

Lecture No. 2.

seem at first to have been used to represent simply the thing pictured but the earliest Egyptian writing that we have is already well past this stage. The signs have already at the earliest period from which we have any writing *been standardized* so that they convey definite ideas.

A sign is not simply a picture supposed to tell everything that can be seen in the picture, but it is a definite idea. For instance, in this early period of Egyptian writing, if it was desired to present the idea that a woman was standing, one would not draw a picture of a woman standing up, but one would draw two pictures, one of a woman seated and one of a man standing. The picture of the woman expressed the idea of a woman, while the picture of a man standing expressed the idea of standing, and so the two pictures together give the idea of a woman standing.

Or if it was desired to present the idea that a steer was running, one would draw a picture of a steer standing still and a picture of the legs of a man in the motion of running. The picture of the steer simply conveys the idea of a steer, while the picture of the legs of a man, presents the idea of running.

This ^{at} age of the Egyptian hieroglyphics presented an idea rather than a real picture. In time these came to stand not simply for the idea, but for the word which was used to express the idea. For instance, the picture of an eye stood for the idea of seeing and also for the word "irj" which means to see. Since the word "do" in Egyptian has practically the same sound as the word "to see" the picture of the eye soon came to be used also for the word "irj" which means to do. Consequently the idea of doing is expressed in Egyptian by the picture of an eye, and the eye occurs with this idea much more frequently than with the idea of seeing.

In this way, the picture writing of Egypt came to assume the meaning of syllables and of sounds, in addition to the original