

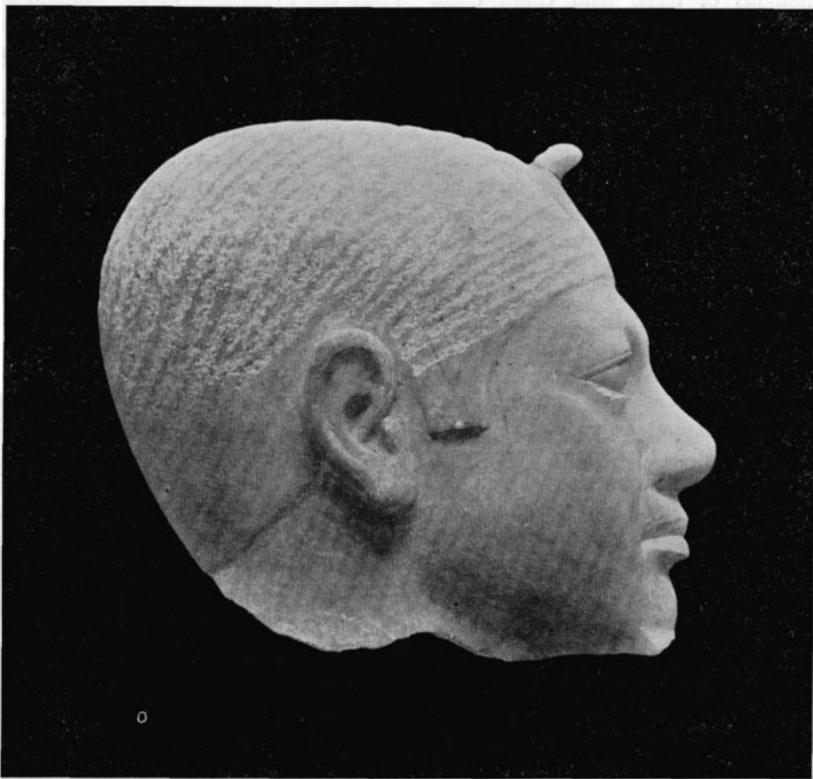
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Alabaster Head of Shepses-kaf, Son of Mycerinus

Fourth Dynasty

The Harvard University — Museum of Fine Arts Egyptian Expedition

THE great creative period of Egyptian culture, in all its phases, culminated in the fourth and fifth dynasties (about 2800-2600 B. C.). A thousand years before, the Egyptian race was just emerging from the stone age — half savage tribes wielding spears and maces tipped with flint and other stones. In this thousand years they had invented copper working and the weighted stone borer, the first of all human machines; they had built up a strong centralized monarchy; they had developed the agricultural and other resources of the land to a point of great national prosperity; they had invented hieroglyphic writing to satisfy the needs of the civil and military administration; and in the service of the Oriental ostentation of their kings they

had created an art,— architecture, painting, sculpture,— now, in the twenty-eighth century before Christ, approaching its most perfect expression.

At this time, during the very greatest period of Egyptian art, there came in succession to the throne of Egypt the great kings who built the pyramids of Gizeh. Cheops, or, as the Egyptians called him, *Khnum-Khufu*, built the First Pyramid at that place and called it *Ikhet-Khufu*, "The Glory of Cheops." His son, Chephren, or *Khaf-Ra*, built the Second Pyramid, called *Wer-Khafra*, "Great is Chephren." The successor of Chephren, *Dedef-Ra*, built his pyramid some miles away to the north at Abu-Roash. But after him Mycerinus, or *Men-kau-Ra*, who was perhaps a grandson of

Cheops, built the Third Pyramid at Gizeh and called it *Men-kau-Ra netery*, "Mycerinus is divine." The last of these rulers of the fourth dynasty was Shepses-kaf, who only lived long enough to finish his father's tomb and begin a pyramid for himself.

The pyramids were merely the tombs of the kings, greater and more splendid than any which their fathers had ever built. They were intended to reflect through all time the power and wealth of the builders. The very names given to the pyramids, "The Glory of Cheops," "Great is Chephren," "Mycerinus is divine," give us clearly the thoughts of those who chose these names.

Now every Egyptian grave serves two purposes and consists of two essential parts. In a chamber under ground lies the body walled up and secured against decay and spoliation. Above ground a mound of brick or masonry marks the grave and presents a place where the living may meet the dead with offerings and magic words which will secure to the spirit of the dead its daily bread and protection from all evil. For it must be remembered that an essential part of Egyptian religion was the belief in another life after death. In some unseen way the personality of the dead man continued after death as a spirit, but with the same necessities, the same fear of the frightful evil demons, the same work and the same pleasures as on earth. With the body was buried all those pots and pans, weapons and implements, adornments and garments which he had needed on earth. Food and drinks were also placed in the grave, but these were not lasting, and it was the duty of the relations to renew them from time to time. The kings and great

men established endowments to provide for their necessities after death. Farms and estates were granted to certain men, who thus became funerary priests and were enjoined to bring offerings of food and drink to the graves of the founder every day and every feast day.

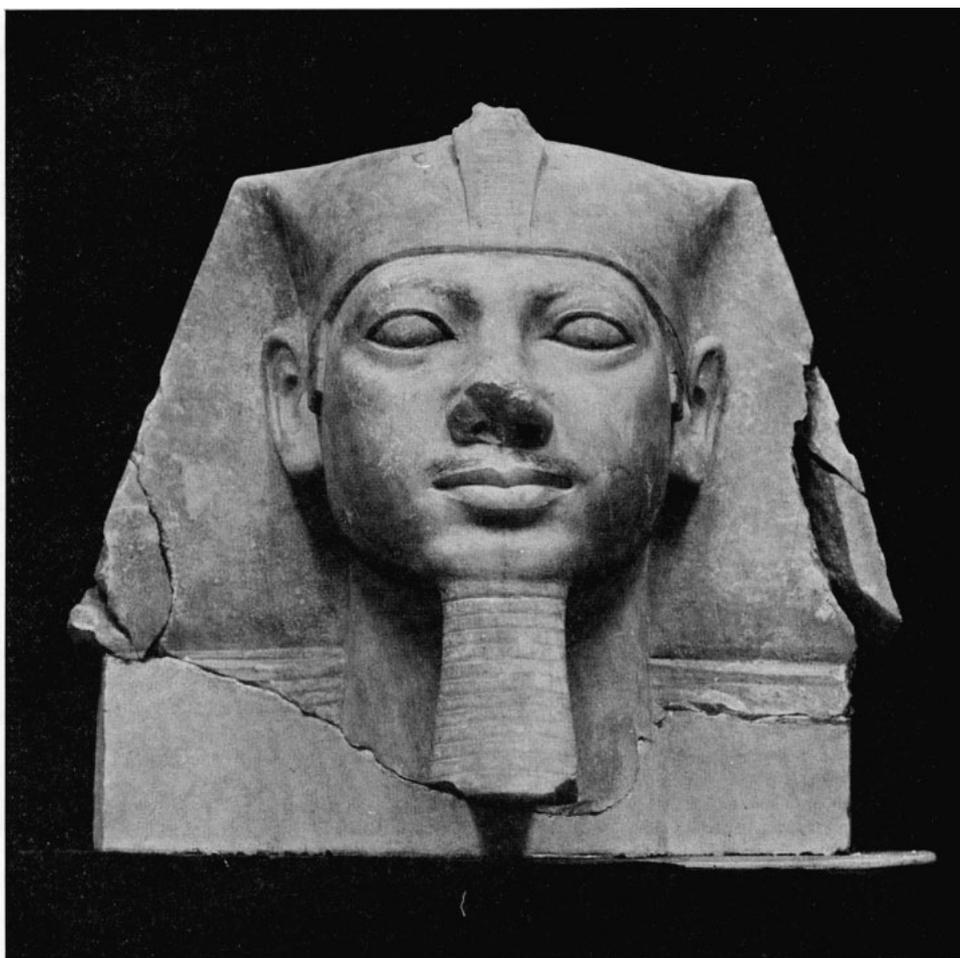
This custom is perhaps the oldest which we can trace in Egypt. It is so deep-rooted in the Egyptian mind that it prevails to-day among both the Copts and the Moslems. The great tombs of the Khaliphs at Cairo are in all essentials ancient Egyptian graves, even though the words used in them are the words of the prophet and not the old magical formulas, and even the meanest grave of the poorest peasant shows the same essential parts.

Thus it is that each pyramid not only contained the burial place of a king, but also presented on the side nearest the valley a chapel for the presentation of offerings and the performance of the necessary rites. The pyramids with their temples stand high up on the rock plateau. For convenience, or some other reason which we do not know, a second chapel was built below on the edge of the valley and connected with the upper temple by a causeway.

Sixty years ago the existence of valley temples was unknown. In 1853 Mariette, at that time Director-General of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities, found a wonderful granite temple close beside the Sphinx and called it the Temple of the Sphinx. The causeway leading to the upper temple was clear, but as the custom of valley temples was unknown, the connection of the granite temple with the pyramid was not understood.



First View of Head of Alabaster Statue of Mycerinus

*Alabaster Head of Mycerinus**Fourth Dynasty*

In a shaft in the so-called Sphinx temple Mariette found nine statues of Chephren and some fragments of other statues. Among these was the famous diorite statue of Chephren now in the Cairo Museum, which has ever since occupied the great place in all works which treat of Egyptian sculpture. From that time on the pyramid field was apparently regarded by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities as exhausted ground. The site was reserved by the government, but the Museum authorities did not consider it advisable to conduct excavations. So for fifty years the great pyramid field lay untouched, except for the almost public plundering of the Pyramid Arabs.

In 1901 the Director of the Department of Antiquities unexpectedly granted two concessions in this field to private individuals, thus breaking the reservation of the site. He was in despair of protecting the place against the marauding Arabs. On the expiration of these private concessions in 1903 applications were handed in by Professor Steindorff of Leipzig, Professor Schiaparelli of Turin, and myself, at that time Director of the

Hearst Egyptian Expedition. Our applications were granted with the request to divide the field amicably among ourselves. The division of the pyramids was easily arranged, as the Italians wanted the First Pyramid, the Germans wanted the Second, and I was willing to accept the Third. But we all wanted the great cemetery west of the First Pyramid. So that was divided into three strips running east and west, for which we drew lots. Professor Schiaparelli drew the southern strip, Professor Borchardt (acting for Professor Steindorff) drew the middle strip, and I drew the northern strip.

As it turned out, the American or northern strip proved the most important. Here we found the great royal cemetery laid out on a regular plan, like a new town in our West, by Cheops and his architects, when the First Pyramid was being built. In this royal city of the dead, nearly five thousand years ago, Prince *Wep-em-nofrit*, Prince *Ka-em-aha*, Prince *Mer-ib*, other sons and daughters of Cheops and his great courtiers, built their tombs. The most beautiful object found in

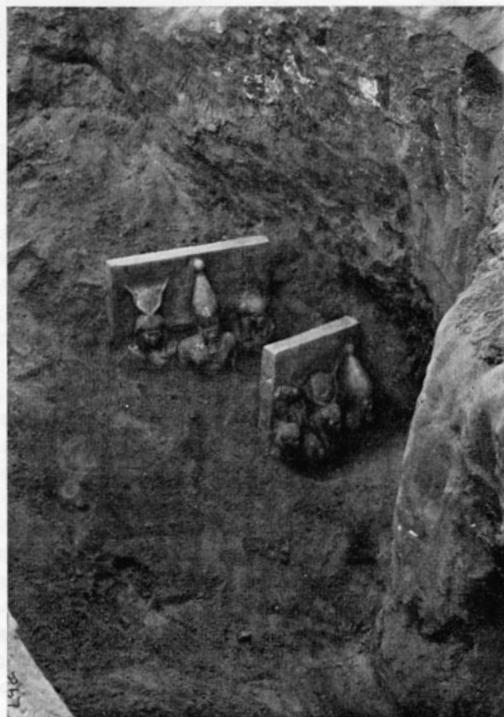


Valley Temple of Mycerinus in Process of Excavation. Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) Beyond

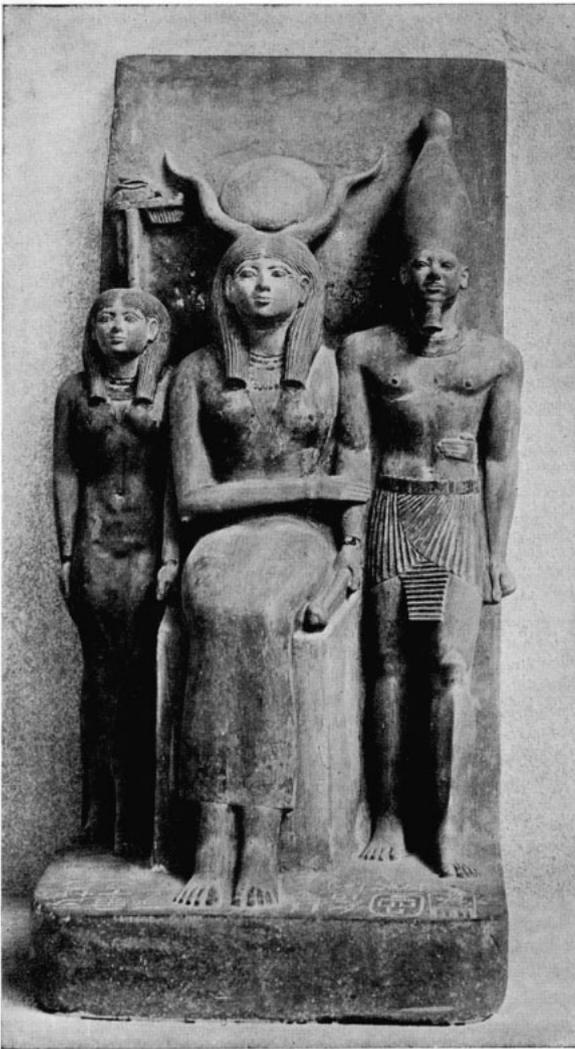
this cemetery was the funerary stele of *Wep-emnofrit* in delicate low relief, pleasantly colored in shaded tones, not with the usual glaring contrasts of Egyptian paintings.

In the streets and open places of the royal Cheops cemetery we found a maze of later tombs. On examination these proved to be the burial places of the priests and officials who lived in "The City of the Pyramid: Glory of Cheops," and were entrusted with the great endowments of the pyramid and with the performance of the offering rites in its temples.

Having thus identified the royal cemetery of Cheops with its intrusive priestly cemetery, it was easy for us to identify the great royal cemetery of Chephren with its intrusive priestly cemetery, although this lay nearer the Second Pyramid in the concessions of the Germans and the Italians. We were able to show also that both these great cemeteries had fallen into decay and had been covered with sand by the end of the sixth dynasty. That is, the first lines for the royal cemetery were laid out about 2900 B. C., and by 2500 B. C., four hundred years later, the last offering had been made, the last priest had gone away, and the great cemetery lay a silent waste, much as it was the day we gave the word to our gangs to begin the excavation.



First View of the Slate-Triad Groups



Slate Triad Group—Nome Goddess, Hathor and Mycerinus

Having recovered in three campaigns the history of the cemetery of the pyramids and enriched the Museums in California and Boston with many stelæ, statues and other objects of the Old Empire, in 1906 we turned to the Third Pyramid.

In 1906-07 the Pyramid Temple of Mycerinus was excavated. One of the first events was the discovery, just south of the Temple, of the quarry of the Third Pyramid, bearing on its northern and western terraces the tombs of the funerary priests of Mycerinus. Then we found that the Arabs of the thirteenth century A. D. had destroyed most of the granite casing of the Third Pyramid for making mill-stones, and had left the holy of holies of the Temple covered with a wilderness of granite blocks. Thirty trained workmen, having only iron bars and rollers, wooden beams, ropes and two improvised railway trucks, carried out in a few weeks over four hundred granite blocks ranging

from one to seven tons in weight, and were so proud of their achievement that they boasted, "We will build a pyramid if there is an order."

In this temple we found among other things the pieces of the beautiful alabaster statue of Mycerinus. The head of this statue was found outside the temple only a few inches under the surface, near the path formerly used by travellers visiting the pyramid, and might have been discovered at any time in the last thousand years by some stroller casually prodding the sand with stick or parasol.

In the meantime the Germans, excavating at Abusir, had found a valley temple connected by a causeway with a pyramid of the fifth dynasty. The conclusion was immediately obvious to everyone that the Sphinx Temple was the valley temple of the Second Pyramid, and that all pyramids of this period probably had valley temples. We therefore resolved to find the valley temple of the Third Pyramid. The causeway could be traced for two hundred yards down the desert to a point where it disappeared under the level surface of the sand which filled the mouth of a great ravine opening into the Nile valley. In the eastern part of this ravine lay a modern Moslem cemetery, and our only fear was that the valley temple lay under this cemetery.

In the summer of 1908, with Mr. Oric Bates as field director, we began the search for the valley temple. Following the line of the causeway down the level floor of the sand-filled ravine, we marked out five points where we proceeded to sink pits each about forty yards nearer the Arab cemetery. As the sand grew deeper toward the cemetery, pit No. 1 struck the causeway first, then pits No. 2 and No. 3 in order. In pit No. 4 we found a mud-brick corridor on the causeway; but pit No. 5 descended through four yards of drift sand to an uneven mud surface. All hands were brought into the space between pits No. 4 and No. 5, and in a week we had uncovered the ruins of a mud-brick building. It was unpromising enough in appearance—a hill of mud scarred by the pits and trenches of Arab treasure seekers, with only a line of wall here and there. But fragments of stone vessels and of statues even were found on the surface and in the thieves' holes; and the second room excavated brought to light the four exquisite slate triads, one of which is now in the Museum.

As room after room was cleared, almost every one contained priceless antiquities. In the portico of the offering room there were the bases of four life-size alabaster statues still in place, and scattered on the floor, as they had been smashed by ancient vandals, lay hundreds of fragments of the bodies of



First View of the Slate Group of Mycerinus and His Queen

these statues. Among them were the body and head of a statue (now in Cairo), the beautiful alabaster head of Prince Shepseskaf, and another large alabaster head (now in Cairo). In other rooms were unfinished statuettes, copper implements and weapons, magic wands of flint, and a multitude of vessels of alabaster, porphyry, diorite, crystal, slate, basalt, and other stones.

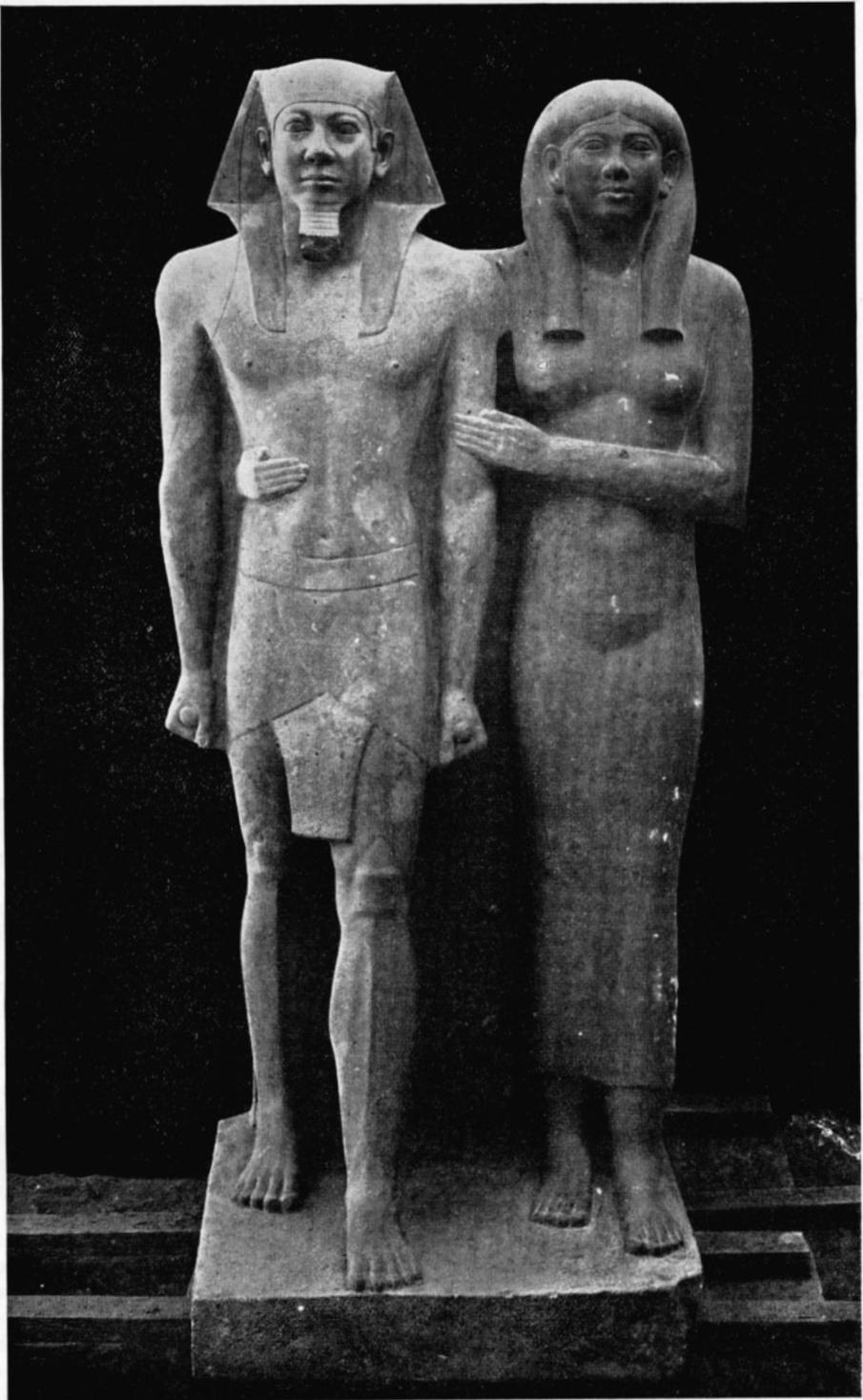
But the temple could not be finished the first year. The value of the finds had been so great that the payment of the bakshish to the workmen exhausted our resources. At that time the winter work of the expedition was devoted to the Nubian Archæological Survey. The next summer (1909) the expedition was obliged to go to Samaria; so the excavations of the Valley Temple of Mycerinus were not resumed until the winter of 1909-10. Mr. Firth and Mr. Bates were then on the Nubian Survey, and the work was carried out under the field direction of Mr. Fisher. By April, 1910, the Valley Temple was finished, and we had come on the edge of a town which lies in front of it and runs out under the Arab cemetery.

Again we found stone vessels, unfinished statuettes, fragments of slate triads, and other objects as before; but the greatest of all our finds was a beautiful pair statue, portraits of the king and queen in hard dark slate. Curiously enough, this was under the floor of the temple in a great hole dug by the Arab treasure hunter of the thirteenth century A. D. These gentry had dug two holes side by side. In digging the second one they had found our statue in their way, had dragged it out from the room in which it stood, cast it uninjured down the

first hole, and covered it with the sand and debris from the second hole. Thus it was almost miraculously preserved until the hour when one of our men, lifting a stone from its bed in the debris, saw the sand fall away and reveal the profile of the queen.

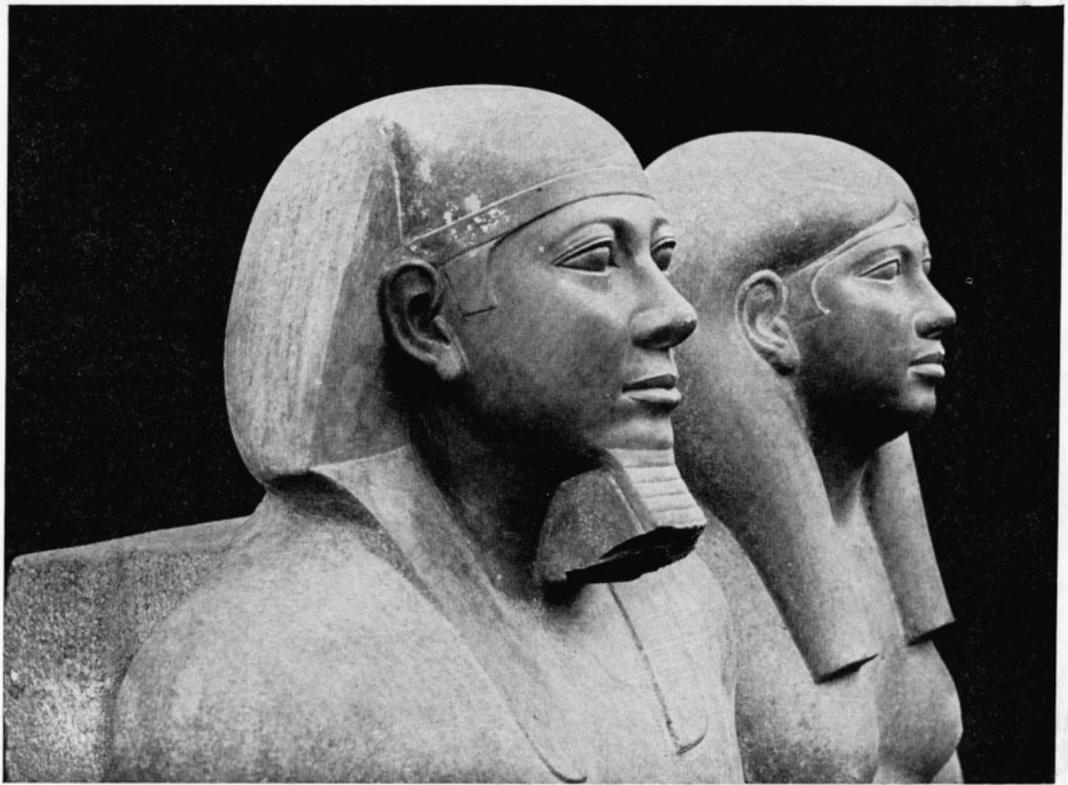
I am often asked: "How came it that such beautiful objects were found in a poor mud-brick temple?" As a matter of fact, these great masterpieces were not made for a mud-brick temple, but for a costly granite temple which would have outdone the Sphinx Temple if it had been finished. Our work revealed three temples: (1) a magnificent stone temple, or rather its foundations, laid by Mycerinus himself, but owing to his early death unfinished; (2) a mud-brick temple built by Shepseskaf, the son and successor of Mycerinus, in the course of his first year; and (3) a mud-brick reconstruction built by Pepy II of the sixth dynasty. Our statues were made in the days of Mycerinus for the stone temple, and placed by Shepseskaf in the only temple he could manage to build, the early mud-brick temple.

The course of events is clear. There is in the Museum at Palermo, Sicily, a fragment of an ancient Egyptian chronicle made probably in the sixth dynasty, and called the Palermo stone. At the end of the second line of the reverse of this stone it is stated that in his second year, Shepseskaf selected the site for his pyramid named "Shelter of Shepseskaf." The rest is broken away. This pyramid is without doubt the unfinished pyramid just northwest of our Valley Temple. It can hardly be called unfinished even, for it had only just been begun.



Slate Group: Mycerinus and His Queen

Fourth Dynasty



Upper Part of Slate Group : Mycerinus and His Queen

Fourth Dynasty

Perhaps a year would have been sufficient for the work done. Shepseskaf was apparently the last king of his dynasty. He was probably killed by one of his rivals, perhaps by User-kaf, the first king of the fifth dynasty. Perhaps from the moment he came to the throne the poor young king was harassed by seditions and revolts. He felt unable to finish his father's tomb as it was planned. Possibly he thought to do it later. In any case his own tomb, not yet begun, was more important. The master masons and the architects, the sculptors and the craftsmen were called on to finish hurriedly the Mycerinus tomb and begin on the new tomb, "the Shelter of Shepseskaf," its statues and its ceremonial vessels. To-day only a square hewed block of native rock, with a pile of masonry on top, stands on the site of "the Shelter of Shepseskaf." For years archaeologists and travellers have wondered vaguely what this might be; and only since the excavation of the mud-brick valley temple of the Third Pyramid has it become clear that this mysterious pile of masonry was the unfinished pyramid of the son of Mycerinus.

The care with which the temples of Mycerinus were excavated enabled us to unravel the history of the construction and the decay of the different buildings on the site. The positive proof was given that our statues were of the fourth dynasty, and that

in the fourth dynasty pyramids had valley temples. Thus the final proof was delivered that the Granite or Sphinx Temple was the valley temple of the Second Pyramid, the tomb of Chephren. At the same time the dispute about the date of the great diorite statue of Chephren and of the Sphinx itself was finally laid to rest. Exactly those characteristics of the Chephren statue and of the Sphinx which were supposed to be of later date were found in our statues, and these arguments fell to the ground. It was therefore necessary to return to the *a priori* probable view that these monuments are of the time of Chephren himself.

Now the Sphinx in Egypt is nothing but the body of a lion with the head of the reigning king. In this guise the king is represented as a guardian, trampling his enemies and warding them off his territory. The motive occurs often. The Great Sphinx is the guardian of the sacred precincts of the Second Pyramid placed beside the causeway leading to the Pyramid. The body is the body of a lion. The head is a portrait of Chephren, the king who built the Second Pyramid and carved the guardian Sphinx out of a knob of natural rock.

G. A. R.