

ment to express their thanks to King Ptolemy V (about 200 B.C.) for remitting certain taxes that they had formerly been required to pay. In 1802 the British captured this part of Egypt, and among the plunder seized from Napoleon's forces was the "Rosetta Stone," which was taken to England and stands today in the British Museum.

Decipherment of the Rosetta Stone proved to be a very difficult problem. Many scholars tried their hand at it, but it was nearly twenty years before success was attained. The Greek version was easy to read and it was a good guess that the other two types of writing gave the same message. However, no one knew anything about the language, or about the type of writing involved. Eventually a young French scholar, named J. F. Champollion, succeeded in comparing proper names in the Greek section with certain signs that occurred at the corresponding places in the hieroglyphic lines. Champollion was a student of Coptic, the language of Egypt in the early Christian centuries. On the assumption that the ancient language was somewhat similar he made guesses as to the pronunciation of some of the words in the hieroglyphic text. In 1822, he published his interpretation of the hieroglyphic writing, and a solid foundation was laid for subsequent study of the language of ancient Egypt.

2. The Nature of the Writing.

The hieroglyphic writing was a system different from anything that had ever been discovered before. It had begun as a sort of picture writing, in which an actual picture was to convey the desired message. Eventually, however, certain pictures came to represent particular words. Thus a drawing that depicted a man's legs might simply mean "to run," and could be used after a picture of a man, a woman, or even a cow, to indicate that the one referred to was running. In the Egyptian language, as in Hebrew, and even sometimes in English (cf. sit