

CHAPTER III.

TOMB AND CEMETERY OF SENSERT III.

By ARTHUR E. P. WEIGALL.

21. THE royal burial ground of the XIIth Dynasty known as Cemetery S is situated at the foot of the cliffs, about a mile south of the Royal Tombs and about the same distance south-west of the Temple of the Kings (Seti I). It lies in the shadow of the promontory which forms the southern extremity of the great desert bay of Abydos. At this point the limestone cliffs shelve down to the desert level in a series of terraces, covered with large boulders and loose stones, detached probably in Palaeolithic times from the summit. From the foot of the rocks extends a bed of blown sand about three feet deep over the whole site, some fourteen inches of which appear to have settled since the cemetery was constructed. Below this there are the more compact gravel and sand deposits, which continue down to the underlying rocks at a depth ranging from a foot to forty feet in the excavated area. The whole desert surface slopes gently towards the arable land, which lies about half-a-mile away, being some nine miles from the Nile.

The site was first observed by M. Amélineau during his residence at Abydos, but no real excavations were carried on by him here. He attempted, however, to clear one of the large tombs (S 9), his endeavours being frustrated by the fact that the sand immediately ran in on the parts laid bare by his men—a not unprecedented occurrence at the outset of work in a large pit filled with loose blown sand. Prof. Petrie noticed the site when he was excavating the Royal Tombs, and decided to clear it as soon as

possible. The opportunity presented itself in the season of 1901-2, and the writer was placed in charge of the work.

On December 14th, 1901, with some fifty men, excavations were commenced at the four points where artificial mounds indicated the existence of ruins, that is to say at S 9, S 10, and the two halves of S 8. Shortly after this the presence of a brick wall just below the sand was noticed to the westward, and this being followed out, the great *hōsh*, or courtyard, was discovered and the clearance of this, and of the great tomb within it, occupied the better part of the season's work. The number of workmen was doubled, and a very large force of boys from the neighbouring villages was engaged for the purpose of carrying the sand and rubbish. As the work advanced in the large tombs these boys were formed up in long chains from the digging level to the surface, each one being a foot or so higher than the last. The baskets when filled with sand were handed from one boy to another until they reached the top, where several were waiting to run with the loads to a suitable distance. The empty baskets were then thrown to the bottom of the pit, and refilled by the trained diggers. These latter, who were paid in proportion to the cubic measurement of their day's digging, speedily overcame the difficulties presented by the falling sand, and worked with a most invigorating "swing," which seldom failed to arouse the energy of the local boys as well.

22. The great *hōsh* is rectangular in form,