

THE JOURNAL
OF
EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

VOLUME III

PUBLISHED BY
THE EGYPT EXPLORATION FUND
37, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.

LONDON

1916

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THE ECKLEY B. COXE, JR. EXPEDITION

[NOTE:—The following account of the work of the Eckley B. Coxe Expedition at Gizeh and Memphis is taken, by permission of Mr Eckley B. Coxe, Jr, our Hon. Secretary for America, from the *Philadelphia Museum Journal* for June, 1915 (Vol. VI, No. 2).]

“MR CLARENCE S. FISHER, Curator of the Egyptian Section of the Museum, arrived in Egypt on December 16, 1914. On that day, as it happened, Egypt became a Protectorate of the British Empire. Mr Fisher found that the country was quiet. Most of the archaeological concessionaries had withdrawn from their excavations and in consequence laborers, many of whom had experience in excavating, were plentiful. The conditions were in all respects favorable for an expedition equipped to conduct excavations on the sites of one or more of the ancient Egyptian cities. The organization of the Eckley B. Coxe, Jr. Expedition was therefore completed under the patronage of the President of the Museum to carry on systematic excavations, subject to arrangement with the Egyptian Government.

The first step to be taken was to secure through the Department of Antiquities of the Egyptian Government a site that would yield the results which the Museum was most desirous of obtaining. Mr Fisher spent a month in preliminary examination of various sites in the Delta and in lower Egypt. For various reasons the choice of sites fell upon the following three. Tanis in the western Delta, a city dating from the sixth dynasty to the Roman Period; the pyramid fields at Gizeh, containing the great royal cemeteries of the fourth and fifth dynasties; and ancient Memphis, situated on the west bank of the Nile and dating from the earliest prehistoric times to the Arab invasion.

Tanis had, a year before Mr Fisher's arrival in Egypt, been divided between a French expedition and an Austrian expedition, but excavation on the site had not begun. Gizeh had several years previously been divided between an American expedition, a German expedition, an Italian expedition and an Austrian expedition. Professor Flinders Petrie had begun excavations at Memphis in 1906 and continued these excavations during a period of three months each year until 1914. Some of the principal portions of the great site, however, still remain untouched. The cemeteries at the Pyramids had all been parceled out, but upon the proclamation of the British Protectorate the German concession and the Austrian concession were forfeited. Likewise the Austrian concession of the half of Tanis was forfeited. An application was accordingly made for the German and Austrian concessions at Gizeh which had been partly worked and the Austrian concession at Tanis which had not been worked at all. The government, however, at that time decided to reserve these

forfeited concessions until the close of the war. By chance, one of the most important parts of the cemeteries at Gizeh had been assigned to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts which had conducted investigations there since 1903. Through the Director of these excavations an arrangement was made whereby a part of this site was transferred to Mr Fisher to excavate on behalf of the Eckley B. Coxe, Jr. Expedition. The Museum has thus enjoyed this year an opportunity of participating in the excavation of the greatest Old Empire site in Egypt.

There remained Memphis. After an examination of this site Mr Fisher applied for that untouched portion which was believed to contain at some depth the ruins of the Royal Palace of the New Empire. In due time this area was measured out and formally assigned by the Egyptian Government to the University Museum.

Mr Fisher conducted excavations at Gizeh for a period of six weeks. Among the discoveries which he made was an offering table with two rows of inscription around its edge containing the names of Khufu and Khafra, the builders of the first and second pyramids, and that of Dedefra, a mysterious king of whom little is known and whose place in the fourth dynasty has not been determined. This is the fourth example of his cartouche that has been discovered. Another discovery of special interest made during the excavation of the Gizeh cemetery was an offering chamber built of mud brick with ribbed vault constructed of specially designed brick with interlocking joints. This is the first time that this type of construction has been found in Egypt or on any ancient site. The tomb in which this vault was found is not of later date than the sixth dynasty.

On March 11 Mr Fisher moved his camp to the Memphis site and work was begun on the 13 of March with a large force of men. The surface of this area was covered with heavy mud brick walls of Roman or Ptolemaic origin. This represented the latest period of occupation. The first operation was to sink a trench down to water level where the sand and mud are saturated with water of the Nile. Below the upper level already described was found a second stratum of occupation which Mr Fisher has not yet identified. Below this stratum were found traces of a great building which is presumably a part of the royal palace. As the seepage from the Nile at this lower level interfered with the excavations, a pump was installed to keep the diggings dry. In order to facilitate the removal of the dirt without encumbering the site, a section of railroad was laid down to carry to a distance the rubbish removed. In this way the débris of the excavations will not be allowed to encumber any part of the ruins and interfere with future excavations. The digging at Memphis has now proceeded for three months. The organization embraces a force of one hundred and eighty men and work has proceeded rapidly. On such a large site where so much débris has to be removed, the developments are slow and the laying bare of ancient buildings is a tedious and protracted operation. Nevertheless, the progress that has already been made indicates that the site was well selected. The objects that have been found during the three months' digging have been numerous, although for the most part small. On April 10 Mr Fisher wrote as follows.

'All the force is now employed on the area where the two exposed tops of columns attracted me some time ago. The plan of the whole is now developing and we have a great door leading to another room to the north. I am quite sure that

we have the beginning of the palace here. The columns bear long inscriptions and the jambs of the doors have also inscriptions and reliefs of the king Merneptah making offerings to different deities. When first exposed all the inscribed parts are filled with mud and the surface of the stone itself is very wet and soft. Nothing can be done to it in the way of cleaning until this dries and then the earth peels off rather easily.'

Professor Flinders Petrie began excavations at Memphis in 1908. These excavations were continued for several years, but almost the entire site still remains to be excavated. The Museum, which had already participated in Professor Petrie's excavations, has long had an interest in Memphis. The great granite sphinx which stands in the courtyard of the Museum formerly stood in the temple of Ptah at Memphis, where it was unearthed by Professor Petrie in 1912. Professor Petrie's work was brought to a close at the time of the outbreak of the European war and since that time, the University Museum, through the Eckley B. Coxe, Jr. Expedition, has taken up the arduous task of excavating in a systematic way the site of the greatest capital of ancient Egypt."

[NOTE:—For comment by Prof. Petrie on this work at Memphis see our Notes and News, p. 61, of this number of the Journal.]