Egypt Exploration Society

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Source: *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Apr., 1914), pp. 81-92

Published by: [Egypt Exploration Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3853513>

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PAPYRI AND PAPYROLOGY

BY PROFESSOR A. S. HUNT, D.LITT.

[See Plates VIII—X]

MY aim here is to give a general sketch of the subject-matter of papyrology—to supply some answer to the questions: What are our principal debts to the papyri, where and how, chiefly, have they supplemented and are they supplementing our knowledge, or modifying our methods of investigation and criticism? The field to be surveyed is a very wide one, and I cannot pretend to offer more than a distant bird's-eye view; just indicating the main sources and summing up shortly some results. Much of what follows will no doubt be familiar to many of my readers; but possibly even to those whom I shall remind rather than inform, a summary of the kind I contemplate may not be quite devoid of interest.

Papyrology means the study of papyri; and it need hardly be said that the papyri found in Egypt (the only place, apart from the charred rolls of Herculaneum, where they have been preserved) are written in a variety of scripts and languages, Egyptian, in its progressive stages of Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, Demotic and Coptic, Hebrew and Aramaic, Syriac, Pehlevi, Arabic, as well as Greek and Latin. But in practice, such general terms as Papyrology, "Papyrusforschung," and so forth, have come to be associated with papyri in the two classical languages, especially Greek, which greatly preponderates. It is with Greek and Latin papyri that I am concerned. But of course the student of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt must not neglect the evidence, though he may have to take it at second hand, of contemporary documents in Demotic; nor, on the other hand, can a papyrologist limit himself to papyri; he must include within his view texts inscribed on other materials—stone, wooden tablets, and above all ostraca, or broken potsherds, which were very commonly employed for short ephemeral documents, such as receipts, letters and accounts.

The history of papyrus discovery falls into three main periods. The first begins with the year 1778, when a Greek papyrus is first known to have found its way from Egypt to Europe; and it lasts for about a century, at various times in which sporadic finds occurred, including four speeches of Hypereides, several lengthy Homeric papyri, and a number of documents of the Ptolemaic age. But these were isolated and comparatively small discoveries, and it was only in the second period, to which may be given roughly the 20 years from 1875 to 1895, that the great possibilities of Egypt in this direction came to be realised. This second period was marked by very large finds of papyri of the Roman epoch in the ruins of certain ancient towns and villages, chiefly in the Fayûm province; and the stream which then started has been flowing

pretty continuously ever since. In the winter of 1895 the first excavations definitely undertaken with a view to Greek papyri were carried out in the Fayûm by Mr Hogarth, Dr Grenfell and myself. The discoveries of the two preceding periods had been the result of unauthorised and desultory digging by native plunderers; those of the third period, which we had the good fortune to inaugurate, and which is still in progress, have been largely the fruit of properly organised and properly directed work by European explorers. In 1897 Dr Grenfell and I began excavations on the site of the ancient Oxyrhynchus—which, let me remark, is not in the Fayûm but in the Nile Valley about 120 miles south of Cairo—excavations which proved most successful, and were only recently concluded. Meanwhile our example had been followed by German, French and Italian investigators, who went to Egypt both to excavate and to make purchases; with the result that whereas 15 years ago there were practically no papyri outside the collections of London, Paris, Berlin and Vienna, and the smaller ones of Oxford, Dublin, Leyden, Turin and Cairo, now they are scattered broad-cast over the museums and libraries of Europe: at Cambridge, Manchester, Leipzig, Heidelberg, Munich, Strassburg, Giessen, Graz, Hamburg, Halle, Brussels, Geneva, Basle, Lille, and elsewhere. A considerable quantity have found their way, like other things, also to America. The Tebtunis papyri are the property of the University of California; and the Amherst collection was one of the last purchases of Mr Pierpont Morgan.

Publications have naturally been increasing in a corresponding degree. Fifteen years ago it was no very formidable task to carry in one's head a working knowledge of all the edited material; to-day, anyone coming fresh to the subject is overweighted with the mass of texts to be sifted and digested. Monographs of various kinds are also constantly appearing; so that even for a specialist it is ceasing to be easy to keep fully abreast of the latest developments in the different branches of research to which papyri more or less directly contribute.

A word should here be said regarding the conditions in which papyri are found. The bulk of them proceed from the ruins of ancient towns and villages: either from deserted houses, where the papers which were of no use to their owners were left behind lying about on the floor, or in a pot, as often in the Fayûm; or, secondly, from rubbish heaps, on which waste paper was thrown out with other house refuse, as for instance at Oxyrhynchus and Hermopolis. Such piles of refuse often rise to a height of from 20 to 30 feet, and similar heaps can be seen in process of formation outside almost any modern Egyptian village. The other main source of papyri is tombs, in which occasionally a roll is found. In the Bodleian Library may be seen a roll of Homer with a lock of the hair of the lady with whom it was buried. But the cemeteries supply us in another and less obvious manner. In the third and second centuries B.C., occasionally still later, mummies were often decorated with pieces of painted cartonnage, in the composition of which waste papyrus was frequently employed. It is possible to remove the overlying plaster and paint, and to separate the layers of papyrus, and so to recover the documents in a more or less legible condition. Most of the earliest Greek papyri have been derived from this source. Sometimes, too, waste paper was used in the mummification of crocodiles and other animals. On two occasions we made large discoveries in this way in the Fayûm, where the crocodile was held sacred.

Such, in brief, has been the history of the discoveries: we may now pass on to consider in what the discoveries consist.

Papyri can be divided into various classes. The broadest division is that between the literary and non-literary. The former naturally come first.

The literary section falls into two main groups, the new and the already known, and within these two groups a number of subdivisions may of course be made. If it be asked, what have been the most important new literary finds, the answer, I suppose, would be, for the theologian, the two fragments of Sayings of Christ, the so-called *Logia*, small in extent but of deep interest not only for what they actually contain, but also for their bearing upon Synoptic problems. In the department of History there are the Aristotelian treatise on the constitution of Athens, published in 1891, and the Oxyrhynchus *Hellenica* which made its appearance six years ago, and of which the authorship has not yet been settled—a candidate who has lately been coming into favour is Ephorus, whose claims have been ably advocated in a treatise issued a few weeks ago by Mr E. M. Walker. But whether Ephorus or Theopompus or some other writer be eventually accepted as the author of these fragments, all critics are agreed on their historical importance. In the department of Oratory we have gained Hypereides, whose six extant speeches, or parts of speeches, are all due to Egypt. In lyric poetry there is Bacchylides, and more recently the remains of Pindar's Paeans. We may, I think, cherish hopes of further additions here, for it seems clear that the great lyrists enjoyed considerable popularity in the Roman period. In the next Oxyrhynchus volume, which will be ready early in the new year, I propose to publish remains of two manuscripts of Sappho and two of Alcaeus. Let me hasten to add that they are in a sadly mutilated condition. Still, Sappho is—Sappho; and for vocabulary and dialect even small fragments have their importance. Of one pretty poem there remain five and a half Sapphic stanzas in fair preservation, expressing regret for an absent friend. "Some say the fairest sight on earth is a company of horse or foot; but I say that the fairest thing is what happens to be the object of a man's desire. And this is easy to prove; for did not Helen judge Paris to be the goodliest man, although he involved his country and his home in ruin? So too I would now rather behold the gracious form of my friend than all the hosts of Troy; but it may not be, for she is far away." Such is the thought, and it is expressed with the simple directness, the apparently effortless felicity, characteristic of the poetess. Of another poem in a different metre, on the subject of the marriage of Hector and Andromache, about 20 lines have survived. Alcaeus comes off rather better; from him we gain some 70 lines in various metres, in a state approaching completeness, but unfortunately not consecutive.

In tragedy the chief acquisitions have been the extensive fragments of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, from which the plot of the play can in large measure be reconstructed, and of the *Ichneutae* of Sophocles, published in 1912, which afford for the first time a fair idea of a Sophoclean Satyric drama. A translation of this, I hear, was performed in Germany last June. In comedy there are about 1300 lines of four plays of Menander, from a papyrus at Cairo. The Oxyrhynchus fragments of Callimachus, including part of the famous love-story of Acontius and Cydippe, are a notable addition to the surviving work of that most influential writer; and the choliambic poems of Herondas have provided a valuable specimen of a class of poetry of which before there was no adequate representative. These may be reckoned the principal gains so far. Then there is a numerous second class, in which may be placed the two fragments of Sappho previously recovered,

one from Oxyrhynchus, the other at Berlin; substantial pieces of Alcman and Corinna; a sample of Pindar's *Partheneia*; the *Persae* of Timotheus, the MS. of which is perhaps the oldest specimen of Greek literary writing on papyrus; fragments of the *Demes* of Eupolis, of the *Eurypylus* of Sophocles, of Euripides' *Antiope* and *Cretes*; of Callimachus' *Hecale*; of the *Meliambi* of Cercidas; of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*; of the *Elements of Metre* of Aristoxenus, the chief ancient authority on the subject; the life of Euripides by Satyrus, written in the form of a dialogue, an interesting element in the history of biographical composition; considerable remains of a treatise on Ethics by the Stoic Hierocles, probably a contemporary of Epictetus; the commentary of Didymus on Demosthenes' *Philippics*, valuable for quotations from the lost works of Theopompus, Philochorus, Anaximenes, and others; an epitome of some of the lost books of Livy, which is an isolated case of an important Latin literary find; the Oxyrhynchus list of Olympic victors (Plate VIII), an insignificant looking scrap measuring a few inches only, but full of precious information, fixing several doubtful dates in connexion with Pindar and Bacchylides, and supplying important evidence for the history of Greek sculpture. Room must also be found in the list for such singular relics of the obscurer literary byways as the so-called Erotic fragment, a poetical lament of a maiden for a lost lover, of the second century B.C., and a farce and mime of the early Roman period, which look like survivals of a local music-hall.

I will not add to the tale, nor descend into the still more numerous third and fourth classes. But there is a general reflection suggested by a survey of these multifarious remnants of perished works, to which I would refer—I mean the remarkable popularity and diffusion of Greek letters in Egypt. The number of literary fragments found at Oxyrhynchus, for example, was enormous; and Oxyrhynchus was only one provincial capital out of many, whose inhabitants are not to be credited with a much higher grade of cultivation than their neighbours. It is not till the Byzantine period that a marked decline becomes apparent, to be traced partly to the material decay which was beginning to make its effects generally felt, partly also, I think, to the spread of Christianity. A new literature had come into favour, and though the great classics were still in wide circulation—Homer, Demosthenes and Menander being prominent—the range tended to become more and more restricted. The right-minded man would tend to replace Sappho with the Psalms, and satisfy his appetite for history and romance with lives of the saints and martyrs. Down to about the end of the third century, however, the papyri may be said to indicate that not so very much of what was really important had been entirely lost. Of course some works had a greater vogue than others; but if such books as the Boeotian poems of Corinna, the philosophical lyrics of Cercidas, or a rhetorical treatise in Doric still found readers in Egypt in the second century, it may fairly be argued that works more generally attractive were not allowed to perish. And this consideration has some weighty consequences. If the materials were so large and so easily accessible, surely it behoves the critic to treat with respect the statements even of comparatively late writers—i.e. statements of fact, such as could have been obtained from older sources. It is not worth while to invent when information lies ready to hand, by means of which, moreover, falsehood can readily be detected. Let us remember, for example, the case of Anthropus, the Olympian victor, who has risen from the grave in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus to confute the modern critics who, refusing to accept the evidence of the early commentators on Aristotle, denied his existence. Similarly the statement of

List of Olympian Victors (Pap. Oxyrh. 222). Third Century.

Plutarch, that Aeschines of Sicyon was one of the tyrants deposed about the end of the sixth century by the Lacedaemonians, has been regarded with suspicion, because this Aeschines was not elsewhere attested. His name has now been found in a papyrus two centuries older than Plutarch in the Rylands Library at Manchester. Another instance, of which the details are not yet published, has recently come under my observation. It will be remembered that the biographical notices of the poet Apollonius Rhodius represent him as having succeeded Eratosthenes as librarian at the Alexandrian Library. This is inconsistent with other evidence for the date of Apollonius, and therefore modern critics have declined to believe that he was one of the Alexandrian librarians at all. There they have gone too far. They ought to have suspected that a positive statement of this kind had a solid basis of fact. A papyrus which will be included in the forthcoming volume shows how the ancient error in date arose. There was a second Apollonius, who held the office subsequently; presumably, therefore, this person was confused with his more celebrated name-sake. And we may now read with better comprehension the statement of Tzetzes, who says that the famous Aristarchus was the 4th or the 5th in succession from Zenodotus. The 4th or the 5th: exactly so; if we count one Apollonius, the 4th; if two, the 5th. It is a grave mistake, then, to treat such reports of ancient authorities cavalierly. They are not, of course, free from confusions and corruptions, against which it is right enough to be on guard; but to neglect their affirmations, or to dismiss them without strong conflicting evidence, is not consistent with the principles of sound criticism. At any rate, those who are minded to flout early testimony will do well to wait until the period of papyrus discovery is safely over.

In passing on from the new to the already known, there is a small group to be noticed standing between those two classes, namely the papyri which preserve specimens of the original Greek of works previously known only in translations. Most of these discoveries relate to theological books. I mention one example, that of the well-known Christian treatise called the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The Greek of this was mostly recovered from Mt Athos in the middle of the nineteenth century, but the conclusion of the book was missing until the notorious dealer in manuscripts, Simonides, produced it, professing to have copied it at Mt Athos. When his other forgeries were revealed, his version of the end of the *Shepherd of Hermas* naturally fell under suspicion, but its genuineness was maintained by Hilgenfeld as late as 1887. About ten years ago we found part of the missing portion in a sixth-century papyrus; needless to add, this does not agree with the version of Simonides. There is also an interesting classical or semi-classical instance, the late Latin treatise on the Fall of Troy attributed to Dictys Cretensis, and professing to be a translation from Greek. The latest Teubner editor decided that the Greek original was a myth. Unfortunately for him, however, we unearthed at Tebtunis in the Fayûm a papyrus containing the Greek of part of the treatise, a papyrus actually written about the middle of the third century A.D.; it is thus evident that the treatise itself must go back at least to the second century and that the authorities upon which the book is based are of no mean antiquity.

Of the Greek Bible, there are numerous fragments, and both for the Old and the New Testament the earliest known manuscripts are to be found among the papyri. Mention should perhaps be made here, though the material is parchment, not papyrus,

of an important discovery which has lately come from Egypt, the Freer Gospels. This MS., which is now at Washington and was published some months ago, is an admirably preserved book in the ancient binding dating probably from the fifth century, and so ranking among the oldest authorities for the Gospel text; and it is distinguished from all other known MSS. of the Gospels by the occurrence in the last chapter of St Mark of a passage otherwise known only from a partial quotation in Latin by Jerome. Of our chief Greek classics, those which remain entirely unrepresented are becoming comparatively few (e.g. Plate X, Fig. 2). Of the exceptions, the most noticeable, perhaps, is Aeschylus, of whom, so far, there is no certain fragment. The commonest author of all is Homer. Some 200 Homeric papyri have already been published, and there are many more to come. The great popularity of the bard is indeed one of the chief trials of the excavator's patience. He sees an extra large literary fragment emerging from the soil, and wonders for a brief moment what new treasure he has found—but ten to one it is only old Homer again. The *Iliad* is always considerably more in evidence than the *Odyssey*; the Homeric Hymns, which would be of more use for critical purposes, unfortunately do not occur.

The chief lessons to be derived from a study of this early evidence for the Greek classics are, I think, three. First and most important, the general confirmation of tradition. Our classical texts are found to be substantially the same as they were at the beginning of the Christian era. The papyri sometimes bring better readings, but they show that there was no extensive deterioration during the early middle ages. Secondly, I think that on the whole they tend to justify the methods of the best modern scholarship. Of course, the end of the resources of conjecture is only too soon reached; but where defects have remained more or less on the surface, conjectural alterations have not seldom been confirmed. For example, some papyrus fragments of the eleventh book of Polybius, in the space of about 130 short and incomplete lines, have corroborated no less than 13 conjectures. A modern scholar may thus have the supreme satisfaction of actually seeing in a papyrus his darling emendation. Thirdly, with regard to the character of papyrus texts, they are often of what may be described as an eclectic type; that is, they do not as a rule tend to support a single manuscript or group of manuscripts, as against others, but to agree here with one, there with another. Editors must beware of pinning their faith to any one manuscript or group; it may be in general the better witness, but it is unlikely to have any monopoly of the truth.

Before passing on to the non-literary papyri we may pause a moment to notice the miscellaneous company which lies about the borderline: documents relating to magic and astrology, incantations, prayers, medical prescriptions, calendars and mathematical tables, school exercises and dictations, which sometimes contain literary or semi-literary matter, and so forth.

It has been aptly remarked, that as for the archaeologist the nineteenth century was preeminently a period of stone, so the twentieth will be preeminently a period of paper; and the essential difference between the inscriptions and the non-literary papyri is this, that whereas the former were consciously designed for the public eye and for posterity, the latter, the papyri, are as a class ephemeral and personal. Their value lies largely in the insight they afford into the business of common every-day life, from the official in his office down to the labourer in his fields. They draw aside

Report of a Public Physician on a man found hanged
(Pap. Oxyrh. 51). 173 A.D.

the curtain, so to say, and show us the figures actually at work, off their guard, free of all artificiality or pose.

These non-literary documents cover a period of rather more than a thousand years. Egypt passed under the rule of the first Ptolemy in B.C. 323, and from that time till the Arab conquest in A.D. 641, Greek became the official language of the country. The earliest dated Greek papyrus at present known is a marriage-contract of the year 311 B.C. After the Arab conquest Greek continued to be employed side by side with Arabic so long as papyrus remained in use as a writing material; but after the first half of the eighth century the Greek language receded into the background, and is practically confined to bilingual official receipts. Latin papyri are rare at all times; those found usually relate to military affairs or legal business.

Considered according to their subjects these documents may be broadly divided into two classes, the official and the private, each class including a large variety of subordinate groups. Under the former head we have laws, rescripts, edicts, diaries of official acts, judicial sentences, reports of many kinds (e.g. Plate IX), correspondence, receipts for payment of taxes, accounts, lists, inventories and the like. In the private papers, a convenient distinction may be drawn between, first, those addressed to officials by private persons, such as petitions, in great variety, census and property returns, notices of birth and death, and numerous other declarations; secondly, those passing between private persons alone: contracts, receipts, wills, letters, accounts, &c. Documents of all these kinds are to be found in a long series of publications, extending now to 50 or more large volumes; among the most considerable may be reckoned the four parts of the British Museum Catalogue, numbering some 1100 texts, the Egypt Exploration Fund series, containing about 1600, and the Berlin *Griechische Urkunden*, about 1200. A special periodical, started in 1901, the *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*, gives notices and reviews of the different editions as they appear, besides having important original articles dealing with their subject-matter. An extremely valuable historical and legal introduction to papyri with extensive annotated selections, by Profs. Wilcken and Mitteis, appeared last year in Germany—a *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde*, indispensable alike to the student and editor of papyri. Several smaller German selections for school use have also been published recently; in English there is Dr Milligan's well-chosen series of Greek papyri, translated and annotated, issued three years ago by the Cambridge University Press, and in French, the selected texts appended to Hohlwein's *L'Égypte romaine*.

Evidently a material so diversified may be viewed in numerous aspects, and will throw light on many branches of study, Roman as well as Greek. For the historian the harvest is especially rich. Direct contributions to political history are not, indeed, common, but they are occasionally obtained. For example, the original edict of Caracalla extending the Roman citizenship to the provinces of the Empire can now be partly read in a papyrus at Giessen. Authentic survivals of the Decian persecution of the Christians in the third century have come to light in the *libelli*, as they were termed, the certificates issued to suspected persons after they had sacrificed publicly to the pagan gods. For dynastic history the papyri are of much importance in all periods, often giving new information on points of chronology and nomenclature. Any history of the Ptolemies must necessarily be full of references to the papyrus evidence, both Greek and demotic; and for the Caesars, too, it is often valuable, not only on

account of the information afforded, but for the way one is brought into touch with events. A recently published Berlin papyrus preserves an edict of Germanicus deprecating extravagant demonstrations on the part of the populace when he appeared in public. Another from Oxyrhynchus is a draft of the actual proclamation announcing to the inhabitants of the town the decease of Claudius and the accession of Nero. But it is in regard to internal administration, and economic and social conditions, that the historical value of the documents is most conspicuous. A large papyrus at Halle has appeared during the past year containing extracts from a number of Alexandrian laws put together in the third century B.C. apparently for use in some advocate's office. To the same period belong the so-called Revenue Papyrus, which reveals the complicated details of the management of a government monopoly, and a document from Hibeh displaying the elaborate organisation of the official postal service, which was conducted with a regularity and precision worthy of a modern registered-letter department. The crocodile papyri from Tebtunis have afforded a very complete picture of the administration of government land a century or so later. In Roman times, the official day-books or diaries are especially notable, both in respect of their form and their contents; they preserve a number of details of legal cases and decisions, and give an adequate idea of the manner in which the Roman magistrates kept the records of their public acts. It is to the papyri that we owe our knowledge of the periodic census, instituted apparently by Augustus, which can be clearly traced from the year 19 A.D. to the middle of the third century. The object of this census was taxation, and the cycle of 14 years depended on the fact that 14 was fixed as the age at which the poll-tax became payable. On the whole subject of taxation the papyri are very full of information. The names of more than 150 different taxes imposed on the Egyptians of the Roman period are now known. Besides the poll-tax, they include taxes on exports and imports, taxes on land and its produce, on trades, on animals, on business transactions such as sales and mortgages, imposts for the benefit of the government and its officials, from the Emperor downwards, who took his *bakshish* in the form of a national offering at his accession. When one further considers the other burdens to which property was liable, the imposition of public duties and the discharge of costly municipal functions, the wonder is that the back was at all equal to the load.

Concerning industrial conditions, the papyri have much to tell us:—about the forms of land-tenure, the methods of cultivation, the development of trades and handicrafts, and similar subjects. And such inquiries may have more than a merely local interest. For instance, some weighty evidence may be gathered from the papyri on the important subject of the agrarian policy of Rome. The Roman government inherited from its predecessors, the Ptolemies, a great quantity of Crown land, which went on increasing in extent. If Roman statesmen had had any real grasp of the agrarian problem, or any sincere desire to grapple with it, here was the opportunity for experiment. But apparently this opportunity was turned to no sort of account. The State seems to have been no more enlightened as an employer of labour than any ordinary private owner, and it is precisely among the cultivators of the public domains that the first signs of agrarian serfdom make themselves manifest. Already in Ptolemaic times compulsion was being resorted to, and the Romans merely carried on and developed this policy. A British Museum papyrus of the year 215 A.D. indicates that

at that date labourers could be transplanted at the pleasure of their rulers from one locality to another, practically implying the principle of bondage to the soil. Free labour and small holdings were gradually supplanted in Egypt, as elsewhere, by serfdom and overgrown estates supporting semi-independent communities. The towns, saddled with municipal burdens, receding in administrative importance and losing their industrial markets, dwindled and decayed; and decline soon became general. In the fourth and fifth centuries the symptoms of disease are no longer to be mistaken; but the germs had been there long before. The evidence on this interesting subject has been recently collected and discussed at length by Prof. Rostowzew in his *Römisches Kolonat*.

Another conspicuous side of the papyri is the juristic. The Ptolemies introduced into Egypt Greek law, upon which was subsequently engrafted the Roman; and both systems obtain from the papyri much valuable evidence and illustration. I have already alluded to the important extracts from the Alexandrian code preserved in a recently edited Halle papyrus. What promises to be an equally valuable document for the student of Roman law is a papyrus lately acquired by the Berlin Museum, but not yet published, which contains a long series of ordinances and regulations compiled for the use of a high Roman official and concerned chiefly with the legal relations of the different nationalities in Egypt, and with the law of inheritance. But apart from texts of such capital interest, the gleanings from isolated contracts, wills, edicts, reports of legal decisions, &c. are by no means to be despised. In the last edition of the well-known handbook, Bruns' *Fontes Juris Romani*, a considerable use has been made of the new material. German and Italian lawyers are particularly active in this field, and few months now pass without the appearance of some juristic monograph dealing with papyri. Many of these contributions to Greek and Roman law are, no doubt, of a highly technical character; but some are of more general import. For instance, the German nation had, I believe, prided itself on having been the first to realise the advantage of the registration of real property, to which the Romans, in spite of their highly developed legal system, were supposed never to have attained. We now know that this is a delusion. The papyri of the Roman period have conclusively proved that registration of land already existed in a highly elaborate form, and that it was instituted not only in the interests of the State, but also—some think even primarily—in the interests of private individuals. That point comes out clearly in an important edict of a first-century praefect, who ordains that contracts affecting real property were not to be drawn up without due authorisation from the keepers of the public archives. These officials had to keep the registers up to date, entering in them all mortgages and other charges, as well as changes of ownership, and they were thus enabled to protect an intending purchaser from oversights and frauds.

But such new legal data are not only valuable in themselves: they are modifying in a remarkable way the attitude of Roman lawyers to the literary sources of their science. They had been accustomed to regard the classical jurists as containing the essence of the legal wisdom of the Roman empire. Now, it is beginning to be realised that those writers are not all-sufficient; that they represent after all a school of law whose outlook was limited, and whose method was scholastic, and not always quite in touch with reality.

For the illustrations of the common life of the day, the material comfort, the culture, religion, habits and amusements of the people, the papyri are an inexhaustible source. Letter-writing, fortunately, was much practised, and there are quantities of letters between persons of all degrees of education and written on all sorts of occasions. We may read, for instance, the encouragement and good advice sent by parents to absent sons, or may recognise familiar types of character in the answering effusions of children to parents—the spoilt boy who scolds his father for having left him at home instead of taking him to the capital; the well-conducted youth who complacently assures his relatives that he is getting on very well, combining study with recreation; and the prodigal son who writes to beg his mother's forgiveness and confesses that he has brought himself to destitution. We have formal invitations, couched like those of the present day in the third person, to dinner-parties (Plate X, Fig. 1) and weddings, and lists of the things that were eaten; accounts of dining-clubs, of the second century B.C., with a record of the number of members and guests present and the amount spent on wine, bread, and garlands. There are contracts with reciters and musicians who were engaged to perform on such festive occasions; an order for an inquest on a slave who had fallen off the roof of a house in his anxiety to secure a good view of some dancing-girls; an announcement of some approaching athletic sports at Oxyrhynchus; athletic diplomas and lists of winners; repeated allusions to horse-racing, which became quite a rage in the Byzantine period. I might quote a list of articles which had been left with a local pawnbroker; or a letter of the year 41 A.D., warning a person in financial difficulties not to fall into the hands of money-lenders. Domestic troubles in the fifth century may be illustrated by a curious indictment by a wife of her cross-grained husband, who refused to give her the household keys, and bolted the door when she had gone out to church. There is a delightful letter of the second century B.C. sent from headquarters to officials in the Fayûm, ordering them to have everything ready for the visit of a Roman senator, who wanted to see the sights, and was to be conducted over the Labyrinth and provided with a bun to throw to the sacred crocodiles; another, from a traveller in the upper country, who says he had carved his friends' names on the temple-walls. Illustrations of this kind might be indefinitely multiplied. They supply, as it were, a series of small historical snapshots, by the aid of which we may construct a realistic picture of Graeco-Roman provincial life.

Linguistically, these unstudied records of common parlance have much to teach. They contain the true *koine*, the true vernacular, undiluted with the artificialities of the literary Hellenistic. Their lexicographical contributions are many and various, and the compilers of the future *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, when it comes, will have to spend much time and labour on the papyri and inscriptions. To a limited extent, these are being utilised in the new edition of Passow's *Lexicon*, of which two fasciculi have lately appeared. But it is in their bearing upon so-called Biblical Greek that the linguistic results of recent discoveries have been most far-reaching and profound. The pioneer here has been Deissmann of Berlin, who has been ably followed, among English scholars, by Prof. Moulton. That the Greek scriptures were written in the *koine*, the common dialect, was of course universally recognized; but it was also seen that the scriptural *koine* was very different from the literary *koine* of the period. There is a wide distance between e.g. Diodorus or Plutarch, and even the more cultivated parts of the New Testament. Hence the peculiarities of Biblical Greek were

Fig. 1. Invitation to dinner (Pap. Oxyrh. 111). Third Century.

Fig. 2. Euclid II. 5 (Pap. Oxyrh. 29). Third or Fourth Century.

explained as Hebraic. Emphasis was laid on the fact that the Septuagint and certain portions of the New Testament were translations from Hebrew or Aramaic; and it was argued that even where Greek was the original language it was used as a foreign speech and coloured by Semitic thought and idiom. What the papyri have done is to show that the apparent peculiarities of Biblical Greek are not peculiarities at all. Its syntax and vocabulary are, broadly speaking, just those of the vernacular in which these official and private documents were written; and words and constructions previously interpreted as directly due to Semitic modes of expression are found to have been in current popular use. The appeal of Christianity was made to the people in the language of the people.

I can only make a passing reference to the study of numismatics and of metrology, which find in the evidence of the documents an indispensable supplement to that of the coins and the literary sources; or to palaeography, whose debt is obviously great. The development of Greek literary writing can now be traced in a long continuous series of specimens from the end of the fourth century B.C. down to the invention of printing. The genesis of the uncial and minuscule scripts of the vellum codices is to be found in the uncial and cursive hands of the papyri; and the date and provenance assigned to the early vellum manuscripts have sometimes to be revised in the light of these new witnesses. For instance, the value of the Egyptian evidence has been shown in Dr Loew's recent researches into the origin and character of the Codex Bezae; and the analogy of a certain Rylands papyrus strongly suggests that the Codex Sinaiticus was the product of an Egyptian scriptorium. But enough has been said to indicate the many-sidedness of the papyri, and also, I hope, something of their importance and interest.

So much for the past: what of the future? With regard to the prospects of further finds in Egypt, it is dangerous to prophesy, but I am inclined to think that the high-water mark of discovery has been reached. During the last few years there has been less for sale in the market, and excavators have not met with any striking success. It looks rather as if the best sites were getting used up; and though a new productive place may be discovered any day, it may be doubted whether Egypt contains another Oxyrhynchus or another Hermopolis. In the present winter the Egypt Exploration Fund will make trial of Antinoë, an extensive site which seems to offer one of the best chances now remaining. The French archaeologist M. Gayet has been at work for many years on the necropolis, but has almost entirely neglected the mounds of the town, for which we have obtained a concession. Let us hope that the success of Oxyrhynchus may be repeated,—though if the mounds of Antinoë are really very rich, it is somewhat surprising that the native plunderer has not discovered the fact before now. We shall soon see. Failing the emergence of a fresh fertile source, costly excavations may before long be found to be not sufficiently remunerative, and there will be a gradual return to the conditions of the first period of discovery. Isolated finds will of course continue to be made for an indefinite time.

But in any case, many years yet must elapse before the stores already accumulated can all be edited. I am far yet from foreseeing the completion of the publication of the Oxyrhynchus papyri; the nine volumes already issued are likely to be but a fraction of the total number. At the British Museum also, at Berlin and Vienna, at Lille, Hamburg, Strassburg, Giessen, Manchester, to mention a few names only, there are

more or less considerable collections awaiting decipherment and publication. And let it not be supposed that the forthcoming documents will be mainly a dull repetition of what we already have. Some repetition of course is inevitable; but it is only by the accumulation of details that sound generalisations and just views can be obtained; and the critic who maintains, as I have seen it maintained, that the world has had about enough Roman and Byzantine documents from Egypt, merely betrays his ignorance of the subject and of the multitude of problems awaiting solution.

And, secondly, the full understanding and scientific elaboration of this mass of material, when published, will be the work of a far greater number of years. As Wilcken says at the commencement of his Introduction, to which I have already referred, 'Wir stehen erst im Anfang': we are still only at the beginning. On a variety of subjects, the new data lie yet unsifted and undigested; and Wilcken and Mitteis repeatedly have to lament their inability to summarise results, because as yet the results have not been extracted and put together. One of the objects of their suggestive book is to indicate how much remains to be done, and to attract more workers into the field. It behoves English researchers to bear their part.

Even if, then, it should turn out that we have had the chief sensations, we may look forward for a long time to come to a steady output of new texts as well as to the fruits of their systematic and intensive study. We may regard the past with satisfaction, and turn with hope to the future.