

“CUNNINGHAM MEMOIRS.”

No. VIII.

ON THE FLINDERS PETRIE PAPYRI, BY REV. JOHN P. MAHAFFY, D.D.
(With Autotypes I. to XXX.)

[Read DECEMBER 8, 1890.]

§ 1. **Introduction.**—Egypt, the land of many wonders, has at no time been more prolific in surprises than during the present generation. Not only have the indigenous records now yielded their secrets to the inquirer, but more careful and scientific search has detected mines of hidden wealth where our forefathers only saw the sands and the rocky defiles of the desert. When a nation civilized for a myriad of years has crowded a narrow country, and left records in every generation, we need hardly wonder that almost every acre of soil should hide some relic of bygone men. But when we further consider that the dryness of the climate, and the solidity of the temples and the tombs, made even the most delicate fabric everlasting, or covered it with an everlasting shelter, we feel justified in hopes which have not yet been satisfied, even after many brilliant realizations. The sudden and romantic capture of the royal mummies from their gloomy hiding place in 1881, and the appearance of the famous Rameses II. in the Boulaq Museum, followed by the very similar discovery just announced (March, 1891), from Thebes, are but the most impressive, not the most instructive, of the successes in recent Egyptology. Not only is the great Museum at Cairo one of the most wonderful in the world, though it depends for its supply upon its own country alone, but all the Museums of Europe—at

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Turin, Vienna, Rome, Paris, Berlin, London—are yearly enriching themselves with splendid Egyptian monuments and records. Nay, even private researches are producing large results; and those who had the privilege of seeing Mr. Petrie's collection last autumn in London can realize how much is still left for such an explorer to uncover and to explain. But, alas! the patient man of genius, who knows not only how to find, but how to preserve, not only how to gather, but how to distinguish, has been followed by the vulgar tourist who defaces and destroys, who by lavishing money ignorantly and at random promotes among the natives not only the practice of forging antiquities, but the habit of defacing or dividing precious documents, for the purpose of selling them in morsels. It is but recently that attention has been publicly called to the lamentable Vandalism which is daily destroying what had lasted intact for thousands of years. In this sad work foreigners have done most mischief in chipping or fracturing stone monuments; the natives, who have learned the value of papyrus rolls, have been the chief culprits in dividing or even cutting into pieces the written documents, which form so interesting a department of Egyptian antiquities.*

§ 2. **Papyri.**—Of these the hieroglyphic or hieratic documents form a great department in themselves, from which we have learned not only the annals of the kings, but the religion of the people, the morals in which they were educated, their epic poetry, and even the fictions which amused their leisure. Nothing has contributed so much to the preservation of this mass of interesting documents, which I classified and described in a work now twenty years old,† as the excellent fibrous material discovered and used by the Egyptians, and from them carried abroad to the civilized nations of antiquity. The use of leather or parchment, and also of real paper, is indeed attested by the actual existence of two or three early hieroglyphic documents written on the former material, as well as by the scraps (of later

* According to Volney, the first great find of papyri, in a box near Memphis, when offered for sale, and declined, was burned by the local sheiks: cf. *Notices et Extraits* of the Louvre collection, vol. xviii., pt. ii., p. 6.

† *Prolegomena to Ancient History*, Longmans, 1871. Cf. especially the last chapter. Of course many have since come to light.

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date) on linen paper among the Rainer collection ; but on papyrus we have many thousand texts, including the rolls found at Herculaneum, so that we may regard it as the common writing material of the ancient world, till the monopoly of its produce in the Delta produced a scarcity,* which increased with the troubles of the world till this great manufacture became wholly extinct. The very plant which we now admire in the greenhouses of our Botanical Gardens, disappeared from Egypt, so that hardly any curiosity would now cause more interest than the finding of this natural growth on its indigenous soil. It is difficult to say how much the loss of such a portable and durable material for writing may have contributed to the decay and disappearance of learning in the dark ages.

§ 3. **Demotic Papyri.**—The earlier specimens of writing on papyrus, to which I have alluded, here concern me no longer, for I am about to describe documents written in Greek, and Greek only. But I will say a word on the intermediate stage, that of *demotic* writing, which began very early, especially for secular purposes, and lasted along with Greek till it was replaced by the Coptic of the Christian Church. In this *demotic*, or *enchorial* as it used to be called, there are indeed some novels and other literary works extant, and our bilingual inscriptions, those of Rosetta and Canopus, give their Egyptian version not only in hieroglyphics, but in the cursive script of everyday life. Business was, however, the principal subject of that demotic writing, in which contracts, bills of labour, accounts, and all fugitive memoranda were scribbled down. We find such not only on papyrus, and frequently on the back of a leaf already used for other writing, but on those potsherds known as *ostraka*, of which mounds have been recently found in several parts of Egypt. The deciphering of these fugitive demotic writings is very difficult, and unfortunately not by any means so far advanced as that of other Egyptian writing, seeing that the two greatest authorities on this point, Brugsch and Revillout, are at open variance in their interpretations. Nor can we hope to reconstruct adequately the private life of the later Egyptians till this riddle also has been satisfactorily solved. Fortunately, M. Maspero and some able younger

* Cf. Strabo, xvii. 1, § 15.

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men in France are now attacking the problem, and we may hope presently to have the controversies regarding it allayed and forgotten in the lessons of reliable interpretation.

§ 4. **Greek Papyri and Ostraka.**—I have delayed for a moment upon these demotic documents, because the great body of the Greek documents found in Egypt are of the same character.* When the Macedonians conquered Egypt, and replaced the indigenous monarchy by that of the Ptolemies, the first new ruler, a sagacious and practical man, adopted as much as possible of the local traditions and habits in his system of government, and disturbed as little as possible the ordinary course of affairs. Petty magistrates were still generally Egyptians, and administered law according to Egyptian practice; all the contracts of the natives were still written in demotic, and dated in Egyptian fashion. Even when the Macedonians spread Greek through the country, and made Greek settlements in the interior, we now know that from the beginning they dated by Egyptian months, as well as Macedonian, and that the better calendar of Egypt presently replaced the Macedonian for all but solemn legal acts.† Gradually all the everyday work in the Greek-speaking towns throughout Egypt began to appear in Greek in the same way that demotic had been employed, on the backs of papyrus sheets, and upon countless potsherds. The cursive Greek upon these *ostraka* is so difficult to decipher that it required all the skill of the late Mr. Birch, of Mr. Sayce, and of M. Wilcken to detect the meaning. Similar

* Among the many papyrus shreds of mummy-cases entrusted to me by Mr. Petrie, which I am now separating, cleaning, and reducing to order, demotic and Greek documents are found together, and in about equal quantities, but rarely on the same piece of papyrus. The demotic documents are generally on much browner and coarser papyrus than the Greek.

† Letronne states that in all the documents known to him, he found no case of a date in Macedonian months only. “Au reste j’observe que ces doubles dates sont très rares; la plupart des pièces connues, même écrites par les Grecs, sont datées d’après le calendrier égyptien; quand à celles qui porteraient uniquement la date macédonienne, jusqu’ici je n’en connais pas une seule.” (*Comm. ad Inscript. Rosettan.* in C. Müller, *Fragg. Hist. Græc.*, I., p. 12). The dating of the wills now published seems, therefore, quite an exceptional practice, and one probably abandoned for the Egyptian month, even in such documents, under the later Ptolemies. We now have dozens of dates in Macedonian months only, but all earlier than what Letronne had examined.

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difficulties encompassed the Greek papyri which had found their way to Turin, Leydon, and London—brief memoranda, accounts, lists of work and of workmen*—in explaining which various skilful men, from the Abbé Amadeo Peyron onwards, have shown their ingenuity and acuteness.†

§ 5. **The Rainer Papyri.**—Very recently (in 1882) our materials for study have been largely increased by a mass of papyri acquired in the Fayyum, and brought to Vienna, by the Archduke Rainer; they are in many languages, and of various dates, so that a committee of experts is now publishing them systematically in a periodical specially produced for that purpose. These documents reach indeed over many centuries down to the Mahometan times, and even give us our earliest examples of Arabic; they comprise not only scraps of Hesiod and other classical poets, but even a verse or two from a Gospel earlier in date than any text we had hitherto possessed; but I am not aware that they contain dated Greek documents from any century before the Christian era.‡ We had indeed already acquired in Egypt portions of classical texts, of Homer, of Euripides, of Hypereides, of which from palæographical reasons one or two might be dated as writing of the first century B.C. But the matter was doubtful, and the great body, even of the classical fragments up to this recovered, were clearly post-

* The abstract of a prolonged and interesting law case, with the arguments of counsel, and many documents, which A. Peyron has printed as his Papyrus A (*Papyri Mus. Taur.*, Turin, 1828), must evidently have been preserved in an earthen pot, as was usual in those days, and so has reached us intact. Thus in the prophet Jeremiah (xxxii. 14) we find: "Take these evidences of the purchase, . . . and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days." But the Leyden Papyrus A, of which the special contracts have been found in other copies, stands alone for length and explicitness. Two large legal documents of the 5th century were found by Mr. Petrie preserved in this way and in a perfect condition, in 1888. They have been published by Mr. Sayce in the *Revue des Études grecques* for 1889. We have two or three smaller ones from Hawara, in what we may call a Byzantine hand, which are also tolerably complete. But they cannot be included in this Memoir.

† The later accounts and contracts of Roman and early Arab days, which are in the Rainer collection, and at Paris, have been exhaustively treated by Dr. Wessely in vol. xxxvi. of the *Trans. Vienna Academy* (1888)—a model for all future inquiries of the kind.

‡ In the *Mittheilungen aus der Sammlung der Papyrus Erzsh. Rainer*, i. p. 51, it is announced that Dr. Wessely had found documents dated in the first half of the second century B.C. These seem, up to vol. v., part 2, of the *Mittheilungen* not to have been published.

Christian in date.* As might be expected from Greek writings in Egypt at such a date, these texts, even those of Homer, the old Bible of the Greeks, were very faulty, and not to be compared with the careful MSS. which passed from Byzantium and Mount Athos into Europe at the Renaissance of Greek learning. Thus Greek classical papyri, unless they gave us texts elsewhere non-existing, have not hitherto been of much value or interest to the classical scholar. But the recovery of three pages of Alcman, of a speech or two of Hypereides, of tragic fragments which we cannot as yet identify, raised the hopes of our Hellenists with the prospect of recovering some larger or older classical texts.

This was the general condition of our knowledge concerning the Greek-speaking population of Egypt which came in with the Ptolemies. The earlier and strictly local settlements at Naukratis and Daphne do not concern us here, and have been treated in very able and complete monographs by Mr. Petrie and Mr. E. Gardner.†

§ 6. **Bibliography.**—For those who desire more particular knowledge I here append a list of the publications of Ptolemaic Greek documents now accessible, to which I shall refer constantly in the following pages.

The first inquirer into this department of Egyptian history was Letronne, whose two great works, *Récherches pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte*, &c. (1823), and *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines de l'Égypte* (1842–8), as well as his *Fragments inédits d'anciens poètes grecs*, &c. (1851), and his excellent monographs on the *Vocal Statue of Memnon*, and on the *Greek text of the Rosetta inscription* (in C. Müller's *Fragg. Histor. Græcorum*, vol. i., appendix, 1851–3) will never be out of date.

Next comes Am. Peyron, whose *Papyri Græci Reg. Taurinensis Musei Ægyptii* (3 parts in 1 vol., Turin, 1824) is still a standard work.

Meanwhile the British Museum papyri had been published for the Trustees by Jos. Forshall (Part I., 1829); and in the same year appeared,

* This is the case also with the recently discovered *Polity of the Athenians*, the lost tract attributed to Aristotle which has been recently published by the Trustees of the British Museum. The MS. is not earlier than 80–100 A.D.

† See the publications of the Egypt Exploration Society, vols. iii. and vi.

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from the pen of Reuvens, *Lettres à M. Letronne sur les papyrus bilingues du Musée de Leide* (1829), followed by C. Leemans *Papyri Græci Musei Lugdunensis Bat.* (Leyden, 1829; 2nd series, 1885).

The Louvre papyri are fac-similed and commented on in vol. xviii. of the *Notices et Extraits* published by the French Government from that great collection, with a separate volume of transliteration and commentary by Letronne and Brunet de Presle, 1858. Since that we have also Miller's *Mélanges de Litt. grecque*, and E. Egger's Essay (*Journal des Savants*, 1873), on the *Papyri Sakkini*.

The vastly increased treasures of the British Museum are at this moment in process of being autotyped and published by the great specialists of that Institution.

The first attempts to produce the Berlin fragments was made by Parthey in 1864 (*Ægypt. Personen-namen, &c.*), 1865 (the magical papyri),* and in 1869.

These older sources, all relating to a very restricted group of papyri found at Thebes or Memphis, and mostly belonging to the Serapeum, but if restricted, for that reason elucidating each other, have told us of the Pagan monastic life and its difficulties, of the grasping spirit of corporations, and the difficulties of obtaining legal redress, of the value of house and landed property, &c., under the seventh and eighth Ptolemies. We may add A. Bœckh's great *Corpus Inscript. Græc.*, vol. iii., Nos. 4677–4978, relating to Egypt; for though he does not profess to give anything but inscriptions upon stone, he prints among them fac-similes of cursive notes, especially from Philæ, which are of great use in deciphering the more fugitive writings on papyrus and on the ostraka.

The same thing may be said of Ad. Schmidt's *Forschungen*, and of Lepsius' splendid *Denkmäler*, in the latter of which many of the texts already published by Letronne, notably those scratched upon the statue of

* The magical papyri—a large and special inquiry—are now best studied in the 2nd part of of Leemans' *Leiden Papyri*, and in the masterly article of Dr. Wessely, in vol. xxxvi. of the *Trans. Vienna Acad.* (1888), who there prints a perfect volume of hymns, incantations, and other curious texts hitherto lying unpublished in the collections of London and Paris, with a very careful index.

Memnon, were fac-similed to perfection. Lepsius also gave us the Greek, as well as the Egyptian, text of the *Inscription of Canopus* in a monograph (*Das Dekret von Canopus*, Berlin, 1866). The more recent literature upon it has been cited by W. N. Groff, in the *Revue égyptologique*, vi. 1, p. 12.

But for some years there was a lull in these studies, for no good fortune added to the celebrated Anastasi collection, which formed the staple of the publications I have named, in which the earlier Ptolemaic days were not at all represented—the Canopus stone giving us, for the first time, a dated document of the third Ptolemy in his ninth year. Still there were occasional discoveries of scraps of Homer, of Euripides, and of other classical writers, which encouraged the hopes of European scholars that in the tombs of Coptic days, when men seem to have sometimes had their books buried with them, treasure might yet be found. These hopes were raised to the highest pitch by the appearance of the Rainer papyri,* which are, indeed, most various and curious, but too fragmentary and lacerated to be in any sense satisfactory, and almost all dating from centuries posterior to the Christian era—the best of them were from the third and fourth centuries. Meanwhile, Dr. U. Wilcken had also turned his attention to the masses of ostraka inscribed with Greek writing, many of which were discovered by Mr. Sayce.

The newer results have been published as follows:—Prof. Wilcken, in a Latin monograph, *Observ. ad hist. Ægypt. prov. Rom.* (Berlin, 1885), then *Arsinoitische Tempelrechnungen* (*Hermes* xx. and xxi.), *Aktenstücke*, &c., in Trans. Berlin Academy for 1886, and quite recently *Tafeln zur älteren griechischen Palæographie*, a useful work based altogether on Egyptian documents; Dr. C. Wessely, *die Griech. Pap. der K. K. Sammlung Wien's* (1875), and since in *Wiener Studien*, vols. iii. *sqq.*, and especially vol. viii. and ix. (1886–7), as well as in Karabaçek's *Rainer Papyri*, vols. i.–v. (especially i. 30 *sqq.*), and in his exhaustive monograph on the acquisitions of Papyri from the Fayyum (Trans. Vienna Academy, 1888). By the acuteness of these scholars, following as they did in the track of Leemans (*Leiden Papyri*, i. p. 92), and A. Peyron in Parts 2 and 3 of his *Pap. Taur.*,

* The general account of this discovery was read by Karabaçek before the Vienna Academy (Transactions for 1882, pp. 207 *sqq.*). He there cites the earlier partial accounts (p. 208).

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and by the independent researches of A. H. Sayce in the fifth chapter of Mr. Flinders Petrie's *Hawara, Biahmi, and Arsinoe* (1889), and of E. Rebillout (*Revue égyptolog.*, 1883, vol. iii. 51 *sqq.*), many signs for measures and sums of money have been determined. Thus we have reached the threshold of that epoch in the discovery and reading of Græco-Egyptian papyri, which is due to the labours of Mr. Flinders Petrie.

§ 7. **Mr. Petrie at Gurob.**—In two earlier volumes, a *Winter in Egypt* (1887), and *Hawara, Biahmi, and Arsinoe* (1889), Mr. Petrie had shown how much there was of interest in the Fayyum, which had not, he says, been examined for 25 years. The fresh and picturesque account of his labours is so recent, and so readily accessible, that I need only refer to his books, and especially to the fifth chapter in the latter work, where Mr. Sayce has given an account of the important fragment of the *Iliad* (from Books I. and II.) found in a coffin under a lady's head, and of many lists of prices and accounts, which are described as blowing about the desert on fragments of papyrus. Mr. Sayce rightly says that the political economy and social life under the Ptolemies, which Lumbroso* had so ably discussed with insufficient materials, may now be examined with larger and more minute evidence, and that we shall soon know all about prices, taxes, rates of labour, and local administration, from the accumulation of these documents, of which Leemans gave long ago the first important specimens. I will not speak of the curious specimens of Romano-Egyptian portrait-painting on the mummy cases, and the other curiosities brought from Hawara. The following winter's work at Tell Gurob (or Kurob) led to still more astonishing results. So far as I gathered from his personal account,† the coffins at Hawara were of wood, whereas in the necropolis of Tell Gurob they were made of layers of papyrus, torn into small pieces, and stuck together so as to form a thick carton, painted within and without with designs and religious emblems. These carton-cases were made to fit the swathed body; there are at present in my possession several portions rounded to fit the skull, with

* *Récherches sur l'économie politique de l'Égypte sous les Lagides*, Turin, 1870.

† The volume containing the record of Mr. Petrie's work in 1889 (*Kahun, Gurob, Hawara*), just published (May, 1891), reserves all mention of the tombs at Gurob for another volume.

even the face shaped and painted, and others fitted to the feet. It was in the structure of these cases that Mr. Petrie detected the use of discarded documents, and forthwith attempted the difficult task of separating and cleaning the various fragments. Most of them were hopelessly destroyed. The thick layer of white chalk or lime laid upon the papyri to form the surface for colouring has in most cases destroyed the ink, if the written surface of the papyrus lay outward. When the several layers were glued together, the binding substance is very strong, and the worms in search of the glue have riddled the whole texture. There are many cases where steeping in water discloses some substance which dissolves into dark-brown juice, and stains the papyrus so as to make all characters illegible. I can speak of these difficulties from personal experience, for Mr. Petrie left in my hands a large number of unseparated fragments of these mummy cases, and I know how hopeless it is in most cases to save anything from the wreck.

Neither he nor I at first knew that this source of possible knowledge concerning the Greeks of Egypt had been discussed by the famous Letronne sixty years ago, for it was only in searching through the older literature of the subject, that I found, in his *Lettre à M. Passelacqua*, printed by M. Brunet de Presle, in the 18th vol. of the *Notices et Extraits* of the Paris MSS., the following prophetic words (p. 410):—

“Quant aux nombreux fragments de papyrus (No. 1564) qui ont servi à former le cartonnage d’une momie, ils sont beaucoup trop mutilés pour qu’on en puisse tirer rien de suivi; on ne voit sur les plus étendus que quelques portions de lignes dont il est impossible de tirer un sens complet. Je me suis donc attaché uniquement à deviner quel a pu être le sujet du papyrus auquel chacun de ces fragments a appartenu; car il eût été curieux de savoir si quelqu’un d’entre eux avait appartenu à une composition littéraire. Mais je n’en ai pas trouvé de trace: tous ces papyrus paraissent avoir rapport à des contrats de vente, à des transactions particulières et à des circulaires administratives. Peut-être, (he adds prophetically) les voyageurs, examinant avec soin les enveloppes de ce genre, trouveront-ils des morceaux où au moins les lignes seront entières. Toutefois je ne croirais pas avoir perdu mon temps si ce que je viens de dire engageait ceux qui exploitent, à Thèbes, une mine si féconde, à