18. On the of Writing in Ancient Egypt

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of a middle nature betwixt Man and Angel. . . . They have Children, Marriages, and Deaths even as we. . . . They are clearly seen by men of Second Sight to eat at *Funerals* and Banquets. . . . There be many fair ladies of this aerial order, which do often tryst with young men . . . in the quality of lightsome paramours."

So far, then, the *ǵnūn* and the Fairies are identical. The *ǵnūn*, at Fez, live in an old fort. So they do in Ireland, to this day, and Mr. Kirk mentions that they abide in the motes, or mounds, near churches. Such motes, hard by the church, exist at St. John's Town of Dalry, Parton, and Balmaclean, in Galloway, being the bases of ancient fortified dwellings. "Their native country is below the earth," says Dr. Westermarck. "The earth being full of cavities or cells," says Mr. Kirk, "these are their ordinary dwellings." The *ǵnūn* "live in tribes or nations, of which each has its sultan." "The Fairies live in Tribes and Orders," and the Fairy king and queen, "aristocratical rulers," are known to everybody. "The *ǵnūn* . . . may assume almost any shape they like." The Fairies "grovele in different schapes," says Kirk. Whirls of sand or dust are caused by *ǵnūn*. They are also attributed, in Scotland, to Fairies, who ride, causing the *tourbillon*, to the cry of "Horse and Hattock." The *ǵnūn* produce diseases by shooting arrows. So do Kirk's Fairies. "Their weapons are much of stone, like to yellow soft Flint spa (*sic*) shaped like a barbed arrow-head," and Mr. Kirk treasured several of these neolithic weapons. The *ǵnūn* are afraid of salt and steel. "Iron hinders all the operations" of the Fairies, and a piece of iron is put into the bed of a woman in labour. As to salt, a dish thereof is put on the breasts of corpses before burial, to keep off evil influences. The Bible is as efficacious as the Koran. The *séance* witnessed by Dr. Westermarck is the old Maori and modern spiritual *séance*, down to the "materialised" hand of the *ǵinn*. "The *ǵnūn* are frequently supposed to be guardians of hidden treasure." Kirk gives Fairy examples, and I have met cases both in Sligo, and, oddly enough, on Flodden Field.

Obviously the *ǵinn* are fairies, and the fairies are *ǵinn*. But nobody will say that the fairies were evolved out of Totem animals; and, indeed, though they can take many shapes, we hear little of them in animal form. On the other hand ghosts of men dead do appear very frequently, in this country, as beasts, and I am inclined to think that both fairies and *ǵinn* are more or less evolved out of ghosts. At all events, whoever wishes to derive *ǵinn* from Totems ought also to derive fairies from Totems, a thing which probably not the wildest Totemist will dream of doing. The Totem is almost as much overworked as the Sun, and the Spirit of vegetation in modern theories. Meanwhile Dr. Westermarck has, perhaps without thinking of it, proved the identity of a great province of Scottish and Arab or Moorish folklore.

Egypt: System of Writing.

Griffith.

18 On the *System of Writing in Ancient Egypt*. Communicated by F. Ll. Griffith, M.A., to the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Bradford, September 6th, 1900.

Egyptology has now reached a position among the sciences from which it may contribute trustworthy information for the benefit of kindred researches. Egyptian writing consists of Ideographic and Phonetic Elements, the signs serving as—1, Word-signs; 2, Phonograms; 3, Determinatives. The highest development shown is an alphabet, which, however, is never used independently of other signs; it is apparently not acrophonic in origin; it represents consonants and semi-consonants only, vocalisation not being recorded by Egyptian writing. No advance can be detected in the system from the beginning of the historic period to the end, notwithstanding

some improvements in practical working which facilitated the use of cursive writing. Phonograms derived from word-signs. The end of the native system was brought about by the gradual adoption of the Greek character—beginning, perhaps, in the second century A.D. If any radical improvement was ever made in the Egyptian form of writing, that improvement must have taken place at or after adoption by another people: *e.g.*, some have supposed that our alphabet was derived by the Phœnicians from Egypt; but any such derivations are at present entirely hypothetical.

Although the Egyptian system of writing may not be actually a stage in the history of our alphabet, it throws a strong light on the development of the alphabetic system: and the survival of its pictorial form (for decorative purposes) enables us to recognise the highly ramified connections between the forms and meanings of characters to an extent which is impossible at present in any other system, whether in Mesopotamia, China, or elsewhere.

The results of recent Egyptian philology indicate therefore that Egyptian was originally a Semitic language, though its character changed early. The main lines of the grammar being at length established, the materials for a complete dictionary are now being collected and classified.

Egypt: Language.

Erman.

Die Flexion des ägyptischen Verbums. Von Adolf Erman. (*Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.* XIX. pp. 317ff.)

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At a recent meeting of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, whilst dealing with some technicalities of Egyptian grammar, Professor Erman gave expression to some new philological results which are of importance both to the historian and to the anthropologist. His own studies had already in 1892 rendered a close connection between Egyptian and the Semitic tongues hardly dubious. But at the same time the most striking characteristic of the Semitic languages, namely, the derivation of the vocabulary from roots of three radicals, seemed to be absent from Egyptian, which appeared, on the contrary, to have a preference for biliteral roots. This difficulty has now been removed by the researches of Dr. Sethe upon the Egyptian verb (see Kurt Sethe, *Das ägyptische Verbum*, of which two volumes have already appeared, and a third, containing indices, is in preparation). It has become clear that most Egyptian biliteral verbs have become such through the decay of a weak consonant, and were accordingly, in their origin, triliteral. As a further consequence of this discovery, fresh similarities in the vocabulary have been brought to light, greatly adding to the evidence hitherto available. Professor Erman has now no hesitation in classing Egyptian among the Semitic languages. It is noteworthy that this conclusion has been reached without any investigations into the field of comparative syntax, which would, as any one acquainted with the languages in question must know, indubitably lead to valuable results pointing in the same direction.

Professor Erman then turns to the historical aspect of his conclusion. He compares the movement which carried the Semitic idiom from Arabia to Egypt and East Africa with the Mohammedan invasion which overran the same countries in the seventh century of our era. The parallel is complete, except that whereas the later stream of conquest gave birth to one extensive, yet united nation, the more ancient failed to do so. This difference he attributes with great show of reason to the fact that the Mohammedan invasion imposed a religion, while the earlier invasion did not. The greater decay of the Semitic idiom in Egypt he assigns to an original difference of race. As to this race, he surmises that they resembled those Nubians who live in the barren stretches between Assuan and Dongola. These have preserved their one language intact in this region which no invader has taken the trouble to conquer;