One of the oldest monuments known is that of the time of Sent, a king of the 2nd dynasty. Towards the close of the 3rd dynasty tablets and inscriptions of the old kings appear at the Wady Magarah, in the Arabian peninsula, the first mentioned being Senefru, in whose reign the mines at that place were worked for copper or turquoise. The succeeding monarchs of the 4th dynasty were chiefly distinguished by the construction of immense sepulchres—the renowned Pyramids of Gizeh—Khufu or Cheops having built the first and largest of these edifices; Shafra or Kephren the second; and Menkara or Mycerinus the third and smallest. Commemorative tablets of the kings of this dynasty are also found at the mines of the Wady Magarah, the legends of the temples of Esneh, and in the older books or papyri. After the 5th dynasty, of which some remains are seen at Gizeh and Wady Magarah, the kings of the 6th dynasty reigned in Middle Egypt and maintained the power of the empire. Tablets of their age are found at the Wady Magarah, El Hammamat, and elsewhere. The most power-