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London Exhibition Room: 54, Wigmore Street, W.

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN WOMEN PLAYING A GAME OF BALL.—Stimulated by the energetic XIth and XIIth dynasty pioneers of civilisation, life became rich and varied in Egypt. Not only occupations and industries, but many kinds of amusements are depicted upon the monuments of this time. From one of them comes the scene reproduced below. Considerable skill is shown by the players; perhaps they were professional dancers giving an exhibition, since ball-throwing appears to have been considered a branch of dancing. Sometimes two, three, or more balls were thrown and caught in succession; one player is depicted performing the feat with her arms crossed. At other times the game was that one party should toss the ball as high in the air as possible, while the members of the opposing party, leaping high, caught it before their feet touched the ground. Two players are seen mounted upon the backs of their fellows, the latter, no doubt, being those who have failed to catch the ball—as, later, in a Greek game. These would suffer their position until the mounted person missed.



Balls were made of skin or leather, stuffed with bran or husks and stitched together; others were made of plaited rush stalks, formed into a round mass and covered with leather. Examples of both kinds may be seen in the British Museum.

DATE: Middle Kingdom, 2160-1788 B.C.

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