

Ann Arbor, Mich.  
May 19, 1947

Dear Steindorffs:

As you may well imagine, I have for a long time wished to write you, and have been conscious of my failure to do so; but the demands of my position have been severe upon my eyesight, which, I remark in passing, has improved only in the sense that I have grown more accustomed to the condition and better able to bear with it. The weather has been very unfavorable to both health and happiness.

Your good letter of the 13th has brought a ray of sunshine into my life; and I shall answer at once, not waiting for the arrival of Vergote. Unless I write to the contrary you may assume its safe arrival.

I shall await with pleasant anticipation the appearance of your work on the phonology and dialect-history of Coptic, promising not to question later on what you have been so good as to offer to let me see in manuscript. The fact is that I know too little of the pre-Coptic stages of the Egyptian language to question your results in that field; and I cannot at present bear the strain of putting myself into condition to reconsider even the Coptic phonological problems. I saw Edgerton's article, but did not attempt to master its contents for the reasons just given, and also because I never did <sup>find</sup> ~~his~~ arguments very intelligible. I was brought up in the Sievers tradition, and was able to carry it along through all my work with Littmann, but not with Spiegelberg. My Coptic Sounds was an attempt to apply my Sievers-Littmann tradition to the materials which I derived from my Coptic studies. It was only with hesitation that I tried to apply the tradition to the pre-Coptic stages, with which in fact I am acquainted only at second hand. I am still quite content with what I wrote on the actual Coptic stages of the language; but ~~even~~ even in that field I am no longer in possession of the details with which my mind was filled during the years when I constantly read Coptic texts with my students, and was constantly preoccupied with the questions of Coptic phonology and dialectology. For some years now I have had no students in Coptic, and have had to teach Arabic and Hebrew and other subjects, while cleaning up obligations to the university in the field of Arabic mathematics, including the listing of manuscripts and the cataloging of books. Then too there has been my health, and the need of carrying on until retirement at full term, so as to have something to live on afterward.

Daphne has just had a facial haircut in preparation for her appearance at a tea party to which she is invited.

We are glad to hear of your happy celebration of your anniversary, and hope that you may be spared for years to come, as we have reason to think you will be, living in the good climate of southern California.

Faithfully,

W. H. Woodwell