

The oldest standing obelisk, at On (Heliopolis), was erected by a king, Sesortasen I., somewhat later than the time of the great pyramids. The obelisks were probably symbols of the sun's rays, certainly dedicated to the Sun-god. Amenemha III. constructed the Labyrinth, an immense palace, for the use of congresses of the Egyptian magistrates, now utterly ruined, but seen and described by Herodotus. Amenemha III. also excavated the immense reservoir called **Lake Mæris**, to control and regulate the inundations of the Nile, by holding over the waters of an excessive inundation for the years of drought. The site and outlines of this reservoir, with a ruined pyramid in the center, are still visible. There is a Nile measure, for marking the height of the inundations, cut in the rock at the Second Cataract, and inscribed with the name of Amenemha III., showing that the armies of the Old Empire had already conquered Nubia.

Tombs of Beni Hassan.—For the period of the "Old Empire" the wall-paintings in the rock tombs of Beni Hassan, between Memphis and Abydos, have the deepest interest. All phases of Egyptian life and industry are here represented in still vivid colors.

The drawing of the Egyptian pictures is stamped with the formalism and rigidity of the people, but its peculiarities are partly the result of decorative principles which reject tints and shadings for the sake of strong and positive color effects; which refuse to represent figures out of profile in order to maintain harmony with the flat surface decorated. The earliest known drawings and statues are the most life-like, and often thoroughly natural.

CHRONOLOGY OF EGYPTIAN HISTORY.

Between the Memphite Empire of the pyramids, the times of Chufu, Chafra, Menkera, Sesortasen I., and Amenemha III.,



Rock Temple at Ipsamboul,
with colossal statues of Ramses II.

and the Theban Empire, distinguished by the temple ruins of Karnak, Luxor, Medinet Habou, Abydos, and Ipsamboul, the times of Thothmes III., Amenophis III., Sethos I., Ramses II., and Ramses III., there was an intervening period known as the Middle Empire.

Owing to insufficient, or as yet unsupplied, records, the beginning and duration of the Old Empire are not yet definitely known. The year 2000 B. C. may be taken as an approximate round number for its close. It was

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