

first sight rather disappointing. There are no historical writings similar to the book of Genesis or the books of Samuel and Kings. No attempt is made to give a full picture of a historical situation or development. A continuous account of the reign of successive kings has nowhere been found, though it is true that many kings put up monuments to celebrate particular victories or outstanding events and these give a considerable amount of historical information. A great handicap in the study of Egyptian literature, as far as its use for history is concerned, is the fact that most of it was written for an immediate purpose, often merely to glorify the person involved, and never simply to preserve objective historical truth. Tombs of the nobles sometimes contain statements about the great deeds they had performed, and these throw incidental light upon many details of the history. Our fullest historical sources are a few rather lengthy accounts of the military affairs of a king's reign, written on papyrus and buried with him, in order to show how much booty he had given to the gods, and thus to secure a reward for him in the afterlife or a blessing upon his posterity. Some of these give rather full accounts of an extended series of military campaigns; yet they leave us with the feeling that they are abbreviated from more extensive annals that have completely perished. Some Egyptian papyri contain what might be designated as "fine writing," since it was greatly treasured for its style. These generally consist of stories of incidents that were not particularly important in themselves; yet from them considerable light is sometimes thrown upon the history. Egyptian literature tells much about the cultural life, religion and general outlook of the ancient Egyptians, but its interpretation in precise historical terms is sometimes rather baffling.

D. The History of Ancient Egypt.