

THE STELE OF BEKA.

(IN THE MUSEUM OF TURIN.)

TRANSLATED BY

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THE *Records of the Past* already contain some texts of the class to which belongs the Tablet of Beka ; for instance : the Inscription of Amenemheb (Vol. II. p. 53); the Inscription of Ahmes Pennishem (Vol. IV. p. 7) ; the Inscription of Seti son of Paramses (*Ibid*, p. 33) ; the Inscription of Ahmes son of Pesabenhor (*Ibid*, p. 63) ; and the Inscription of Samtati Tafnekht (*Ibid*, p. 65).

But a number of by far more extensive texts than those which have been published up to this day would allow a larger harvest of information in the scope of biography, history, and mythology.

The Tablet of Beka, the great Steward of the Public Granary, (an office well known by the patriarch Joseph's story), is on the contrary remarkable by the

sobriety of its contents. Instead of the long litanies of gods and funereal genii, which usually tire the attention of modern readers, cult and religion are hardly mentioned in the text, which runs especially upon philosophical ethics. Therefore this tablet affords an excellent introduction to the study of the Egyptian eminent doctrine, which revealed to *the initiated* the unity and incomprehensibility of God, while the multitude was abandoned to the cult of material symbols.

The absurdities of the public cult have been recorded by the historians more carefully than the precepts of their occult science: *Quis nescit qualia demens Ægyptus portenta colat?*

Nevertheless the classical antiquity has known "that the first mortals who have revealed the secret paths which lead to the divinity are those who drank the excellent waters of the Nile."

With the assistance of a sufficient knowledge of the Egyptian language we are now enabled to detect in the Egyptian documents the information which neither the Greeks nor the Romans could understand in their time.

THE STELE OF BEKA.

1 A ROYAL gift of offerings to the person of the Steward,
of the public granary, BEKA, the justified.

He says,

I myself was just and true, without malice,¹ having put
god in his heart,² and having been quick to discern
his will.

2 I reach the city of those who are in eternity.

I have done good upon earth;⁴

I have harboured no prejudice;⁵

I have not been wicked;⁶

I have not approved of any offence or iniquity.

3 I have taken pleasure in speaking the truth;

I have perceived the advantage it is to conform to this
practice upon the earth from the first action (of my
life) even to the tomb.⁷

My sure defence⁸ shall be to speak it (truth) in the day
when

¹ Or, "evil," or, "perversity."

² This change of the personal pronoun is a common feature in Egyptian inscriptions, and was reckoned an ornament.

³ Or literally, "the city which is in millions of years," *i.e.*, for ever.

⁴ Or, "I have made good things."

⁵ Or, "wrong or damage to others." ⁶ This last word is obscure.

⁷ Literally, "depuis l'action jusqu'à la tombe."

⁸ Or perhaps, "escort," or, "guard;" the word is a rare one.

4 I reach the divine judges, the skilful interpreters,¹ discoverers of all actions, the chastisers of sins.

Pure² is my soul.

(While) living, I bear no malice.³

5 There are no errors⁴ attributable to me, no sins of mine are before their hand.⁵

I am come out of this trial⁶ with the help of truth,⁷ and behold I am in the place of the ancients.⁸

Bring ye the food of truth⁹ to the Steward

6 of the public granary, BEKA, the justified.

He says : It was I who filled the heart of the Lord of the Two Regions, (who was) the beloved¹⁰ of the King of Upper Egypt, the favourite of the King of Lower Egypt, on account of my pre-eminent merits, which were the cause of my promotion.

7 Great was I in the place of millions of true perfections.¹¹ Wherever the King proceeded, I (always) approached his person,¹² and went joyfully round him adoring his goodness each

8 day, and did homage to the double asp¹³ on his diadem throughout all time.

The Steward of the public granary, BEKA. He says :

I am a *sahu*,¹⁴ I who took pleasure in truth, conformably

¹ The 42 assessors of Osiris.

² The word rendered "pure" is also a rare one.

³ In the original text there is an alliterative play of words in this phrase.

⁴ Or, "there exists no abuse or wickedness of mine, my virtue is before their hands."

⁵ *I.e.*, the judges.

⁶ Literally, "of the."

⁷ Or, "the words of Thoth."

⁸ Or, "the place of the just."

⁹ Literally, "its food."

¹⁰ Or, "the favourite friend."

¹¹ The royal palace.

¹² Literally, "Whenever the king thrived before and behind."

¹³ The emblem of his immortal dignity.

¹⁴ A corpse, a mummy.

with the laws of the tribunal of the Two Truths¹
desired by me.²

9 I reach the Kher-neter.³

I have not made myself master over the lowly;⁴

I have done no harm to men who honoured their gods.⁵

I have spent my lifetime in the life of truth,⁶ until I
have attained the age

10 of veneration, being in favour with the King, and be-
loved by the great ones around him.

The royal dwelling, those who dwelt there, no ill will
towards me was in their heart.⁶ The men

11 of the future, while they live, will be charmed by my
remarkable merits.

He who inhabits the place of the fulness of health⁷ had
given me an important post.⁸

My sincerity and my goodness were in the heart of my
father and mother; my affection was in them.⁹

12 Never¹⁰ have I outraged it in my mode of action towards
them from the beginning of the time of my youth.

Though great, yet I have acted as if I had been a
little one. I have not disabled anyone worthier than
myself.

¹ The hall of Osiris.

² Literally, "my desire."

³ Hades.

⁴ Most of these sentences are excerpts from the Negative Confession.
See *Ritual of the Dead*, Cap. cxxv.

⁵ Or rather, "the gods."

⁶ The usual lapidary phrases.

⁷ The king's palace.

⁸ "Master of works," or, "master of things." The term *Neb kat* was
also a common personal name.

⁹ It is uncertain from the text of the stele itself, whether the meaning
is of Beka delighting in his parents, or his parents in him. It is remark-
able, that contrary to all Egyptian usage, he does not give his parents
names.

¹⁰ Or, "strained."

13 My mouth has always been opened to utter true things,
not to foment quarrels.

I have repeated what I have heard just as it was told to
me.

O! all ye men who live, taking pleasure in truth every
day in Egypt,

14 ye who are not (yet) nourished by the god, Lord of
Abydos,¹ who lives on truth each day, be happy!
Spend your life in pleasures until you approach the
happy West. May your soul enjoy the right to go
freely in and out like the eternal Lords who are
established before the gods.²

¹ Osiris, Lord of Tattu.

² The chief bliss of the elect, according to the Egyptian creed, consisted
in their faculty of unlimited motion in the whole universe. The usual
prayers demand for the deceased the power of "going and coming from
and to everywhere under any form they like."



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