

## NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

### *AN EGYPTIAN TOMBSTELA*

SOME TIME AGO the Library received from Mr. James Neilson, class of 1866, trustee from 1886 to 1937, an Egyptian tomb relief or stela which he acquired in Egypt from an unknown source. It is of grey sandstone and measures  $21\frac{1}{4}$  by  $18\frac{5}{8}$  inches. Part of a brown color wash is still preserved. The Library has lent the stela to the Department of Art so that an original work of Egyptian art can be studied.

The civilization of Egypt with its massive temples and tombs, its delicate carving, its complicated pictorial script, and its elaborate rituals in honor of the dead has exercised a great attraction to many from the Roman emperors to our own day. It was not, however, until 1822, when the French scholar Jean Francois Champollion deciphered the century-long forgotten pictorial writing or hieroglyphics with the help of the trilingual Rosetta Stone, that the arts, history, and religion of Egypt were fully understood, and since then generations of Egyptologists have opened to us the splendors of a fascinating culture.

Our stela was made when this great culture was slowly dying. The Ptolemaic Dynasty ruled after Alexander the Great's conquest in 332 B.C. In this period we have actually two styles in sculpture, one showing the influence of the culture of the conquerors which was Greek and another one deliberately reviving the native artistic tradition when it was at its best, in the Old Kingdom (3200-2270 B.C.). A stela such as ours is

really a document in stone. It may contain an important contract or the record of a victory. Most commonly, it is a tombstone which often, as in this case, shows the deceased worshipping the mortuary deities. Tombstelae were in use from the 4th (2720-2560 B.C.) to the 30th Dynasty (378-341 B.C.) and formed the major part of the tomb. In some periods it was set into a niche hewn into the living rock where it formed the end of a long narrow passage. The type of relief sculpture here used is sunken or incised relief which is nowhere found but in Egypt.

Dr. Bernard V. Bothmer, Egyptologist on the staff of the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston kindly supplied the following information:

"The text contains a series of standard formulae and breaks off just when it comes to the name of the person who owned it and whose autobiography presumably was inscribed in the lower portion, now missing. The owner is represented on the far right, facing left, worshipping Osiris, Horus, Isis, and Nephthys. The name of the owner is Pe-dy-khonsu-iy; he is a priest, and the piece must have come from Akhmim where this name as well as this type of stela were fairly common in the beginning of the Ptolemaic reign. The date appears to be the third century B.C."

Akhmim is a district capital in Upper Egypt on the Nile with about 25,000 inhabitants. It was a great center of Greek culture in the Ptolemaic period.

BERNARD V. BOTHMER  
HELMUT VON ERFFA

*HENRY JAMES:  
CORRECTION*

IN A LETTER to the Librarian, dated 17 May 1952, Miss Edna Kenton, of New York City, called attention to a wrong attribution of a letter to Henry James, the American novelist. She notes that the first of five letters, supposedly by James the novelist, which were printed in the *Journal* (June, 1949, pp. 54-58), is actually by Sir Henry James "the eminent Victorian barrister and social light." She gives various proofs, the most obvious of which seems to be that the letter in question was written from "NEWCOURT, TEMPLE," an address not known for the American author. Sir Henry had for one of his addresses, "New-court, Middle Temple." A comparison of the handwriting of Sir Henry's letter with that of the novelist shows enough similarity to deceive the unwary, but a more detailed examination makes clear the difference in penmanship.

RUDOLF KIRK

*MICROFILM*

REFERENCE has been made elsewhere in the present issue to the microfilming of newspapers. With the ever-increasing demand for such work, the Library is fortunate to have acquired recently an excellent new camera designed for that purpose. It has built-

in light, exposure, and focusing controls, and is sufficiently easy to use so that relatively inexperienced operators can produce very good results under the guidance of Mr. Oliver K. Westling, who is in charge of all photoduplication work. Although supervision of the Library's storage system presently demands much of his attention, Mr. Westling and his assistants have made gratifying progress in the filming particularly of modern newspapers. In addition, there are outside calls upon the department for copies of theses, or manuscripts and other rare material.

Microfilm is not a panacea, but it is the best available solution to many problems in which size and perishability are important considerations. Moreover, as a means of assembling research materials it has unlimited possibilities. The Library has projects of both types under way, and plans have been made for an expanded microfilming program. Henceforth all current newspapers will be filmed, rather than bound. Many of the post-Civil War newspaper files must also be copied, as disintegration has already begun. A few manuscripts have been microfilmed, among them the thirteen minute books of the West Jersey Council of Proprietors, 1688-1951. The surveys will be copied during the present fall and winter, and eventually all West Jersey proprietary records will be covered.