THE ARABIC PAPYRI IN THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY.

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THE Arabic Papyri described in this Catalogue were purchased together with a large number of paper fragments by the late Earl of Crawford in the year 1899. They were placed by him for deciphering and cataloguing in the hands of the late Dr. Josef Karabacek, director of the K. K. Hofbibliothek, Vienna, a scholar who may be regarded as the founder of this particular study, whose works dealing with it are models of scholarship, erudition, and sagacity, and are indispensable to all who have to handle similar material. Though the documents were in his possession for some years, he appears to have found no time to do work upon them, and when the collection became the property of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, in 1901, it was sent over from Vienna, and presently put into the hands of the present writer, who published some specimens of its contents in the Florilegium dedicated to M. de Vogüé in 1909. With the authorization of Dr. Guppy, Librarian of the John Rylands Library, the present writer had these documents mounted between glass sheets, and arranged in boxes similar to those used for lantern slides; since his time was largely taken up with other work, and he had repeatedly to travel in the East, he thought it best to send these back to the Library, and pay


2 Glass which had been used for X-ray photographs was supplied at a low price for this purpose by the Radcliffe Infirmary.
occasional visits to Manchester to study them. At Dr. Guppy's request he made in 1931 a final verification of his materials.

The town most frequently mentioned in these documents is Ushmun, sometimes in the dual form Ushmunain. These names are of frequent occurrence in the papyri, and the passages in which they occur have been collected by A. Grohmann, in an article which contains valuable information about these as well as about other local names which occur in these documents. His conclusions with regard to the extent of the kurah of Ushman or Ushmunain are confirmed by the Rylands papyri, which might possibly have supplemented them if the document XI. 19 had been more fully preserved. The dual form is explained by the division into an Upper and a Lower Ushmun, both copiously illustrated by Grohmann. From the document cited it would appear that Darūṭ might also have had a dual form since there was a Darūṭ the Less. As will be seen from the Index of Local Names the documents do not either emanate from or belong exclusively to this district, but are likely to have been consigned to the waste-paper baskets (or their equivalents) of residents there. Indeed since the great majority of the scraps belong to letters, which might from their nature come from anywhere, we should expect to find references to places at a distance from Ushmun. On the other hand the documents which do not belong to this class are likely to belong to Ushmun or its district, even when the fragment contains no allusion by which its home can be identified.

A list is given at the end of the work of dated documents, and the greater number belong to the third century A.H., while a few belong to the second, some to the fourth, and (perhaps) a very few to the fifth; the use of papyrus as late as this is surprising.

They have been classified in the manner shown in the Table of Contents, but it has not always been easy to decide whether a document should be included in one of these groups, or relegated to the mass of 'Minor Fragments.' Size and legibility have been the determining considerations.

1 Archiv Orientalní, Journal of the Czechoslovak Institute, Prague, iii (1931), p. 388 sqq.
The contents of waste-paper baskets have a tendency to be similar in all ages and with all nations. Documents of importance rarely find their way thither; such are either carefully guarded or carefully destroyed. The majority of those which have got into this collection are of a sort which were neither valuable nor dangerous; chiefly private letters of persons whose lives entered neither into political nor literary history. Few of these are preserved intact; most of them were torn either vertically or horizontally before being consigned to the rubbish heap, whence only a portion remains. Even when such documents are preserved intact, interpretation is often difficult, since the matters with which they deal, though familiar to the addressee, are quite unknown to outsiders; domestic joys and sorrows, difficulties and expectations, for the understanding of which family history is requisite. Where, as in the majority of cases, what is preserved is only a scrap or torn portion of a letter, ingenuity would be wasted in the endeavour to reconstruct it.

It would seem that Professor Karabacek had hoped to be able to piece together complete letters from some, at any rate, of the fragments, and the present writer has in one or two cases been able to effect this. The process could not often be carried out, since what survives is most frequently either the commencing or the final salutation; care perhaps was taken to destroy the actual messages. Of the peril which sometimes attended the preservation of a letter we have a hint in VI. 6, where the writer requests that it be burned after perusal: the contents do not explain the necessity for this. The danger resulting from preservation is clearly illustrated in one of Tanukhi’s anecdotes.1 Abu’l-‘Abbas, brother of the celebrated vizier Ibn al-Furat, noticed hanging up in a confectioner’s shop a letter (to be used for wrapping sweetmeats) which he perceived to be in the script of one Husain b. ‘Amr, who had been secretary to al-Muktasfi (ob. 289 A.H.) when he was a provincial governor. Abu’l-‘Abbas ordered his slave to purchase some of the confectioner’s wares and see that they were wrapped in this particular cover. The

1 Translated in Islamic Culture, vi (1932), p. 384.
letter proved to be a communication to the vizier ‘Ubaidallah b. Sulaiman in which the future Caliph was charged with viciousness and incompetence and his recall urgently advised. Abu’l-‘Abbas preserved the document as a weapon to be used, if desirable, against its author, and presently, when al-Muktafi was Caliph, an occasion arose on which he employed it effectively for that author’s ruin. Unfortunately his procedure enabled his enemies to represent him as a dangerous person to the vizier in whose favour he had employed this weapon, and who, if Tanukhi is to be believed, put him to death with poison.

Besides illustrating the reasons for destroying correspondence this anecdote also indicates that individuality of script in this alphabet of at most 14 signs was no less marked than in ours of 52. And indeed there is this individuality in the fragments which form the collection which is here described.

Since papyrus was an Egyptian product, it is likely to have been cheaper in that country than elsewhere. There appears to be no reference to the cost in these papyri, which are full of requests for correspondence. Some economy was practised by replying to letters on the verso, and by washing out a communication with the view of using the same material for another. It is clear that many of these documents have been subjected to this process, which naturally does not improve their legibility. References to the practice, and indeed in connexion with paper, are frequent in Arabic literature. It was familiar in the fifth century B.C. to Aeschylus, who has a line

\[ \text{βολαίς υγρόσων σπόγγος ὀλεσεν γραφήν} \]

The material is mentioned by its Arabic name (qirtās) in the fragment XV. 78. Dr. Mingana has called my attention to a passage in the Apology of Timotheus for Christianity,\(^1\) wherein it is distinctly stated that the letter of the Caliph al-Mahdi (775-785 A.D.) was written on papyrus, the Greek word being there given as the equivalent of the Syriac word which is the origin of the Arabic qirtās,\(^2\) and the reed whence it was manu-

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Maqrizi asserts that paper (kāghad) was introduced into the public offices by Ja'far b. Yahya the Barmecide in the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd, who came to the throne in 786 A.D. An interesting notice is quoted by Tha'alibī from Jāḥiz of Basrah (ob. 255 A.H. = 869 A.D.) that 'the papyri of Egypt are to the West like the papers of Samarqand to the East'; while Eastern Islam was using paper, Western Islam continued to use papyrus. Maqrizi (ob. 846 A.H.) does not state whence he got his information, which is remarkably confirmed by Dr. Mingana's document.

By the end of the fourth Islamic century it would seem that papyrus had been driven out of the market by paper, of which in the time of Abu Sālih (sixth century of Islam) there was a factory in Asouan. Another rival which was driven out by paper, and which is not represented in this collection, was parchment. When Jāḥiz speaks of 'skin' in this context, he apparently refers to binding material, not to the material of the book. 'I have seen,' he says, 'in the possession of Dāwūd b. Muḥammad al-Ḥāshimī a book on snakes, more than ten skins; what is correct therein is the amount of one skin and a half.' By 'skin' he appears to mean 'volume,' a word taken over from the time of papyrus rolls. The employment of this material for title-deeds about the year 300 A.H. is illustrated by an anecdote recorded by Ibn Khallikan. A man of Ispahan presented his beloved with certain estates, of which he sent her the title-deeds; these were loaded on a mule. Another lover, who wished to imitate his generosity, and supposed the gift to consist in pieces of parchment, purchased enough to form the load of two mules, and sent them to his lady-love. The latter was indignant at this unsavoury gift, and replied with some stinging verses. The assignation of plantations in IX. 1 is on papyrus, doubtless a less costly, but also an inodorous material.

Where enough remains to indicate the purport of the letters, one is reminded of Dickens's words about the old mail-coaches;
We thought of the numbers of people to whom one of those crazy, mouldering vehicles had borne, night after night, for many years, and through all weathers, the anxiously expected intelligence, the eagerly looked-for remittance, the promised assurance of health and safety, the sudden announcement of sickness and death. The merchant, the lover, the wife, the widow, the mother, the very child who tottered to the door at the postman's knock,—how had they all looked forward to the arrival of the old coach! And where were they all now?

*Mutatis mutandis* this description applies to the recipients of the letters which in a seriously damaged condition have ultimately found their way to Manchester. One of the chief *mutanda* is in the mode whereby the letters were conveyed. The Egyptians of this period had neither mail-coaches, nor in our sense postmen; though the earliest of our documents are orders on the postmaster of Ushmun to supply messengers with mules, conveyance of letters to private persons was ordinarily through unofficial travellers. The case of VI. 8 is clearly exceptional. But the contents of the letters, and the mentality of the recipients, correspond well with this passage. 'The eagerly looked-for remittance' is the writer's chief concern, though the letters more often deal with the request for it than with the despatch.

Next to private letters tradesmen's and household accounts form the largest portion of the collection. These were, of course, private memoranda, doubtless both legible and intelligible to their authors, but conveying little meaning to outsiders, especially when only scraps survive. It has been considered sufficient to transcribe some specimens of these accounts, while relegating the remainder to the 'Minor Fragments.' Cereals and vegetable produce are the wares most frequently mentioned. If the document XI. 11 has been correctly interpreted, it is of some interest as introducing us into the bureau of a provincial apothecary. In the great cities the healing art was practised on a great scale; One Qaṭī‘ī who lived in Egypt in this period 'used to earn every month a thousand dinars from stipends and fees paid by ordinary patients.' He could afford to keep a private hospital for poor people.¹ The members of the profession with whom this document acquaints us more nearly resemble those of Algeria

before the French occupation, as described by a German visitor near the end of the eighteenth century, from whose work M. E. Mersiol has published an amusing extract.¹

Receipts for payment of kharaj, mostly in illegible scrawls, which however Karabacek has taught us to decipher, are well represented in this collection. It would seem that the sums were paid in very small instalments, which must have made the task of the Collector one of great difficulty. Occasionally, however, larger sums are mentioned.

To the study of the import of these documents and their notation the most important contribution known to the writer that has been made since the time of Karabacek is the article in Der Islam, iv (1913), Beiträge zur arabischen Papyrusforschung, by K. W. Hofmeier. This scholar has called attention to the extreme difficulty of reading many of the figures, and has produced some valuable results obtained from his examination of numerous documents of this sort. It would seem, however, that the publication of which a portion had been set up, and which was to have contained facsimiles of such documents with his interpretation of their contents, has not yet appeared. It is likely that that publication would have given convincing proof of the correctness of the solutions which he offers to the difficulties suggested by these receipts; the receipts in the possession of the Rylands Library are not sufficient in number either to confirm his solutions or to suggest others. One difficulty lies in the employment of series of fractions of the dinar, when the arithmetical operation required could have been avoided by giving the sum in Qīrāts. If 24 of these went to the Dinar, it would surely be easier to say 23 quirats than \( \frac{3}{2} + \frac{2}{8} + \frac{1}{8} \) of a dinar. Further in what form were these fractions of a dinar paid? Hofmeier says in silver; hence he renders the formula in some of the receipts \( bilā sarf \) 'without agio,' i.e. the money-changer's commission to be paid by the taxpayer. The process was evidently a somewhat complicated one, if this be right; for in addition to computing the value of the silver coins in terms of the gold dinar, the taxpayer or taxcollector had also to calculate

¹ Deuxième Congrès National des Sciences Historiques, Alger, 1932, p. 311.
the allowance to be made for the money-changer’s commission. The process could only be carried out with facility if there was a fixed ratio between the gold and silver coins and a fixed commission. The texts suggest that the ratio between gold and silver coins was exceedingly variable, and the question arises how it came to be possible to express these fractions of the dinar in silver coins at all. It is unfortunate that Maqrizi’s treatise on Islamic coinage is of no help whatever for these matters, and the Mafātīḥ al-‘Ulūm, though in general of great value, gives scanty information about the coinage.

This Kharaj or Land-tax, about which much has been written, fills many a page in both the historical literature and the collections of anecdotes, and was a matter of prime importance to the people from whom our documents emanate; mention of it crops up incessantly. The sources enumerated introduce us to various forms of dishonesty practised both in assessment and collection, to which some of the perpetrators confess unblushingly; the letters in this collection add some illustrations.

Although so much is heard in these documents of the kharaj, it does not seem that the notices which they contain will modify the results obtained by C. H. Becker from a study of those described by Karabacek collated with the statements of the historians. It would appear that the increase of the duty to something over 1 dinar for a feddan, introduced in 228 A.H. (Becker, p. 118), was not unknown before that period; for in the very interesting lease IX. 6 of the date 182 A.H. whereas the rent to be paid for the land is 1 dinar for 1 feddan, the lessee has to pay kharaj ‘according to the distribution’; the tax then is unlikely to have been identical in amount with the rent, and was clearly a variable sum. There is (apparently) an allusion to a tax on naphtha in II. 8, which resembles the tax on sodium carbonate introduced by Ibn al-Mudabbir about 247 A.H. (Becker, p. 146); this document is unfortunately without date. Kharai on the plant qarad, mentioned in VII. 19, perhaps belongs to the same group of additional demands. The writer of II. 5 complains of a tax called nuzl, which in Spain meant provisions to

1 Al-Nuqād al-Islāmiyyah, Constantinople, Jawā‘ib Press, 1298.
2 Beiträge zur Geschichte Aegyptens unter dem Islam, 1903, pp. 114 foll.
be supplied to a prince who was travelling, and is likely to mean the same here; this is not mentioned in the long list of extortions abolished by Saladin.\(^1\) The fragment XV. 38 is likely to refer to some recently introduced form of taxation.

Of literary works there are here very scanty remains; possibly such books as these Egyptians possessed were too valuable to be consigned to the rubbish-heap. And indeed, when we get notices of the price of books, it appears to be somewhat prohibitive.\(^2\) From the amounts which our correspondents expend, and for which they express unbounded gratitude, we should gather that they were for the most part of small means.

Magic is represented by one fairly lengthy page out of a book of spells, and certain fragments which belong to the same subject. They are similar in character to those of which Tanukhi gives examples in the Second Part of his *Nishwār*, and which he found infallible. How wide-spread the belief in magic was is indicated by the fact that this writer not only belonged to the most highly educated class, but was an adherent of Mu’tazilite doctrine, which ridiculed the belief in Jinn and their activities. The spells which he favours consist largely of Qur’anic verses,\(^3\) but he does not disdain the employment of barbarous words, which are very common in these compositions, and are sometimes, though by no means always, traceable to some foreign language.

The very modest interest and importance which attaches to this material is explained by the considerations which have been given above. The accession of the ‘Abbāsid dynasty had removed Egypt very far from the centre of the empire; the days when its ruler was to be a dangerous rival to the Caliph of Baghdad had not yet arrived. And though we are fortunate in possessing monographs on its rulers and qāḍīs, the information which they furnish is scanty. And in Egypt Ushmunain (about

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\(^1\) Maqrizi, *Khītāt*, i, 104 (quoted by Becker).


\(^3\) Cf. his *Al-Faraj ba’d al-Shiddah*, i, 30 foll.
31 E. long. 28 N. lat.), West of the Nile, not far north of Tell-
el-Amarna (East of the Nile), which has recently become famous, was not a place of much importance; Istakhri and Ibn Ḥauqal call it a small city, populous, possessing palms and cultivated fields, whence many garments are exported. To the palms there are some references in the papyri, notably in the docu-
ment IX. 2, dealing with a bequest of certain plantations. Re-
ferences to wheat, and other agricultural produce, are frequent. On the other hand the orders for clothes suggest that these were imported rather than exported. The inhabitants were very largely Copts, whose names figure largely in the papyri, mixed with others which are evidently Muslim. Jewish names also occur, but rarely. Probably the life in this 'city' and the villages of the district (according to Abu Șāliḥ 300 in number) was not very different from that which is so vividly described by Ṭā Ḥā Ḥusain in the autobiography of which Mr. Paxton has furnished a translation. They were indeed interested in changes in the government, but their concerns were mainly domestic and either agricultural or commercial. Earnest students, like Shāfiʿi and Ṭabarī, who travelled far and wide to hear traditions, would not ordinarily visit such places. Several of those which are mentioned in the documents are to be found in the geographical Index to the work of Abu Șāliḥ, edited by Mr. Evetts,¹ where details of their churches and monasteries are furnished.

The material collected here is unlikely to be of much interest to the historian, but it may have some for the sociologist. He will not fail to be struck by the important part played by women in the management of affairs. A large number of the letters are either from or to women, who give instructions about the management of estates, and interfere with the collection of kharaj, besides exerting their influence in domestic matters. If their correspondence was written and read by themselves, and not through professional letter-writers, they must have attained a good standard in education, since grammatical mistakes are slight and infrequent, colloquialisms are rare, and ability to read these documents at all is not easily acquired.

¹ The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt, Oxford, 1895.
We should gather that the relations between the Muslim and Christian communities were ordinarily of a friendly character, though I. 4 suggests discrimination against the Copts. In many of the lists dealing with business matters Muslim and Coptic names figure miscellaneously, and the complaints which many of the letters contain appear to be unconnected with the religious difference. To the harsh conditions which some of the Caliphs imposed on the dhimmīs it would not be easy to find any illusion in this material. Neither do the sectarian storms which raged in other Islamic territories seem to have affected these back-waters.

For historical allusions the treatises of al-Kindī, edited by Mr. Guest,¹ have proved useful; for geographical matter the monumental work of ‘Alī Pasha Mubārak² has been found a mine of information. For the identification of Coptic names the recently published work of Dr. Gustav Heuser³ has been very helpful.

The writer has endeavoured to profit by the study of the works of the masters of Arabic papyrology, Karabacek, Becker, Grohmann, Hofmeier and others.

Although much time and trouble have been spent on the classification, decipherment, and to some extent interpretation of the documents, the utmost for which the writer hopes is that the judgment of experts on his work may be lenient. There are indeed certain matters which evidently call for excuse or apology.

In the first place he has not deemed it necessary to furnish photographic facsimiles of all the documents; he believes the selection which he has made will be sufficient to enable the student to estimate the correctness of the transcriptions, and to illustrate the paleography of the periods to which the documents belong, and the classes from which they emanate. Should any student require a facsimile of any document which has not been reproduced in this way, it will be easy to procure one

¹ Governors and Judges of Egypt, Gibb Memorial, 1912.
² Al-Khīṭat al-jadīdah al-Taufiqiyah, Cairo, 1309 etc. A.H.
³ Die Personennamen der Kopten, Leipzig, 1929.
⁴ Adab al-Kuttāb, Cairo, 1341, pp. 57 and foll.
at small cost by application to the Librarian with reference to case and number. The 'old numbers,' i.e. those which were attached when the preliminary survey was made, have been recorded, solely for the purpose of rendering the finding of the plates required easy and certain.

In the second place the documents have been with rare exceptions copied in the ordinary Arabic script with diacritic points, though these are almost entirely absent from the originals. We learn, e.g. from the handbook of Abu Bakr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī, who died 338 A.H., and so was contemporary with the writers of many of these documents, that the insertion of diacritic dots was regarded as an insult to the intelligence of the reader, though it is admitted that their omission often led to serious misunderstanding. An earlier author on the art of letter-writing, Ibrahim b. al-Mudabbir (ob. 279 A.H.) in his Risālah al-ʿAdhraʾ¹ goes so far as to warn the letter-writer against inserting diacritic points or vowel-signs, except where a word is so difficult that the addressee is quite sure to be non-plussed by it. He adds that he prefers to be in doubt about a word to the disgrace of points and vowel-signs, and that the Caliph Maʿmūn had severely condemned their use. The poet Abū Tammām (ob. 228 A.H.) speaks of a letter with dia-
critic dots and vowel-signs as a curiosity.² Examples of mistakes which arose from their absence are given in al-ʿAskari’s work on textual corruption.³ The grammarian Mubarrad records a serious one dating from the first century of Islam.⁴ Yet, when the letters are carefully formed, as in the scripts of the second century, a faithful copy might well leave it to the reader to insert them; for usually one who knows the language can do this with certainty, when the form of the consonant is distinct. The practice of employing the same sign for B, T, Th, N, Y is not so very different from our method of using the combination OUGH for sounds as dissimilar as UFF and OW, etc. In the greater number of cases this condition is by no means fulfilled. Some of the initial salutations are so written that it would be no great exaggeration to say that the same sign is employed

¹ Ed. Zaki Mubarak, Cairo, 1931, p. 25. ² Diwān, Beyrut, 1889, p. 374. ³ Kitāb al-tašrif wa-tahrif, Cairo, 1908. ⁴ Kāmil (Cairo, 1308 A.H.), i, 292.
for at least nine different letters; and though these formulae owing to their frequent recurrence are legible, greater difficulty arises when the practice is extended to the rest of the document. The decipherer has in such cases to interpret; it seems best to furnish a complete interpretation.

In the third place, since a Catalogue is not the same as an edition, the writer has exercised some licence with regard to the amount of material to be reproduced or translated. From the description given above of the Minor Fragments (§ XV), it will be seen that little or nothing would in most cases be gained from a complete reproduction and translation. It would resemble a lengthy series of Dear Sir and Yours sincerely. The assignation of particular compliments to particular officials, which, if properly observed, would give a clue to the position of the addresses, seems to belong to a period later than these papyri. Hilâl (360-447 A.H.) gives a detailed account of the usage of the fourth century of Islam.¹ In the handbook of Muḥammad b. Yahyā al-Ṣūli (ob. 336 A.H.)² the assignation would seem to be far less stereotyped. Some of the questions which arose with regard to these initial compliments involve subtle considerations. Thus according to some authorities May I be made your ransom should not be addressed to a superior, since a ransom should be the equivalent of the ransomed, and this formula would imply equality with the addressee. No such inconvenience would attend the wish which we occasionally find, that the addressee may outlive the writer, or that the addressee may outlive his wife.

Where what is preserved of the longer letters consists entirely of compliments and salutations, translation has seemed superfluous; such proper names, however, as occur in these documents have been recorded in the Index.

The sections which on the one hand have given the writer most trouble, and on the other seem to him the least satisfactory, are those which reproduce Accounts of tradesmen and managers (§§ XI and XII). For the interpretation of the figures employed he has been guided chiefly by Karabacek, but has obtained

² Adab al-Kuttāb, especially pp. 150 foll.
occasional help from some other sources, e.g. the tables appended to the treatise on the *Hamzah* by ‘Abd al-Masih Ṣalib al-Mas‘ūdī. ¹ It might, indeed, have been expected that even in private memoranda figures would have been written so distinctly as to be unmistakable. This expectation is by no means fulfilled, whence the liability to error in the identification of the signs is very serious. That which represents the Greek γ is at times indistinguishable from that which is intended for δ; that which is meant for η might be easily confused with κ. The sign of which Karabacek (or Wessely) discovered the import to be ½ + ¼ is very like one which clearly signifies ⅛. Karabacek has himself called attention to the carelessness with which the signs for dīnār and qīrāt are written. All these signs seem to be scrawled with extra negligence in the receipts for kharaj, where we might expect them to be particularly clear; in these, however, the sums are also written in words as well as the dates, so that the import is fairly certain. The words which signify the fractions *a half* and *an eighth* are ordinarily so written as to furnish little indication of the consonants of which they are composed. The use of the Arabic notation (i.e. the employment of the Arabic letters as figures) appears in a receipt for A.H. 309. The experience of the writer in interpreting the dates on the astrolabes edited by Dr. Gunther ² has shown him that it is possible to render these as illegible as the Græco Coptic figures.

The statement quoted by Mez ³ from Yahyā b. Ādam ⁴ that the dinar was the coin of Egypt, whereas the dirhem was that of Iraq, is in the main borne out by these documents, though the dirhem figures not infrequently.⁵ Hence he is quite right in charging Maqrizi with serious exaggeration in the assertion that the dirhem was not heard of in Egypt till Saladin’s time; and indeed this assertion can be disproved from Maqrizi’s own treatise on the coinage. A curious passage dealing with

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¹ *Takmīl al-Shurūḥāt fi Qawā‘id kitābat al-Hamazāt*, Cairo, 1925.
³ *Die Renaissance des Islams*, p. 445.
⁵ See also C. H. Becker, *Beiträge zur Geschichte Aegyptens unter dem Islam*, 1903, p. 132.
coins is to be found in VIII. 6, which the writer has endeavoured to explain. In VIII. 2 a quarter of a dirhem is sent by a slave, with instructions as to the price to be paid for the different drugs required; the sum does not seem to come right. In most cases where the figures attached to the items might be checked by a total, either the total or some of the items are lost.

The writer's treatment of these documents may therefore meet with severe and possibly just criticism: he can only allege in excuse that he has done his best.

Further excuse must be offered for the writer's procedure in occasionally dealing with the recto and the verso of the same papyrus in different parts of the volume. This was a necessary result of his endeavour to classify the material and arrange it under heads. Any inconvenience that may arise should find its solution in the Index of the papyri according to their location in the Library. Where a number of fragments have been mounted between the same sheets of glass they are distinguished by letters of the alphabet (A, B, etc.), and the student should have no difficulty in identifying them. They have been so mounted chiefly with a view to economy.

In certain cases it will be found stated that some part of the papyrus is in a script unknown to the writer, and possibly in cipher. He has not regarded it as part of his duty to describe these writings any further. The employment of cipher for secret messages at the time of these documents is attested by Ibrahim b. al-Mudabbir,\(^1\) who gives some curious precepts for this purpose. People, he says, in this matter have attached themselves to al-Qummi and al-Isfahani; he does not tell us whether these were the names of persons or of ciphers. His own suggestion is that the letters should be secretly substituted for each other, or that secret ink be employed, of which he mentions several varieties. He also knows methods of tampering with the seals of documents, but does not consider it desirable to describe them.

I will terminate this Preface by again expressing the hope that critics of this work will make allowances for the many difficulties

\(^1\) Al-Risālah al-‘Adhrā, § 19.
which it has involved; and my gratitude to Dr. Guppy both for entrusting me with it, and providing all possible facilities for its execution; to Dr. Mingana, till recently in charge of the Oriental MSS. of the John Rylands Library, for counsel and assistance: and to Mr. U. Cantillon of the Clarendon Press, who has taken great interest in the work, and made many valuable corrections and suggestions.