Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen

DFG-Projekt "Digitalisierung und Erschließung des Nachlasses des Ägyptologen Adolf Erman (1854-1937)"

Brief von James Henry Breasted von Oriental Institute (Chicago, Ill.) an Adolf Erman

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The University of Chicago
The Oriental Institute

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Beantw. 21/11.26.

October 22, 1926.

Professor Dr. Adolph Erman,
Peter-Lennéstr. 36,
Berlin-Dahlem, Germany.

My dear Friend:

I wrote you a few days ago to acknowledge with great gratification the receipt of my copy of the second half of Volume I of the Dictionary and immediately after the dispatch of that letter I received your kind letter of the 10th of October from Carlsbad. I earnestly hope that you have all three received the greatest benefit from your stay at the cure. I did not know of Henri's trouble. I am very sorry to hear it. I trust he has now been fully restored.

It is quite true that the years attack not only our heads but also our feet and legs. I look back on the Kunststücke in which I used to find amusement both for myself and friends when we were in the Harz Mountains nearly thirty-five years ago and I can hardly think it possible that I ever did such things, for the legs on which I now walk are quite incapable of such performances at present!

I must hasten to tell you that I have not really, as a matter of fact, actually given up my professorship. By action of the Board of Trustees I have been relieved of all obligation to lecture or teach; but one of my students, Dr. T. G. Allen, who has grown up here at my side, is carrying all classes in Egyptian. He has seven students at present, some of whom are already on the staff of the Oriental Institute. As soon as these students are sufficiently advanced I take them in hand and lay out a course of work leading to research and in this way we are managing to continue the instruction of students.

After the close of the Great War my situation was a difficult one. I was painfully conscious of the crippled situation of European Science both in the matter of personnel and in the matter of financial support. We too had suffered financially. My income tax at present is a terrible load; but I realized that there was vast wealth in America which might be made available for Science. There seemed to be no one else to step in and divert some of this wealth into our field. It was with much reluctance and with a very heavy heart that I finally, on my own responsibility, laid plans for securing

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some of this support and organized our work as a kind of research laboratory which we call The Oriental Institute. I find a depressing amount of my time is absorbed by these enterprises but I have been enabled to lay out one large task after another, secure the funds for it, put it under a good man (for example, Gardiner and DeBuck on the Coffin Texts, Nelson and two of my students on Medinet Habu, Fisher on Megiddo) while I endeavor to keep my hand on each one of these tasks and to see that they do not lack financial support.

It is very gratifying to see these various projects growing and developing and prospering. We have been able to organize the Assyriologists of America for the production of an exhaustive dictionary of the cuneiform documents. We now have over 600,000 Zettel in our filing drawers. I try to find my reward in the realization that these projects must be of service to Science. I have never had any other object in promoting them. There is, of course, a very shady side of the role I am now trying to carry. We are a new University at Chicago. The older institutions do not look upon us with favor. I am accused of devising ingenious plans for self advertising and I have all sorts of mud slung at me, not least in the international situation in which I was involved by the Cairo Museum Project. It is a pleasure to write to my old teacher and friend who I know understands that I have only one purpose in view and that is to serve Science and the Truth.

I am glad to say that my family are all well. Our tall Charles is about to take up literary and editorial work at an initial salary ten times larger than the one I received when I began! But these youngsters live in a new world about which you and I don't know anything. It was kind of you to write me that you found somebody reading my History of Egypt at Carlsbad. I shall be glad to see him if he will call at our new house at Medinet Habu.

You must be very gratified that Annemarie and her husband are so favorably situated at Bremen. I am hoping very much that we may be able to see you all on our return from Egypt next spring. We are hoping to make such arrangements that we

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can leave Astrid here in school and in that case Frances will go out to the East with me this winter.

Earnestly hoping that your bad knee is completely restored and with affectionate greetings to you all, I am always

Your old friend

James H. Breasted

JHB:MDS

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