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NOTICES OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Les Maximes de Ptahhotep d'après le Papyrus Prisse, les Papyrus 10371/10435 et 10509 du British Museum et la Tablette Carnarvon. Texte. By EUGÈNE DÉVAUD. Fribourg, Suisse, [en vente à la librairie A. Rody]¹. 1916. 53 autotyped pages. Large 4°.

The Swiss scholar to whom we owe this first instalment of an exceedingly important work has been known to Egyptologists hitherto only by a number of ingenious lexicographical notes published in *Sphinx* and other periodicals. It is all the more pleasant to welcome his book, as it testifies, both at first sight and on nearer acquaintance, to philological ability of a quite exceptional kind. In the whole range of our studies no more exacting task awaited fulfilment than that of editing the *Maxims* of Ptahhotp, and we can congratulate ourselves that it has fallen into such able hands. But the more difficult half, and that from which we shall gain the most profit, is still outstanding. Let me urge M. Dévaud not to let us wait too long; in dealing with such a text finality is out of the question, and it is far more desirable for our science that he should publish his results without delay than that he should withhold them in view of a perfection that is unattainable. No greater impetus could be given to Egyptian philology after the war than would be provided by the second half of M. Dévaud's book, if it in any degree keeps the promise of the first instalment.

The *Maxims* of Ptahhotp have been termed, and not without good reason, 'the oldest book in the world.' The funerary incantations known as the Pyramid Texts are not a book in any true sense of the word, but that name can fairly be applied to the body of aphorisms and counsels which the Vizier Ptahhotp compiled for the instruction of his son in the reign of the Pharaoh Asosi of the Fifth Dynasty. For many years these were known only from a single manuscript now in the Bibliothèque Nationale; this manuscript is called the Papyrus Prisse after its first owner and editor, and dates from the late Middle Kingdom. In 1891 Mr Griffith identified an incomplete copy of the same book in an extensive series of papyrus fragments, also of the Middle Kingdom, in the possession of the British Museum (nos. 10371—10435), and in 1909 there came to light a new example of the exordium on the reverse of the Hyksos writing-board recently studied in this *Journal* (vol. III, pp. 95—100). Two years later M. Jéquier published admirable photographic facsimiles of all these texts, and his volume has of course been of the utmost service to M. Dévaud, who has not otherwise had access to the originals. Hardly was M. Jéquier's book available, when Dr Budge published a fourth manuscript covering a number of pages of the Prisse and, so far as it goes, almost free from lacunae: Pap. B.M. 10509 is a careful copy of the Eighteenth Dynasty, especially valuable on account of its verse-points—for in this difficult text even the division into sentences is often a matter of considerable doubt.

M. Dévaud's book contains, so far as I have been able to test them, absolutely faultless transcriptions of all these texts. The identification and rearrangement of the often tiny fragments of *Pap. Brit. Mus.* 10371—10435 is a very noticeable feat; here the patchwork necessary was so complex that M. Dévaud has done well to preface his critical text with a *transcription servile* in the exact arrangement of the original (pp. 7—14). In the end only five fragments remain unidentified, and of these three are very trumpery. The sole fault I have to find with the *transcription servile* is that M. Jéquier's numbering or lettering of the fragments is not given in the margin according as the fragments occur in their new places; this would have obviated the constant reference to the table that precedes (pp. 5—6).

¹ Indication added at M. Dévaud's express desire.

The main portion of the work is the critical text (pp. 15—53). In order to display this conveniently, M. Dévaud has had the happy idea of dividing the entire book into 647 sentences or combinations of sentences, each occupying a single line. The text of the Prisse stands on the right-hand portion of the page, and immediately opposite to it on the left are the parallel words from the other manuscripts or manuscript, as the case may be. The result is in some ways more satisfactory than the superposition usually employed, as the text of each manuscript can thus be read consecutively without skipping of lines. The new method is, however, chiefly appropriate where, as in the case of our Maxims, the manuscripts represent widely divergent versions. The critical text thus consists of sometimes as many as three separate versions, and it has been rightly deemed impracticable to reduce these to a single eclectic text. Each manuscript has, however, been 'edited,' restorations being enclosed in dotted square brackets, and insertions of omitted signs or words being indicated by plain square brackets. Students who have been accustomed to < > for inserted signs and [] for restorations will find this deviation from usage rather misleading, and it seems a pity that M. Dévaud has adopted it. Nor can I wholly reconcile myself to the inclusion of emendations in the critical text, even though the MS. readings are always clearly marked in the footnotes. It appears to me that in dealing with a literary text of such obscurity a critical text is as yet far from feasible, and that it might have been better to give the MS. readings as they stand, and to relegate all textual alterations to the footnotes. But it must be admitted that this would have led to a rather undue extension of the latter; at all events there is a case to be made out for either method of procedure.

With M. Dévaud's convenient new text before me, I have tried, in what moments of leisure I have had, to translate a number of passages, and the difficulties of the task have impressed themselves only too strongly upon me; whole passages I find quite unintelligible, though now and again the obscurities lift and a glimmer of daylight shows itself. It will be interesting to see what M. Dévaud makes of his formidable undertaking. Let me beg him to have the courage to make suggestions, even though they prove wrong; mistakes are far more helpful than a mere scholarly refusal to run risks. I have noted certain passages where, until M. Dévaud converts me to a better faith, I would divide differently from him, or reject an emendation that he proposes: thus in 320 (text of *Pap. Brit. Mus.* 10509) I would provisionally retain *pr* 'house' for *pr* 'go forth'; the notes on 342, 344 (*Prisse*) seem to imply a textual jugglery which is not easy to understand; in 489–90 the words *m hs bû-k* must surely be joined and not separated. But for discussion of these and like details M. Dévaud's further instalment must be awaited.

The book is printed in admirably clear and attractive autography, unsurpassed in any recent publication. Some readers will object to its appearance in loose sheets, which however has a certain convenience for collation with the originals or the facsimiles; after all, any bookbinder will supply the remedy.

ALAN H. GARDINER.

Beschreibung der Aegyptischen Sammlung des Niederländischen Reichsmuseums der Altertümer in Leiden: Mumienstücke des Neuen Reiches. By Dr P. A. A. BOESER. Haag, Nijhoff, 1916. Pp. 12. Three coloured and seven photographic plates. Folio.

This fine publication of the Leyden antiquities proceeds steadily in spite of the war: we now have eight volumes issued in nine years. Alone 1914 was a blank year; the volume of 1915 was reviewed in the *Journal*, vol. II, p. 142; 1916 has brought illustrations of the wooden coffins belonging to the period of the New Kingdom. Coffins and coffin lids made for five individuals are here described and most of these are figured with more or less elaboration in the plates. With one exception they are from the great deposit of Theban priestly coffins which came to light at Dêr el-Bahri under M. Grébaut's administration in 1891. All are of the type that is attributed to the Twenty-first Dynasty. The coffins are of wood, shaped to the mummy, and the face and hands are modelled on the lids; the whole surface is stuccoed, painted in green, blue, and red on an orange ground, and generally varnished over with a brilliant yellow varnish. At the neck commences a broad *usekh* collar reaching to the hands, which are crossed on the breast, the fingers closed in the male coffins, open in the female. The goddess Nut and winged scarabs cover the chest; a broad strip down the middle of the legs,