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## **Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen**

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

### **Brief von Alan Henderson Gardiner an Adolf Erman**

**Gardiner, Alan Henderson**

**London, 19.06.1924**

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9, LANSDOWNE ROAD,

HOLLAND PARK, W.11.

19 June 24

Dear Professor Egan

Yesterday I sent off a long letter to Grapow, but today brings me one from you which very sensibly modifies the standpoint which I took up in writing to Grapow. If your Handwörterbuch is to contain references, that to a very considerable extent disposes of the necessity of a similar work on my part, and all that remains is the question of the language. Here I fear I do not see eye to eye with you. The

fact is — and this is no exaggeration —  
that during all the years I  
worked in Berlin I never  
found a student who had  
more than the most superficial  
smattering of English; certainly  
a Hieroglyphic - English dictionary  
would not have helped him  
without constant recourse to  
a German - English dictionary.  
Even in the Wörterbuch rooms  
was not this so much of a  
difficulty that I was asked  
to write my translations in  
German? Whence those astounding  
examples of German which, to my

eternal shame, are perpetuated in the  
Lettelkasten!

The need of a hieroglyphic -  
English dictionary is, to my mind,  
so indisputable that I shall not  
readily abandon the idea of it.  
On the other hand, if you and  
Grapow should wish your book  
translated I think that is a  
proposition which we might well  
consider and discuss. I have so  
many tasks before me that I  
have not the slightest desire to  
enter the lists with a competitive  
work which, with my limited  
resources and collections, would  
necessarily be of far inferior  
value to that on which we all  
have spent years. But I do want  
you to consider very seriously the needs  
of English and American students. It is

not my fault nor yours that they do not know enough German seriously to utilize German books. But the fact remains, and I think that it is only because German scientific literature is so complete in itself that a similar need is not found in Germany.

How far is Grapow's book advanced? Could he send me a sample page? Is it to be autographed or printed? What will the probable price be — German books in England are extremely expensive now? I should be grateful to know all these things. You see, I am most anxious to show a real spirit of cooperation; only I must beg you both to realize our needs here, otherwise I might have to go my own way.

I am so anxious for this letter to go off at once that I am today <sup>only</sup> writing this hasty business letter. Very best greetings and good wishes to you all

Over yours Alan H. Gardiner

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a French and a German Egyptology is an unthinkable position, and it is not I who would ever start upon, or encourage, a work which was mere duplication of, or competition with, similar work on the part of my foreign colleagues and friends.

Well now, how are the need for an English hieroglyphic hand-dictionary and the existence of a German hand-dictionary to be reconciled? I have often thought of a translation of Emen-

Graps as a way out, but to  
this there seem to me to  
be many objections. I wonder  
whether you, who live in the  
Dictionary rooms with the  
Zettelkasten all around you,  
wholly realize how important  
an instrument of scientific  
work you have in your  
hands. Sometimes a doubt comes  
across me regarding some quite  
simple word, some word I seem  
always to have known; did it  
exist at such and such a period,  
does it really possess such and

such a meaning? What in fact we  
need is references. Not all the  
references, not even all the clearest  
references, but at least one or two  
references so as to satisfy our  
doubts. Whenever possible, also, we  
want references to the Zeitschrift,  
Revueil, etc. where further Belege  
can be found. Now of course  
the great Berlin dictionary, when it  
appears, will contain all this.  
But when will it appear? And  
of course no student, no beginner,  
will be able to purchase it,  
or even would be able to use  
it if obtained. It would be  
too large for his purpose and attainment.

In the meantime there must be makeshifts, just like Spiegelberg's *Ägyptisches Handwörterbuch* while we are waiting for Crum's greater work.

Well, I feel so greatly, both for myself and for all students here with whom I come into contact, the need for references, that I consider that the lack of these, in your own *Handwörterbuch*, is a very serious bar to its usefulness here in England. Think of it! In Germany so many of the students of Egyptology are in Berlin, where they can go direct to the *Zettelkasten*, or else have friends there to whom they

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can write. An English student would, I know, always receive a prompt and courteous answer from you, but how many would have the audacity to bother you for references? Now I am sending you a sample of what our students, in my opinion, urgently need. The references which you will find in my sample are, of course, from the standpoint of your great Berlin collections, utterly inadequate. You would probably feel yourself, in

face of those collections, terribly  
embarrassed to make an arbitrary  
selection of meanings and uses  
such as I have made.

But I know my own public  
and its needs, and I can  
assure you that a dictionary  
of moderate scope, with some,  
but only a few references, would  
be a boon and a godsend  
to English speaking students —  
and even, on completion, to  
myself and others who like me  
are far away from Berlin. I  
am quite well aware that

scientifically my project leaves a very  
great deal to be desired. But  
I think it is practical and  
in many ways does not compete  
with your book at all. In this  
letter regard, I should confine  
myself to Middle Egyptian, excluding  
roughly old Egyptian and late  
Egyptian. I should leave out most  
of the Coptic equivalents. In all  
these respects your book would  
remain indispensable to the  
more advanced or more serious  
student.

The key-note of my book, then,  
is references: references both to  
the original texts and references  
also to Egyptological literature.  
When you come to think of it, the

inclusion of the letter is about the truest kind of cooperation which is possible among scholars, and I venture mildly to suggest that the absence of references to Egyptological literature is a real defect of your own book. Gunn and I collected all the most important references in 1915-18 onwards and it was always intended that we should make this the nucleus of a Handwörterbuch. What is new in my plan are the references to original texts, particularly to the best-known and most accessible texts (M.K. literary books, Urkunden, etc).

And now I come to the most important part of this letter.

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I so much agree with you about the desirability of cooperation, that I at once respond by the suggestion: let us cooperate! I don't think that either Professor Erman or yourself will really wish in any great measure to alter the general scheme or plan of your own work, which is exactly that which you have found best adapted to German needs, so that I doubt whether any notion of a joint work, to appear both in English and in German, would be

† By the bye, I want the English book to be printed, not autographed.

acceptable to you. On the other hand if you cared to insert or otherwise utilize my bibliographic references or in fact to employ my Ms. in any sort of way I would gladly submit it to you bit by bit. In return I should ask you for references when, as I have already frequently found the case, my rapid searches had proved unavailing.<sup>†</sup>

Anyhow, dear Friend, I want to show that I am as

completely imbued as you by the  
desire for cooperation. I don't  
honestly think that our books  
would compete much with me  
another. Rather they would usefully  
supplement me another. But  
my plan is in its infancy  
and I will listen to any  
suggestions. The only thing I  
cannot do is to surrender  
altogether my plan of an  
English - hieroglyphic dictionary,  
since I know how indispensable  
it is; nor would I enter into  
any plan which would delay its  
appearance indefinitely.  
~~I hope you will speak quite freely~~

I wish I had time to come  
across and see you. It is so  
much easier to discuss these  
things verbally than in a  
letter. Anyhow, I hope you will  
speak quite freely and frankly  
in this matter. Show my  
letter to our common counsellor  
and friend, Professor Euman. I  
feel sure he will realize  
on the one hand, what is  
due to my equal desire for  
cooperation, but also what is  
due to the really urgent  
needs of English and American  
beginners.

With the very best greetings  
Yours ever

Alan Harding

I hope I shall hear from you soon. In the meantime  
I shall not proceed further with my dictionary work.