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There appears to be no doubt that the Ancient Egyptian cat was a tabby; rather longer in the leg and lighter in color, perhaps, than our own cats, but with hair of the same length, and not furry, like the Persian.

Paintings and statuettes of striped cats frequently occur, but nowhere are tortoiseshell or plain black or white ones found; and the Egyptians, so conventional often in their treatment of the human figure, are, on the contrary, so invariably realistic and true to Nature when they deal with the animal world, that it is impossible to suppose they would not have painted truly any other markings if they had existed.

The goddess Bast was a cat, and, as being under her protection and types of herself, all cats were sacred. During life they were treated with respect, and their personal safety was guaranteed by rigorous laws, and when dead, they were buried with solemnity. They wore carrings in their ears and neck laces about their necks; but whether this honor was accorded to all cats, or only to those of high degree and exceptional sanctity, is uncertain, as only some of the statuettes show these ornaments, while some have also a jewel on their foreheads. Figures of cats were kept in the house and buried in the tomb, and trinkets, representing both the goddess and the cat, pure and simple, were worn upon the person, and were, no doubt, indicative of a special devotion on the part of the wearer. Besides, however, the religious dignity of repre senting Bast, they also had a very practical use, and

> reptiles the reverence it received. They were largely used

THE MAN WHO KILLED THE CAT.

Diodorus Siculus says that the cat owed to

its usefulness in the destruction of noxious

for sporting purposes, for the cap. ture and retriev ing of wild fowl, A beautiful picture of this mode of taking game is to be found in the British Museum,

and is represented above. clings to the bending stems of the papyrus, holding a goose in her mouth, and with two other birds in her claws. In the rest of the of which part only is shown here, ler himself is seen standing up in , apparently about to cast an int, not unlike a boomerang, grasping ther hand three birds of the wader at his side is his wife, and at his feet es a slave girl. Other paintings excroud ist of similar kind, showing cats about to spring into the water after their quarry. This is remarkable, when we recollect the intense hatred of our modern cats to that element, and is, perhaps, evidence in favor of the scientific speculation that the cat was originally a fishing animal.

The drawing, too, of the battle of the its and the rats in the Turin Papyrus may be taken as an allegorical allusion to their taste for a more domestic form of sport.

Without examining more closely than can be done here the system, as far as it is known, of Egyptian sun-worship, it would be difficult to show the exact position occupied among the divinities by Bast and her relation to Ptah, or Ra, the sun, but it may suffice to say generally that she was the Egyptian Diana and the goddess of light.

The curious extract given at the side of the page, from an inscription of the XVIIIth Dynasty (the cat decapitating a serpent), typifies the triumph of light over

Bast was also the evening, while Sekhet, the lion goddess, was the morning. These two are frequently confused, and are represented in statuary under the same form. The large black basalt statues, of which there are so many in the British Museum, both seated and standing, are examples of great interest. They have mostly the disk of lunar divinity above their heads, and the uraus, or Royal asp, above the forehead. The second small drawing shows Sekhet and Bast the beginning and the end of the day, together.

But not only individuals were dedicated to Bast; we know that she had a town of her own, Bubastis, especially devoted to her worship. The site has been recognized in the mound of Tel Basta, east of the delta near the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, and has indeed been recently explored.

Cats were sometimes sent to the sacred city to be buried, especially those that had been venerated in the temples of Bast. So were ibis sent to Hermopolis, the men to Abydus, in order that they might rest in the same grave with Osiris; but this translation of the remains was exceptional, and the result probably of special wishes or devotion.

The father of history, Herodotus, has something to tell us about cats. He says: "When a house caught fire the only thought of the Egyptians was to preserve the lives of their cats. Ranging themselves, therfore, in bodies round the house,

they endeavoured to rescue these animals from the flames, totally disregarding the des-



SEKHAT

truction of the property itself; but notwithstanding all their precautions, the cats, eaping over the heads and gliding between the legs of the bystanders, rushed into the flames as if impelled by Divine agency to self-destruction; and when an accident of this kind happens, a deep sorow takes possession of the Egyptians.



TRIUMPH OF LIGHT OVER DARKNESS

When a cat dies a natural death the people of the house shave off their eyebrows, but if a dog dies they shave the head and the whole body." All the provisions in the house, too, were thrown away, as having become unlawful food.

As we have said, there were some cats



BATTLES OF THE CATS AND RATS