

HAS THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX BEEN SOLVED AT LAST?

Prof. G. A. Reisner of Harvard Just Back from Egypt Believes He Has Answered the Problem that Has Baffled the World



Mycerinus and His Queen That Gave Prof. Reisner His Solution of the Sphinx Riddle.

Prof. G. A. REISNER of Harvard University set out on an exploring expedition about ten years ago, and it will be remembered that, returning to this country a few months since, he announced he had found the remains of the palace of Jezebel and Ahab, whose story was so freely used to point a moral in our Sunday-school days. This was a great deal, but there was more to follow. A press dispatch from Boston announced, this very week, that Prof. Reisner had also "solved the riddle of the Sphinx."

Everybody knows the Sphinx and everybody has heard it had a riddle. To the public the fact that the creature has at last a name and pedigree comes as a surprise. To the archeologist, on the other hand, it is a piece of good news but nothing startling.

There was, says Albert M. Lythgoe, curator of the Egyptian section of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, good reason for thinking that things would turn out just as they have. The connection between the Second Pyramid at Gizeh and the Sphinx was close and it would not have been unusual to give the great image the head of the king who built it.

Prof. Reisner has, however, cleared up several points. Authorities have differed as to the date of the carving of the image; some put it earlier than the fourth dynasty, in which the Second Pyramid was erected, and more put it later, because the sphinxes appear more commonly in later times. Prof. Reisner has unearthed the statue of the builder of the Third Pyramid, also of the fourth dynasty—and his head-dress is exactly like that of the Sphinx. This fashion of head covering does not appear elsewhere, so the two works of art evidently belong to the same period. Hence, the Sphinx is none other than Cephren, son of that Cheops who built himself the first and greatest pyramid of the three huge tombs.

The Sphinx of the desert takes the discovery of his secret with composure, quite unlike his Greek predecessor who had the original riddle. It was her custom to ask passersby what animal went on four feet and on two and on three, and her purpose was not to waste away time by pleasant guessing but to devour those who failed to give the answer.

Edipus had the inspiration of guessing that the animal was man, who goes first a-creeching, then walks erect, and finally tatters with a stick. The Greek Sphinx threw herself from a mountain-top when she found her one and only riddle guessed, and perished miserably; while the Egyptian pays no attention at all to the ingenuity of the Harvard Professor, but gazes placidly over the sands at the rising sun and thinks, "You may guess who I am, but you can't guess what I know"—which makes him more irritating than ever.

"The Sphinx of Egypt," said Prof. Reisner, "is nothing but the body of a lion with the head of a reigning king. In this guise the king is represented as a guardian trampling down his enemies and warding them off his territory. The motive occurs often.

"The Great Sphinx is the guardian of the sacred precincts of the Second Pyramid, placed beside the causeway leading to the pyramid. The body is the body of a lion. The head is the head of Cephren, the king who built the Second Pyramid and carved the Sphinx out of a knob of natural rock."

Cephren the Sphinx fulfilled his object well. Even to the Arabs he is known as "The Father of Terror." No one has ever doubted that he was on watch, not even those who knew nothing of the fact that the Sphinx is always, in the Egyptian mythology, a guardian. Aker, the watchman of the underworld and guardian of Ra, the sun god, is frequently pictured as a sphinx, and Ra himself is a sphinx sometimes when he goes forth to battle with his enemies. Because Ra is associated with the idea it was natural that the image of Cephren should face the rising sun.

The Sphinx should guard the pyramid was also natural. Such images frequently protected tombs. The inscription on one such sphinx reads: "I protect the chapel of thy tomb, I guard thy sepulchral chamber, I ward off the intruding stranger, I cast down thy foes to the ground and their arms with them, I drive away the wicked from the chapel of thy tomb, I destroy thine adversaries in their lurking place, blocking it that they may no more come forth."

This calm assurance of power and ultimate victory has seemed to create a soul for the Great Sphinx. Nearly five thousand years it stood in the shifting desert sands, and it always has had a way of troubling people's conscience.

Between the paws there is a little shrine, set there by a Pharaoh who ruled about a thousand years after Cephren and who has dreamed, after seeing it, that the great god Ra reproached him for his neglect of the image. He set up the shrine and dug away the sand, but the wind soon buried the statue again, far over the paws. Several times during the last century it was dug out again, but always the sand came back. Now it is half buried again.

Mr. Lythgoe explains that the Egyptians built long covered causeways leading from the valley to the temples in the pyramids where the people went to worship the king. The causeway to the Second Pyramid is the Sphinx, conspicuous than those leading to the others, and its entrance is guarded by the Great Sphinx.

It was in the course of his excavations around the Third Pyramid that Prof. Reisner added the last proof to the strong suspicion that the Sphinx represented Cephren. The statue which showed the head-dress similar to the plected folds which hang from the Sphinx's head showed Mycerinus, the builder of that pyramid and probably the nephew of Cephren. Prof. Reisner thus described the finding of the statue from which such convincing conclusions were deduced:

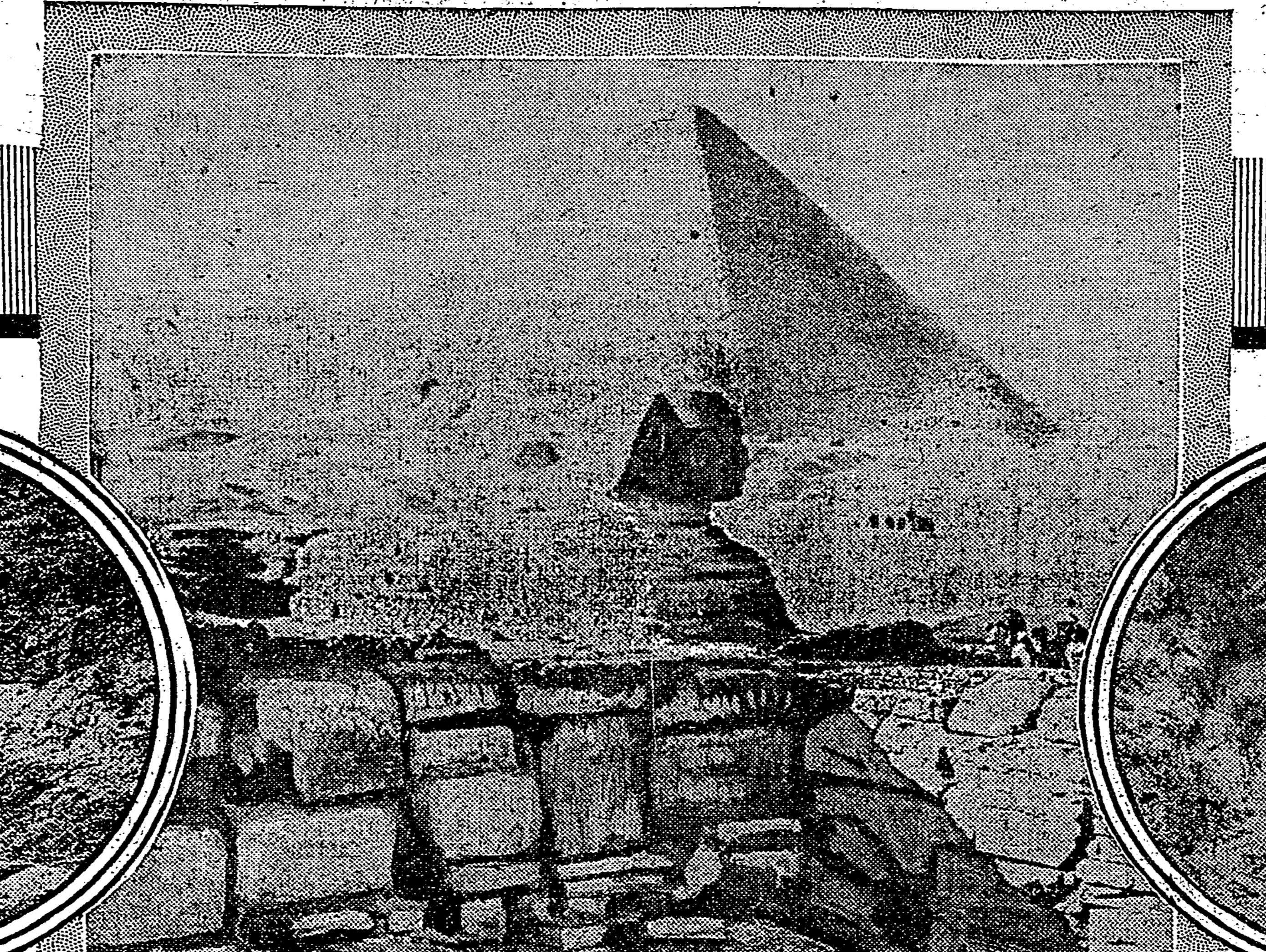
"In the fourth or fifth dynasty, or about 2800-2600 B. C., the creative period of Egyptian culture came to its highest point of development. A thousand years before the Egyptian race was just emerging from the stone age, but in the thousand years down to the period I mean they invented copper working and the weighted stone borer, founded a strong centralized monarchy, progressed to great prosperity through their agricultural ad-

vantages, and created an art in the service of their oriental kings which was, as regards architecture, painting, sculpture, on the high road towards perfect expression.

"At this period ruled the dynasty of kings who built the pyramids of Gizeh.

They were able to show also that both these cemeteries had fallen into decay and had been covered with sand by the end of the sixth dynasty. That is, the first lines for the royal cemetery were laid out about 2900 B. C., and by 2600 B. C.—400 years later—the last offering had been made, the last priest had gone away, and the great cemetery lay a waste, much as it was the day we gave the word to our gangs to dig.

"To understand our excavations at Gizeh it is necessary to know that every Egyptian grave serves two purposes and consists of two essential parts. The body lies in a chamber underground, walled up against decay, and with it are the pots and pans, the weapons, adornments, and garments that the deceased needed in life. Above ground was a mound of brick or masonry where the living might visit the dead with offerings and prayers.



The Pyramid with the Sphinx on Guard.

Thus it happened that the pyramids contained not only the burial place of a king, but also had on the side nearest the valley a chapel for offerings and the ruins of others scattered on the floor by vandals dead these many centuries, were found. In other rooms were unfinished statuettes, copper weapons, and many vessels of alabaster, crystal, slate, and other stones.

"By April 1910 we had finished our excavations of the valley temple, and come upon the edge of a town in front of it. There we came upon the beautiful pair statue of Mycerinus and his queen, in hard dark slate. This was almost miraculously preserved, as a glance at it proves, and it had lain waiting through the years until one of our men lifted a stone and in doing so revealed the profile of a queen.

"I am often asked, 'How came it that such beautiful objects were found in a poor mud-brick temple? As a matter of fact, these great masterpieces were not made for a mud-brick temple but for a costly granite temple which would have outlasted that of the Sphinx if it had been finished.

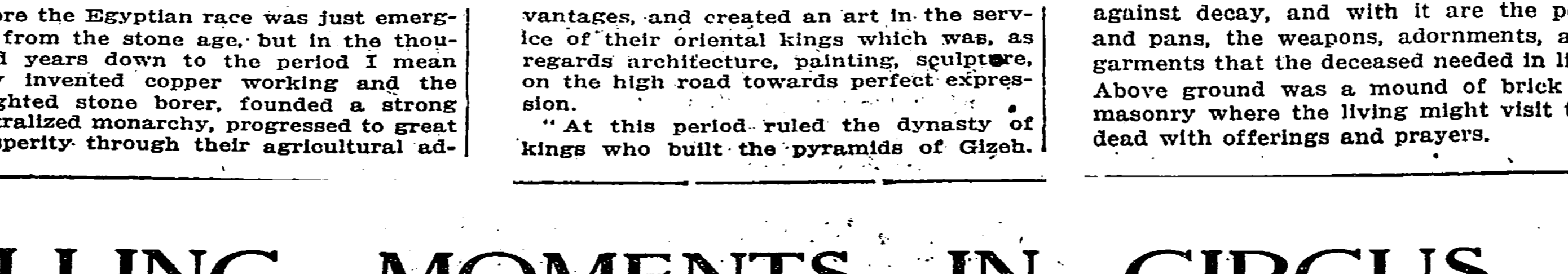
"Our work had disclosed three temples, one of magnificent granite begun by Mycerinus and intended to hold the treasures we discovered. But he did not finish it, nor was his son Shepeses-kaf able to do so; and the latter placed them in the second—the poor temple of mud-brick—where we found them. The third temple was built by Pepy II. of the sixth dynasty."

The Professor showed an alabaster head of little Shepeses-kaf, whose pyramid building was so soon interrupted by death. "Probably from the first he was harassed by seditions and revolts. He could not finish his father's tomb, but hastened on with his own—the pyramid only begun, the foundation of which still stands. He didn't finish even that, but needed it long before it was done. Probably he died a violent death by the hand of his successor on the throne."

"The care with which the temples of Mycerinus were excavated enabled us to unravel the history of the construction and the decay of different buildings on the site. The positive proof was given that our statues were of the fourth dynasty and that in the fourth dynasty pyramids had valley temples. Thus the final proof was delivered that the granite or Sphinx Temple was the valley temple of the Second Pyramid, the tomb of Cephren.

"At the same time the dispute about the date of the great diorite statue of Cephren and of the Sphinx itself was finally laid to rest. Exactly those characteristics of the Cephren statue and of the Sphinx which were supposed to be of later date were found in our statues, and these arguments fell to the ground. It was therefore necessary to return to the question of the date of the Sphinx—a priori probable view that these monuments are of the time of Cephren himself."

Where the Statue of Mycerinus Was Found.



The Slate Group: Mycerinus and His Queen.

First View of the Slate Group After Excavation.

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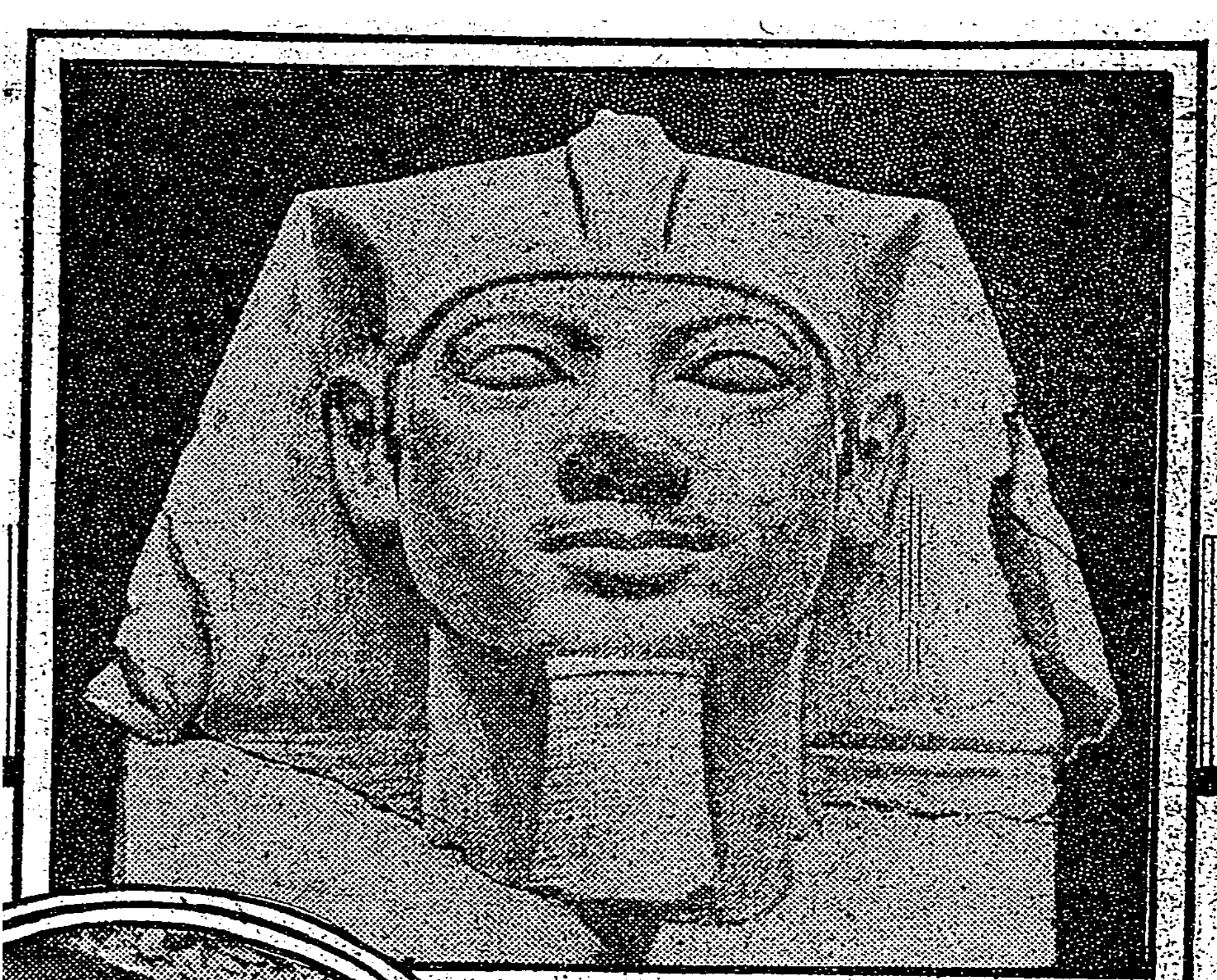
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Alabaster Head of Mycerinus.

picture some bespectacled and breathless Cook's tourist uncovering with a Middle West umbrella his most precious treasure, and then continued:

"In the meantime the Germans had come upon the valley temple of the later pyramid, and it was obvious that the famous Sphinx Temple was the valley temple of the Second Pyramid, built by Cephren.

"We began the search for the valley temple of the Third Pyramid in the summer of 1908. Inside of a week we uncovered the ruins of a mud-brick building. Four exquisite diorite statues were disclosed, and as we investigated room after room priceless treasures were revealed.

"The bases of alabaster statues, and the ruins of others scattered on the floor by vandals dead these many centuries, were found. In other rooms were unfinished statuettes, copper weapons, and many vessels of alabaster, crystal, slate, and other stones.

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"I turned my attention first, however, to the great cemetery west of the First Pyramid. This had been divided into three strips, and we had dug the northern one. It proved the most important. We found the tombs of many royal sons and daughters of Cheops, and unearthed the wonderful funerary stele of Wepemnofrit. We also found the burial places of the priests of 'The City of the Pyramids' to whom were entrusted the rites and offerings. Later we easily identified the great royal cemetery of Cephren, near the Second Pyramid.

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"I'll never forget one of my men letting out a cry, 'Look at that woman!' I looked, and there was a woman with a baby carriage doing her best to run, but not knowing in which direction to go. The elephants in one of their circles crushed her so close that, with all our anxiety to get them rounded up, it made us hold our breath.

"Well, we had four standbys in that herd. They were old-timers that had been with the show many years, and I mention their names with gratitude. Babe, Gyp, Lena, and Albert. We got them quieted, and as soon as we could get close to them, bunched them up and let them stand for a while until they got quieted. The little and less experienced ones joined them. You know those eight little ones, the babies of the herd, were the worst of the lot. As soon as we got them bunched together we quietly chained a baby on each side of one of our standbys. As soon as we had that done we managed to drive the herd back to the menagerie tent and securely hobbled and fastened the entire bunch.

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"THE MOST THRILLING MOMENTS IN CIRCUS MEN'S CAREERS"

The Elephant Man and a Midair Acrobat Tell Stories and a Clown Spins a Funny One.

GO to a man who earns his daily bread and lodgings by doing hair-raising stunts and ask him to tell you of the most thrilling moment in his career! I can assure you any surprise that the deeds of which he speaks are of things Homer?

Yesterday a reporter of THE TIMES penetrated into the "greenroom" of the Barnum and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, which is now performing at the Madison Square Garden. Let it be said here that this "greenroom" is of Homeric proportions: Twenty-four elephants, camels, other strange animals, and horses and men beyond number, were lined up there waiting for the cue for the grand entrance. "This circus man, as the circus progressed, wandered about and asked the question: 'What has been the most thrilling moment of your circus career?' Is it surprising that the people who are constantly flirting with death spoke only of elephant stampedes and cyclones? There was just one variant—a clown to whom the reporter went for the sake of variety.

You very likely have seen him—the man in the blue uniform who appears in the Barnum and Bailey grand entrance at the head of the elephant herd. His name is Harry Mooney, head elephant man of the circus, and he has been all over the world with shows that ranged from one to three rings.

THE TIMES man asked him for the most thrilling moment in his life. "It's hard to pick and choose, but I should say that it was out in Johannesburg, South Africa. I was in charge of five elephants. Water was scarce in those days in Johannesburg. In order to give the elephants the bath which they so much hanker after, particularly in warm dry climates, I led them out to the compound around one of the diamond mines. You know these compounds are big

stockades built around the diamond mines to keep the negroes from getting away with valuable finds. The negroes work in the mines by day and at night sleep in huts within the stockade. Pumps are going constantly to drain the mines, and the water from these makes good-sized puddles in the compounds.

"There was an American negro and one South African native assisting me with my herd of five elephants.

"We led the herd into the compound, but immediately there appeared what I guessed none of them had ever seen an elephant before. They crawled out of huts, from behind heaps of dirt, and from every other place conceivable.

"As soon as the negroes appeared the elephants made a rush for the gate. Luckily the gates were closed, and I was able to round the herd up. But I couldn't get them to go back and take their bath.

"A week later, or about that, I again took the herd back to see if they hadn't changed their minds. The minute we reached the gates they seemed to recognize them, just like human beings. They began to trumpet, swung around, and before you could snap your fingers they started off down the street.

"I was a little way behind the herd, and when they came at me I swung my elephant hook into the fore flank of one of them. It hung, and I was able to catch and grab hold of his ear. At that instant another elephant of the herd came alongside. The two of them started to run side by side, and I got jammed between them. I guess it only lasted for a second, but it seemed to me like a year. That new elephant simply wiped me from my hold on the elephant's ear, and I got rolled between the two.

"I realized that if those elephants got a little closer together it would be all up with me, but if they separated I should

I would drop—very likely beneath their feet. It was two chances for a bad job.

"Before I knew just what was going to happen, those two elephants had rolled me their entire length, and left me sprawling on the ground. I picked myself up and gathered my wits together just in time to see them disappearing through a lumber yard.

"My knowledge of the town let me know that there was a side street by which, if I beat it quickly, I could head them off. I cut through this and, sure enough, I got there just in time to see the herd of five coming down the street lickety-split.

"The crowd?—yes, and the policemen, too—were beating it in all directions. It was no time for elephant hooks. If you are going to stop an elephant herd at all it is with your voice, and you've got to have mighty good reason to know that they are acquainted with that voice, and know just what it means.

"I jumped out into the middle of the street. The five elephants were coming full gear ahead. I yelled 'Ho, hey, ho!' 'The five elephants stopped, and I breathed a relieved breath, and the circus management didn't have 5 cents to pay."

Harry Mooney told another story. "I'll never forget Somerville, New Jersey, season of 1905.

"We had the same old herd. The Greatest Show's—twenty-four elephants, just what we got now.

"The twenty-four began to rush around the circus lot. People were still coming to the circus, and they hiked in all directions. There was some good spirit, and we got busy with bale sticks, iron pipe, and any other good long-reach club that we could lay hands to. If an elephant won't listen to your voice, your only other chance is to swat him on the head good and plenty.

"Well, first we swatted 'em and we yelled, but those elephants kept on doing the grand circuit of the lot. You know we couldn't tell at what moment they might switch off the track and rush through the main tent, which was filled with the regular afternoon audience, unconscious of the danger without.

"I'll never forget one of my men letting out a cry, 'Look at that woman!' I looked, and there was a woman with a baby carriage doing her best to run, but not knowing in which direction to go. The elephants in one of their circles crushed her so close that, with all our anxiety to get them rounded up, it made us hold our breath.

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"The happiest minute," said Phil Denver Darling, looking thoughtful beneath his clown's make-up, "I don't need to think long; I know it just as well as

though it happened at the last performance.

"My father was a butcher, and he wanted me to follow in his footsteps. But I preferred to cut up in a circus rather than in butcher's shop. So I ran away from home and joined a traveling circus.

"I'll never forget when our circus went back to play my home town. When I came into the ring I saw my father and mother and brother and sister down in the front row.

"I managed to pull off a little stunt in front of them, and I got that whole section of the tent laughing, laughing good and hard. Best of all, my family laughed with them.

"That was the happiest minute of my life—I knew I'd made good.

"When the crowd laughed, I threw them back a laugh, and up spoke mother: 'Why, that's Phil.' And all the family said, 'Why, I guess you're right.'

"How did they know me? The clown put two fingers in his mouth and raised his upper lip. Two solid gold teeth gleamed.

"I had them before I ran away."

"We all know the Siegrist-Silbon troupe of aerial artists. They include the only acrobats who can do the triple somersault from a flying bar to what is known in circus talk 'to catch.' This means a man who hangs by his legs and grasps by the wrist the somersaulting acrobat.

This stunt, which many have tried to accomplish, is needless to say, a nice calculation of seconds and inches. Eddie Silbon does the swing through the air and Eddie Polo does the catching.

"But I've said more of than I meant to. The most exciting minute, I think, that I can remember, was out in Tecumseh, before the show began, we saw a dark cloud on the horizon and when

you see that in Texas it's a good sign to look out. The equestrian director who is ringmaster for our part of the performance asked 'Will you take a chance on your performance?' Well, we never like to disappoint an audience, and said, 'All right, we'll go ahead.'

"Hurry it up," said the equestrian director. We had put through part of our performance, and I was hanging by my feet waiting for Silbon to swing when that black cloud materialized above us. It lifted a corner of the tent and began to rip it into shreds. The audience knew what was happening and ran. The elephants began to trumpet and the other animals to give their various cries of fear.

"Silbon, however, had started his swing and was making his triple somersault through the air. That tornado simply lifted the whole tent, the main pole and our apparatus, and shifted it over at least eight inches. By luck, and, perhaps, by great effort, I managed to catch Silbon. The minute I had his wrist and before I had swung him back to his trapeze, he yelled 'Hold places!'

"You see, when a wind strikes a tent or we see other danger coming, the women in our troupe, of whom there are four—Silbon's wife, my wife, and two others—drop into the net first and the men after them. You can't all drop into the net at once. You've got to take your turn.

"But the wind had so shifted our apparatus that any one dropping would take a chance of falling outside the net. This was not on account of distance, but because all the trapezes were swaying violently.

"Silbon landed back on his trapeze, and for six or seven minutes we all hung tight while the tornado blew over. Then we dropped down by the ropes to the ground, and I can tell you we were a mighty thankful lot."