

Answer me my sayings!  
 Unravel for me what goes on in the land,  
 Why those who shone are overthrown.<sup>6</sup>  
 I meditate on what has happened:  
 While trouble entered in today,  
 And turmoil will not cease tomorrow,<sup>7</sup>  
 Everyone is mute about it.  
 The whole land is in great distress,  
 Nobody is free from crime;  
 Hearts are greedy.<sup>8</sup>  
 He who gave orders takes orders,  
 And the hearts of both submit.  
 One wakes to it every day,  
 And the hearts do not reject it.  
 Yesterday's condition is like today's  
 . . . . .<sup>9</sup>  
 None is wise enough to know it,  
 None angry enough to cry out,  
 One wakes to suffer each day.

My malady is long and heavy,  
 The sufferer lacks strength to save himself  
 From that which overwhelms him.  
 It is pain to be silent to what one hears,  
 It is futile<sup>10</sup> to answer (5) the ignorant,  
 To reject a speech makes enmity ;  
 The heart does not accept the truth,  
 One cannot bear a statement of fact,  
 A man loves only his own words.  
 Everyone builds on crookedness,  
 Right-speaking is abandoned.  
 I spoke to you, my heart, answer you me,  
 A heart addressed must not be silent,  
 Lo, servant and master fare alike,  
 There is much that weighs upon you!

## NOTES

1. *Gmt*, "find," here and below in line 5, in the pregnant sense of "find useful," "make use of."

2. It is interesting that imitation of the past, which is usually recommended in the Instructions, is here rejected.

3. *Shd* is quite literally "to enlighten."  
 4. The pair is *maat* and *isfet*, as in *Neferti*, lines 68/9; see there, n. 19.  
 5. Or, "painful"; *whd* occurs four times, varying from "painful" to "suffer," and "endure," (I, x3-4, and II, 4-5).  
 6. *Ntiw hd pth* recalls *sr m pth*, "the great man is overthrown," in *Neferti*, line 21.  
 7. Note the chiasmic order of *ihw bs m-min/ nhpw n sw3 drdrw*, where *nhpw* is surely the word for "morning" in the sense of tomorrow, as suggested by *Sethe apud* Gardiner, op. cit., 106. For the word *drdrw*, which elsewhere means "stranger," a meaning parallel to *ihw* is required, e.g., "strange doings," "hostilities."  
 8. *Snm* here and in *Admonitions*, 2, 5, is probably "greedy" rather than "sad."  
 9. *Hr sn rs n 'šzw/ hr dri* is obscure.  
 10. *Zhw* (= *shw*) above in II, 1, was the noun; here it is the adjective and recalls the *shw m mw* of *Merikare*, lines 91/2, where the sense is "lacking, deficient"; hence "futile" seems appropriate here.

## THE ADMONITIONS OF IPUWER

## Papyrus Leiden 344, Recto

Ever since Gardiner's pioneering edition of this difficult text, his view of the *Admonitions* as the work of a Twelfth Dynasty author who laments the alleged calamities of the First Intermediate Period has held sway. It is, however, contradictory and untenable. Gardiner maintained on the one hand that "the pessimism of Ipuwer was intended to be understood as the direct and natural response to a real national calamity" (*Admonitions*, p. III), and on the other that "historical romance was always popular in Ancient Egypt, and there is no inherent reason why the *Admonitions*, even if referring to the conditions of the Tenth Dynasty, should not have been written under the Twelfth" (*ibid.*). I submit that there is strong inherent reason why this cannot be so. If the *Admonitions* is the "direct response to a real calamity," then it cannot also be a "historical romance." The two are mutually exclusive.

We have seen that *Neferti* has a political-propagandistic aim which it expresses through the poetic elaboration of the topos "national distress." In *Khakheperre-sonb* we have encountered the same topos in a work that seems to be largely rhetorical. Both works were written in times of peace and prosperity. When the *Admonitions* is placed alongside these two works, it reveals itself as a composition of the same genre and character which differs only in being longer, more ambitious, more repetitious, and more extreme in its use of hyperbole. Its very verbosity and repetitiveness mark it as a latecomer in which the most comprehensive treatment of the theme "national distress" is attempted, in short, as a work of the late Middle Kingdom and of purely literary inspiration.

The unhistorical character of the whole genre was recognized by S. Luria in an article that did not receive the attention it deserved.\* Adducing strikingly similar compositions from other cultures he pointed out the

\* "Die Ersten werden die Letzten sein," *Klio*, 22 (1929), 405-431.

fictional, mythologic-messianic nature of these works and the fixed cliches through which the theme of “social chaos” was expressed. From an **Annamite** song he quoted phrases that sound as if they came from the **Admonitions**:

“Ceux qui n’avaient pas de **culotte** ont aujourd’hui des **souliers** . . .

Les **filles** publiques sont devenu de grandes dames,

Les vauriens sont tout puissant. . . .”

Luria also made the telling point that the description of chaos in the **Admonitions** is inherently contradictory, hence historically impossible: On the one hand the land is said to suffer from total *want*; on the other hand the poor are described as having become rich, of wearing fine clothes, and generally of disposing of all that once belonged to their masters.

In sum, the **Admonitions of Ipuwer** has not only no bearing whatever on the long past First Intermediate Period, it also does not derive from any other historical situation. It is the last, fullest, most exaggerated and hence least successful, **composition** on the theme “order versus chaos.”

The text is preserved in a single, much damaged copy, Papyrus Leiden 344, which dates from the Nineteenth Dynasty. In its present condition the papyrus measures 347 cm in length and consists of seventeen pages. The text occupies the **recto**, while the verso has hymns to a deity, written in a different hand. Each page had fourteen lines, except pages 10 and 11, which have only thirteen each. On the first page, less than one-third of each line is preserved; and beginning with page 8, every page has large **lacunae**.

Publication: Gardiner, **Admonitions**.

Translation: Erman, *Literature*, pp. 92-108. J. A. Wilson in **ANET**, pp. 441-444. R. O. Faulkner, **JEA**, 51 (1965), 53-62, and “Notes,” **JEA**, 50 (1964), 24-36.

(I, 1) ----- The door[-keepers] say: “Let us go plunder.”  
The pastry-makers -----, The washerman does not think of  
carrying his load. -----, The **bird[-catchers]** are lined up for  
battle. -----, The **Delta[-dwellers]** carry shields. The brewers  
(5) ----- sad. A man regards his son as his enemy. Hostility  
----- another. Come and conquer. ----- what was ordained  
for you in the time of Horus, in the age of [the Ennead]. -----, The  
man of character walks in mourning on account of the state of the  
land. The --- walks -----, Foreigners have become people  
**everywhere**.<sup>1</sup>

Lo, the face is pale (10) -----

What the ancestors foretold has happened.

-----

**Lo**, -----

(2, 1) The land is full of gangs,

A man goes to plow with his shield.

Lo, the meek say -----

----- is a man of substance.

Lo, the face is pale, the bowman ready,

Crime is everywhere, there is no man of yesterday.

Lo, the robber --- everywhere,

The servant takes what he finds.

Lo, Hapy inundates and none plow for him,

All say, “We don’t know what has happened in the land.”

Lo, women are barren, none conceive,

Khnum does not fashion because of the state of the land.

Lo, poor men have become men of wealth,

He who could not afford (5) sandals owns riches.

Lo, men’s slaves, their hearts are greedy,

The great do not mingle with their people [‘**when** they rejoice’].

Lo, hearts are violent, storm sweeps the land,

There’s blood everywhere, no shortage of dead,

The shroud calls out before one comes near it.

Lo, many dead are buried in the river,

The stream is the grave, the tomb became stream.

Lo, nobles lament, the poor rejoice,

Every town says, “Let us expel our rulers.”

Lo, people are like ibises, there’s dirt everywhere,

None have white garments in this time.

Lo, the land turns like a potter’s wheel,

The robber owns riches, [the noble] is a thief.

Lo, the trusted are like -----

The citizen [says], “Woe, what shall I do!”

(2, 10) Lo, the river is blood,

As one drinks of it one shrinks from people

And thirsts for water.

Lo, doors, columns, **coffers**<sup>2</sup> are burning,

While the hall of the palace stands firm.

Lo, the ship of the South founders,

Towns are ravaged, Upper Egypt became wasteland.

Lo, crocodiles gorge on their catch,

People go to them of their own will.

‘**The** land is injured’,

One says, “Don’t walk here, there’s a net,”

People flap like fish,

The scared does not discern it in his fright.

Lo, people are diminished,

He who puts his brother in the ground is everywhere.  
 'The word of the wise has fled without delay'.  
 Lo, the son of man is denied recognition,  
 The child of his lady became the son of his maid.

(3, 1) Lo, the desert claims the land,  
 The nomes are destroyed,  
 Foreign bowmen have come into Egypt.  
 Lo, -----

There are no people anywhere,  
 Lo, gold, lapis lazuli, silver, and turquoise,  
 Carnelian, amethyst, *ibht-stone* and ---  
 Are strung on the necks of female slaves.  
 Noblewomen<sup>3</sup> roam the land,  
 Ladies say, "We want to eat!"  
 Lo, ----- noblewomen,  
 Their bodies suffer in rags,  
 Their hearts 'shrink' from greeting [reach other'].  
 Lo, (5) chests of ebony are smashed,  
 Precious *ssndm-wood* is chopped ---  
 Lo, ['tomb']-builders have become field-laborers,  
 Those who were in the god's bark are yoked [to it].<sup>4</sup>

None indeed sail north to Byblos today. What shall we do for pine trees for our mummies?<sup>2</sup> Free men are buried with their produce, nobles are embalmed with their oil as far as **Crete**.<sup>5</sup> They come no more. Gold is lacking; exhausted are 'materials' for every kind of craft. What belongs to the palace has been stripped. What a great thing it is when the oasis-peasants come with their festival offerings, mats and [skins], fresh *rdmt-plants*, (10) the 'fat' of birds ...

Lo, Yebu, 'This' --- are not taxed because of strife. Lacking are 'grain', charcoal, *irtyw, m3'w-wood*, nwt-wood, brushwood. The output of craftsmen is lacking --- ... What good is a treasury without its revenues? Happy is the heart of the king when **gifts**<sup>6</sup> come to him. And when every foreign land [comes], that is our **success**,<sup>7</sup> that is our fortune. What shall we do about it? All is ruin!

Lo, merriment has ceased, is made no more,  
 Groaning is throughout the land, mingled with laments.  
 Lo, every have-not\* is one who has,

Those who were (4, 1) people are strangers whom one shows the way.

Lo, everyone's hair [has fallen out],  
 One can't distinguish the son of man from the pauper.  
 Lo, ['one is numb'] from noise,  
 No 'voice is straight' in years of shouting,  
 No 'end of shouting'.  
 Lo, great and small (say), "I wish I were dead,"  
 Little children say, "He should not have made me live!"  
 Lo, children of nobles are dashed against walls,  
 Infants are put out on high ground.  
 Lo, those who were entombed are cast on high ground,  
 Embalmers' secrets are thrown away.  
 (5) Lo, gone is what yesterday was seen,  
 The land is left to its weakness like a cutting of flax.  
 Lo, the whole Delta cannot be **seen**,<sup>9</sup>  
 Lower Egypt puts trust in trodden roads.  
 What can one do? One says, "There are no --- anywhere."  
 One says "Woe" to the place of secrets,  
 Those who ignore it own it as if they knew it,  
 Foreigners are skilled in the works of the Delta.

Lo, citizens are put to the grindstones,  
 Wearers of fine linen are beaten with [sticks].  
 Those who never saw daylight go out unhindered,  
 Those who were on their husbands' (10) beds,  
 "Let them lie on **boards**,"<sup>10</sup> [one repeats].  
 If one says, "Those boards with myrrh are too heavy for me,"  
 She is loaded down with jars filled with ---,  
 [No longer] does she know the palanquin,  
 And the butler is lacking."  
 There is no remedy for it,  
 Ladies suffer like maidservants,  
 Singers are at the looms in the weaving-rooms,  
 What they sing to the goddess are dirges,  
 Those who told --- are at the grindstones.  
 Lo, all maidservants are rude in their speech,  
 When the mistress speaks it irks the servants.  
 Lo, trees are felled, branches stripped,  
 And the servant abandons (5, 1) his household.

People say when they hear it:  
Gone is the gain of abundance of children.  
Food is lacking -----  
What does it taste like today?

Lo, the great hunger and suffer,  
Servants are served ---  
----- lamentations.

Lo, the hot-tempered says:  
“If I knew where god is I would serve him.”

Lo, [right] is in the land in name,  
Standing on it one does wrong.

Lo, one runs and fights for the goods [of a man]

(5) He is robbed, all his things are taken.

Lo, all beasts, their hearts weep,  
Cattle bemoan the state of the land.

Lo, children of nobles are dashed against walls,

Infants are put out on high ground,  
Khnum groans in weariness.

Lo, terror kills; the frightened says .....

Lo, (IO) --- throughout the land,

The strong man sends to everyone,

A man strikes his maternal brother.

What has been done? .....

Lo, the ways are [blocked], the roads watched. One sits in the bushes till the night-traveler comes, in order to plunder his load. What is upon him is seized ; he is assaulted with blows of the stick; he is criminally slain.

Lo, gone is what yesterday was seen,  
The land is left to its weakness like a cutting of flax.  
Citizens come and go in desolation,  
-----

If only this were the end of man,  
No more conceiving, no (6, 1) births!  
Then the land would cease to shout,  
Tumult would be no more!

Lo, [one eats] herbs, washed down with water,  
Birds find neither fruit nor herbs,  
One takes --- from the mouth of pigs,

No face is bright ... hunger.

Lo, grain is lacking on all sides,

One is stripped of clothes,

Unanointed with **oil**,<sup>12</sup>

Everyone says, “There’s nothing.”

The **storehouse** is bare,

Its keeper stretched on the ground.

..... (5) ...

Had I raised my voice at that time,

To save me from the pain I am in!

Lo, the private chamber, its books are stolen,

The secrets in it are laid bare.

Lo, magic spells are divulged,

Spells are made worthless through being repeated by people.

Lo, offices are opened,

Their records stolen,

The serf becomes an owner of serfs.

Lo, [scribes] are slain,

Their writings stolen,

Woe is me for the grief of this time!

Lo, the scribes of the land-register,

Their books are destroyed,

The grain of Egypt is “I go-get-it.”

Lo, the laws (10) of the chamber are thrown out,

Men walk on them in the streets,

Beggars tear them up in the alleys.

Lo, the beggar comes to the place of the Nine Gods,

The procedure of the House of Thirty is laid bare.

Lo, the great council chamber is invaded,

Beggars come and go in the great mansions.

Lo, there is much hatred in the streets,

The wise says, “Yes,” the fool says, “No,”

The ignorant is satisfied.<sup>13</sup>

Lo, those who were entombed are cast on high ground,

Embalmer’s secrets are thrown away.

(7, 1) See now, fire has leaped high,

Its flame will attack the land’s foes!

See now, things are done that never were before,

The king has been robbed by beggars.

See, one buried as hawk is ...  
 What the pyramid hid is empty.  
 See now, the land is deprived of kingship  
 By a few people who ignore custom.  
 See now, men rebel against the Serpent,  
 [Stolen] is the crown of Re, who pacifies the Two Lands.  
 See, the secret of the land, its limits are unknown,  
 If the residence is stripped, it will collapse in a **moment**.<sup>14</sup>  
 See, Egypt has fallen to (5) pouring **water**,<sup>15</sup>  
 He who poured water on the ground seizes the mighty in misery.  
 See, the Serpent is taken from its **hole**,<sup>16</sup>  
 The secrets of Egypt's kings are bared.  
 See, the residence is fearful from want,  
 Men stir up strife unopposed.  
 See, the land is tied up in gangs,  
 The coward is emboldened to seize his **goods**.<sup>17</sup>  
 See, the Serpent --- the dead,  
 He who could not make a coffin owns a tomb.  
 See, those who owned tombs are cast on **high** ground,  
 He who could not make a grave owns a treasury.

See now, the transformations of **people**,<sup>18</sup>  
 He who did not build a hut is an owner of coffers.  
 See the judges of the land are driven from the land,  
 (The nobles) are expelled from the royal (10) mansions.  
 See, noble ladies are on boards,  
 Princes in the workhouse,  
 He who did not sleep on a box owns a bed.  
 See, the man of wealth lies thirsting,  
 He who begged dregs has overflowing bowls.  
 See, those who owned robes are in rags,  
 He who did not weave for himself owns fine linen.  
 See, he who did not build a boat for himself owns ships,  
 Their owner looks at them: they are not his.  
 See, he who lacked shelter has shelter,  
 Those who had shelter are in the dark of the storm.  
 See, he who did not know a lyre owns a harp,  
 He who did not sing extols the **goddess**.<sup>19</sup>  
 See, those who owned offering-tables of bronze,  
 Not one of their vessels is garlanded.

See, he who slept (8, 1) wifeless found a **noblewoman**,<sup>20</sup>  
 He who **was** not **seen**<sup>1</sup> stands . . .  
 See, he who had nothing is a man of wealth,  
 The nobleman sings his praise.  
 See, the poor of the land have become rich,  
 The man of property is a pauper.  
 See, cooks have become masters of butlers,  
 He who was a messenger sends someone else.  
 See, he who had no loaf owns a barn,  
 His storeroom is filled with another's goods.  
 See, the **baldhead** who lacked oil  
 Has become owner of jars of sweet myrrh.  
 (5) See, she who lacked a box has furniture,  
 She who saw her face in the water owns a mirror.  
 See now ----.

Lo, a man is happy eating his food. Consume your goods in gladness,  
 while there is none to hinder you. It is good for a man to eat his food.  
 God ordains it for him whom he favors.

(See now>, he who ignored his god  
 Offers him another's incense

-----

See, great ladies who owned wealth give their children for beds.  
 See, a man who -----  
 --- a lady as wife

.....

See, the children of magistrates are ----- (10)

The calves of their herds --- to robbers.

See, the serfs eat **beef**,<sup>21</sup>

The paupers -----

See, he who did not slaughter for himself slaughters bulls,

He who did not know carving sees [**meat cuts**<sup>1</sup>] of all kinds.

See, the serfs eat geese,

Offered (to) the gods in place of cattle.

See, maidservants ----- offer ducks,

Noblewomen -----

See, noblewomen flee -----

----- cast down in fear of death.

(See), the chiefs of the land flee,

They have no purpose because of want ---

[See], (9, 1) those who owned beds are on the ground,  
 He who lay in the dirt spreads a rug.  
 See, noblewomen go hungry,  
 And serfs are sated with what was made for them.  
 See, all the ranks, they are not in their place,  
 Like a herd that roams without a herdsman.  
 See, cattle stray with none to bring them back,  
 Everyone fetches for himself and brands with his name.  
 See, a man is slain by the side of his brother,  
 Who abandons him to save himself.  
 See, he who lacked a team owns herds,  
 He who could not find plow-oxen owns cattle.  
 See, he who lacked grain owns granaries,  
 (5) He who fetched grain on loan issues it.  
 See, he who lacked dependents owns serfs,  
 He who was a <magnate> does his own errands.  
 See, the mighty of the land are not reported to,  
 The affairs of the people have gone to ruin.  
 See, all the craftsmen, they do not work,  
 The land's foes have despoiled its craftsmen.  
 [See, he who recorded] the harvest knows nothing about it,  
 He who did not plow [for himself] ----.  
 ----- it is not reported,  
 The scribe --- his hands [‘idle’] in it.  
 Destroyed is ----- in their time,  
 A man sees -----  
 ----- brings coolness -----  
 --- \_--- (10) -----

Destroyed is -----, Their food [is taken] from them. -----  
 fear of his terror. The citizen begs -----, ----- messenger,  
 but not ----- time. He is seized loaded with his goods, taken  
 -----, ----- pass by his door ----- ... rooms filled with  
 falcons -----, As to the citizen, when he wakes, (10, 1) day dawns  
 on him without his being ready. One runs ..... ‘tents’ are what  
 they make, like foreigners.

Destroyed is the doing of errands<sup>22</sup> by attendants in the service of  
 their masters. They are not ready. Though there are five of them,  
 they say: “Go you on that road; we have just come.”

Lower Egypt weeps. The king's storehouse is “I go-get-it,” for

everyone, and the whole palace is without its revenues. It should have  
 emmer, barley, fowl, and fish; it should have white cloth, fine linen,  
 copper, and oil. (5) It should have carpet and mat ----, all good woven  
 products. ....

Destroy the foes of the noble residence, resplendent in courtiers,  
 -----, The mayor of the city goes unescorted.

Destroy [the foes of the noble residence], resplendent -----.

[Destroy the foes **of**] the noble residence, rich in laws, -----.

[Destroy the foes **of**] (10) that noble [residence] -----.

Destroy the foes of that [noble] residence -----,

None can stand -----.

[Destroy the foes **of**] that noble [residence], rich in offices. Lo,  
 -----.

Remember the immersing -----,<sup>23</sup>

----- the sickness of his body. -----.

Remember (11, 1) . . . , fumigating with incense, libating from a  
 jar at dawn.

Remember (bringing) fat ro-geese, *terep-geese*, set-geese, and  
 making divine offerings to the gods.

Remember chewing **natron**, preparing white bread, ‘as done’ by a  
 man on the day of . . .

Remember the erecting of flagstaffs, the carving of offering stones;  
 the priest cleansing the chapels, the temple whitewashed like milk;  
 sweetening the fragrance of the sanctuary, setting up the **bread-**  
 offerings.

Remember the observing of rules, the adjusting of dates, removing  
 one who enters (5) the priestly service unclean; for to do this is wrong,  
 . . . -----.

Remember the slaughtering of oxen -----.

Remember going out --- ... ----- (10) -----.

Lo, why does he seek to fashion (men), when the timid is not  
 distinguished from the violent ?<sup>24</sup> If he would bring coolness upon  
 the heat, (12, 1) one would say: “He is the herdsman of all; there is no  
 evil in his heart. His herds are few, but he spends the day herding  
 them.” There is fire in their hearts! If only he had perceived their  
 nature in the first generation! Then he would have smitten the evil,  
 stretched out his arm against it, would have destroyed their seed and  
 their heirs! But since giving birth is desired, grief has come and  
 misery is everywhere. So it is and will not pass, while these gods are

in their midst. Seed comes forth from mortal women; it is not found on the road. Fighting has come, (5) and the punisher of crimes commits **them!** There is no pilot in their hour. Where is he today? Is he asleep? Lo, his power is not seen!

If we had been **fed**, I would not have found you, one would not have summoned me .....<sup>25</sup>

Authority, Knowledge, and **Truth**<sup>26</sup> are with you-turmoil is what you let happen in the land, and the noise of strife. Lo, one man assaults another, and one **transgresses**<sup>27</sup> what you commanded. When three men travel on the road, only two are found. For the greater number kills the lesser. Is there a herdsman who loves death? Then you could order it **done**.<sup>28</sup> (13, 1) It means the replacement of love: one man hates another. It means reducing their numbers everywhere. Is it your doing that brought this about? Do you speak falsely?

The land is a weed that kills people. One does not expect to live. All these years there is strife. A man is killed on his roof. He must keep watch in his gatehouse. If he is brave he may save himself. Such is his life!

When a **servant** is sent to citizens, he walks on the road until he sees the flood. If the road is washed out, (5) he halts distressed. Then he is robbed, attacked with blows of the stick, and criminally slain.

If only you would taste a little of these miseries! Then you would say -----.

[It is however] good when ships sail upstream,

----- (10)-----.

It is however good -----.

It is however good when the net is drawn in.

And birds are tied up -----.

It is however good -----,

And the roads are made for walking.

It is however good when men's hands build tombs,

When ponds are dug and orchards made for the gods.

It is however good when people get drunk,

When they drink *miyet* with happy hearts.

It is however good when mouths shout for joy,

When the nome-lords watch the **shouting (14, 1) from** their houses,

When one is clothed in clean robes ...

It is however good when beds are readied,

The masters' headrests safely secured ;

When every man's need is filled by a mat in the shade,

And a door shut on him who slept in the bushes.

It is however good when fine linen is spread on New Year's Day,

----- fine linen is spread, robes are laid out. -----

(5) -----

----- (10) --- in their [midst] like Asiatics -----.<sup>29</sup> None are found who would stand up to protect them. ----- Every man fights for his sisters and protects himself. Is it Nubians? Then we will protect ourselves. There are plenty of fighters to repel the Bowmen. Is it Libyans? Then we will turn them back. The Medjai are content with Egypt.

How then does every man kill his brother? The troops (15, 1) we raised for ourselves have become Bowmen bent on destroying! What has come from it is to let the Asiatics know the state of the land. Yet every foreigner fears it.<sup>30</sup> The experience of the people is that they say: "Egypt will not be given over (to> sand!" ----- (5) -----.

What Ipuwer said when he answered the majesty of the All-Lord: -----, It pleases the heart to ignore it. You have done what pleases their hearts. You have sustained people among them. Yet they cover (16, 1) their faces in fear of tomorrow.

There was an old man who was about to die, while his son was a child without knowledge. -----

#### NOTES

1. "People" = "Egyptians."
2. *Drtwt*, "coffers, chests," in accordance with Vandier's discussion of *drit* in *Mo'alla*, pp. 208-211.
3. *Špswt*, "noblewomen," rather than "good things."
4. Contrary to Goedicke's rendering in *JARCE*, 6 (1967), 93, I take the two sentences, as those preceding it, to be descriptions of the reversal of fortune, i.e., variations on the theme "the first will be the last".
5. I retain the traditional rendering of the passage. A different one was proposed by Goedicke, *loc. cit.*
6. I read *ms'w*, "gifts, tribute," rather than *ms'wt*, "truth." The text abounds in corruptions. But the feminine form, *ms'wt*, for the word 'gifts' is attested for the Late Period; hence the writing may be correct.
7. The meaning of the metaphor *mw-n pw*, "this is our water," is uncertain. Faulkner took it to mean "bad luck" and the sentence to be ironic. I take it to be "good luck," "success," parallel to *wꜣd*, "fortune."
8. Reading *iwty*, as suggested by Posener, *RdE*, 5 (1946), 254.
9. A rather obscure section which is thought to mean that the Delta is overrun by Asiatics. In the choice between *dgi*, "hide," and *dgi*, "see," I have preferred the latter.

10. *Sdw* is an object on which one can lie down and on which a load can be placed; hence “board,” seems to me more suitable than “raft.”

11. Emending *dd·i to dd·s*; ladies are made to labor and no longer have the use of their palanquins, or the service of their butlers.

12. *Hsa*, “unanointed,” rather than Gardiner’s restored *hsst*, “spices(?)”.

13. The passage recurs in the *Instruction of Amenemhet*; see there n. 12.

14. This passage has always been rendered: “The secret of the land whose limits were unknown is divulged, and the Residence is thrown down in a moment.” But the first sentence, besides being overlong, has an abnormal word order. Moreover, the sense is poor; for the text nowhere implies that the residence is threatened. I divide: *sšts n ts hmm ḡrw·fj šhšw hnw hn·f n wnw*.

15. On *stf mw* see *Amenemhet*, n. 6.

16. The &&-serpent was a guardian spirit.

17. I.e., to acquire goods for himself by robbing.

18. There is no need to emend the text when *hprw* is understood as “transformations, changes,” as in *Khakheperre-sonb*, recto 10.

19. *Meret*, the goddess of song, as in 4, 13.

20. Again reading *špsst*, “noblewoman,” rather than *špswt*, “riches”; see above, n. 3.

21. This sentence has been misunderstood by all translators. Gardiner read it as: *Mtn nswtyw hr knkn m ihw mš[rw] --- hškyw*, and rendered, “Behold, butchers transgress(?) with the cattle of the poor . . . . . plunderers,” a rendering that all have retained with minor variations. It should be observed that, first, *mšrw* is the subject of the **second** sentence; second, that “poor people” do not own cattle; third, that *nswtyw*, which stands in parallelism with *mšrw*, means “serfs,” or the like (see S. Wenig, *ZAS*, 88 (1962), 67-69, and P. Kaplony, *ZAS*, 88 (1962), 73-74), and last, that *knkn* is a spelling of *wmm*, “to eat.” The preposition *m*, unintelligible after *knkn*, is in perfect order after *wmm*. In 8, 12, the *nswtyw* eat geese, and in 9, 1-2, they have appropriated the food destined for noblewomen.

72. *Hšb·tw hr·s* looks like an idiom for “errand, commission.”

23. *Contra* Gardiner and Faulkner, Wilson was surely right in taking this section not as “exhortations to pious conduct,” but as a recalling of the past when the right order prevailed.

24. This section is interesting for being a criticism of the sun-god, the creator of gods and men, who is chided for passively permitting people to kill each other, instead of intervening. It also offers **confirmation** for the point of view expressed in CT 1130: the evil in men’s natures is not the work of the creator.

25. This section appears to be an address to the king, rather than to the sun-god.

26. Hu, Sia, and Maat.

27. *Sni*, “overstep,” rather than *sni*, “imitate.” Ipuwer is not reproaching the king with committing crimes but with allowing them to happen.

28. I divide: *hr ks wḡ·k tr·tw| šb n mrwt is pw| w' msd ky. Šbt* = “change, exchange.”

29. The king is now speaking. What is left of his speech indicates that he places the blame for the disorders on the people **themselves** and maintains that Egypt has nothing to fear from foreigners.

30. The *f* of *snd·f* can only refer to “the land.” J. Van Seters, *The Hyksos* (New Haven, 1966), p. 117, saw in the passage a reference to

“a new independent power in the Delta,” i.e., the Hyksos. When the sentence is correctly translated, however, it contains nothing to promote that conclusion. Van Seters’s attempt to date the *Admonitions* to the Hyksos period is based on historical and archaeological considerations which are, however, inconclusive.

## THE DISPUTE BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS BA

Papyrus Berlin 3024

This famous text is preserved in a single manuscript which dates from the Twelfth Dynasty. The first portion is missing. In its present form it consists of 155 vertical columns, broken by a number of **lacunae**. An exceedingly difficult and intriguing work, it has engendered a great deal of controversy. In translating it for this anthology I had two choices: to provide sentence-by-sentence summaries and discussions of the widely diverging translations and interpretations—this would have required many pages of annotations—or to dispense with notes altogether. I have chosen the latter course. Scholars familiar with the text know its problems. Those unfamiliar with it who wish to study it in detail are advised to consult all translations and commentaries.

My translation owes much to that of Faulkner, though I differ from him on a number of points, especially on the rendering of the crucial word *ihm*, where I hold with those scholars who take it to mean “lead toward,” not “hold back from.”

Given the great variety of interpretations, I also refrain from a general discussion of the meaning of the work and content myself with a bald and brief sketch of what I believe to be its *plot*.

A man who suffers from life longs for death. Angered by his complaints, his *ba* threatens to leave him. This threat fills the man with horror, for to be abandoned by his *ba* would mean total annihilation, instead of the resurrection and immortal bliss that he envisages. He therefore implores his *ba* to remain with him, and not to oppose him in his longing for death, a death that he does not appear to contemplate as a suicide but rather as a natural, though greatly welcomed, death, to be followed by a traditional burial. The *ba* counters his pleas by telling him that death is a sad business, and that those who have fine tombs are no better off than those who have none. It urges him to stop complaining and to *enjoy* life. And it tells two parables designed to drive home the point that life is worth living. The man’s final answer is delivered through four exquisite poems, in which he deplors the miseries of life and exalts death and resurrection. In a brief concluding speech the *ba* agrees to remain with him.

As I see it, the work is composed of a mixture of the three main styles of Egyptian literature: prose, symmetrically structured speech, and lyric poetry.

publication: A. Erman, *Gespräch eines Lebensmüden mit seiner Seele*, APAW (Berlin, 1896). R. O. Faulkner, *JEA*, 42 (1956), 21-40. W. Barta, *Das Gespräch eines Mannes mit seinem Ba*; Miinchner ägyptologische Studien, 18 (Berlin, 1969). H. Goedicke, *The Report about the Dispute of a Man with His Ba* (Baltimore, 1970).

Translation: Erman, *Literature*, pp. 86-92. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, PP. 405-407. Bissing, *Lebensweisheit*, pp. 124-128.



Commentaries and comments: A. Scharff, *SBAW*, 1937, Phil.-hist. Abt., Heft 9 (Munich, 1937). A. Hermann, *OLZ*, 42 (1939), 141-153. A. de Buck, *Ex Oriente Lux*, 7 (1947), 19-32. R. Weill, *BZFAO*, 45 (1947), 89-154. H. Junker, *AOAW*, Phil.-hist. Kl., 1948, No. 17 (Vienna, 1949). H. Jacobssohn, in *Zeitlose Dokumente der Seele*, Studien aus dem C. G. Jung Institut, Ziirich, vol. 3 (Zurich, 1952), pp. 1-48. S. Herrmann, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 62-79. G. Thausing, *MDZK*, 15 (1957), 262-267. R. Williams, *JEA*, 48 (1962), 49-56. E. Brunner-Traut, *ZAS*, 94 (1967), 6-15.

Additional references will be found in the works cited.

----- (i) your --- in order to say ----- [their tongue] is not partial ----- payment; their tongue is not partial.

I opened my mouth to my *ba*, to answer what it had said:

(5) This is too great for me today,  
My *ba* will not converse with me!  
It is too great for exaggeration,  
It is like deserting me!  
My *ba* shall not go,  
It shall attend to me in this!

-----  
--- in my body with a net of cord.

(10) It shall not be able to flee on the day of pain!  
Look, my *ba* misleads me-I do not listen to it—  
Drags me toward death before (I) come to it,  
Casts (me) on fire so as to burn me!

-----  
(15) It shall be near me on the day of pain!

It shall stand on that side as does a ...

It is he who comes forth,

‘He has brought himself.’

My *ba*, too ignorant to still pain in life,

Leads me toward death before I come to it!

Sweeten (20) the West for me!

Is that difficult ?

Life is a passage ; trees fall.

Tread on the evil, put down my misery!

May Thoth judge me, he who appeases the gods!

May Khons defend me, (25) he who writes truly!

May Re hear my speech, he who calms the sun-bark!

May Isdes defend me in the sacred hall!

For my suffering is ‘too heavy a burden to be borne by me’. May it please that the gods (30) repel my body’s secrets!

What my *ba* said to me: “Are you not a man ? Are you not alive ? What do you gain by complaining about life like a man of wealth ?” I said: “I will not go as long as this is neglected. Surely, if you run away, you will not (35) be cared for. Every criminal says: “I shall seize you.” Though you are dead, your name lives. Yonder is the place of rest, the heart’s goal. The West is a dwelling place, a voyage -----.

If my *ba* listens to me ‘without (40) malice’, its heart in accord with me, it shall be happy. I shall make it reach the West like one who is in his tomb, whose burial a survivor tends. I shall make a ‘shelter’ over your corpse, so that you will make envious another *ba* (45) in weariness. I shall make a ‘shelter’-it shall not be freezing-so that you will make envious another *ba* which is hot. I shall drink water at the pond over which I made shade, so that you will make envious another *ba* that hungers.

But if you lead (50) me toward death in this manner, you will not find a place on which to rest in the West. Be patient, my *ba*, my brother, until my heir comes, one who will make offerings, who will stand at the tomb on the day of burial, having prepared the bier (55) of the graveyard.

My *ba* opened its mouth to me, to answer what I had said: If you think of burial, it is heartbreak. It is the gift of tears by aggrieving a man. It is taking a man from his house, casting (him) on high ground. You will not go up to see (60) the sun. Those who built in granite, who erected halls in excellent tombs of excellent construction-when the builders have become gods, their offering-stones are desolate, as if they were the dead who died on the riverbank for lack of a survivor. (65) The flood takes its toll, the sun also. The fishes at the water’s edge talk to them. Listen to me! It is good for people to listen. Follow the feast day, forget worry!

A man plowed his plot. He loaded his harvest into (70) a boat. He towed the freight. As his feast day approached, he saw rising the darkness of a north wind. Watching in the boat, as the sun went down, (he) came out with his wife and children and foundered on the lake infested at (75) night with crocodiles. When at last he sat down, he broke out saying: “I do not weep for that mother, for whom there is no coming from the West for another being-on-earth. I grieve for her children broken in the egg, who have seen the face of the Crocodile (80) before they have lived.”

A man asked for an early meal. His wife said: "It is for supper."  
He went outdoors to ... a while. When he came back to the house  
he was like another (person). His wife beseeches him and he does not  
listen to her. He ... (85) heedless of the household.

I opened my mouth to my *ba*, to answer what it had said:

## I

Lo, my name reeks  
Lo, more than carrion smell  
On summer days of burning sky.

Lo, my name reeks  
Lo, more than a catch of fish  
(90) On fishing days of burning sky.

Lo, my name reeks  
Lo, more than ducks smell,  
More than reed-coverts full of waterfowl.

Lo, my name reeks  
Lo, more than fishermen smell,  
More than the (95) marsh-pools where they fish.

Lo, my name reeks  
Lo, more than crocodiles smell,  
More than a shore-site full of crocodiles.

Lo, my name reeks  
Lo, more than that of a wife  
About whom lies are told to the husband.

Lo, my name (too) reeks  
Lo, more than that of a sturdy child  
Who is said to belong to one who rejects him.

Lo, my name reeks  
Lo, more than a king's town  
That utters sedition behind his back.

## II

To whom shall I speak today?  
Brothers are mean,  
The friends of today do not love.

To whom (105) shall I speak today ?  
Hearts are greedy,  
Everyone robs his comrade's goods.

(To whom shall I speak today ?>  
Kindness has perished,  
Insolence assaults everyone.

To whom shall I speak today?  
One is content with evil,  
Goodness is cast to the ground everywhere.

To whom shall I speak (110) today ?  
He who should enrage men by his **crimes**—  
He makes everyone laugh (at) his evildoing.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Men plunder,  
Everyone robs his comrade.

To whom shall I speak today?  
The criminal is one's intimate,  
The brother with whom one dealt is (115) a foe.

To whom shall I speak today?  
The past is not remembered,  
Now one does not help him who helped.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Brothers are mean,  
One goes to strangers for affection.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Faces are blank,  
Everyone turns his face from (120) his brothers.

To whom shall I speak today ?  
Hearts are greedy,  
No man's heart can be relied on.

To whom shall I speak today?  
None are righteous,  
The land is left to evildoers.

To whom shall I speak today?  
 One lacks an intimate,  
 One resorts to an unknown (125) to complain.

To whom shall I speak today ?  
 No one is cheerful,  
 He with whom one walked is no more.

To whom shall I speak today ?  
 I am burdened with grief  
 For lack of an intimate.

To whom shall I speak today?  
 Wrong roams the earth,  
 (130) And ends not.

## III

Death is before me today  
 (Like) a sick man's recovery,  
 Like going outdoors after confinement.

Death is before me today  
 Like the fragrance of myrrh,  
 Like sitting under sail on breeze day.

Death is before me today  
 (135) Like the fragrance of lotus,  
 Like sitting on the shore of drunkenness.

Death is before me today  
 Like a well-trodden way,  
 Like a man's coming home from warfare.

Death is before me today  
 Like the clearing of the sky,  
 As when a man discovers (140) what he ignored.

Death is before me today  
 Like a man's longing to see his home  
 When he has spent many years in captivity.

## IV

Truly, he who is yonder will be a living god,  
 Punishing the evildoer's crime.

Truly, he who is yonder will stand in the sun-bark,  
 Making its bounty flow (145) to the temples.

Truly, he who is yonder will be a wise man,  
 Not barred from appealing to Re when he speaks.

What my *ba* said to me: "Now throw complaint on the 'wood-pile', you my comrade, my brother! Whether you offer on the brazier, (150) whether you bear down on life, as you say, love me here when you have set aside the West! But when it is wished that you attain the West, that your body joins the earth, I shall alight after you have become weary, and then we shall dwell together!"

**Colophon:** It is finished (155) from beginning to end, as it was found in writing.

## THE ELOQUENT PEASANT

This long work is preserved in four papyrus copies, all dating from the Middle Kingdom. The individual copies are incomplete, but together they yield the full text, which comprises 430 lines. The three principal copies are P. Berlin 3023 (B1), P. Berlin 3025 (B2), and P. Berlin 10499 (R); the fourth is P. Butler 527 = P. British Museum 10274.

The text consists of a narrative frame and nine poetic speeches. It is both a serious disquisition on the need for justice, and a parable on the utility of fine speech. The connection between the two themes is achieved by means of an ironic device in the narrative frame: after the peasant has been robbed and has laid his complaint before the magistrate in a stirring plea, the latter is so delighted with this unlearned man's eloquence that he reports it to the king; and on the king's orders the magistrate goads the peasant to continue pleading until the poor man is completely exhausted. Only then does he receive justice and ample rewards.

The tension between the studied silence of the magistrate and the increasingly despairing speeches of the peasant is the operative principle that moves the action forward. And the mixture of seriousness and irony, the intertwining of a plea for justice with a demonstration of the value of rhetoric, is the very *essence* of the work.

Publication: F. Vogelsang and A. H. Gardiner, *Die Klagen des Bauern*, Literarische Texte des Mittleren Reiches, I (Berlin, 1908). F. Vogelsang, *Kommentar zu den Klagen des Bauern*, Untersuchungen, 6 (Leipzig, 1913; reprint, Hildesheim, 1964).

Excerpts: de Buck, *Readingbook*, pp. 88-99. **Sethe, Lesestücke**, pp. 17-25. **Zdem, Erl.**, pp. 21-32.

Translation: A. H. Gardiner, *JEA*, 9 (1923), 5-25. Erman, *Literature*, pp. 116-131. F. Lexa, *Arch. Or.*, 7 (1935), 372-383. Lefebvre, *Romans*, pp. 41-69. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 407-410 (excerpts). Bissing, *Lebensweisheit*, pp. 155-170.

Comments: F. Lexa, *RT*, 34 (1912), 218-231. A. H. Gardiner, *PSBA*, 35 (1913), 264-276. E. Suys, & *de sur le conte du fellah plaideur*

(Rome, 1933). A. M. Blackman, *JEA*, 20 (1934), 218-219. S. Herrmann, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 79-98. *Idem*, *ZÄS*, 80 (1955), 34-39, and *ZÄS*, 82 (1958), 55-57. G. Lanukowski, *Altägyptischer Prophetismus* (Wiesbaden, 1960).

(R1) There was a man named **Khun-Anup**, a peasant of **Salt-Field**.<sup>1</sup> He had a wife whose name was **[Ma]rye**. This peasant said to his wife: "Look here, I am going down to Egypt to bring food from there for my children. Go, measure for me the barley which is in the barn, what is left of [last year's] barley." Then she measured for him [twenty-six] gallons of barley. (5) This peasant said to his wife: "Look, you have twenty gallons of barley as food for you and your children. Now make for me these six gallons of barley into bread and beer for every day in which [I shall travel]."

This peasant went down to Egypt. He had loaded his donkeys with rushes, **rdmt-grass**, (10) **natron**, salt, sticks of ---, staves from **Cattle-Country**,<sup>2</sup> leopard skins, (15) wolf skins, **ns3-plants**, 'nw-stones, mm-plants, **hprwr-plants**, (20) **s3hwt**, **s3skwt**, miswt-plants, snt-stones, **'b3w-stones**, (25) **ib33-plants**, inbi-plants, pigeons, n'rw-birds, **wgs-birds**, (30) wbn-plants, **tbsw-plants**, **gnmnt**, earth-hair, and **inst**; (35) in sum, all the good products of Salt-Field. This peasant went south toward **Hnes**.<sup>3</sup> He arrived in the district of Perfefi, north of Medenyt. There he met a man standing on the riverbank whose name was **Nemtynakht**.<sup>4</sup> He was the son of a man (40) named Isri and a subordinate of the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru.

This Nemtynakht said, when he saw this peasant's donkeys which tempted his heart: "If only I had a potent divine image through which I could seize this peasant's goods!" Now the house of this Nemtynakht was at the beginning (45) of a **path**<sup>5</sup> which was narrow, not so wide as to exceed the width of a shawl. And one side of it was under water, the other under barley. This Nemtynakht said to his servant: "Go, bring me a sheet from my house." It was brought to him straightway. He spread it out on the beginning of the path, (50) so that its fringe touched the water, its hem the barley.

Now this peasant came along the public road. (Bl, 1) Then this Nemtynakht said: "Be careful, peasant; don't step on my clothes! This peasant said: "I'll do as you wish, my course is a good one." So he went up higher. This Nemtynakht said: (5) "Will you have my barley for a path?" This peasant said: "My course is a good one. The riverbank is steep and our way is under barley, for you block the path with your clothes. Will you then not let us pass on the road?"

Just then one of the donkeys filled (10) its mouth with a **wisp** of barley. This Nemtynakht said: "Now I shall seize your donkey, peasant, for eating my barley. It shall tread out grain for its offense!" This peasant said: "My course is a good one. Only one (wisp) is destroyed. Could I buy my donkey for its value, if you seize it (15) for filling its mouth with a wisp of **barley**?<sup>6</sup> But I know the lord of this domain; it belongs to the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru. He punishes every robber in this whole land. Shall I be robbed in his domain?" This Nemtynakht said: "Is this the saying people say: (20) 'A poor man's name is pronounced for his master's sake.' It is I who speak to you, and you invoke the high steward!"

Then he took a stick of green tamarisk to him and thrashed all his limbs with it, seized his donkeys, drove them to his domain. Then this peasant (25) wept very loudly for the pain of that which was done to him. This Nemtynakht said: "Don't raise your voice, peasant. Look, you are bound for the abode of the Lord of Silence!" This peasant said: "You beat me, you steal my goods, and now you take the complaint from my mouth! O Lord of Silence, give me back (30) my things, so that I can stop crying to your **dreadedness!**"<sup>8</sup>

This peasant spent the time of ten days appealing to this **Nemtynakht** who paid no attention to it. So this peasant proceeded southward to Hnes, in order to appeal to the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru. He found him coming out of the door (35) of his house, to go down to his courthouse barge. This peasant said: "May I be allowed to acquaint you with this complaint? Might a servant of your choice be sent to me, through whom I could inform you of it?" So the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, (40) sent a servant of his choice ahead of him, and this peasant informed him of the matter in all its aspects.

Then the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, denounced this Nemtynakht to the magistrates who were with him. Then they said to him: "Surely it is a peasant of his who has gone to someone else beside him. (45) That is what they do to peasants of theirs who go to others beside them.<sup>9</sup> That is what they do. Is there cause for punishing this Nemtynakht for a trifle of **natron** and a trifle of salt? If he is ordered to replace it, he will replace it." Then the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, (50) fell silent. He did not reply to these magistrates, nor did he reply to this peasant.

## First Petition

Now this peasant came to appeal to the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru. He said: "O high steward, my lord, greatest of the great, leader of all!

When you go down to the sea of (55) justice  
 And sail on it with a fair wind,<sup>10</sup>  
 No squall shall strip away your sail,  
 Nor will your boat be idle.  
 No accident will affect your mast,  
 Your yards will not break.  
 You will not founder when you touch land,  
 No flood will carry you away.  
 You will not taste the river's (60) evils,  
 You will not see a frightened face.  
 Fish will come darting to you,  
 Fatted fowl surround you.  
 For you are father to the orphan,  
 Husband to the widow,  
 Brother to the rejected woman,  
 Apron to the motherless.

Let me make your name in (65) this land according to all the good rules:"

Leader free of greed,  
 Great man free of baseness,  
 Destroyer of falsehood,  
 Creator of rightness,  
 Who comes at the voice of the caller!  
 When I speak, may you hear!  
 Do justice, O praised one,  
 Who is praised by the praised;  
 Remove (70) my grief, I am burdened,  
 Examine me, I am in need!"

Now this peasant made this speech in the time of the majesty of King Nebkaure, the justified. Then the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, went before his majesty and said: "My lord, (75) I have found one among those peasants whose speech is truly beautiful. Robbed of his goods by a man who is in my service, he has come to petition me about it." Said his majesty: "As truly as you wish to see me

in health, you shall detain him here, without answering whatever he says. In order to keep him (80) talking, be silent. Then have it brought to us in writing, that we may hear it. But provide for his wife and his children. For one of those peasants comes here (only) just before his house is empty. Provide also for this peasant himself. You shall let food be given him without letting him know that it is you who gives it to him."

So they gave him ten loaves of bread and two jugs of beer (85) every day. It was the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, who gave it. He gave it to a friend of his, and he gave it to him. Then the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, wrote to the mayor of Salt-Field about providing food for this peasant's wife, a total of three bushels of grain every day.

## Second Petition

Now this peasant came to petition him a second time. He said: "O high steward, my lord, greatest of the great, richest of the rich, truly greater than his great ones, richer than his (90) rich ones!

Rudder of heaven, beam of earth,  
 Plumb-line that carries the weight!  
 Rudder, drift not,  
 Beam, tilt not,  
 Plumb-line, swing not awry!

A great lord taking a share of that which is (now) ownerless; stealing from a lonely man? Your portion is in your house: a jug of beer and three loaves. What is that you expend to satisfy your (95) clients? A mortal man dies along with his underlings; shall you be a man of eternity?

Is it not wrong, a balance that tilts,  
 A plummet that strays,  
 The straight becoming crooked?  
 Lo, justice flees from you,  
 Expelled from its seat!  
 The magistrates do wrong,  
 Right-dealing is bent sideways,  
 The judges snatch what has been stolen.  
 He who trims a matter's rightness (100) makes it swing awry:  
 The breath-giver chokes him who is down,

He who should refresh makes pant.  
 The arbitrator is a robber,  
 The remover of need orders its creation.  
 The town is a floodwater,  
 The punisher of evil commits crimes!"

Said the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru: "Are your belongings a greater concern to you than that my servant might seize **you?**"<sup>12</sup>  
 This peasant said:

"The measurer of (105) grain-heaps trims for himself,  
 He who fills for another shaves the other's share;  
 He who should rule by law commands theft,  
 Who then will punish crime?  
 The straightener of another's crookedness  
 Supports another's crime.  
 Do you find here something for you ?  
 Redress is short, misfortune long,  
 A good deed is remembered.  
 This is the precept:  
 Do to the doer (110) to make him **do.**<sup>13</sup>  
 It is thanking a man for what he does,  
 Parrying a blow before it strikes,  
 Giving a commission to one who is skillful.

Oh for a moment of destruction, havoc in your vineyard, loss among your birds, damage to your water birds!

A man who saw has turned blind,  
 A hearer deaf,  
 A leader now leads astray!

(115) . . . . . You are strong and mighty. Your arm is active, your heart greedy, mercy has passed you by. How miserable is the wretch whom you have destroyed! You are like a messenger of the Crocodile; you surpass (120) the Lady of Pestilence!<sup>14</sup> If you **have** nothing, she has nothing. If there's nothing against her, there's nothing against you. If you don't act, she does not act. The **wealthy** should be merciful ; violence is for the criminal ; robbing suits him who has nothing. The stealing done by the robber is the misdeed of one who is **poor.**<sup>15</sup> One can't reproach him; he merely seeks for himself But you are sated (125) with your bread, drunken with your **beer**, rich in all kinds of [treasures].

Though the face of the steersman is forward, the boat drifts as it pleases. Though the king is in the palace, though the rudder is in your hand, wrong is done around you. Long is my plea, heavy my task. "**What** is the matter with him ?" people ask.

Be a shelter, (130) make safe your shore,  
 See how your quay is infested with crocodiles!  
 Straighten your tongue, let it not stray,  
 A serpent is this limb of man.  
 Don't tell lies, warn the magistrates,  
 Greasy baskets are the judges,  
 Telling lies is their **herbage**,  
 It weighs lightly on them.  
 Knower of (135) all men's ways:  
 Do you ignore my case?  
 Savior from all water's harm:  
 See I have a course without a ship!  
 Guider to port of all who founder:  
 Rescue the drowning!  
 . . . . ."

### Third Petition

Then this peasant came to petition him a third time; he said:

(14) "High steward, my lord,  
 You are Re, lord of sky, with your courtiers,  
 Men's sustenance is from you as from the flood,  
 You are Hapy who makes green the fields,  
 Revives the wastelands.  
 Punish the robber, save the sufferer,  
 Be not (145) a flood against the pleader!  
 Heed eternity's coming,  
 Desire to last, as is said:  
 Doing justice is breath for the nose.  
 Punish him who should be punished,  
 And none will equal your rectitude.  
 Does the hand-balance deflect ?  
 Does the stand-balance tilt ?  
 Does Thoth (150) show favor  
 So that you may do wrong?  
**Be** the equal of these three:

If the three show favor,  
 Then may you show favor!  
 Answer not good with evil,  
 Put not one thing in place of another!

My speech grows more than *snmyt-weed*, to **assault**<sup>16</sup> the smell  
 with its answers. Misfortune pours water (155) till cloth will grow!  
 Three times now to make him **act**<sup>17</sup>

By the sail-wind should you steer,  
 Control the waves to sail **aright**;  
 Guard from landing by the helm-rope,  
 Earth's rightness lies in justice!  
 Speak not falsely-you are great,  
 Act not **lightly**—(160) you are weighty;  
 Speak not falsely-you are the balance,  
 Do not swerve-you are the norm!  
 You are one with the balance,  
 If it tilts you may tilt.  
 Do not drift, steer, hold the helm-rope!  
 Rob not, act against the robber,  
 (165) Not great is one who is great in greed.  
 Your tongue is the plummet,  
 Your heart the weight,  
 Your two lips are its arms.  
 If you avert your face from violence,  
 Who then shall punish wrongdoing?  
 Lo, you are a wretch of a washerman,  
 A greedy one who harms (170) a friend,  
 One who forsakes his friend for his client,  
 His brother is he who comes with gifts.  
 Lo, you are a **ferryman** who ferries him who pays,  
 A straight one whose straightness is splintered,  
 A storekeeper who does not let a poor man pass,  
 Lo, you are (175) a hawk to the little people,  
 One who lives on the poorest of the birds.  
 Lo, you are a butcher whose joy is slaughter,  
 The carnage is nothing to him.  
 You are a herdsman .....  
 .....

(180) Hearer, you hear not! Why do you not hear ? Now I have  
 subdued the savage; the crocodile retreats! What is your gain? When  
 the secret of truth is found, falsehood is thrown on its back on the  
 ground. Trust not the morrow before it has come; none knows the  
 trouble in it.”<sup>18</sup>

Now this peasant had made this speech (185) to the high steward  
 Rensi, the son of Meru, at the entrance to the courthouse. Then he  
 had two guards go to him with whips, and they thrashed all his limbs.

This peasant said: “The son of Meru goes on erring. His face is  
 blind to what he sees, deaf to what he hears; his heart strays from what  
 is recalled to him.

You are like a **town**<sup>19</sup> (190) without a mayor,  
 Like a troop without a leader,  
 Like a ship without a captain,  
 A company without a chief.  
 You are a sheriff who steals,  
 A mayor who pockets,  
 A district prosecutor of crime  
 Who is the model for the (evil)-doer!”

#### Fourth Petition

Now this peasant came to petition him a fourth time. Finding him  
 (195) coming out of the gate of the temple of Harsaphes, he said:  
 “O praised one, may Harsaphes praise you, from whose temple you  
 have come!

Goodness is destroyed, none adhere to it,  
 To fling falsehood's back to the ground.  
 If the ferry is grounded, wherewith does one cross? .....

Is crossing (200) the river on sandals a good crossing? No! Who  
 now sleeps till daybreak? Gone is walking by night, travel by day,  
 and letting a man defend his own good cause. But it is no use to tell  
 you this; mercy has passed you by. How miserable is the wretch (205)  
 whom you have destroyed!

Lo, you are a hunter who takes his **fill**,<sup>20</sup>  
 Bent on doing what he pleases;  
 Spearing hippopotami, shooting bulls,  
 Catching fish, snaring birds.  
 (But) none quick to speak is free from haste,

None light of heart is weighty in conduct.  
 Be patient (210) so as to learn justice,  
 Restrain your ['anger'] for the good of the humble seeker."  
 No hasty man attains excellence,  
 No impatient man is leaned upon.

Let the eyes see, let the heart take notice. Be not harsh in your power, lest trouble befall you. (215) Pass over a matter, it becomes two. He who eats tastes; one addressed answers. It is the sleeper who sees the dream; and a judge who deserves punishment is a model for the **(evil)doer**. Fool, you are attacked! Ignorant man, you are (220) questioned! Spouter of water, you are attained!

Steersman, let not drift your boat,  
 Life-sustainer, let not die,  
 Provider, let not **perish**,<sup>22</sup>  
 Shade, let one not dry **out**,<sup>23</sup>  
 Shelter, let not the crocodile snatch!  
 The fourth time I petition you! (225) Shall I go on all day?"

#### Fifth Petition

Now this peasant came to petition him a fifth time; he said:

"O high steward, my lord! The fisher of **hwdw-fish** -----, the - - - slays the **iy-fish**; the spearer of fish pierces the **wbb-fish**; the **qsbhw-fisher** (230) attacks the **p'kr-fish**; and the catcher of **wh'-fish** ravages the river.<sup>24</sup> Now you are like them! Rob not a poor man of his goods, a humble man whom you know! Breath to the poor are his belongings; he who takes them stops up his nose. It is to hear cases that you were installed, to judge between two, (235) to punish the robber. But what you do is to uphold the thief! One puts one's trust in you, but you have become a transgressor! You were placed as a dam for the poor lest he drown, but you have become a swift current to him!

#### Sixth Petition

Now this peasant came (240) to petition him a sixth time; he said:  
 "O high steward, my **lord!**<sup>25</sup>

He who lessens falsehood fosters truth,  
 He who fosters the good reduces (evil),  
 As satiety's coming removes hunger,

Clothing removes nakedness;  
 As the sky is serene after a (245) storm,  
 Warming all who shiver;  
 As fire cooks what is raw,  
 As water quenches thirst.  
 Now see for yourself:  
 The arbitrator is a robber,  
 The peacemaker makes grief,  
 He who should soothe (250) makes sore.  
 But he who cheats diminishes justice!  
 Rightly filled justice neither falls short nor brims over.

If you acquire, give to your fellow; gobbling up is dishonest. But my grief will lead to (255) parting; my accusation brings departure. The heart's intent cannot be known. Don't delay! Act on the charge! If you sever, who shall join? The sounding pole is in your hand; sound! The water is **shallow!**<sup>26</sup> If the boat enters and is grounded, its cargo perishes (260) on the shore.

You are learned, skilled, accomplished,  
 But not in order to plunder!  
 You should be the model for all men,  
 But your affairs are crooked!  
 The standard for all men cheats the whole land!  
 The vintner of evil waters his plot with crimes,  
 Until his plot sprouts (265) falsehood,  
 His estate flows with crimes!"

#### Seventh Petition

Now this peasant came to petition him a seventh time; he said:  
 "O high steward, my lord!

You are the whole land's rudder,  
 The land sails by your bidding;  
 You are the peer of Thoth,  
 The judge who is not partial.

My lord, be patient, so that a man may invoke you (270) **about his** rightful cause. Don't be angry; it is not for you. The long-faced becomes short-tempered. Don't brood on what has not yet come, nor rejoice at what has not yet happened. The patient man prolongs friendship; he who destroys a case will not be trusted.\*' If law is



laid waste and order destroyed, no poor man can (275) survive: when he is robbed, justice does not address him.

My body was full, my heart burdened. Now therefore it has come from my body. As a dam is breached and water escapes, so **my mouth** opened to speak. I plied my sounding pole, I bailed out my water; I have emptied what was in my body; I have washed my soiled linen. (280) My speech is done. My grief is all before you. What do you want ? But your laziness leads you astray; your greed makes you dumb; your gluttony makes enemies for you. But will you find another peasant like me ? Is there an idler at whose house door a petitioner will stand ?

(285) There is no silent man whom you gave speech,  
No sleeper whom you have wakened,  
None downcast whom you have roused,  
None whose shut mouth you have opened,  
None ignorant whom you gave knowledge,  
None foolish whom you have taught.  
(Yet) magistrates are dispellers of evil,  
Masters of the good,  
Craftsmen who create what is,  
Joiners of the severed head!"

#### Eighth Petition

Now this peasant (290) came to petition him an eighth time; he said: "O high steward, my lord! Men fall low through greed. The rapacious man lacks success; his success is loss. Though you are greedy it does nothing for you. Though you steal you do not profit. Let a man defend his rightful cause!

Your portion is in your house; your belly is full. The grain-bin brims over; shake it, (295) its overflow spoils on the ground. Thief, robber, plunderer! Magistrates are appointed to suppress crime. Magistrates are shelters against the aggressor. Magistrates are appointed to fight falsehood!

No fear of you makes me petition you; you do not know my heart. A humble man who comes back to reproach you is not afraid of him with whom he pleads, (300) The like of him will not be brought **you** from the street!

You have your plot of ground in the country, your estate in the district, your income in the storehouse. Yet the magistrates give to you and you take! Are you then a robber? Does one give to you and the troop with you at the division of plots?

Do justice for the Lord of Justice  
The justice of whose justice is real!  
(305) Pen, papyrus, palette of Thoth,  
Keep away from wrongdoing!  
When goodness is good it is truly good,  
For justice is for eternity:  
It enters the graveyard with its doer.  
When he is buried and earth enfolds him,  
His name (310) does not pass from the earth ;  
He is remembered because of goodness,  
That is the rule of god's command.

The hand-balance-it tilts not; the stand-balance-it leans not to one side. Whether I come, whether another comes, speak! (315) Do not answer with the answer of silence! Do not attack one who **does** not attack you. You have no pity, you are not troubled, you are not disturbed! You do not repay my good speech which comes from the mouth of Re himself!

Speak justice, do justice,  
For it is mighty;  
It is great, it endures,  
**Its** worth is **tried**,<sup>28</sup>  
It leads one to reveredness.

**Does** the hand-balance tilt ? Then it is its scales which carry things. The standard has no fault. Crime does not attain **its** goal; he who is **helpful**<sup>29</sup> reaches land."

#### Ninth Petition

(B2, 91) Now this peasant came to petition him a ninth time; he said: "O high steward, my lord! The tongue is men's stand-balance. It is the balance that detects deficiency. Punish him who should be punished, and (none> shall equal your rectitude. (95) --- ..... When falsehood walks it goes astray. It does not cross in the ferry; it does not 'progress'. (100) He who is enriched by it has no children, has no heirs on earth. He who sails with it **does** not reach land; his boat **does** not moor at its landing place.

Be not heavy, nor yet light,  
Do not tarry, nor yet hurry,  
Be not partial, nor listen to (105) desire.

Do not avert your face from one you know,  
 Be not blind to one you have seen,  
 Do not rebuff one who beseeches you.  
 Abandon this slackness,  
 Let your speech be heard.  
 Act for him who would act for you,  
 Do not listen to everyone,  
 Summon a man to his rightful cause!

A sluggard has no **yesterday**;<sup>30</sup> (110) one deaf to justice has no friend; the greedy has no holiday. When the accuser is a wretch, and the wretch becomes a pleader, his opponent is a killer. Here I have been pleading with you, and you have not listened to it. I shall go and plead (115) about you to Anubis!”

#### Conclusion

Then the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, sent two guards to bring him back. Then this peasant was fearful, thinking it was done so as to punish him for this speech he had made. This peasant said: “A thirsty man’s approach to water, an infant’s mouth (120) reaching for milk, thus is a longed-for death seen coming, thus does his death arrive at last.” Said the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru: “Don’t be afraid, peasant; be ready to deal with me!” Said this peasant: (125) “By my life! Shall I eat your bread and drink your beer forever?” Said the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru: “Now wait here and hear your petitions!” Then he had them read from a new papyrus roll, each petition in its turn. (130) The high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, presented them to the majesty of King Nebkaure, the justified. They pleased his majesty’s heart more than anything in the whole land. His majesty said: “Give judgment yourself, son of Meru!”

Then the high steward Rensi, the son of Meru, sent two guards [to bring Nemtynakht]. (135) He was brought and a report was made of [all his property] ----- his wheat, his barley, his donkeys, ---, his pigs, his small cattle -----, --- of this Nemtynakht [was given] to this peasant -----,

**Colophon:** It is finished -----.

#### NOTES

1. The **Wadi Natrun**.
2. **The** Farafra Oasis.

3. Heracleopolis Magna (Ahnas), the metropolis of the twentieth nome of Upper Egypt and the capital of the Ninth/Tenth Dynasty.

4. So rather than Thutnakht, as shown by O. Berlev, *Vestnik Drevnei Zstorii*, 1 (107) (1969), 3-30 (pointed out to me by K. Baer).

5. *Sms-t3 n r3-wst* was rendered “riverside path” by Gardiner, but this is a rather free rendering which hardly accounts for the term or for the situation. The text says that the house was *hr sms-t3*, but it could not have stood **on** the path. The implied situation is that the house stood at the side of a narrow path which at this point merged with the “public road,” on which the peasant was approaching. Hence I take *sms-t3* to mean the “beginning”, or similar, of the path.

6. The meaning of the passage was established by E. Wente in *JNES*, 24 (1965), 105-109, where he rendered: “Only one (wisp) has been destroyed. It is for its (i.e., the wisp’s) price that I will buy back my donkey if you seize possession of it for a (mere) filling of its mouth with a wisp of Upper Egyptian barley,” and explained it as a quick-witted response. I differ only in taking it as a rhetorical question rather than an assertion.

7. The god Osiris, who had a sanctuary in the neighborhood.

8. Among the epithets of Osiris are “lord of fear,” “lord of awe.”

9. The magistrates exculpate Nemtynakht by surmising that the peasant was a serf of his who had tried to do business with another landlord and was being punished for it.

10. Wordplay on *ms’t*, “justice” and *ms’w*, “fair wind.” The poetic speeches contain numerous wordplays and assonances. Where possible I have tried to imitate them, as in rendering *mm iwt iyt m ht-k* as “no accident will affect your mast,” rather than “no mishap will befall your mast,” or the like.

11. As Ranke explained in *ZÄS*, 79 (1954), 72, the peasant makes for the high steward a titulary of five great names in analogy with the five great names of the royal titulary.

12. In order to goad the peasant to further speeches, the high steward threatens him with a beating.

13. The peasant quotes a proverb that embodies the *do ut des* principle.

14. The goddess Sakhmet.

15. I emend *iwtj to nty*.

16. *Dmi* here, as in the *Dispute between a Man and His Ba*, line 150, cannot mean “cling to,” but rather “press against,” “attack.”

17. I.e., **this** is the peasant’s third plea.

18. A proverb similar to *Ptahhotep*, line 343: “Though one plans the morrow one knows not what will be.”

19. Reading *mi* instead of *m*; the speeches of the peasant by and large make a clear distinction between the two. The high steward is *identified* with individual characters or things (steersman, balance, etc.) and is *likened* to larger entities, such as a troop without leader, etc.

20. Literally, “washes his heart.” In *Ptahhotep*, lines 79 and 152, *i’-lb* is an “outburst of anger.” See there n. 9.

21. *Bss grw*, “he who enters humbly.” Here and in B I, 298 *grw* is “humble”, not “silent.”

22. A wordplay on *htm*, “to provide,” and *htm*, “to destroy.”

23. *Šwyt m tr m šw* is not: “Shade, act not as the sunheat,” but rather: “Shade, don’t make one into one who is *šw*,” i.e., “dry.”

24. *Wh’* is the *synodontis schall*; the other fishes are unidentified.

25. If the scribe skipped a line here, as Gardiner assumed, the omitted sentence ended with the second *nb*. But perhaps *nb* is a dittography and nothing is missing.

26. *Sp n mw seems* to mean "remnant of water," i.e., "shallow water." The garbled *shpr spmw(?)* in B 1, 199 probably contained the same expression. If so, the passage there would mean: "If the water is shallow and one crosses the river on sandals, is that a good crossing?"

27. Literally, "becomes one-does-not-know-what-is-in-the-heart."

28. Gmf, "to find useful."

29. I take *hry s3*, "under the back," to mean "to support the back" similar to *tsw psd* in *Merikare*, P 136.

30. I.e., is not remembered; a wordplay on *sf* and *wsf*.

### THE SATIRE OF THE TRADES

Like the other Instructions, this work has a prologue and an epilogue which frame the actual teaching and set its stage. A father conducts his young son to the residence in order to place him in school, and during the journey he instructs him in the duties and rewards of the scribal profession. In order to stress the amenities and advantages that accrue to the successful scribe, he contrasts the scribal career with the hardships of other trades and professions, eighteen of which are described in the most unflattering terms.

Ever since Maspero called this Instruction "Satire des *Métiers*," scholars have understood it to be a satire, that is to say, a deliberately derisive characterization of all trades other than the scribal profession. Helck, however, in his new edition of the text has denied its satiric character and has claimed it to be a wholly serious, non-humorous work. I continue to think of it as a satire. What are the stylistic means of satire? Exaggeration and a lightness of tone designed to induce laughter and a mild contempt. Our text achieves its satirical effects by exaggerating the true hardships of the professions described, and by suppressing all their positive and rewarding aspects.

If it were argued that the exaggerations were meant to be taken seriously, we would have to conclude that the scribal profession practiced deliberate deception out of a contempt for manual labor so profound as to be unrelieved by humor. Such a conclusion is, however, belied by all the literary and pictorial evidence. For tomb reliefs and texts alike breathe joy and pride in the accomplishments of labor. Moreover, the principal didactic works, such as *Ptahhotep* and the *Eloquent Peasant*, teach respect for all labor.

In short, the unrelievedly negative descriptions of the laboring professions are examples of humor in the service of literary satire. The result is obtained through unflattering comparisons and through exaggerations that rise to outright fabrications. What if not a fabrication for the sake of caricature is a bird-catcher who does not have a net—the very tool of his trade? What if not a caricature is a potter who is compared to a grubbing pig, a cobbler whose hides are termed "corpses," a courier terrorized out of his wits by the dangers of the road, and a fisherman blinded by his fear of crocodiles?

The text is preserved entirely in P. Sallier II, and partially in P. Anastasi

VII (both in the British Museum), both of which were written by the same Nineteenth Dynasty scribe. Small portions are preserved on an Eighteenth Dynasty writing board in the Louvre, the Eighteenth Dynasty P. Amherst in the Pierpont Morgan Library, P. Chester Beatty XIX of the British Museum, and numerous, mostly Ramesside, ostraca.

Though ample, the textual transmission is exceedingly corrupt. Helck's comprehensive new edition has advanced the understanding considerably. But the corruptions are so numerous and so extreme that there remains much room for differing conjectures and interpretations.

Publication: Budge, *Facsimiles*, pls. 65-73. H. Brunner, *Die Lehre des Cheti, Sohnes des Duauf*, *Ägyptologische Forschungen*, 13 (Glieckstadt, 1944). W. Helck, *Die Lehre des Dws-Htjj* (Wiesbaden, 1970).

Translation: Erman, *Literature*, pp. 67-72. B. Van de Walle, *CdE*, 24 (1949), 244-256. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 432-434.

Comments: A. Piankoff, *RdE*, 1 (1933), 51-74 (the Louvre Tablet). A. Théodoridès, *Bruxelles Annuaire*, 15 (1958-60), 39-69. B. Van de Walle, *CdE*, 22 (1947), 50-72. *Idem*, *L'Humour dans la littérature et dans l'art de l'ancienne Egypte*, *Scholae Adriani de Buck memoriae dicatae*, 4 (Leiden, 1969), p. 11. Seibert, *Charakteristik*, pp. 99-192.

(3, 9) Beginning of the **Intruction** made by the man of **Sile**,<sup>1</sup> whose name is 'Dua-khety',<sup>2</sup> for his son, called **Pepi**, as he journeyed south (4, 1) to the residence, to place him in the school for scribes, among the sons of magistrates, with the elite of the residence. He said to him:

I have seen many **beatings**—  
Set your heart on books!  
**I** watched those seized for **labor**—  
There's nothing better than books!  
It's like a boat on water.

Read the end of the **Kemit-Book**,<sup>3</sup>  
You'll find this saying there:  
A scribe at whatever post in town,  
He will not suffer in it;  
As he fills another's need,  
He will 'not lack rewards'.  
I don't see a calling like it  
Of which this saying could be (5) said.

I'll make you love scribedom more than your mother,  
I'll make its beauties stand before you;  
It's the greatest of all callings,  
There's none like it in the land.