CHAPTER XIV
THE XIXTH DYNASTY. THEBES AND ABYDOS.

The Egyptian rulers had an innate tendency, from the earliest dynasties, to manifest their power by the vast scale of their buildings, and towards the end of the XVIIIth dynasty this tendency had begun to assume a form in which size and mass were attained at the expense of finer qualities. The foreign conquests of Thothmes III and Amenhetep III in western Asia had raised Egypt to the highest pitch of material prosperity, and brought an access of wealth to its rulers, much of which was expended on vast buildings and gigantic sculpture. The two colossal portrait-statues of Amenhetep III, which overlook the Nile from the western plain of Thebes, are the most familiar examples of this. Originally monoliths of hard sandstone conglomerate, about sixty-five feet high,¹ they formed with others a frontal guard to a large temple, which has now been so completely demolished that its plan and aspect are irrecoverable. What this

¹ Both have suffered severely from time and earthquakes. The more northern, which was supposed to emit a musical sound at sunrise, having been reconstructed in parts under Septimius Severus, is no longer a monolith. The association of the name Memnon with them by Pliny, Juvenal, and other Roman writers, probably arose from a confusion of the name of Amenhetep with that of the Ethiopian hero. Some Greek writers apply the word Memnonium to the Ramesseum, and to the temple of Seti I at Abydos. See Murray's Handbook, p. 410, also p. 412.
building consisted of may be surmised from the remains of the mortuary temple built about 150 years later by Rameses II, who probably used the material of Amenhetep's,\(^1\) as well as some from the XIth dynasty temple at Dĕr-el-Bahri.

This Ramesseum, as it is called, lies somewhat less than half a mile north of the Colossi,\(^2\) and though it is in a very ruinous condition, enough remains to show that it was a magnificent representation of the architectural ideals of its day.\(^3\) A large pylon covered with incised pictures of Rameses' Asiatic wars led into the usual forecourt, which appears from its scanty remains to have had a double colonnade on each side. On the south side are the

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\(^1\) Hall, "Near East," p. 317.

\(^2\) See plan, p. 101.

\(^3\) Petrie supposes that the building was actually laid out by Seti I, but finished and appropriated after his death by Rameses II (Hist., iii, p. 43).
remains of an unexplained building. Near a second pylon, at the further side lie fragments of a colossal statue (D) of the king seated, which must have been about fifty-seven feet high, and was originally a monolith of carefully polished syenite. Beyond this was a second open court with a colonnade on each side, the most striking feature of which is that on the east and west sides,¹ the massive square pillars (H H) are fronted with colossal figures of Osiris. On the west side these stand on a raised platform, approached by three sets of steps corresponding to three doors in the back wall which lead into the hypostyle hall beyond. Where there are no steps the intercolumnar spaces are said to have been filled in by a dwarf-wall, such as was common in the

¹ The axis is here assumed to lie due east and west, though the actual orientation is south-east and north-west.
Ptolemaic temples.¹ The hypostyle hall (Q) is arranged on a plan similar, but on a smaller scale, to that at Karnak; the central walk being flanked by two rows of six massive columns, whilst the triple aisles on each side are divided by somewhat smaller columns. About thirty-four of the original forty-eight columns remain. Beyond this hall is a smaller one (U) with eight columns, which is in fairly good preservation, leading into another of similar size and plan, and still further there are ruins (Y Z) which seem to indicate a third small hall with a sanctuary beyond it.

Behind the actual temple there are considerable remains of brick buildings, including a row of semi-circular vaults, the arches of which are constructed of three or four courses of roughly-fashioned voussoirs.

¹ See P. and C., ii, p. 149, and "Description de l'Egypte," ii, pl. 29.
From the remains of wine-jars found in them, they seem to have been magazines for storage. An altar and the ruins of a large hall indicate that the whole area was the site of an extensive colony of officers and servants connected with the service of the temple, and the reception of tribute paid in kind to the king.

If the Ramesseum followed, so far as the temple is concerned, what had become the more usual arrangement in its ground plan, there are two rather earlier temples founded by Rameses' father Seti I, which show some peculiarities both in plan and style. One is the temple at Kurna, the most northern of the ruins on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, dedicated by Seti to
his father Rameses I, and finished by his son Rameses II. Its chief feature now remaining is a portico of clustered papyrus bud columns, originally ten in number, with heavy square abaci supporting an entablature which differs in its rectangular profile from the more usual cavetto cornice. This formed the façade of the *naos*

![Exterior Colonnade of the Temple of Seti I, at Abydos](image)

proper or inner chambers of the temple. Vestiges of two pylons show that there were two open forecourts as in the Ramesseum, and some mutilated remains of sphinxes indicate that a central pathway or *dromos*, leading from the first pylon through the second was lined by these figures. Whether the courts had other architectural features seems doubtful.

The other temple specially associated with Seti I is
that at Abydos. Here the first court has practically disappeared, but portions of the second pylon and of another open court exhibit surface sculptures by Rameses II, some of which are in the peculiar style of sunk relief which became common in the Ptolemaic period. They are better than those of the temples at Thebes and Kurna, and are described as the finest known of the age. At the farther side on a slight elevation was a colonnade consisting of a single row of twelve square piers (A), behind which were originally seven doors leading into the first hypostyle hall, a narrow transverse space the roof of

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1 This temple is called by Strabo the Memnonium. The name should properly belong to the destroyed temple of Amenhetep III. See note, p. 129.

2 Petrie, Hist., iii, p. 19.
which was supported by two rows of twelve circular or rather roughly hewn polygonal columns (B). In the further wall were doors opposite to those in front, leading into a second larger hypostyle hall with three rows of twelve columns, and from this opened seven cellae with arched roofs separately dedicated to Seti himself and the six deities, Ptah, Harmachis, Amen, Osiris, Isis, and Horus (1-7). The entrances of the cellae were opposite to the doors of the hypostyle hall, with clear approaches between every double rank of columns. Apart from this unusual sevenfold dedication, the chief peculiarity in the plan of this temple is the rectangular wing on the south side of the naos or temple proper, giving it an L shape and so contravening the general rule that extensions were made on the main axis and at the outer end of the precincts. The lateral position of the addition is accounted for by the fact that a subterranean building, which has been identified with a well or pool mentioned by Strabo,1 lay immediately behind the temple: its purpose is probably to be explained by the requirements of the simultaneous cult of seven different deities. One of the larger pillared halls (L) in the addition is provided on three sides with a stone wall-bench, and appears from the mural reliefs to have been used like one of the lateral halls at Dér-el-Bahri (see p. 96) for the slaughter of sacrificial victims. A slightly ascending passage (F) which gives access to this chamber from the hypostyle hall is covered with reliefs on both walls and ceiling. Those on the right hand or western wall represent Seti and his son doing homage to their ancestors and predecessors represented by seventy-six cartouches. This is the celebrated tablet of Abydos, which, inasmuch as it has

1 See Appendix II.
WALL PAINTING AND RELIEF IN SETI'S TEMPLE
helped to elucidate the succession of the kings of Egypt, is a historical document of high importance.

A much simpler ground plan is shown by the temple erected by Rameses II, a short distance to the north of Seti's. It is now in a very ruinous condition, but enough remains to show that it was one of his best works. The forecourt was surrounded by pillars fronted with Osiride figures, such as are seen in the Ramesseum. These are of hard sandstone, but much of the building is of fine limestone, and the doorway to the pillared halls was framed with red and black granite, whilst the sanctuary was lined with alabaster.

In all that denotes prosperity, wealth, and magnificence as distinct from the more intellectual attributes of art, Egypt reached its culmination in the XIXth dynasty. The sepulchre of Seti in the valley of the tombs of the kings is the largest, and the most justly celebrated for the fineness and completeness of its work, in this royal
necropolis. Steeply inclined galleries alternated with staircases lead downward to several pillared chambers in the depth of the mountain-side, the whole being richly decorated with mural paintings representing the past and future life of the great king. The tomb when discovered by Belzoni in 1817 had already been ransacked, but the embalmed body was afterwards found in the pit near Dēr-el-Bahri, to which it had been removed with others for safety. It is now at Cairo, and the fine alabaster sarcophagus which had remained in the tomb is in the Soane Museum in London.

1 Petrie, Hist., iii, p. 22.  
2 See p. 90 note.