

## ROMAN ANTIQUITIES FROM SAN.<sup>1</sup>

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The objects that I have the pleasure of placing before the Institute to day, are some of the antiquities of the Greek and Roman periods, found in the recent excavations that I carried on during the past season for the Egypt Exploration Fund, at San-el-Hagar (the Roman Tanis) in the Delta of Egypt. They have, by the kind permission of the council of the Institute, been on view in the rooms of the Institute during the past few weeks, along with other less important remains; and I will now briefly describe the more interesting objects.

The house which yielded the greatest variety of things was the property of a native Egyptian, who appears to have been in the Roman civil service; a man of taste and intelligence, who without the advantages of high birth rose to be one of the most important men of the town. He is described on his statuette, which we found in the cellar of his house, as "Bak-akhuiu (the servant of light) Son of his mother Ta-ankh (endowed with life)." This is one of the very few portrait figures of classical times that have come down to us in Egypt: it shews a well developed figure, and a head of much power and intelligence. It is carved in limestone and stands twenty-one inches high. In this house I also found six waste-paper baskets full of papyri, stowed away in a cupboard in the cellar; they had been partly carbonized and partly reduced to mere ash, but from the better examples it is hoped that somewhat of the private affairs of this man may be made out. Most of the Greek documents are apparently legal papers, and in one the name of Hadrian as a private person has been already observed. As the Emperor Hadrian made his tour in Egypt in 130 A.D., at which time children would be most likely to be named

<sup>1</sup> Read at the the Monthly Meeting of the Institute, Nov. 6th, 1884. Mr. Petrie exhibited to the meeting a large and

varied collection of antiquities, part of the results of his late valuable researches in Egypt.

after him, this would place the date of the destruction of the house at probably about forty years later; and this agrees with the date of the Bucolic war in Egypt, an insurrection which was so bloodily suppressed in 175 A.D. by Avidius Cassius. The very name Bucolic war suggests the district of the shepherd kings, of whom in far earlier times Tanis had been the capital. That the house was burnt by enemies is shewn by the fact that no gold, and only one small scrap of silver, was found; while the master's statue and all his bronze objects were left to the fire. Also a basket of papyri was found lying on the staircase, just as the looters would have pulled it out of the cupboard in search of valuables.

We have then here the furniture and miscellaneous property of a gentleman of the latter half of the second century. He appears to have been fond of amateur work, judging from the fancy burnishers of rock crystal and white flint, which were fitted with wooden handles and set in large bronze sockets; such are above the style of a mere workman's tools. Again, we find that red paint had been mixed in a granite cup of fine work, far too valuable to have been intended for such a purpose. A large painter's palette in limestone was also found in the house; and a superior class of basalt muller (used for grinding red paint) of a type introduced from Asia Minor, with a bent thumb-end by which to hold it. The bronze and other objects found in the house are also above the general run of such things. The feet of a tripod ornamented with figures of the god Bes, and the upper corners with heads of Alexandria in the elephant's skin, are unusually decorative. The long-handled bronze lamp found on the cellar stairs is an elegant piece of work; and the various vase handles of bronze are ornamented with heads. Among the objects is one which must have been kept with somewhat of the taste of a modern collector; it is a bas-relief in limestone representing a seated sphinx with a turreted crown, raising one paw against a pillar with a Syrian form of capital. The long curved wing, the face, the crown, the pillar, are all Asiatic and not Egyptian; the work rather recalls the Euphrates than the Nile, and is an illustration of the community of Egypt and Syria at the time, shewn by their joint rebellion under Cassius. There is also a

terra-cotta of the Syrian Venus, superior to those generally found in the Delta; traces of gilding were visible on the anklets when it was dug up. Among the large quantity of fine blue glazed ware, some figures of animals were found; there are here two dogs in glaze and one in terra cotta, all different; a cat in blue glaze broke to pieces, as did many beautiful cups and bowls, owing to having been burnt. One large blue jar, nearly a foot high, I succeeded in cutting out the earth, and, raising it whole, though cracked, removed it to my house.

Of figures of deities there is here a large series in blue glazed ware, shewing what stage of degradation the manufacture of these familiar figures was in at that time; besides these there was a large alabaster statuette of Thoth, fourteen inches high, which was retained at the Bulak Museum, as no such figures were known there; a large tablet of Horus holding serpents and standing on crocodiles,—a very well known group, was also found, but so much broken and burnt that I have not yet brought it away.

Among utensils were three basalt mortars of various sizes; a large granite bowl for grinding or mixing dough, several small granite mixing slabs, and the alabaster vase, libation bowl, and mortars here exhibited. One curious object is a cup-shaped piece of turned alabaster, which seems as if intended for a stand to support a round-bottomed vase; this may explain how the Phœnician glass bottles were made to stand upright. Ring-stands of pottery were in common use for large earthen jars, as I described at the Institute last year. Of the glass work scarcely any could be saved, owing to the breakage, the burning, and the digging out; many vessels of the clear white glass with milky threads around it were found, but I could only get fragments such as those now shown. A piece of inlaid glass mosaic from an eye, is of good work; and a little globular glass bottle is worth notice. Quantities of tesserae of glass and limestone were found, evidently from a destroyed piece of mosaic, possibly of a floor, or a wall decoration. Pieces of fine red glass dishes, ground and polished, were also found, and are in the present collection.

Of iron work, nails, cramps, knives, keys, and a pick-

head were found: these mostly belonged to the woodwork and furniture of the house. Parts of the bone inlaying of boxes, and pieces of bone hollowed out and fitted together on a stick of wood, to make rails and legs of stands, are also exhibited. A quantity of pottery was discovered, including about ten large amphoræ, up to three feet high, and about fifty various articles, such as jugs, cups, plates, &c. All these I hope to bring to England next year. Such is the result of clearing out one of the burnt houses of San.

A short distance only from the above house, was another burnt room apparent on the surface of the ground; this I also attacked, and though not so rich in objects, some unique things were recovered from it. It had been apparently looted and then burnt, like the other house, and at the same time. The first piece found was a small marble term, with a beautiful female bust on the top of it, and with traces of the usual attachment half way down the pillar. This head is about half life size, and though only a piece of decorative work it is of the best Græco-Roman style, with a sweet and yet noble expression. I hope to see this in England before long; meanwhile I am able to exhibit two photographs of it, from which its quality may be judged. It was doubtless brought from southern Italy. Lower down in this house much burnt furniture, legs of tables, &c., were found, as well as bronze edgings and locks from boxes. But the most strange discovery was a glass lens, of plano-convex form, highly polished, and of very colourless and clear glass. It is two-and-a-half inches diameter, half an inch thick in the middle, and one-sixteenth of an inch thick at the edge; its magnifying power cannot be practically tested owing to a scale of decomposed glass on the surface, but it would magnify about three times with a large field of view, like a strong reading glass of modern times. Magnifying glasses have been found at Pompeii, so that there is no reason to doubt the purpose of this lens, though it is the first ever found in Egypt.

Another find, equally remarkable in its way, is that of a large sheet of painted glass. I have heard of but one ancient example of painted glass, a vase from Cyprus; but here we have a sheet of clear glass thirteen inches square,

bearing in an outer circle twelve heads of the months painted in burnt ochre, with attributes to each, such as the bull's horns for Taurus, the crab's and scorpion's claws for Cancer and Scorpio, and bushy hair for Leo; while within this circle is an inner circle with the regular astronomical signs laid on in gold foil. In the centre was some large subject, now indistinguishable. This unique object has unhappily suffered in every way; first shivered into about two hundred chips (I have replaced a hundred and fifty), then burnt, and finally buried in a soil which has stripped off nearly all the gilding and some of the paint. We must look at it rather as an evidence of what was, than as a possession remaining to us, for but eight of the twelve heads and three of the twelve signs, are left. Still it is a great acquisition to our examples of working on glass in Roman times.

Other small objects of interest were found in this house; a bronze pan for a hanging lamp, with ring and staple; bronze tweezers; a piece of thin bronze foil ornament filled up with rosin, a modern system, known, however, to the Assyrians; many keys, one of a new form, and nails, including one with a brass head; an iron sickle; some small glass balls, probably for a certain game; and various trifles.

In another house on a different mound at San, I found in the corner of a cellar a jar with a stone on the top; and in the jar a gold ring of twisted snake pattern; a necklace of onyx, agate, turquoise, garnet, lapis lazuli, and coral, the larger beads being in pairs; a necklet of silver beads, made apparently from small globules of metal, soldered together in an hexagonal pile; and a large mass of silver chain of graduated thickness, weighing 17oz. Excepting the chain, which was kept at Bulak as no such chain was known there before, all this find is now exhibited here. In the same house was found a weight made of bronze filled with lead, which is very rare; also a kohl-stick for staining the eyes, some Ptolemaic coins, and other small objects.

On the south of San lies a cemetery of Roman age; and among the various graves I found one in which the coffin had been highly decorated with inlaid glass, and gilt all over. The gold objects had all been plundered in early

times ; but the glass mosaics, more precious now than gold, have been left to our days. The finest of these are two pairs of wings, of the most delicate work. They shew us somewhat of the method employed, since the smaller pair is exactly similar to the larger in all the minute variations of work, only of just half the size. This proves that they reduced the whole size of the mosaic pattern in section by pulling it out lengthwise ; and hence we can understand how they produced such extremely minute work, by starting on a practicable scale, and reducing the size, while they increased the quantity available for cutting up, by drawing it out hot.

Another curious manufacture of the same period is that of the woven tapestry clothing, of which we have before us several different patterns and varieties, all from one mummy. The patterns are important in the history of textile design, and may be looked upon as the kinsmen of the Turkey-carpet patterns. The elements which can be distinguished are the flowering plants, the leaf patterns, and the birds. The colours are very varied, including red and white (which are the commonest), blue, green, yellow, and purple : and most of these colours have withstood a burial in a damp soil for about sixteen hundred years in a surprising manner. The patterned clothing was the dress of the lady when alive, as the dirtied state of the cuff shews us ; but the bulky outer wrappers (of which only a small example has yet been brought) were probably solely used for the burial. A glass necklace, a small iron knife, a gold nose ring, and two gold earrings were found in the grave. With the exception of the earrings, now at Bulak, all these objects are now exhibited.

Beside the objects from San I exhibit two others from the site of Pithom, now called Tell-el-Maskhuta. These are both additions to our knowledge of Egyptian antiquities, as no window lattice, and no gilded wall, has ever been found before. The bronze lattice belonged to the great chambers built by Ramessu II in the store city of Pithom, about 1450 B.C. ; it seems to have been a long strip, which was probably placed over a window-slit between the top of the wall and the wooden roof. The gilt wall scene is much later, having been erected by Nekht-har-hebi, or Nectanebo the first, in the fourth

century B.C. Happily the king's face remains unbroken on one fragment.

All the antiquities now brought before the Institute are to be presented by the Committee of the Exploration Fund to the British Museum (other objects going to different collections), and thus they will form the first nucleus of what we may hope to see much extended in future, namely, a series of systematic groups of objects which have been discovered together, of one age, of one place, and of one class in life. Such groups are really the keys to the proper understanding of the whole of our great collections of antiquities, in which scarcely any two things belong together, and in which history must be a process of guess-work and analogy, and even locality is too often unknown. This is but one side of the work now in progress: for the more important study of Egyptian history, to which most of the work of the Committee is devoted, I have not at present touched on. If the objects that we have excavated were well known already, their age and connections still give us invaluable information; but when, as I have attempted to show, many things quite fresh to our collections have been obtained, there can hardly be any question as to the value of the systematic excavation begun, and we may hope long to be carried on by the Egypt Exploration Fund.

Mr. Petrie desires to state that any suggestions or enquiries relative to the Exploration Fund should be addressed to R. S. Poole, Esq., Hon. Sec., at the British Museum.