CHAPTER XI

KARNAK AFTER THE XVIIIth DYNASTY

With the advent of the XIXth dynasty an extraordinary amplification of the temple took place by the addition of the Hypostyle Hall (D) which after the great pyramids is regarded as the chief marvel of Egyptian architectural art. Planned by Rameses I who erected the enormous pylon which forms its west front, it was mainly built and completed by his son and grandson Seti I and Rameses II. Its colossal scale is characteristic of the megalomania which had already made itself evident at the close of the preceding dynasty. The lintel stones of its entrance were more than forty feet in length. The
area of the hall was 329 feet by 170, and its stone roof was supported by 134 columns. Of these 122, ranged in six rows on either side of the central avenue, are 43 feet in height and 29 in circumference, whilst the 12 which line the avenue are over 70 feet high. The roof above them was further raised in the centre by square blocks and stone struts on the four central rows of columns so that light was admitted through the apertures which were subdivided by stone posts and rails. The central columns had capitals of the expanded flower pattern; the others were colossal simplifications of the so-called lotus-bud kind. Both walls and pillars were covered with incised and coloured designs and hieroglyphics, and it is largely from such mural documents that the history of ancient Egypt has been reconstructed. The exterior of the north wall gives an illustrated record of the wars of Seti I in Syria and Palestine; the designs
on the south wall refer to those of Rameses II in western Asia, with others added by later kings.

Rameses II also surrounded the eastern part of the temple with another enveloping wall (plan, p. 104, F F) which was similarly made a field for reliefs, mostly of a religious character.

That the addition of the Hypostyle Hall was regarded by the kings of the XIXth and XXth dynasties as a completion of the temple seems probable from the fact that both Seti II and Rameses III built small temples (M. L.), dedicated to the Theban triad, Amen, Mut and Khonsu, in the open space before its west front. Moreover, there exists on the northern side a collection of sculptured figures of couchant rams, which are supposed to have originally formed part of an avenue of approach from the Nile to the west portal, and to have been set aside when they were in the way of later buildings.

The want of a closed forecourt, such as was usual, must have seemed an imperfection to the priests of Amen, who in the period of political decay which followed the reign of Rameses III became all-powerful at Thebes. Lower Egypt had in the meantime become an independent government under Libyan rulers at Bubastis. It was only when one of these rulers, Sheshenk (Shishak) I, had resuscitated the foreign influence of Egypt by a successful campaign in Palestine, and reunited the two kingdoms under the XXIIInd dynasty, that this final enlargement of the temple of Amen was carried out. A large court (B), 338 feet in width and 276 feet front, was laid out, the north and south sides being colonnaded. It included in its area Seti II, and part of that of Rameses I, and wall impinged on the side walls of the
its front within the court facing north. The work probably remained unfinished for some centuries, for the immense pylon (A) which forms its west side dates from Ptolemaic period and was never quite completed. The pylon marks the greatest width of the temple as 370 feet; its total length was 1,180 feet. Meanwhile, Taharka, an Ethiopian king of the XXVth dynasty, had erected in the centre of the court a rectangular portico with an entrance on each side. Its roof, if it had one, was supported by ten colossal columns of which only one remains standing. Outside the west pylon is an avenue of ram-headed sphinxes leading from a quay on the former bank of the Nile, which has receded considerably to the west. It was part of the improvements of Rameses II, but appropriated afterwards by Seti II, who set up two obelisks at the western end.

The temple continued in use and in good condition during the period of Greek domination, in the course of which several alterations in detail took place. The shrine was rebuilt olemv Soter in the name of Philip Arrhidaeus, entrance to the Hypostyle Hall was altered the Ptolemies. These rulers not only adapted to the native religion, but they also adhered ancient ideals in architecture, and their things show little of the influence of
The precincts of this vast temple were delimited by a girdle-wall of brick, which included a sacred lake on the south side, and several other temples of comparatively small size (p. 117). That of Rameses III, which abuts on the forecourt, though small—for its length is only 170 feet—is interesting as a fairly well-preserved and unaltered example. It has the forecourt with Osiride colonnades (see p. 101, and plan, p. 104), the pillared hall, and a triple cella at the end. Further to the south is the somewhat larger temple of Khonsu, founded by Rameses III (see p. 160), which whilst it follows the general type has, like every other temple, an arrangement of its inner chambers peculiar to itself. On the north side of the precincts are the scanty remains of a temple built by Amenhetep III to the war god Mentu.

Near to the central court of the great temple on the south side is a pylon built by Thothmes III at right angles to the axis of the temple, and further south is a
similar one erected by Hatshepsut. Both these were additions to a temple facing south-west, previously built by Amenhetep I, which was afterwards almost entirely demolished. Further on were two more pylons built by Horemheb, the last king of the XVIIIth dynasty, between which on the east side are the remains of a small temple which had been previously built by Amenhetep II. The pylons were apparently intended to adorn the approach to the great temple, for the southernmost one marks the entrance on that side to the precincts. From this gate southwards an avenue of sculptured rams, about 330 yards long, led to a temple dedicated to the goddess Mut, generally said to have been founded by Amenhetep III, though it has indications of an earlier date,¹ and additions by later kings. A similar avenue of ram-headed sphinxes led from the temple of Khonsu to that which Amenhetep III built at Luxor.

¹ It is in this temple that the statue of Senmut referred to on p. 97 was found.