

THE TOMBS AT BENI HASAN.

PART II.

GENERAL NOTICE OF THE TOMBS

(continued from Part I., p. 3).

It was pointed out in the first part of the present memoir,¹ that the tombs which are here described, are nearly related to one another in point of time, and, further, that they all belong to the Middle Kingdom period of Egyptian history (*circa* 2800-2500 B.C.). This was a time of great wealth among the nobles, and consequently it is found that the decoration of their tombs is very rich. The architecture, which is extremely simple, has already been described,² but the interior decoration of the tombs yet remains to be noticed.

DECORATION.
Sculpture.

§ 5. But little sculptured decoration is found at Beni Hasan. It is confined to the façades, the doorways, the columns, and the shrines. In two tombs (Nos. 2 and 3) dentils representing the ends of wooden roof-beams have been sculptured in the portico. The architraves of the doorway have incised inscriptions in horizontal and vertical lines, which are divided from each other by grooves; the same is the case with the doorway into

the shrine of Tomb No. 3. There are also incised hieroglyphs in the passages into Tombs Nos. 2, 3, and 13. The columns are either fluted (as in Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 32), or sculptured in the form of bundles of lotusbuds (Nos. 15, 17, 18, and 28). In four instances³ the shrine has contained statues of the deceased, which in Nos. 2 and 3 have been painted. In ancient Egyptian tombs it was usual to represent the entrance into the underworld by the jambs and lintel of a doorway, with a stela above it, upon one of the walls. This is technically known as the "false door," and was often represented with great elaboration, but there is never any passage-way through it. At Beni Hasan there are nine instances of false doors in the thirty-nine tombs. In Tomb No. 2 it is painted only, but in all the other cases it is represented in relief, or at least by sculptured lines, and not merely painted, so as to keep up its architectural character. The position of these false doors appears to

¹ *Vide Beni Hasan*, Part I., General Notice, § 3, p. 2.

² *L.c.*, General Notice, § 4, p. 3.

³ Tombs Nos. 2, 3, 9, 30. In Tomb No. 36, on the East wall, are also sculptured three small figures.

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