HOWARD CARTER

HOWARD CARTER, Hon. Sc.D. (Yale University) and Hon. Member, Real Academia de la Historia, Spain, known to all the world as the discoverer of the tomb of Tut'ankhamûn, was born at Swaffham, Norfolk, in 1873, and died, after a grievous illness, on March 2 last. He was the youngest son of Samuel Carter, the animal painter, whose works depicting famous racehorses, scenes of deer-stalking, etc., adorn the walls of many of our country houses. As a lad Howard was taught painting by his father, and the love and knowledge of animals which he retained throughout life was early fostered by his having the care of his father’s menagerie in the garden of the family house in the Richmond Road, South Kensington. He once told the present writer that in his boyhood he made his pocket-money by painting portraits of pet dogs, cats, and parrots for some of his father’s clients.

It was in the summer of 1891 that he first became connected with Egyptian studies. I was then in need of assistance in inking-in the mass of pencil tracings that had been made the previous winter at Beni Hasan, and Lady Amherst of Hackney, with whom I was staying at Didlington Hall, Norfolk, suggested that Howard Carter, who was at the time living at the neighbouring village of Swaffham, would be most useful for this purpose. I interviewed him at Didlington, and shortly afterwards his father brought the young Howard to London to see Mr. Griffith and myself at the British Museum, where we arranged to engage him for three months on the Beni Hasan tracings. The following October the Committee of the Egypt Exploration Fund agreed that Carter should accompany me to Egypt and we worked together at Beni Hasan and El-Bersheh till the end of the year. Mr. Petrie had just begun his excavations at El-'Amarna, and as he needed assistance there it was arranged that Carter should join him at the beginning of 1892 and excavate, under Petrie’s supervision, certain parts of the site on behalf of Lord Amherst of Hackney. This was Howard’s first experience of digging in Egypt, and on the termination of the work at the end of May Petrie and he returned to London.

In the autumn of 1892 Carter was appointed draughtsman to the Archaeological Survey of the Fund and joined me at Beni Hasan, where he made the coloured drawings of dogs, birds, and other animals depicted in the ancient paintings that are published in Beni Hasan, iv. It had been arranged in London that, after completing the survey of El-Bersheh tombs, we should begin a survey of those a few miles south at El-'Amarna. Permission to do this work was applied for from the Antiquities Department but was refused by the Director-General, Monsieur J. de Morgan, on the ground that the French Institute proposed to do it themselves. On this news reaching London we were instructed to explore the region on the eastern bank of the Nile between El-Bersheh and Dër el-Gebrâwi. Soon after our arrival at the latter place Carter was detached from the Survey and ordered by the London Committee to proceed to Simbelawîn in the Delta, there to join Mr. Guthrie Rogers and help him to excavate that site. Carter left Asyût early in February and remained in the Delta till the middle of April, but as no permit was received from the Museum authorities, no work could be done; however it was while in northern Egypt that Carter acquired his knowledge of colloquial Arabic.

In the autumn of 1893, when the Egypt Exploration Fund undertook to copy the scenes and inscriptions in the temple at Dër el- Bahri, Carter was appointed draughtsman on the
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staff of Professor Naville, and during the next six years was continuously at work drawing
in the famous temple; his pencil drawings are reproduced in collotype in the six volumes on
Dër el-Bahri published by our Society. At the end of 1899, when Professor Maspero entered
on his second term as Director-General of the Department of Antiquities, the Egyptian
Government decided to reconstitute the Department, and Carter was appointed Inspector-in-
Chief of the Monuments of Upper Egypt and Nubia, with headquarters at Thebes. He at
once threw himself whole-heartedly into his new work, and during the three years that he
was in Upper Egypt he did much in restoring the temples of Western Thebes, Edfu, and
Kôm Ombo. At Abu Simbel he installed an electric light plant, and afterwards carried out
the installation of electric light in six of the royal tombs in the Bibân el-Mulûk. In January
1902, at Carter's suggestion, the American, Theodore M. Davis, undertook to finance a
systematic exploration of the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings at Thebes for the benefit
of the Department of Antiquities, and this work was carried out under the personal super-
vision of Carter. Among the discoveries made were the tombs of Tuthmosis IV and Ḥatshep-
sut. During the three years that Carter remained at Thebes he also put up the iron doors to
many of the painted tombs in the Theban necropolis that had been cleared by the present
writer; these included the tombs of Imisibe (No. 65), Ḥeke renheh (No. 64), Sebkhotp (No.
63), Thanuny (No. 74), Nespenefrhor (No. 68), Amenhotpe-sise (No. 75), Ḥaremḥab (No. 78),
and several others.

In 1903 Carter was transferred to the Inspectorate of Lower and Middle Egypt and made
his headquarters at Sakkarah. Soon after his arrival there an incident occurred which led
to his resigning the post that he held under the Egyptian Government. One afternoon his reis of the guards of the necropolis came to Carter's office to report that a party of French-
men, very much the worse for liquor, demanded admittance to the Serapeum although
they did not possess the necessary tickets. One of the visitors struck a guard, and this led
to a free fight. Carter, on his arrival at the scene, remonstrated and was answered by insults.
He then ordered the guards to protect themselves and one of the Frenchmen was knocked
down. On their return to Cairo the visitors lodged a formal complaint against Carter and the
French Consul-General demanded an apology. Carter refused to give it, saying that he had
only done his duty, and as a result of his refusal he had to resign his post. Maspero was greatly
distressed about this affair and wrote to several of Carter's friends saying that he did not
know what the Antiquities Department would do without him, and begged us to persuade
him to return to the Department. Carter, however, was adamant in his refusal to apologize
and preferred to return to private life. He then gave up archaeological work for a time and
earned his living by painting the beautiful water-colour pictures of Egyptian scenery which
are a joy to all those who were fortunate to secure examples.

In 1906 Carter was employed by Theodore M. Davis to make drawings of the most
important objects that had been found in the tomb of Iouiya and Touiyou in the Biban
el-Mulûk; these are published in colour in the volume The Tomb of Iouiya and Touiyou by
Maspero and the present writer.

In 1907 Lord Carnarvon came out to Egypt and obtained a permit to dig at Thebes.
When he had completed a short season on his own, Maspero insisted that if another permit
was granted an expert excavator must be employed, and recommended Carter for the post.
This was the beginning of Carter's connexion with Carnarvon; they spent the next four
seasons digging, and the results were published in Five Years' Explorations at Thebes,
Oxford, 1912. Carnarvon then decided to explore a Delta site and was given a permit for
Sakha (the ancient Xois) some thirteen miles to the east of Sais. As it was only possible to
excavate here late in the season, Carnarvon, Carter, and the rest of the party did not arrive
at Sakha till April when the weather was abnormally hot, and after a fortnight they were practically driven from their camp by the extraordinary number of cobras that infested the place.

Shortly before the Great War broke out Carter had persuaded Carnarvon to return to Thebes and dig in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings. A permit was applied for and obtained from the Department of Antiquities and Carter was once again back in his favourite haunt. On the outbreak of war all work at Thebes was at once closed down, but Carter in his solitary walks over the necropolis succeeded in finding the long-sought-for tomb of Amenophis I. For his account of this discovery the reader is referred to the paper printed in this Journal, vol. 3, 147 ff. Later he located the tomb of Princess Hatshepsut which the Arabs had recently plundered (JEA 4, 107 ff.).

The winters of 1919 to 1921 were spent in exploring the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, but without success of any kind. Then, when the systematic digging was almost completed, Carter made the most sensational archaeological discovery that has been made in Egypt—he found the tomb of Tut'ankhamān with its extraordinary wealth of jewellery and furniture. He cabled the news to Lord Carnarvon, who immediately left for Egypt with Lady Evelyn Herbert. After inspecting the chambers of the tomb, Carnarvon and his daughter at once returned to London, and in a speech on the night of January 11 at the Central Hall, Westminster, following a lecture on previous explorations in the Bībān el-Mulūk delivered by the present writer, he gave an account of the discovery and of what he had seen.¹

Carter at once realized that only with the help of a large staff of expert workers could he attempt to clear the tomb of all the treasures it contained. Fortunately this problem was quickly solved through the generosity of the Egyptian Expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In answer to Carter's appeal, Mr. A. M. Lythgoe, the curator of the Egyptian Department of the Museum, placed at his disposal Mr. A. C. Mace, one of his associate curators, Mr. Harry Burton, their expert photographic recorder, and Messrs. Hall and Hauser, draughtsmen to their expedition. At the same time Mr. A. Lucas, director of the Chemical Department of the Egyptian Government, offered his aid, and all were soon at work. During the years that followed other workers were enrolled, including Dr. Alexander Scott, F.R.S., and Dr. Derry of the Egyptian State University, Cairo. Altogether it took ten years to record the contents of the tomb and to preserve the objects so that they might be safely packed for transport to the National Museum at Cairo. Carter and his staff published three popular volumes on the tomb and its contents between the years 1923 and 1933; but much remains still to be published. The Card Catalogue of the contents of the tomb, as well as the notes made by Mace, Dr. Alan Gardiner, Lucas, and the present writer, have been deposited by Carter's niece, Miss Phyllis Walker, in the Griffith Institute at Oxford where they will be kept until provision has been made to print them.

P. E. NEWBERRY.

¹ Lord Carnarvon's speech was printed in extenso in most of the English daily newspapers of Friday, January 12, 1922.