

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
PITT RIVERS MUSEUM

Telephone 2467

From MR. W. C. BRICE.

Tues., 15th. June '54.

Dear Professor Bennett,

Since I received the proofs of SM III this morning and posted an acknowledgement, I have had the two copies of your long and carefully thought out letter of June 6th. I am extremely grateful that you have been so frank in your assessment of the enterprise. For my part I am not in a position to criticize the whole idea of the undertaking. This is not my speciality, and I undertook to help expecting nothing more than routine checking of proof-reader's queries on minor points. But as I have gone deeper into the whole book, and looked into cross-references, I have come to an opinion very like yours. I would go further in criticizing the transcriptions, for I have checked them against barratelli's drawings and photographs and found numerous errors, of omission or misreading, which could not possibly be due to deterioration of the tablets between the times of Evans and barratelli. Moreover, I embarked on a comparison of the vocabulary and transcriptions, which you ~~did not attempt~~ ^{only tested}, and found again numerous inconsistencies ^{and} errors of reference, which it would take a long effort to check. As you say, the vocabulary was drawn up in another hand, and I wonder if this may give us a clue to the whereabouts of Evans' drawings, which I have been unable to trace. The vocabulary is drawn up on squared paper in a clear square hand. Does this sound like Miss Roberts' work?

You have put the whole case for and against the printing of a transcription in set type, ^{so well} that I cannot do better than pass on your letter to Dr. Border, which I shall do immediately. I had not thought of criticizing the whole idea, as it had been decided on by people much more expert in this than I. But it certainly does seem to me after working through the HT series in Barratelli that at this stage it is a risky task to attempt. In this cursive hand, alternative readings are ~~certainly~~ ^{continually} possible, especially where the tablet is fragmentary. It seems to me a much sounder idea to print a photograph or careful drawing and leave the reader to make his own transcription.

In fairness to Sir John, it should be remembered that he embarked on ~~this~~ ^{SM III} before Barratelli's work appeared, which it did without any warning, so to say, so that he had to abandon a lot of progress and start again. I do not know the history of the project, but I suppose it was at this stage that the decision was made to dispense with photos or drawings of the main HT series and print them instead in "literary" form. Lately of course Sir John's eyesight failed him seriously, and he was working against great physical handicaps. In fact I think the main reason for the failure of his sight was the strain of SM III.

I was about to write to Dr. Border, after checking our ^{against each other} corrections, suggesting very strongly that no publication be made until every cross-reference and reading had again been closely checked by at least one other person. I will do so now, at the same time forwarding

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your letter and strongly supporting your opinion of the need for a drastic review of the whole book.

The ultimate decisions of course lie with the Antiquaries. If they decide to go forward I am prepared to do all I can to help, provided they give plenty of time, as I am sure you will be, too. As for passing on your proof-corrections and tables again, I will gladly arrange for this if the Antiquaries approve. Meanwhile, I will suggest they take back all the material for the present, and decide what best to do.

I will let you know any developments immediately. Meanwhile, with sincere thanks for your very generous help, I remain, with kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
W. C. Brice.