



The tomb of Perneb, with illustrations

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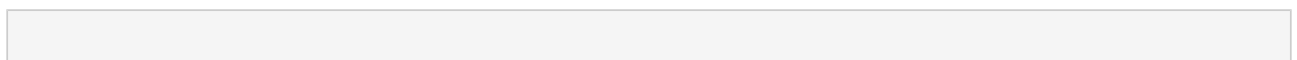
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CHAPTER I

THE CEMETERY OH MEMPHIS

MORE than four thousand five hundred years ago — we may say approximately 2650 B. C. — an Egyptian dignitary named Perneb, who held high office under the king at Memphis, erected in the great cemetery of the capital a tomb which should afford enduring protection to his body and likewise stand as a fitting memorial to his name. During the long period when Memphis served as the seat of the kingdom, its cemetery, which lay along the desert edge west of the city, reached such widely separated points as Abu Roash on the north and Dahshur on the south — a stretch some twenty miles in length. In this particular period when Perneb lived — the Fifth Dynasty — the kings selected principally the region centering about the modern Sakkara for the erection of their pyramids; and near these royal mausolea, if possible, the dignitaries of the court always elected to place their own. Thus, Perneb and one named Shepsesre, who was in all likelihood Perneb's son, constructed their tombs side by side at Sakkara, in an area some two hundred

and fifty yards north of the "Step Pyramid" of King Zoser and just outside the great enclosure-wall of that pyramid and its precinct. This king had lived some three hundred years before this time, and with the ambition to erect a monument more imposing than those of any of his predecessors, had constructed this first royal tomb in the semblance of a pyramid, although in the strictest sense it did not have this form. This monument, therefore, was already one of some antiquity in Perneb's time, but we may almost take it for granted that his own sovereign was one of those who had erected their pyramids in the district, and so Perneb had chosen this position for his final resting-place as being as near that of his lord and master as circumstances allowed.



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