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

**Brief von David Randall-Maclver von Museum University
of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia) an Adolf Erman**

Randall-Maclver, David

Philadelphia, o.D. [17.08.????, 1908?]

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University Museum
Philadelphia
Aug 17th

Dear Professor Eiman

It was with the greatest gratification
that I received your very kind letter.
I fully appreciate the distinction that
must be observed in these matters between
private and official expressions of
opinion. You may be assured that I
shall regard your communication as
strictly confidential, and shall indeed
-following my invariable practice
with non-official letters- immediately
destroy it.

Your personal approval of my
endeavours, if not of my actual

scheme, encourages me to proceed. I myself
am fortunate in holding an almost
independent position. ~~in~~ Any policy that
I propose is, not indeed inevitably but as
a matter of fact invariably, approved and
endorsed by my chairman and there is
no other authority to which I am
responsible. This is the reason which
makes me feel that I rather than others
of more reputation and experience may
well take the initiative in the matter
which interests us.

I intend now to send a letter, virtually
identical in terms with the type-written
letter which I sent to you, to a number

myself of other museums and institutions
viz

In America to Boston, New York, Chicago.

In Germany to Munich

In Italy to Turin, and Florence.

In England
Great Britain to Aberdeen, Cambridge,
Oxford, Liverpool museums.

And to the

Royal Anthropological Institute,
Royal Geographical Institute, Society
Society of Antiquaries.

From some of these at least I hope to obtain
favourable answers. If a considerable
number of them are in favour of my scheme
that I think will be a distinct argument
in favour of its feasibility. I am a well
known member of the three powerful learned
societies in England which I have named,
and I know that they will at least

carefully consider anything that I lay
before them. and though Museums are
naturally less free to declare a policy than
are learned institutions still I think that
my close personal connections with a number
of the Museums may have an appreciable
influence.

Before October I ought to have received
replies from most of these and I shall
then write to you again and inform you
what degree of support they seem inclined
to give. If the majority of them are
in favour of signing such a memorial
as I propose, then I shall feel justified
in asking you to carefully consider it
in your official capacity, and to give
me a strictly official policy answer
declaring the position of the Berlin Museum.

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May I suggest that the most valuable support which you could give would be not ~~the~~ absolute but the conditional consent of the Berlin Museum. A consent that is to say conditional only on the British Museum accepting my policy.

This will give me a very powerful weapon when I come to deal with the British Museum. Armed with the approval of the best English institutions and with that of Berlin I shall be in a very strong position; and, if the British Museum proved unreasonable, could appeal to public opinion with a very good chance of success.

If the British Museum refuses outright

then I fear the scheme must be abandoned; but I shall certainly see to it that the newspapers and my friends in Parliament make things very uncomfortable for that institution. However Tom sanguine and expect to succeed to that extent.

Your principal doubts as to the feasibility of my scheme rest on two grounds
(1) That only a part, and that perhaps not the greatest part of the traffic in antiquities, will be brought to an end by the refusal of the Museums to buy except from authorised quarters.

In fact you consider the private purchaser and the European dealer ^{to be} more important than I have been inclined to consider them. You have far better

med; opportunities of judging than myself;
and I admit that your estimate may
be more accurate than mine. Still I do
not think that the Museums can absolve
themselves of their responsibility. Their
duty to the Science obliges them to act
even if it be, as I hope it is not, to "lead
a forlorn hope". And I know that you
agree with me in this.

(Remember becomet. If you can give me
the names of the well-known American
purchasers to whom you refer it is not
quite impossible that I may be able to
bring some influence to bear upon them)

(2) That the difficulties and expense of
policing so large a tract of country
make any measure repressing unlicensed
collecting and digging impracticable.

Now to this second ground of objection
I would answer that in strict logic it
does not concern us, and we are not
called upon to consider it. It concerns
the Egyptian Government only. We
cannot dictate to the Egyptian Govt. We
can point out ~~what~~ that measures to
a certain end are desirable, and can
promise our support (- no slight thing
in view of the diplomatic embarrassments
under which Egypt has suffered) but
we have no right to prescribe the
measures to be taken. If we do everything
possible on our side and the Egyptian
Government then fails, we shall have
done all our duty and can be

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not indeed satisfied, but at any rate
clear in conscience.

But supposing that we were asked
to give our opinion; that the Egyptian
Govt. consulted some or all of us as to
the practical means of carrying out
a coercive law, I, for one, should be
quite ready with my answer. I think
it is eminently desirable that the
number of inspectors should be increased,
and necessary that the principal
(not the minor) inspectors should be
Europeans. But whilst I consider that
"ein solches Heer von europäischen Beamten"
would be extremely useful, yet I do
not consider that it is indispensable.

The existing village-organisation in Egypt provides all the machinery for carrying out a law regarding antiquity-dealing and plundering just in precisely the same degree that it provides the machinery for carrying out any other law.

The omdehs and police of every village should be made to feel that they are responsible. In the Sudan, which begins everything ab ovo, and is beginning everything well, this is done. The Egyptian Government can ^{the same} do ~~this~~ and if it will regard a law ^{concerning} ~~with regard~~ to antiquities as no less serious a law than any other then it will do it.

And I may say that Europeans

can contribute in no small degree, even
though they be not Egyptian officials.
If every excavator did like Reisner and
myself - left trustworthy guards in
charge of his district during his own
absence, and considered himself when
in the field as temporarily a Government
officer in charge of a piece of country,
thieving and plundering would be much
rarer. Since Reisner and I went to
Lower Nubia I venture to think that
all plundering there has ceased, - and
that is for a district of 200 miles in
which few miles do not contain antiquities
though archaeologists have been ignorant
of the fact. Alan Gardiner and I

obtained the deposition of an Omdeh in
the Soudan, who had allowed a few stones
to be carried away from a temple. At
Wady Halfa my own mention to the Governor
that the Sebaktin were working on what
might be valuable ground was sufficient
to cause that work to be forbidden—

In conclusion I would urge you to
consider that, even if you doubt whether
my scheme is practicable, yet it cannot
at least do any harm and to recommend
it to the authorities on that ground,
viz as a wellintentioned effort which
^{it} will be creditable in the eyes of the
scientific world to have supported even
though it may be destined to fail.

Yours very sincerely

David Randall-Mac Iver

Geantworfet, 29. 8/08.

- 1) Warum nicht Leipzig, Bonn,
Straßburg ausgelassen?
- 2) warum nicht Louvre, Guinet,
Brüssel?
- 3) Masperos Vortrag: sich mit
dem Breidbaron begnügen,
vollständige Heilung
sei unmöglich.

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