

MR. PETRIE'S DISCOVERY

A PHARAOH'S HOUSE FOUND IN A CORNER OF THE DELTA.

THE KITCHEN OF THE PALACE, THE BUTLER'S PANTRY, AND THE SCULLERY—

HOW THE DISCOVERY CAME TO BE MADE.

From an Article in the London Times, June 18.

A very curious and interesting discovery has been made in the loneliest and dreariest corner of the Northeastern Delta. In a land where previous explorers have found only temples and tombs—the monuments of an extinct faith and the graves of a dead nation—Mr. Flinders Petrie has lighted upon the ruins of a royal palace. Not a palace of the dubious pre-historic Byzantine sort, but a genuine and highly respectable structure, with an unblemished pedigree and a definite place in the history of four great nations. In a word, the fortunate finder of Naukratis has for the last six or eight weeks been working upon a large mound, or group of mounds, called Tell Defenneh, which Egyptologists and historians have long identified with the "Pelusiæ Daphnæ" of the Greek writers and the "Tahpanhes" of the Bible. Here he has discovered the ruins of that very palace to which, as recorded in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, (chapter 43.) Johanan, the son of Kareab, followed by "all the Captains of the forces" and "the remnant of Judah," brought the fugitive daughters of Zedekiah, then a dethroned and mutilated captive in Babylon. This flight of the Hebrew Princesses took place about B. C. 585, during the reign of Ua-ab-Ra, (twenty-sixth Egyptian dynasty,) whom the Hebrews called Hophra and the Greeks Apries. The Pharaoh received them with hospitality. To the mass of Jewish immigrants he granted tracts of land extending from Tahpanhes to Bubastis, while to the daughters of Zedekiah, his former ally, he assigned this royal residence, which the Bible calls "Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes."

At the time when these events happened the whole of this part of the Delta, to the westward as far as Tanis, (San,) to the southward as far as the Wady Tûmiât, was a rich pastoral district, fertilized by the annual overflow of the Pelusiæ and Tanitic arms of the Nile. It is now a wilderness, half marsh, half desert. Toward the eastern extremity of this wilderness, in the midst of an arid waste relieved by only a few sand hills overgrown with stunted tamarisk bushes, lie the mounds of Defenneh. Far from roads, villages, or cultivated soil, it is a place which no traveler goes out of his way to visit and which no explorer has hitherto attempted to excavate. Sixteen miles of marsh separate it on the one side from Tanis, while on the other the horizon is bounded by the heron-haunted lagoons of Lake Menzaleh and the mud swamps of the plain of Pelusium. The mounds consist of three groups situate from half a mile to a mile apart, the intermediate flat being covered with stone chips, potsherds, and the remains of brick foundations. These chips, potsherds, and foundations mark the site of an important city in which the lines of the streets and the boundaries of two or three large inclosures are yet visible. Two of the mounds are apparently mere rubbish heaps of the ordinary type; the third is entirely composed of the burned and blackened ruins of a huge pile of brick buildings, visible, like a lesser Biris Nimroud, for a great distance across the plain. Arriving at his destination toward evening, footsore and weary, Mr. Petrie beheld this singular object standing high against a lurid sky and reddened by a fiery sunset. His Arabs hastened to tell him its local name, and he may be envied the delightful surprise with which he learned that it is known far and near as "El Kasr el Bint el Yahudî—the Castle of the Jew's Daughter."

Seeing at once that the interest of the place centered in this "Kasr" Mr. Petrie forthwith pitched his camp at the foot of the slope, between the tamarisks and the right bank of a brackish canal which intersects the outskirts of the mound and expands somewhat higher up into two good-sized lakes. The place being literally in the midst of an uninhabited desert he had brought with him a patriarchal following of Nebeshah folk—men, boys, and girls—some 40 souls in all, to say nothing of camels and baggage. Want of space forbids us to follow Mr. Petrie step by step in his work of exploration; enough that he at once concentrated his forces upon the "Kasr," which has now been so thoroughly cleared out and cleared up that not only its architectural structure, but its history has been rescued from oblivion.

The building was first a stronghold, quadrangular, lofty, massive; in appearance very like the keep of Rochester Castle. It contained 16 square chambers on each floor, both the outer walls and partition walls being of enormous strength. It is, of course, impossible to guess of how many stories it was originally composed; but the bulk of the mound consists of its debris. This stronghold was built by Psammetichus I., whose foundation deposits (consisting of libation vessels, cornrubbers, specimens of ores, model bricks, the bones of a sacrificial ox and of a small bird, and a series of little tablets in gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, jasper, cornelian, and porcelain, engraved with the royal name and titles) have been discovered by Mr. Petrie under the four corners of the building. The name of the founder being thus determined, we at once know for what purpose the castle was erected. What the excavations have disclosed is, however, still more curious. And here it is necessary to remember that the place is not merely a ruin, but a burned ruin, the upper portions of which have fallen in and buried the basements. Furthermore, it was plundered, dismantled, and literally hacked to pieces before it was set on fire. The State rooms, if one may use so modern a phrase, were lined with slabs of fine limestone covered with hieroglyphic inscriptions, bas-relief figures of captives and the like, most delicately sculptured and painted. These now lie in heaps of splintered fragments, from among which Mr. Petrie has with difficulty selected a few perfect specimens. The whole place, in short, tells a tale of rapine and vengeance. It would be idle, under these circumstances, to hope for the discovery of objects of value among the ruins. Moreover, it was only in the basement chambers, where things might have fallen through from above, or have been left *in situ*, that there seemed to be any prospect of "finds" for the explorer. Now, the basements were the offices, and some of these offices have been found intact under the superincumbent rubbish. There is certainly nothing very romantic in the discovery of a kitchen, a butler's pantry, and a scullery. It would be more satisfactory to find a throne room or a treasure chamber. Yet even these domestic *arcana* become interesting when they form part of an ancient Egyptian palace of 2,552 years ago. The kitchen of "Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes" is a big room, with recesses in the thickness of the walls, which served for dressers. Here some 14 large jars and two large flat dishes were standing in their places, unharmed amid the general destruction. A pair of stone corn rubbers, a large iron knife, various weights, and three small flat iron pokers—or possibly spits—were also found in this room. The butler's pantry, it need scarcely be said, was the room to which wine jars were brought from the cellars to be opened. It contained no amphoræ, but hundreds of jar lids and plaster amphoræ stoppers, some stamped with the royal ovals of Psammetichus, and some with those of Necho, his successor. Here, also, was found a pot of resin. The empty amphoræ, with quantities of other pottery, mostly broken, were piled in a kind of rubbish depot close by. Some of these amphoræ have the lute-shaped hieroglyph signifying "nefer" (good) scrawled three times in ink upon the side, which, not to speak it profanely, may probably indicate some kind of "XXX" for Pharaoh's consumption. Most curious of all, however, is a small room evidently sacred to the scullery maid. It contains a recess with a sink, a built bench to stand things upon, and recesses in the wall by way of shelves, in which to place what has been washed up. "The sink," writes Mr. Petrie, "is formed of a large jar with the bottom knocked out and filled with broken potsherds placed on edge. The water ran through this, and then into more broken pots, going down to the clean sand some four or five feet below." The potsherds in this sink were covered with organic matter and clogged with fish bones.

In other chambers there have been found large quantities of early Greek vases ranging from B. C. 550 to B. C. 600, some finely painted with scenes of gigantomachia, chimeras, harpies, sphinxes, processions of damsels, dancers, chariot races, and the like, nearly all broken, but many quite mendable; also several big amphoræ with large loop handles, quite perfect. A sword handle with a wide curved guard, some scale armour, bronze rings, amulets, beads, seals, small brass vessels, and other minor objects of interest have also turned up, and two rings engraved with the titles of a priest of Amen. Some small tablets inscribed with the name of Amasis (Ahmes II.) and a large bronze seal of Apries (Hophra) are important, inasmuch as they complete the name-links in the historic chain of the twenty-sixth Dynasty. * * *

To identify Jeremiah's stones (unless he had first inscribed them, which is unlikely) would of course be impossible. Yet Mr. Petrie has looked for them diligently and turned up the brickwork in every part. Some unhewn stones have indeed been dug out from below the surface, and it is open to enthusiasts to identify them or not as they think fit, but about the "Balât" it is scarcely possible that there should be a difference of opinion. Did Nebuchadrezzar really come to Tahpanhes and spread his royal pavilion on that very spot, and was Jeremiah's prophecy fulfilled? Egyptian inscriptions say that he came, and that Apries defeated him; Babylonian inscriptions state that he conquered, and the truth is hard to discover. At all events, there are three clay cylinders of Nebuchadrezzar in the Museum at Boulak inscribed with the great King's name, titles, parentage, &c., which there is much reason to believe were found a few years ago at this place, and not as the Arab sellers stated, at Tussûn, in the isthmus. Such cylinders were taken with him by Nebuchadrezzar in his campaigns for the purpose of marking the place where he planted his standard and throne of victory.