

THE SOLEMN
FESTAL DIRGE OF THE EGYPTIANS

TRANSLATED BY

C. W. GOODWIN, M.A.

THIS Dirge or Hymn, which is that alluded to by Herodotus,¹ is contained in one of the *Harris Papyri* (No. 500), the same from which I have already translated the "Story of the Doomed Prince." The first line of the Hymn ascribes it to the authorship of King Antuf, one of the Pharaohs of the XIth Dynasty.

¹ "At the entertainments of the rich, just as the company is about to rise from the repast, a small coffin is carried round, containing a perfect representation of a dead body; it is in size sometimes of one, but never more than two cubits, and as it is shown to the guests in rotation the bearer exclaims, 'Cast your eyes on this figure, after death you yourself will resemble it; drink then, and be happy.'"—Herodotus, *Euterpe*, xxviii.

The papyrus itself is however of the time of Thothmes III, XVIIIth Dynasty, but that is no reason why all the Texts in the MSS. should be of the latter date. The translation here given was printed by myself for the first time in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. iii., part I, but the Hieroglyphic Text remains yet to be published. A fragment of another copy of this identical Hymn is to be found in the *Monumens du Musée de Leide* iii. partie, pl. 12, and from it several words which were wanting in the Harris papyrus have been restored.



FESTAL DIRGE.

- 1 wanting.
- 2 The song of the house of King ANTUF, deceased, which
is (written) in front of
- 3 the player on the harp.¹
All hail to the good Prince,
the worthy good (man),
the body is fated (?) to pass away,
the atoms²
- 4 remain, ever since the time of the ancestors.
The gods who were beforetime rest in their tombs,
the mummies
- 5 of the saints likewise are enwrapped in their tombs.
They who build houses, and they who have no houses,
see!
- 6 what becomes of them.
I have heard the words of IMHOTEP³ and HARTATEF.⁴
It is said in their sayings,
- 7 "After all, what is prosperity?
Their fenced walls are dilapidated.
Their houses are as that which has never existed.
- 8 No man comes from thence
who tells of their sayings,
who tells of their affairs,

¹ *The Song of the Harper* in the tomb of Nefer-hotep bears a great resemblance to this composition; see Dümichen, *Historische. Inschriften* ii., pl. 40.

² Or perhaps "the little ones, the children."

³ Imhotep, the son of the primæval deity Ptah, was the mythical author of various arts and sciences. The Greeks spelt the name Ἴμώθης Imophth, but more frequently substituted the name Ἀσκληπίος, Asclepius.

⁴ Hartatef was the son of King Menkera (Mycerinus), to whom the discovery of part of the *Ritual*, cap. lxiv. is attributed, and who was the author of a mystical work.

who encourages our hearts.

Ye go

- 9 to the place whence they return not.¹
 Strengthen thy heart to forget how thou hast enjoyed
 thyself,
 fulfil thy desire whilst thou livest.
- 10 Put oils upon thy head
 clothe thyself with fine linen adorned with precious
 metals
- 11 with the *gifts* of God
 multiply thy good things,
 yield to thy desire,
 fulfil thy desire with thy good things
- 12 (whilst thou art) upon earth,
 according to the dictation of thy heart.
 The day will come to thee,
 when one hears not the voice
 when the one who is at rest hears not
- 13 their voices.²
 Lamentations deliver not him who is in the tomb.³
- 14 Feast in tranquillity
 'seeing that there is no one who carries away his goods
 with him.
 Yea, behold, none who goes thither comes back again.

¹ Compare the Assyrian phrase "The land men cannot return from"
 "Descent of Ishtar," *Records of the Past*, Vol. i. p. 143, p. 5.

² *I.e.* "of the mourners."

³ Here follows a lacuna.



END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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