

THE
 STORY OF SANEHA,
 AN
 EGYPTIAN TALE OF THE XIIth DYNASTY.

TRANSLATED BY
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THE following Egyptian narrative of an autobiographical kind may serve to vivify two very ancient kings, already well known to us by monuments, Amenemha I. and Osirtesen I., the first two sovereigns of the twelfth dynasty. The papyrus from which this narrative is taken is preserved in the Museum of Berlin, having been purchased by Dr. Lepsius for that collection in London many years ago. A fac-simile of this manuscript and of three others in the same handwriting was first published in 1860, in the concluding volume of that gigantic work *Denkmäler Ägyptens*, Abth. vi., Bl. 104 and foll. All four papyri remained undeciphered, notwithstanding

their tempting appearance, until 1863, when the task was undertaken simultaneously by M. Chabas and the writer of the present version, but without concert or communication. M. Chabas produced the result of his researches in November, 1863, in a work entitled *Les Papyrus Hiératiques de Berlin, recits d'il y a quatre mille ans*. The present writer read his translation to the Society of Antiquaries, in the month following, after having seen the work of M. Chabas, but without having occasion to make any material alteration in consequence. The two translations in fact, if not precisely identical, agreed in all essential points.

The four Berlin papyri appear to be the work of the same hand, yet the writing varies very much in different parts. The best written parts are those where the lines are vertical; when the scribe had got tired of this arrangement, or, perhaps, when he was afraid of wanting room, he lapsed into the ordinary horizontal arrangement of lines, and his writing becomes careless and bad.

No. 1, the subject of this translation, wants the commencement; but there remain three hundred and eleven lines or columns. In some parts the divisions of sections are distinguished by headings in red ink.

Nos. 2 and 4 contain portions of an extremely curious legend of a rustic, who is robbed of his asses by a tyrannical officer, and brings his complaint to the governor of the province. The governor, at the

suggestion of King Nebkara, the last monarch it seems of the IIIrd Dynasty, affects to despise the appeal, for the purpose of testing the veracity or the perseverance of the rustic, who utters a series of eloquent harangues, all of which are taken down in writing to be reported to the king. This primæval law case unluckily wants the final decision, which we may be satisfied, however, was in the rustic's favour. The two papyri in which this story is contained are not parts of the same copy. The text of No. 2 coincides towards the end with the beginning of that of No. 4, so that they must be parts of two different copies. A small part of a third copy which supplies the beginning of the story exists in the British Museum.

The Berlin papyrus No. 3 contains the concluding part of a sort of poetical effusion, not very easy to characterize.

Nothing has been recorded as to the finding of these papyri; we know not whether they came from a Theban or a Memphite tomb, or whether from some other kind of repository; for it seems strange that works of this kind should be buried with the dead. If they came from a tomb they may have been pieces copied by the occupant with his own hand, and which he delighted to peruse when alive. From the style of the handwriting, and from various peculiarities in the language, they may be unhesi-

tatingly assigned to the XIIth or XIIIth Dynasties, that is to the old Egyptian empire, previous to the invasion of the Hykshos. When the dominion of Egypt was restored, and the Asiatic invaders expelled, a certain change had taken place in the Egyptian language and writing, so that monuments of this later period are easily distinguishable from those which belong to the ancient kingdom.

The papyrus No. 1, with which we are now principally concerned, purports to have been composed in the XIIth Dynasty, and relates, as we have said, to events in the reigns of its first two kings. The copy at Berlin is not the composer's autograph, as it closes with the scribe's note that it had been copied from beginning to end, as found in the original. In all probability then the actual text dates from the reign of one of the later kings of the Dynasty. It belongs to one of the most remarkable periods of Egyptian history, about which we happen to be very well informed by the monuments. With the exception of the book of the *Proverbs of Ptahhotep*, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the *Ritual of the Dead*, the works contained in these Berlin papyri are the most ancient compositions which have been yet published. A few other papyri of as old, or it may be an older date, are known to exist.

THE STORY OF SANEHA.

- 1¹ one of them, to make me obey
 2 the words which he had spoken.
 3 When I was on the point of setting out,
 4 my heart was troubled ; my hands shook,
 5 numbness fell on all my limbs.
 6 I staggered, yea, I was in perplexity
 7 to find myself a place of repose.
 8 I simulated a herbseller in order to travel ;
 9 two journeys made I, and returned back.
 10 I desired not to approach this mansion.²
 11 I longed to become free.
 12 I said there is no life besides that.
 13 I quitted the house of the sycamore.
 14 I lay down at the station of Snefru,
 15 I passed the night watch in a corner of the garden.
 16 I rose up when it was day,
 17 and found one preparing for a journey.
 18 When he perceived me he was afraid.
 19 When the hour of supper was come,
 20 I arrived at the town of
 21 I embarked in a barge without a rudder
 22 I came to Abu I made the journey on foot
 23 until I came to the fortress which the King
 24 had made to keep off the Sakti.³
 25 An aged man, a herbseller, received me ;
 26 (I was) in alarm seeing the watchers upon the wall,
 27 in daily rotation.
 28 But when the time of darkness was passed,
 29 and the dawn came,
 30 I proceeded on from place to place,

¹ The text begins in the middle of a sentence.² The palace.³ Eastern Foreigners, enemies of Egypt. S.B.

- 31 and arrived at the station of Kamur.¹
 32 Thirst overtook me in my journey,
 33 my throat was parched ;
 34 I said this is the taste of death.
 35 I lifted up my heart, I braced my limbs,
 36 I heard the pleasant voice of cattle.
 37 I beheld a Sakti.²
 38 He demanded of me whither I journeyed (saying),
 39 "O thou that art from Egypt."
 40 Then he gave me water,
 41 he poured out milk for me.
 42 I went with him to his people.
 43 They brought me on from place to place,
 44 I came to . . . I arrived at Atima.
 45 (While) I was there AMMU-ANSHI³
 46 the King of Upper Tenu⁴ sent for me.
 47 He said to me, "Remain with me ;
 48 thou mayest hear the language of Egypt."
 49 I told him of these affairs
 50 (so that) he understood my condition,
 51 he listened to my disgrace.
 52 Certain men of Egypt who were among his guests
 53 questioned me. Then he said to me,
 54 "To what end hast thou performed these things
 55 Is it true that the wealth of the house of
 56 King AMENEMHA reaches to heaven ?
 57 That the wealth of it is incredible ?"
 58 I said, "It is certain." I came from the land of the Tamahu,⁵
 59 I rebuked my heart, I tamed my courage.
 60 I was unwearièd in (travelling),
 61 I stopped not in the ways of the renegade,

¹ A town in Lower Egypt of the 13th or Heliopolite nome, Brugsch, *Geog.* I., 150, 260. S.B.

² Eastern Foreigner. S.B.

³ Local king not otherwise known.

⁴ Uncertain site, perhaps Silsilis. S.B.

⁵ Libya.

62 I was not an idler, not
 63 no listener to counsels of sloth,
 64 my name was not heard in the place of reproof,
 65 I relaxed not. When I was brought
 66 to this land,¹ it was as though a god was in it;
 67 a land such as one which a beneficent god presides over,
 68 one whose terror extends to the lands like SECHET²
 69 in the season of pestilence. He spoke to me,
 70 and I answered him, (saying) "Save us!"
 71 His son comes home, bringing prosperity
 72 to the affairs of his father.
 73 He also is a god, without fears,
 74 none such was ever before him,
 75 he is most skilful in affairs,
 76 beneficent in mandates, going out and coming in.
 77 When he bids, he makes the regions flourish.
 78 His father is in his palace,
 79 he announces to him how much he has profited.
 80 Moreover he is a valiant man,
 81 doing deeds of strength with his sword,
 82 there is not his equal. Behold him going up against the Petti,³
 83 he suppresses violence, he chastens pride,
 84 abasing regions, his enemies rise not up again
 85 that which is before him stands not,
 86 but bows the knee.
 87 He is joyful when he sees multitudes,
 88 he lets not his heart remain behind.
 89 He is cheerful when he sees contest,
 90 he rejoices when he goes up against the Petti. He takes
 his shield
 91 he redoubles his blows, he smites,

¹ Egypt.² Or Pasht, the goddesses Sechet, Bast or Bubasis, Ptah, of which one was the wife, formed with their son Nefer-Atum the Memphite triad.³ Western Foreigners, "Bows." S.B.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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