

HERMANN RANKE, 1878-1953

Hermann Ranke, former Curator of the Egyptian Section, died April 22nd, 1953, at Freiburg, Germany, in his 75th year. At three periods during his life he was connected with this Museum for several years. After he got his doctorate at Munich in Assyriology he was an assistant to Dr. Hilprecht in the Mesopotamian Department of the University Museum and in 1902-1905 prepared the volume *Babylonian Legal and Business Texts from the Time of the First Dynasty of Babylon*. As an assistant at the Berlin Museum during the succeeding years he was primarily engaged in Egyptology and became professor of Egyptology at Heidelberg in 1910, with a full professorship in 1922. In 1937 his resignation was compelled by the Nazi regime on the grounds of what was called un-German activities. He found generous asylum in this country as Curator of the Egyptian Section of the University Museum and Professor of Egyptology at the University of Pennsylvania in 1938. When the United States entered the Second World War he felt obliged to leave, since Mrs. Ranke was in Germany with the last of their three children. This was a son who had joined the army and was subsequently killed in the war. When the war was over Dr. Ranke recommenced his teaching in Heidelberg as professor emeritus; this chair for Egyptology has since been discontinued. He returned to Philadelphia as a visiting professor and curator in 1948 for two years and thereafter continued teaching at Heidelberg until 1952. As the Curator of the Egyptian Section he prepared the first guide to the collection (UNIVERSITY MUSEUM BULLETIN XV, 2-3), rearranged the mummy room, commenced work on the publication of the excavations at Denderah made by Clarence S. Fisher thirty-five years ago, and effected some valuable acquisitions including the painted stela in the spirited style of the period prior to 2000 B.C. (*op. cit.*, Fig. 18), the kneeling statue from the time of the Persian conquest of Egypt (*op. cit.*, Fig. 32), and the Hathor statue from the last century B.C. (*op. cit.*, Fig. 33). These he published with a scholarly discussion.

Among the many other publications of Hermann Ranke there are three which should be emphasized here. First, he translated James H. Breasted's famous *History of Egypt* in 1911; this translation remained the only dependable comprehensive presentation of ancient Egyptian history for the layman in the German language for two decades. Further,



Photograph by Reuben Goldberg

he prepared a new edition of Adolf Erman's pioneer book *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben in Altertum* published in 1885 (with an English edition of 1894 entitled *Life in Ancient Egypt*), a survey of Egyptian culture fascinating for the general reader and illuminating for the specialist. The original edition became obsolete rather quickly in consequence of the immense progress of Egyptology during the decades around 1900. Ranke's difficulties in preparing a thorough revision can hardly be appreciated. He succeeded admirably, however, in retaining the merits of Erman's book; the new edition published in 1923 is still one of the best introductions to the ancient Egyptian world and at the same time a source of dependable and important information for Egyptologists. The latest and most important work of Ranke is *Die aegyptischen Personennamen* in two volumes, the publication of which was completed only a few months before the author died. Presenting the entire repertory of Egyptian personal names, it is one of those few books which cannot be replaced and will be useful for generations to come. The second volume contains discussions of cultural and historical questions pertaining to the names, and these represent a valuable contribution to our understanding of Egypt. They are composed with conscious artistry and combine a fine feeling for the subject with sound scholarship—all this is characteristic of the author's lifework.

The present writer has very good reason always to remember his predecessor and venerated friend with warm gratitude, and he has heard often that Dr. Ranke was as popular and highly esteemed by his colleagues and students in Philadelphia as he was in his homeland and elsewhere. Though life laid hard burdens upon Hermann Ranke and his wife, to the end he retained his kindness, concern for others, and congenial spirit.

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