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Man. E. Pottier,
Hommage de l'auteur.

AN ALABASTER FIGURE OF THE FOURTH DYNASTY
IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

BY

H. R. HALL, D.LITT.

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Alabaster statuette in the British Museum.

Scale about $\frac{1}{4}$.

AN ALABASTER FIGURE OF THE FOURTH DYNASTY IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

By H. R. HALL, D.LITT.

With Plate I.

THE fine alabaster or calcite figure of a woman in the British Museum [No. 24619] illustrated by the frontispiece, Pl. I, was acquired many years ago. It has already been published by Sir Ernest Budge in his *Guide to the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Egyptian Rooms* (1922), p. 128. The figure is 1 ft. 7½ ins. (48·75 cm.) tall. It represents a girl, presumably a princess or noble lady, standing with her hands by her sides. She wears the usual tight-fitting shift and a heavy wig over her hair, the natural parting of which appears over her forehead below the edge of the wig. The feet are missing, otherwise the figure is perfect. It was originally coloured, and there are traces of black on the wig and of a green (?) turned to brown on the dress, especially at the back. There is no plinth at the back and, of course, no inscription, so that we do not know who is represented by this beautiful figure. The perfect preservation of the face is a great boon, and makes this one of the finest existing examples of its style. There can, I think, be little doubt in the minds of most as to its date. It could not possibly be later than the Twelfth Dynasty, unless it were an example of Saïte archaism, and were of Twenty-sixth Dynasty date, which it obviously is not. There is nothing archaistic about it. It is archaic, not archaistic, and its genuinely archaic character forbids its being as late as the Twelfth Dynasty, or even the Sixth. I unhesitatingly ascribe it to the Fourth Dynasty, and rather to the earlier than the later period of that dynasty. It might almost be described as Third-Fourth Dynasty, judging by its contour, and the heavy hunched-up effect of the broad shoulders and great wig, which reminds us of the Third Dynasty figure of 'Aper (?)-'ankhu or Bezmes (B.M. 171 [70 a]), published by BUDGE (*Egyptian Sculptures in Brit. Mus.* (1913), Pl. I) and WEILL (*La II^e et la III^e Dynasties* (1908), Pl. I), and of the newly discovered figure of King Zoser (*Ill. Lond. News*, Feb. 28, 1925). Personally, however, I think the face much too good for the Third Dynasty. It is in the perfect face that the chief charm of the figure resides. The cheeks have the full rounded contours, with their European effect, characteristic of the nobility of the Old Kingdom. The nose is full and slightly aquiline at the tip: happily it is undamaged. The mouth has a singularly sweet and good-natured expression. The eyes are indicated without any exaggerated convention. The whole face is very natural and obviously is a portrait. The sculptor has known how to use his material with remarkable skill; the figure is a masterpiece of the portraiture of the time of the pyramid-builders, an example of the first rank, on the possession of which the Museum is to be congratulated. It is exhibited in the Fifth Egyptian Room.