

THE PRAISE OF LEARNING.

TRANSLATED BY
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THIS composition is found on two papyri in the British Museum, Sallier II., pl. iii., l. 9-pl. xi., l. 4, and Anastasi VII., pl. i. l. 1-pl. vii. l. 4, *Select Papyri*, pl. xv.-xx., cxxviii.-cxxxiv., and also on a slice of calcareous stone in the same institution, published in *Inscriptions in the Hieratic and Demotic Characters published by the British Museum*, pl. xi. It has long attracted the attention of students; a precis of the contents and translation of a small portion having been given by Mr. Goodwin in the *Cambridge Essays*, 1858, p. 272-275; but the first critical translation of the whole has been given by M. Maspero, *Le Genre Epistolaire chez les Anciens Egyptiens*, 1872, p. 48. The present translation is made after that of M. Maspero, and follows it in nearly all the passages; but the difficult and obscure nature of many sentences is such that they can hardly be interpreted, except conjecturally, owing principally to two reasons, viz., the extreme conciseness of the language in which it is

written, accompanied by the use of colloquial phrases, and the abnormal employment of determinative Hieroglyphs in Hieratic compositions. This long text appears to be a poetical one, and the lines of poetry are indicated by red spots. That these do not mark off sentences is evident from the spots occasionally being placed in the middle of a sentence, the end of which passes into the following line. The composition is attributed to the period of the XIIth Dynasty ; but the name of Pepi, the same as that of a monarch of the VIth Dynasty, may indicate that it is of the earlier period. The manuscripts in which it is found are not older than the age of Rameses II. of the XIXth Dynasty. Two dedications are found on the papyri ; that of the Sallier Papyrus is, " To the perfect bard, the very wonderful, the scribe of the treasury, Qakabu, of the treasury of the Pharaoh," while Anastasi VII. has " To the scribe of the treasury, Qakabu, the scribe Paharpet, the scribe Autha, the scribe Rameriu, made by the scribe Anna, (or Ann-ann) the master of instructions, in the 6th year the 25th of the month Payni when one was in the house of Rameses (II.). Loving Amen, the Living, the great portrait of Ra-Harmachis," by which last expression is meant the king Rameses II. It should be observed that these dedications are also marked with red spots, but they were also drawn up in poetical form, so as to make the entire composition uniform.

THE PRAISE OF LEARNING.

- 1 THE commencement of the instructions
 2 made by a person of Tsaru ¹
 3 TUAUFSAKHRAT is his name
 4 to his son PEPI ² is his name
 5 He went to Khennu ³
 6 to place himself in the place of instruction of letters.
 7 The children of elders did not surpass him
 8 who are in the town of Khennu ³
 9 He was saying to him
 10 I have seen violence, I have seen violence ⁴
 11 give thy heart after letters
 12 I have seen one free from labours ⁵
 13 Consider there is not anything beyond letters
 14 As it is done in the water
 15 plunge in the bosom of Kami ⁶
 16 You are finding this sentence in it in words
 17 Should there be a scribe whose entire residence is in
 Khennu ³
 18 He is not inactive in it
 19 He is giving satisfaction to another
 20 He does not come forth an inactive person
 21 I have seen labours likewise
 22 the words of this sentence in it

¹ Perhaps Tanis, as he evidently was not a native of Silsilis. Maspero reads "threshingfloor," barn.

² Shows the composition to date from the VIth Dynasty. ³ Silsilis.

⁴ Rather manual labour. ⁵ Service. ⁶ Books.

- 23 Love letters as thy mother
 24 I make its beauty go in thy face
 25 it is greater possession than all employments¹
 26 It is not a word² on this earth
 27 He who has commenced to avail himself is from his
 infancy a counsellor³
 28 He is sent to perform commissions⁴
 29 He who does not go he is in sackcloth
 30 I have not seen a blacksmith on a commission
 31 a founder who goes on an embassy
 32 I have seen the blacksmith at his work
 33 at the mouth of his furnace
 34 his fingers like things of crocodiles⁵
 35 he stinks worse than the eggs of fishes
 36 every carpenter carrying tools
 37 is he more at rest than the labourers
 38 his fields are of wood his tools of metal
 39 at night (when) he is free
 40 he does in addition of his hands in making
 41 at night the lighting of his house⁶
 42 The stone cutter he searches for employment
 43 in all kinds of hard stones
 44 He has made the completion of the things
 45 his arms are fatigued, he is at rest
 46 seated at the bread⁷ of the Sun
 47 his knees and his back are broken
 48 The barber is shaving till evening
 49 when he places himself to eat he places himself on his
 elbows.
 50 he places himself at street after street
 51 to seek after his shaving

¹ Dignities or honours.² A mere word.³ A counsellor, a *net' xet*.⁴ Receives a civil employment.⁵ So black and hard.⁶ Cutting wood or torches.⁷ Obscure.

- 52 he wearies his hands to fill his belly
 53 as bees feed by their labours.
 54 The *boatman*¹ he navigates to
 55 At'hu² that he may have taken his price
 56 he has done beyond the power of his hands in doing
 57 to kill geese and flamingoes
 58 he has suffered his suffering
 59 he approaches his orchard³
 60 he approaches his house at night
 61 for he must go⁴
 62 The little labourer having a field
 63 he passes his life amongst rustics⁵
 64 he is worn down for vines and pigs
 65 to make his kitchen of what his fields have
 66 his clothes are heavy with weight
 67 he is tied as a forced labourer⁶
 68 he goes into the air he suffers
 69 coming forth well from his fireplace
 70 He is bastinadoed by a stick on his legs
 71 He saves himself
 72 Shut against him is the hall of every house
 73 drawn are the chambers.⁷
 74 I tell you also of the builder of precincts
 75 Disease tastes him
 76 For he is in draughts of air
 77 He builds in slings
 78 Tied as the lotus⁸ of the houses

¹ A rare word, *bu-ti*, apparently the poulterer or preparer of birds.

² The marshlands, Delta, or Fayoum.

³ Or avenue of trees before the house.

⁴ Again to his labours.

⁵ *Anxu*, either "natives" or "beasts."

⁶ *Satepu*, "one selected" to do work for nothing.

⁷ Bolts or doors of the rooms against his entry.

⁸ Obscure phrase, either as a lotus is tied to a house, or to the "lotus of the house," perhaps the roof. Cf. l. 88.

- 79 To go along to his end
 80 his hands are worn with labour
 81 Disordered are his clothes
 82 He eats himself, the bread his fingers
 83 He washes himself at one time only
 84 He lowers himself to examine all directions
 85 His passage ¹ is from place to place
 86 which is from ten to six cubits
 87 his passage is from month to month
 88 upon the beams of the lotuses of the houses
 89 doing all its work
 90 Should there be bread for him, he gives it his house
 91 Exhausted ² are his children.
 92 The gardener brings me *gazelles* ³
 93 all his yokes have weight
 94 His hands are chiefly on his neck
 95 when he has done the manuring
 96 He passes the morning watering vegetables
 97 The evening vines
 98 He has done every day
 99 his belly is wretched
 100 Ignorant of his mother is his name ⁴
 101 more tranquil than any employment
 102 The farmer his garments are for eternity ⁵
 103 He elevates his voice like a bird ⁶
 104 His fingers aid me for his arms are dry in the wind

¹ Maspero, l. c. p. 54 n. 3, reads, "he is a pawn (*senen*) from square to square."

² Or "beaten are his children," *i.e.*, his children are starved; it can hardly be that he beats them because he has obtained bread.

³ *Mautu*, probably for *mahu* "wreaths," as the gazelle was not under the charge of a gardener.

⁴ Ignorant of literature, "an ignoramus."

⁵ He wears the same clothes a very long time.

⁶ "As a bird," or "to the birds." To drive them away.

- 105 He reposes at the middle¹ of the marshes
 106 For he is a forced labourer²
 107 He is in good health with the beasts
 108 Illness tastes him
 109 he resides amongst them
 110 He arrives at his garden³
 111 He comes to his house in the evening
 112 He must go out
 113 The weaver inside the houses
 114 is more wretched than a woman
 115 his knees are at the place of his heart⁴
 116 he has not tasted the air
 117 Should he have done little in a day of his weaving
 118 he is dragged as a lilly in a pool⁵
 119 he gives bread to the porter
 120 that he may be allowed to behold the light
 121 The maker of weapons suffers extremely
 122 going forth to foreign countries
 123 he gives a great deal for his asses
 124 more than the labours (of his hands)
 125 he gives a great deal for their being in a field
 126 He gives on the road
 127 He arrives at his garden³
 128 he reaches his house at night
 129 he must be off.
 130 The courier going to foreign countries
 131 bequeathes his goods to his children
 132 because of the fears of beasts and Asiatics
 133 What happens to him when he is in Kam⁶
 134 he arrives at his garden³

¹ *Mātr*, "at a place examined" or "selected."

² *Sūteḥ*, "one chosen" or "conscripted" for the service.

³ Or avenues of l. 59. ⁴ Owing to his being seated on the ground.

⁵ Either he is overcome or punished. ⁶ Egypt.

- 135 he goes to his house in the evening
 136 he must be off
 137 His heavy bond comes forth
 138 No joys come
 139 The dyer his fingers stink
 140 The smell of bad fish
 141 his two eyes are weary with very fatigue
 142 his hand does not stop
 143 he watches at the rent of the old garment
 144 abominable ¹ are the clothes
 145 The sandal maker is very miserable
 146 he is always begging
 147 his health is as my health of a bad fish ²
 148 he gnaws the leather
 149 The washerman washing on the quay
 150 Traverses the ground approaching the crocodiles ³
 151 The father of the water brings out the dirt
 152 his hand does not stop
 153 a quiet employment is not before you
 154 easier than any employment.
 155 his draughts ⁴ are mixed up with his clothes
 156 not a limb of him is clean
 157 there is given to him the bonds ⁵ of women
 158 For as he is in misfortunes
 159 I lament to thee he passes his time with a bat ⁶
 160 I have brought to thee
 161 has been said to him
 162 Shouldst ⁷ thou delay to bring them
 163 Thy lips will then be struck
 164 The fowler of birds suffers very much

¹ To the dyer.

² Or invalid of some kind.

³ One text reads, "in many approaches."

⁴ *Sbab*, applied to draught of water.

⁵ Tie or affliction.

⁶ To full the linen.

⁷ Doubtful reading.

- 165 The confines of NUM¹ are before thee
 166 when he says "Let the net refuse"
 167 The god wills not to show his forms
 168 vain are his² plans
 169 I tell you the fisherman
 170 suffers more than any employment
 171 consider is he not toiling on the river
 172 he is mixed up with the crocodiles
 173 Should the clumps of papyrus diminish
 174 Then he is crying out for help
 175 If he has not been told a crocodile is there
 176 Terrors blind him
 177 Comes forth the father out of the waters³ it is the net
 178 Then like the spirits⁴ which are from god
 179 Consider there it is not an employment destitute of
 superior ones
 180 Except the scribe who is the first
 181 For he who knows letters
 182 he then is better than thee
 183 Not so the employments before thee
 184 Consider a companion despises his companion
 185 It has not been said Labour for that person
 186 Do not transgress that which said to thee
 187 Consider I made it in going up to Khennu⁵
 188 Consider I made it out of love for thee
 189 (If) thou hast profited a day in the school
 190 It is for ever its works are mountains
 191 they are my precepts⁶ which I let you know

¹ There are different readings in the versions of this line: as, "he does not see the birds (*ari-em-pe*) should Num pass to the upper heaven."

² The fisher's plans or skill.

³ "The father makes to come the net out of the water." Maspero.

⁴ His destiny is in the hands of God. Maspero. ⁵ Silsilis.

⁶ *Ast* determined by a packet. Maspero reads, "quick, quick."

192 I let you love them they drive away worms,¹
 193 I tell thee some other words
 194 for thy instruction and knowledge
 195 so that thou art not opposed
 196 Thou art of those who are weighty in plans
 197 Should the weight of my precepts be taken away
 198 There is not known anything of counsel
 199 When in the hands (is) lapis lazuli for beasts²
 200 Vain replies are made to him
 201 Should thou walk after great men
 202 Thou art to proceed with good knowledge
 203 if thou goest in is the master³ in his house
 204 the hands of another are not before thee
 205 Fit thy hand in thy mouth
 206 do not ask any thing for thee
 207 Who has done as to say give
 208 Is as breaking a switch against a stake⁴
 209 Irritating against thee the master of good
 210 Do not speak words of dissimulation
 211 He who dissimulates his heart acts against it
 212 Do not say proud words
 213 Be sealed in thyself that is alone
 214 When you come out of school
 215 Should you have been told it is now
 216 To pay respects in the halls
 217 I recommend to thee do not go in their places
 218 If a master comes to thee on a mission
 219 What he says let it be as he says it
 220 Do not detract about what has been laid down
 221 When he has left after paying respects
 222 He has not laid aside his heart

¹ *Tennu* "enemy, opponents," Maspero; perhaps "cares."

² Like pearls before swine.

³ One version, "mistress, lady."

⁴ Or, "pen."

- 223 He is full of all his admiration
 224 Nothing is hidden from him
 225 None of all his places holds him ¹
 226 He does not tell lies to his mother ²
 227 Against the wishes of that Chief.³
 228 After things come to (hand) ⁴
 229 The hands of a person will be strengthened his trouble
 soothed
 230 Do not let it be about those with thee that is to say
 alone
 231 Are they kept low
 232 the bowels, thou hast been heard.
 233 When three loaves have been eaten
 234 and two pots of beer swallowed
 235 (If) thy stomach is not full, contend against that.
 236 Should another be satiated with it do stand
 237 as if breaking a pen against a pike
 238 Consider thou passest (by) multitude
 239 Thou hearest the words of chiefs
 240 Ah could I make like thee the children of men ⁵
 241 Thou goest to receive them.⁶
 242 The scribe who listens ⁷ is seen ⁸
 243 Those who are attentive are heard
 244 Combat the words which are against them
 245 Hasten thy feet, thou hast gone

¹ A very obscure passage, apparently to respect the tutor or master.

² Letters or literature.

³ Old person or instructor. Maspero refers this to Osiris.

⁴ Very difficult passages, apparently referring to the unremunerative nature of literature.

⁵ *I.e.*, could the children of common people do as thou doest through literature.

⁶ He wishes to make the ignorant like him.

⁷ Attentive.

⁸ Conspicuous.

- 246 Do not turn back thy heart
 247 Uniting the road to it
 248 The elder of a (another) person are thy juniors
 249 Consider RANEN is on the road of the god
 250 RANEN a scribe (has) on his shoulder
 251 The day of his birth.¹
 252 He approaches the halls
 253 of the assembly² men have made.
 254 Truly no scribe is without eating
 255 The things of the royal palace of the king
 256 MESCHENT³ supplies a scribe
 257 Placed at the head of the assembly²
 258 Adores RA⁴ the father his mother⁵
 259 Those placed on the path of the living
 260 Consider what I have placed before thee
 261 The children of his children
 262 Happily finished.⁶

¹ That he is destined or has the goddess as his good genius.

² Jury or council.

³ The goddess of new birth or the metempsychosis.

⁴ Maspero reads, "Duau (Tuau) is his father and mother." Tuau is the morning.

⁵ His mother literature.

⁶ It has gone out well in peace.



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