

when the great pyramids and the sphinx were built at Gizeh, and the vast necropolis, or rock cemetery, was laid out at Sakka'rah, near Memphis. The kings of the fourth dynasty are known as the "pyramid builders," the most noted of whom was Khufu (or Cheops).

(2) *The Middle Empire* (about 2700-1670 B. C.) extended from the eleventh to the seventeenth dynasty, with the capital first at Thebes and afterwards at Tanis. The most important dynasty was the twelfth, when Egypt reached a high degree of prosperity and many important public works were constructed, like reservoirs and canals for irrigating the lands not reached by the overflow of the Nile. This dynasty was followed by the conquest of Egypt by foreign barbarian kings, called the "Hyksos" or Shepherd Kings, who probably came from Asia. The rule of the Shepherd Kings extended from the thirteenth to the seventeenth dynasty, and this was the darkest period of Egyptian history.

(3) *The New Empire* (1670-525 B. C.) extended from the eighteenth to the twenty-sixth dynasty (to the time of the Persian conquest), the capital being again at Thebes and afterwards at Tanis and Sais. During the eighteenth dynasty Egypt recovered her independence by driving out the Shepherd Kings. Under Thothmes III she extended her power over Ethiopia and over Syria as far as the Euphrates and the borders of Asia Minor. This period marks the greatest extent of the Egyptian empire. By these conquests Egypt was brought into contact with the culture of the Euphrates valley, and derived from the Babylonians a taste for the finer mechanical arts, for Oriental luxury, and for a more palatial architecture. During



RAMESES II.

the nineteenth dynasty, under the renowned kings Seti I and his son Rame'ses II, Egypt reaped the glorious results of her previous conquests and reached the highest stage of her civilization. From this time Egypt began to decline. In the twenty-fifth dynasty she was conquered by the Ethiopians and afterwards by the Assyrians. In the twenty-