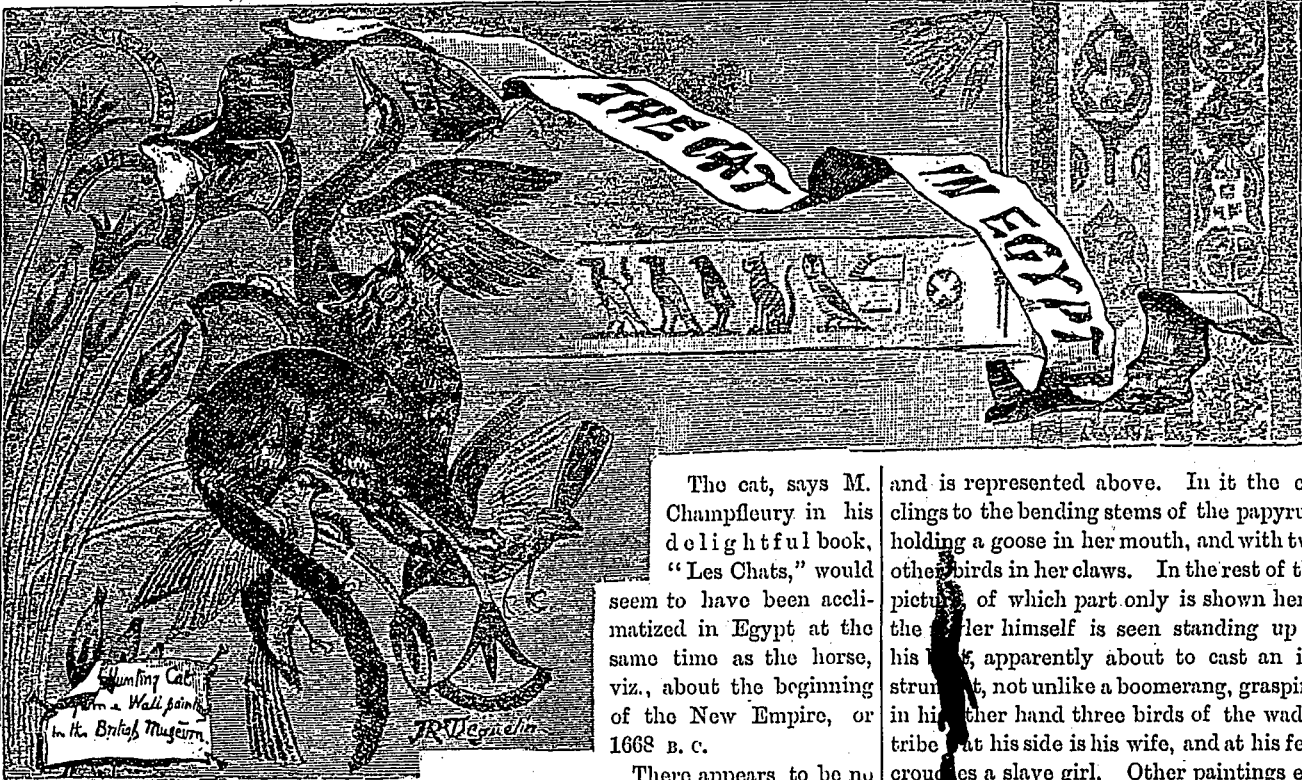


DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND LITERATURE.

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The cat, says M. Champfleury in his delightful book, "Les Chats," would seem to have been acclimatized in Egypt at the same time as the horse, viz., about the beginning of the New Empire, or 1668 B. C.

and is represented above. In it the cat 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 picture, of which part only is shown here, the cat is seen standing up in his hind legs, apparently about to cast an instrument, not unlike a boomerang, grasping in his other hand three birds of the wader tribe. At his side is his wife, and at his feet crouches a slave girl. Other paintings exist of a 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 cats 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 darkness.

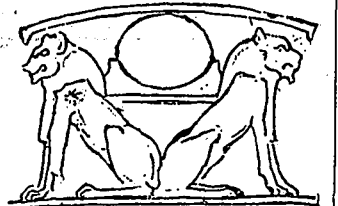
Bast was also the evening, while Sekhet, the lion goddess, was the morning. These two are frequently confused, and are represented in statuary under the same form. The large black basalt statues, of which there are so many in the British Museum, both seated and standing, are examples of

great interest. They have mostly the disk of lunar divinity above their heads, and the uræus, 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 Abydos, 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, therefore, in bodies round the house, they endeavoured to rescue these animals from the flames, totally disregarding the destruction of the property itself; but notwithstanding all their precautions, the cats, leaping 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 sorrow takes possession of the Egyptians.



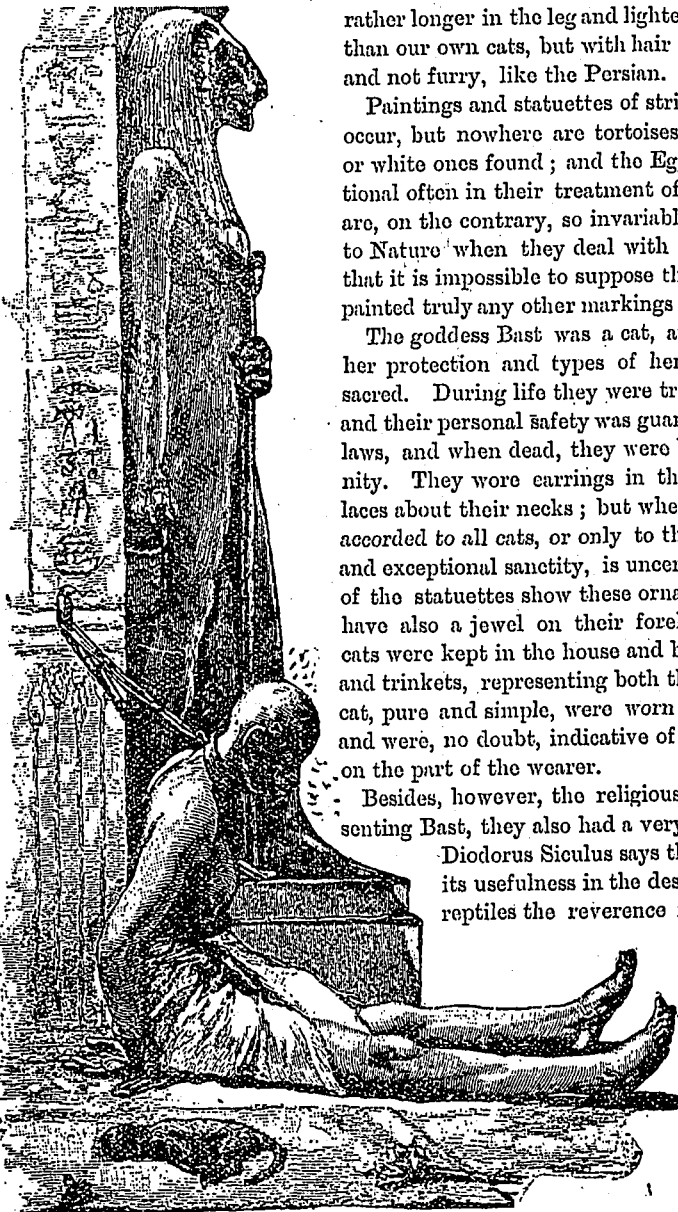
SEKHET AND BAST.



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



THE MAN WHO KILLED THE CAT.

Besides, however, the religious dignity of representing Bast, they also had a very practical use, and Diodorus Siculus says that the cat owed to its usefulness in the destruction of noxious reptiles the reverence it received. They were largely used for sporting purposes, for the capture and retrieving of wild fowl, &c. A beautiful picture of this mode of taking game is to be found in the British Museum,



BATTLES OF THE CATS AND RATS.