CHAPTER V

THE MORALITY OF EXCAVATION

I AM asked with great frequency by travellers in Egypt and persons interested in Egyptology why it is that the excavation of ancient tombs is permitted: Surely, they say, the dead ought to be left to rest in peace. How would *we* like it were foreigners to come to England and ransack our graveyards? Is it not a sacrilege to expose to view once more the sepulchres and the mummies of the Pharaohs?

Questions of this kind, suggesting disapprobation of the primary actions of archæology, were at first inclined to take the breath away; but it soon became clear that in every case they were asked in all sincerity and were deserving of a studied reply. Moreover, there is no doubt that the whole subject of the morality of excavation, and the circumstances under which it is justifiable or unjustifiable, has been much neglected, and is liable to considerable misapprehension. I therefore venture here to play the part of an apologist and to explain the attitude assumed towards excavation by the small group of Egyptologists of what may be called the modern school, that it may serve as a response, halting but sincere, to this recurrent inquiry.

The main argument in favour of the excavation of tombs by archæologists is easily stated. The careful opening of an ancient Egyptian sepulchre saves for science information and antiquities which otherwise would inevitably be scattered to the four winds of heaven by native plunderers. In spite of the strenuous efforts of the Department of Antiquities, a considerable amount of robbery takes place in the ancient cemeteries. Tombs are rifled, coffins are broken open, mummies torn to

pieces in the search for gold, heavy objects smashed into portable fragments, and valuable papyri ripped into several parts to be apportioned among the thieves. It will not be easy for the reader to picture in his mind the disorder of a plundered tomb. There lies the overturned sarcophagus, there sprawls the dead body with the head rent from the shoulders, there are the shattered remains of priceless vases believed by the robbers to have been of no great value. It is as though the place had been visited at full moon by demented monkeys.

Compare this with scientific excavation. The archæologist records by means of photographs, drawings, plans, and copious notes, everything that there is to be recorded in the tomb. Before he raises the lid of the shell in which the dead man lies he has obtained pictures of the intact coffin at every angle; before he unrolls the bandages from the mummy he has photographed it again and again. There is a rough decency in his dealings with the dead, and a care in handling the contents of the graves which would have been gratifying to their original owner. Every object is taken from the sepulchre in an orderly manner, and the body itself is either buried once more or is sent to the workroom of the archæologist or anthropologist. A tomb which might be thoroughly plundered in half an hour occupies the earnest attention of an archæologist for several days; and the mummy which would have been rapidly torn to pieces in the search for jewels is laboured over for many an hour by men of science.

Which, then, is the better course: to leave the tombs to be rifled by ignorant thieves, or to clear them of their contents in an orderly manner? I do not see how there can be any doubt as to the answer.

But let us assume for the sake of argument that there is no illegal robbery to be feared, and that the question is simply as to whether these ancient tombs should be excavated or left undisturbed. What can be said in favour of the molesting of the dead? What can be brought forward to justify this tampering with oblivion?

Firstly, it is to be remembered that without the excavation of the tombs a large part of the dynastic and industrial history of ancient Egypt could not be reconstructed; and the question thus largely resolves itself into the query as to whether the history of Egypt is worth studying or not. The ancient Egyptians buried in their sepulchres a great quantity of "funeral furniture", as it is called—beds, chairs, tables, boxes, chests, vases, utensils, weapons, clothing, jewellery, and so forth. Almost all the objects of this kind which are exhibited in our museums have been found in ancient sepulchres, almost all the pictures which give us scenes from the daily life of ancient Egypt have been discovered upon the walls of the mortuary chapels; and if there had been no excavation of the tombs very little would have been known about the manners and customs of this antique race.

It was the discovery of the body of Akhnaton, and the consequent determination of his age at death, that made the writing of his biography possible: it was upon the walls of a tomb that his great hymn was inscribed. The invaluable biographies of the nobles of the various dynasties of Egyptian history were mostly recorded upon the walls of their mortuary chapels and tombs; famous texts such as that upon the "Carnarvon tablet", which relates a part of the history of the Hyksos wars, were found in the graves of the dead; the beautiful "Song of the Harper" was engraved upon the wall of a tomb; and so on. If a scruple had held the Egyptologist from interfering with the dead, these inscriptions would be unknown, and man would be the less understood.

The complex character of a human being is expounded only by the study of his forefathers. If we would appreciate the value of a race or nation we must of necessity sit down seriously to a detailed examination of its past. It is as futile to attempt to understand the modern Egyptians from a survey of this little moment of their present existence as it would be at a single interview to gauge the character of a butler or groom who brings no

testimonials with him. The testimonials, credentials, references, and certificates of the Egyptian race are to be found in her ancient tombs; and, say what you will, those who would leave them unexcavated and unstudied are like the trusting and much deceived young housekeepers who place their confidence in servants whose "characters" are not forthcoming. The study of Egyptology is a political necessity, and for this reason alone the tombs must be opened and their contents recorded. Lord Cromer, in a letter to the present writer, speaks of the "value of archæology, which is really only another name for history, *to the practical politician of the present day*". "Incidents in ancient history," he writes, "frequently brought to my mind the facts with which I had to deal during my tenure of office in Egypt"; while both in his Reports and in his *Ancient and Modern Imperialism* he enlarges upon this same theme.

Thucydides said that history was philosophy learnt from examples. "To philosophise on mankind," wrote Taine, "exact observation is not sufficient, but requires to be completed, and knowledge of the present must be supplemented from the history of the past." "History," says Seeley, "lies before science as a mass of materials out of which a political doctrine may be deduced . . . The ultimate object of all my teaching (of history) is to establish this fundamental connection, to show that politics and history are only different aspects of the same study . . . What can be more plainly political than the questions—What ought to be done with India? What ought to be done with our Colonies? But they are questions which need the aid of history. We cannot delude ourselves . . . so as to fancy that commonsense or common morality will suffice to lead us to a true opinion."

These words are especially applicable to Egypt, where there is a complete sequence of many thousands of years of history, and where the historian may watch the Egyptian in his every mood, and may observe his actions under innumerable combinations of circumstances. The

race has not changed its character since the days of the Pharaohs, and in order to know of what the nation is capable in the future we must ascertain what it has done in the past. It is our particular business in Egypt to work for the future, to build up a nation out of the wreck which confronted us in 1882; but, as Edmund Burke said, "people will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors." It is an incontestable fact that the contents of the ancient sepulchres do give us the material to form the basis of the only reasonable study of the Egyptian question—the study of the Present in the light of the Past with an eye to the Future. The records which are discovered in the tombs tell us what Egyptian individuals can accomplish ethically, while the antiquities themselves show us of what they are capable artistically, industrially, technically, and scientifically.

It is to obtain this knowledge, and also, of course, to add to our general material for the study of art, religion, literature, and so forth, that the ancient tombs must be excavated and recorded, and the dead disturbed. Moreover, the mummies and bones of the dead men are of considerable value to science. The work of Professor G. Elliot Smith, F.R.S., and his assistants has led to most important discoveries in connection with the history of disease; and his minute examination of thousands of mummies has been most extraordinarily fruitful. Studies in the origin and growth of such diseases as tuberculosis or plague cannot fail to be of importance; but without the excavation of ancient tombs no such work can be undertaken. I venture to think, too, that the fight against disease is invigorated by the knowledge that certain maladies are of modern growth, and that the known world was at one time free of them.

There is, however, a very widespread feeling against any meddling with the dead. A sentiment which has a large part of its origin in the belief that the spirits of the departed have still some use for their bodies forbids one to disturb the bones which have been committed to

the earth. There is the fear lest the disturbing of the dead should offend the susceptibilities of the living members of the family to which the deceased belonged. A body from which the life has gone assumes, also, a sanctity derived from the mystery of death. It has passed beyond the sphere of our understanding. The limbs which in life were apparently independent of Heaven have suddenly fallen back upon God, and are become the property of the Infinite. A corpse represents the total collapse of our expediencies, the absolute paralysis of our systems and devices; and thus, as the incitement to the mental search for the permanency which must somewhere exist, the lifeless bones become consecrate.

The question, however, is a somewhat different one in the case of the embalmed bodies of the ancient Egyptians. No modern family traces its descent back to the days of the Pharaohs; and the mummies which are found in the old tombs, although often those of historical characters, and therefore in a special sense the property of the Egyptian nation, compel the family consideration of no particular group of persons. Like other antique objects, they fall under the care of the Department of Antiquities, which acts on behalf of the people of Egypt and the scientists of the world. They have been such aeons dead that they no longer suggest the fact of death; like statues, they seem never to have been alive. It is with an effort that in the imagination one puts motion into the stiff limbs, and thoughts into the hard, brown skulls. They have lost to a great extent that awful sanctity which more recent bones possess, for the soul has been so long departed from them that even the recollection of its presence is forgotten. People who would be terrified to pass the night in a churchyard will sleep peacefully in an ancient Egyptian necropolis camped amidst the tombs.

After all, what virtue do our discarded bodies possess that we should dislike to turn them over? What right have we to declare that the mummies must be left undisturbed, when their examination will give us vitally

important information regarding the history and early development of diseases—information which is of real, practical value to mankind? Is it just for us to object to the opening of tombs which contain matter and material so illuminating and of such value to Egypt and the world? Those who hold orthodox religious opinions sometimes point out that the dead should not be interfered with, firstly, because the bodies are temples of the spirit, and, secondly, because they will rise again at the call of the last trump. "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth?" says the Gospel of St. John (v. 28); and the belief in the Second Advent seems, at first sight, to necessitate the preservation of the dead in the tombs. In answer to these contentions, however, one may point out that the mummies of the ancient Egyptians are the notable exception to the general law of total destruction which overtakes the ancient dead in all countries, and which leaves to the present day hardly a trace of the millions of bodies of our remote ancestors. The dissection and scattering of all the mummies in Egypt would add infinitesimally to the number of corpses already reduced to dust and blown about the world. Moreover one may call attention to the words of our Lord: "Let the dead bury their dead," which seem to indicate that no extreme consideration for them is required.

It is often argued, and with far more justice, that the mummies should not be disturbed or removed from their tombs because it is obvious that the ancients took extreme care to prevent any tampering of this kind, and most passionately desired their bones to be left where they were laid. There are many Churchmen who, tracing an historic growth in religion, maintain that the consecration ceremony made by the priests of long ago in all sincerity, and accepted by the people in like manner, is of the same eternal value as any Christian committal of the dead body; and that therefore one is actually sacrilegious in touching a body laid to rest in the name of the elder gods.

In stating the answer of the archæologist we must

return to the subject of illegal excavation, and must point out that scientific excavation prevents the desecration of the tombs by the inevitable plunderer, and the violent smashing up of the mummies in the crazy search for gold. I have come upon whole cemeteries ransacked by native thieves, the bodies broken and tossed about in all directions. I have seen mummies sticking up out of the sand like the "Aunt Sallies" of a country fair to act as a target for the stone-throwing of Egyptian boys. In the Middle Ages mummies were dragged from their tombs and exported to Europe to be used in the preparation of medicines. "The Egyptian mummies," says Sir Thomas Browne in *Urn Burial*, "which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams." There is some reason, also, to suppose that Pharaoh was sold for common manure.

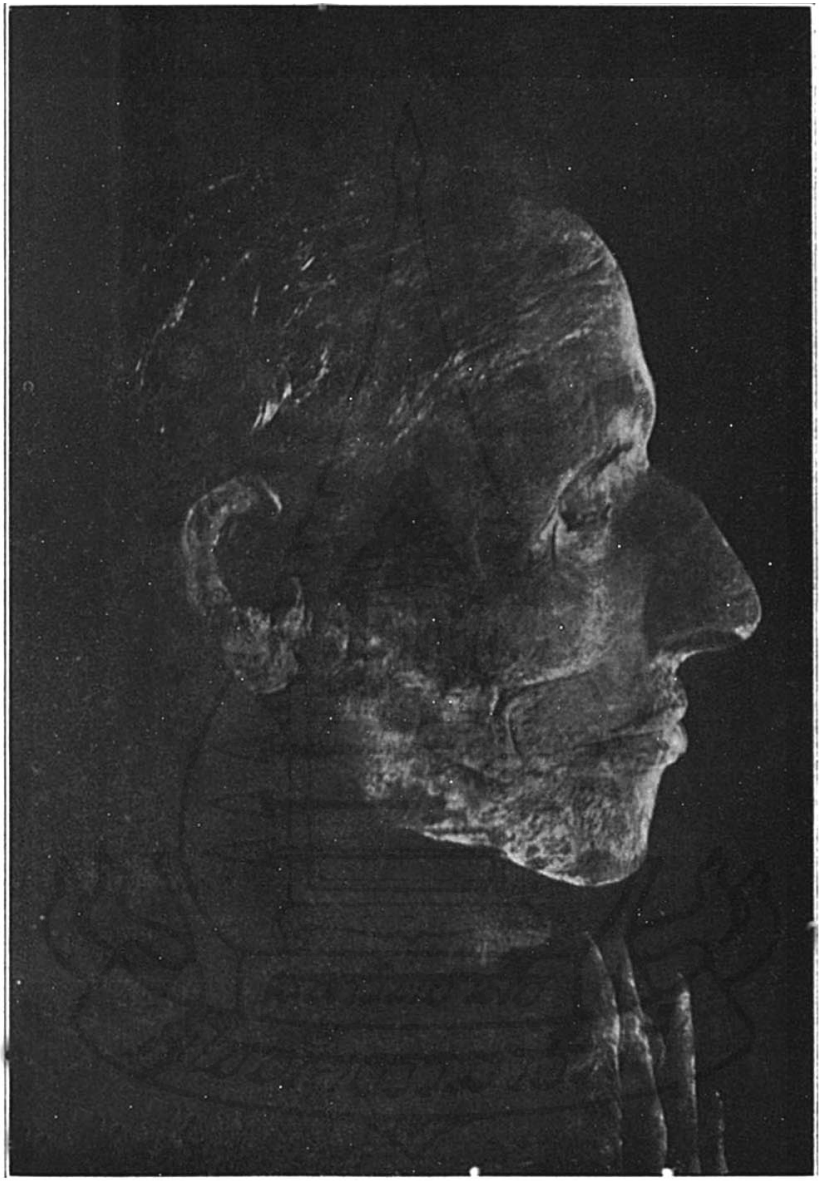
The scientific excavator anticipates the robber whenever it is possible to do so; and if, in the cause of science, the mummies, like the bodies of paupers in the dissecting-room, are sometimes exposed to what may appear to be indignities, these are surely not so great as the insults which they might suffer at the hands of the modern Egyptians, who, in this regard, care not a snap of the fingers for sentiment.

Nevertheless, I am of opinion that the ancient dead should be treated with very great respect, and that they should be left in their tombs whenever it is consistent with scientific work to do so. Though the religious point of view may not be accepted, it is usually undesirable to act without regard to inherited sentiment; and as regards the dead, there is a very distinct feeling at the back of all our minds against any form of desecration. It is, no doubt, a survival which cannot be defended, but it should not be lightly dismissed on that account. Certain mummies of necessity must be examined and dissected, and for this purpose it is often necessary to remove them to scientific institutions; others, in certain cases, require to

be available for public examination in museums. But there is no reason why the bones of one of the Pharaohs, for example, should now lie jumbled in a dusty old box under the table of a certain museum workroom ; nor does there seem to be any particular object served in exposing other bodies, which do not happen to have the protective dignity of the mummies of Rameses the Second and Sethos the First, to the jibes and jests of the vulgar.

It seems reasonable to hold that the mummies of Pharaohs and other historical characters should be available for study at any moment, and should not be buried again beneath the tons of sand and rock from which they have been removed. But most assuredly they should be placed with decency and solemnity in a room set aside for the purpose in the Cairo Museum, and should only be seen by special permission. Certain exceptions might be made to this rule. The mummies of Rameses the Second, Sethos the First, Thutmosis the Fourth, Prince Yuaa, Princess Tuau, and one or two others have such inherent dignity that, in rather more serious and impressive surroundings, they might well remain on regular exhibition in Cairo. It is a pity that they cannot be placed once more in their tombs at Thebes, where they might be visited, as is the tomb and mummy of Amenophis the Second among the hills of the western desert. But there is too grave a danger from the native plunderer, who, in spite of bolts, bars, and police, on one occasion burst into the tomb of this Amenophis and bashed in the breast of the mummy in the vain search for gold. At present there are seven watchmen in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, and it would be quite absurd to replace more of the royal mummies there with such inadequate protection. The tomb of Rameses the Second, moreover, is now destroyed, and the alabaster sarcophagus of Sethos the First is in London; thus neither of these two mummies could be properly enshrined.

The public exhibition of the mummies of the ancient Egyptians in the galleries of the museums of the world,



The mummy of Prince Yuaa. The photograph was taken by the Author on the day of its discovery. The mummy is now in the Cairo Museum

where they are generally stuffed into glass cases amidst dusty collections of pots and pans and sticks and stones, is always objectionable. One does not care to think of the body of a Pharaoh who ruled a mighty empire exposed to the giggling comments of the members of a school treat, or to the hard jests of the American tourist. The only three justifications for the removal of the body from the tomb are that it could not safely be left in its sepulchre, that it is of use to scientists, and that it is of value in the education of the public. Now, the first two of these points do not give reason for its exhibition at all, and the third obviously requires the "setting" to be impressive and conducive to serious and undistracted thought. We are not called upon to amuse the public by means of the earthly remains of a great king: we may leave the business of entertainment to the circus proprietor.

The fact that excavation so often involves the disturbance of the dead makes it a very serious matter, not to be entered into in any but a purely scientific spirit. But there are also other reasons for regarding excavation as in no way a sport.

The archæologist who lays bare an intact burial takes upon himself a grave responsibility. If we admit that the study of the ancient Egyptians is of any value to mankind, then we must also allow that the excavator has a duty to the world to perform when he enters an ancient sepulchre and is confronted by the antiquities which are stored there. The objects which he sees in front of him are not his own: they belong to all men; and it is his business on behalf of the public to get from them as much information as possible. In the present stage of the development of archæology the value of a "find" of antiquities often rests far more in the original arrangement of the objects than in the objects themselves. The sole interest of a scarab, for example, may be in the fact that it rested on the first and not the second finger of the mummy; and the main value of the mummy may be found in the manner of its orientation as it lies in the

tomb. Such evidence as this, however trifling it may seem, must of necessity be the basis of all real knowledge of the history of a race; and the excavator who omits to record by means of photographs, drawings, and notes every scrap of evidence with which he meets, commits a far greater crime than he could at once comprehend, and has failed in his duty to the public. An item is for ever lost: and the history of Egypt is built up by means of items.

Some years ago I excavated a few tombs in Lower Nubia which were in danger of robbery. I photographed the contents *in situ*, recorded the positions of the skeletons and all the objects placed around them, measured and photographed the skulls, and went away believing that my duty to science had been fulfilled. Some months later I showed the photographs of the skulls to a certain *savant*, who examined them closely.

"I notice in these pictures," said he, "that some of the front teeth are missing from the jaws. Had they dropped out in the grave, or had they been knocked out during life? You could, of course, tell from the condition of the jawbone." And it was with considerable shame that I was obliged to admit that I had not made the required observations. The point was an important one. Certain African tribes break out the front teeth for ornamental reasons, and the origin and geographical distribution of this strange custom, which can now be traced back to Pharaonic times, is a matter of far-reaching value to ethnology.

The excavator must be prepared to record everything he sees, and his general knowledge must be such that he will not, by ignorance of what to search for, overlook matters of this kind; for it is a patent fact that, in general, we do not see what we do not look for. The number of tombs in Egypt is limited, and the person who excavates any one of them has an opportunity for observation which can never be exactly repeated. When he has removed the antiquities to the museum he has necessarily obliterated for ever the source of his information, and, unless the contents of the tomb are all duly

photographed and recorded *in situ*, that obliteration is as calamitous as the actual destruction of the antiquities themselves. He may carry off to his museum, let us say, four bronze statuettes of no particular artistic merit or individuality. Their real value to the scholar may have rested almost solely in the fact that they stood at the four corners of the tomb to ward off the evil spirits of the north, south, east, and west; and it is that piece of information rather than the somewhat mediocre objects themselves which must at all costs be preserved.

Thus the responsibility of the excavator is very great, and he must honestly feel capable of meeting the demands which such work makes upon him, and must enter upon his labours *in full consciousness of his obligations to the public*. It may fall to his lot to dig through the stratified remains of a Roman fortress in order to reach the ruins of an Egyptian temple buried far below. To a large extent the Roman walls and buildings must be destroyed, and scholars will afterwards possess only so much information regarding the fortress as the excavator has had the ability to record. If his notes are incomplete, then he may justly be accused of destroying valuables which can never be replaced; and I can see very little difference between him and the crazy villain who cuts a slice out of a famous painting or smashes the nose off a statue. The rarity of antiquities and ancient remains constitutes their special value. Information once destroyed can never be recovered. A stroke of the spade or pick, made before the necessary records are taken, may nullify the labours of many an ancient Egyptian's lifetime. An old priest's philosophy may have been summed up in the burial of a magical figure of Osiris in the earth floor under his bed as a protection against evil, and a too hasty stroke of the pick may lay bare the statuette but at the same time obliterate the traces of the position of the bed, thus rendering the magical little god as meaningless as the thousands of others just like it which line our museum shelves. The point of an arrow lying below the dust of

a royal skeleton may be shown by close observation to have been the cause of death, and a fact will thus be added to history which might have been lost had a rough hand scattered the ashes.

Dead men are not useless; and the excavator must not cheat the world of any part of its great perquisite. The dead are the property of the living, and the archæologist is the world's agent for the estate of the grave. The fact that the world does not yet realise the value of its possessions in this respect is no justification for bad stewardship. A *dilettante* can no more amuse himself by excavating carelessly because the world is not looking than the agent can play the fool with property which is neglected by its owner. Excavation is only moral when it is conducted on the strictest scientific lines for the benefit of mankind. Bad excavating, that is to say, digging for antiquities and not for information, is not the less dishonest because it happens to break no law. It cheats the living men of their rightful possessions which, believe me, are of real practical value to them. It cheats the dead of their utility, and gives in very truth a sting to death and the victory to the grave.

In past years professed archæologists have been surprisingly remiss in regard to the moral principles of excavation. The work of such famous men as Mariette can only be described as legalised plundering, and there are not a few diggers at the present day who have no possible right to touch ancient ground. Mariette made practically no useful records during the course of his work. For example, we do not know with certainty from what tomb came the famous statue of *Shêkh-el-beled*, perhaps the greatest art treasure in Egypt; we do not know how it was found; we do not know whether it was the *ka*-statue of the deceased standing behind the altar, or whether it had some other function in the sepulchre; we do not even know its exact date. It was Mariette's custom to send a native overseer to conduct the work for him, and it was his boast that numerous excavations under his direction

were being carried on throughout Egypt at one and the same time. The antiquities were dug out at a terrific rate, and were hurled pell-mell into the museum in cart-loads. In more recent years European gentlemen, and even native antiquity-dealers, have been given excavating concessions, and have ransacked the ancient tombs and temples in a mad search for loot, no records being made and no scientific information being gleaned.

All antiquities found in Egypt, except those discovered on private property, belong by law to the Egyptian Government; and it has been the custom for many years to allow natives to excavate, should they so desire, on the understanding that they pay all expenses and receive in return one half of the objects found, the work being conducted under the supervision of a native *ghaffir*, or watchman, employed by the Department. The antiquities handed over to the native promotor of the work (not to mention those which he has retained illicitly), are sold by him to dealers and merchants, and the enterprise is often a very profitable one. No records whatsoever are made, and there is a total loss of every scrap of interesting information. Of course, since this is a long-established custom, it is perhaps a difficult one to stop; and, doubtless, there are arguments to be recorded in its favour. I was permitted, however, to put an end to it in my own district of Upper Egypt; and, whilst I was there, no person, native or European, who was not a competent archæologist, or who did not employ a competent archæologist to do the work for him, was allowed to excavate for antiquities or new material. Nor was any person permitted to excavate who desired to do so simply for pecuniary gain and who intended to sell on the open market the objects which fell to his share.

For many years European or American millionaires, bored with life's mild adventure, have obtained excavating concessions in Egypt, and have dallied with the relics of bygone ages in the hope of receiving some thrill to stimulate their sluggard imagination. They call it "treasure

hunting", and their hope is to find a king lying in state with his jewelled crown upon his head. With this romantic desire for excitement one feels a kind of sympathy; but, nevertheless, it is a tendency which requires to be checked. The records of the past are not ours to play with: in the manner of big game in Uganda, they have to be carefully preserved; and the tombs, like elephants, should only be disturbed by those provided with a strictly worded licence. That licence should prohibit merchandise in the relics of the dead, all foolery with the things of the past, and all pseudo-archæological endeavours. None but the honest and disinterested expert can get full value out of a "find", and excavation is not moral unless full value is obtained. What would have happened to the fragile objects found recently by Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Carter in the tomb of Tutankhamen if those two gentlemen had not been trained archæologists working for science and not for loot?

Another aspect of the subject must now be examined. Archæologists whose intentions are perfectly honest often dig out monuments, sepulchres, and temples which require to be protected as soon as exposed; but they do not first consider whether such protection is available. They are overwhelmed by the desire to make discoveries, and they go on digging and digging without any regard for the immovable but frangible objects which are left exposed to destruction in their wake. "Oh, the Government will look after them," say they, not realising that the Government is already straining every nerve and expending every available penny upon such works of preservation, and can do no more. People sometimes believe that the British are vandals; and I must therefore observe in passing that under British direction more money has been spent upon antiquities in Egypt in proportion to the budget of the country than in any other part of the world. During the four or five years previous to the war nearly £300,000 was spent by the Egyptian Government on archæological works; and surely no more can be asked.

In archæological work there is nothing more harmful than the craze for discovery. The archæologist often thinks that it is his business to find antiquities with which to fill the museum which he represents; or, again, he thinks it is necessary to make some startling discovery which will redound to his credit and to that of his institution. This attitude is generally forced upon him by the fact that the persons or societies who have financed his work desire to see a tangible return for their money, and are not satisfied with the heavy records of a dull piece of work such as the planning and clearing up of an empty fortress of Roman date. They insist on their representative going for the plums; and they do not seem to realise that in so doing they are encouraging him to excavate in an unprincipled manner. An archæologist cannot accomplish his duty to the world unless he digs out the unfruitful site as conscientiously and diligently as he would the plenteous one, and records everything minutely, whether it happens to thrill him or leave him cold. This is the first principle of honest work, based upon the quite obvious truth that at the present time we cannot always tell exactly which of our records of the past are going to be considered of value to the future.

In digging thus for the plums, it is the excavator's object to obtain as large a concession from the Government as possible, and to tap as many sites as he may. The result is that far more ruins are left exposed to the scant mercies of the weather, the native robber, and the unscrupulous tourist than would be the case were he to confine himself to working thoroughly over one set of remains. The excavator has no right to expose any immovable monument unless and until he can secure its protection—at his own expense if need be. Being responsible, as I was, for the preservation of hundreds of ancient remains, I felt with peculiar bitterness the callous behaviour of certain archæologists who in past years have opened up ruins which could in no way be protected, and which have now been smashed up and defaced. The

peasants will hack out pieces of bas-reliefs from stone walls to sell to the dealers, or sometimes for superstitious reasons, or again from sheer maliciousness, will break up the most precious treasures of art. No ancient monument in Egypt is safe unless it is walled in, or placed under lock and key in the charge of a custodian; and I do not hesitate to say that it is the bounden duty of the excavator to make full arrangements for such protective measures or ever he puts pick in the ground.

Excavation is being carried on in Egypt on a scale wholly disproportionate to the number of trained field-workers available. Yet it would not be easy for the Government to refuse the desired concessions, since they are generally presented in the name of institutions of high standing; but at the same time the would-be excavator should remember that the Government ought not to give a licence to anybody through a sort of generosity or desire to show magnanimity. It sometimes happens that ancient cemeteries or ruins are situated so far from the nearest police outpost that they are in real danger of illegal plundering by native robbers; and in such cases it is desirable that they should be excavated as quickly as possible even though the persons who conduct the work are not absolutely first-class men. But it should be clearly understood that such danger from unauthorised diggers is the only possible justification for excavations which are not conducted on the strictest scientific lines and under the close supervision of first-rate men. By a first-rate man I mean an archæologist who has been trained in his work; who is imbued with the highest principles, and is aware of his responsibility to the world; who subordinates personal interests and the interests of the institution which he serves to those of science in general; who works for the benefit of his fellow-men, desiring only to give them in complete measure the full value of the property they possess in the regions of the dead; whose general knowledge is such that he will not overlook any item of evidence in the "finds" which he

makes; who is prepared to sit or stand over his work all day long no matter how trying the conditions; who is deft with his fingers as well as with his brain, being able to photograph, draw, plan, mend, and write fluently; and who can organise and control his men. There is no harm in allowing a wealthy amateur to excavate provided that he employs a trained archæologist to do the work for him and does not interfere in it himself, and also provided that he intends to make available to the public the antiquities which fall to his share and all the information which has been gleaned. But there is very real harm done in giving concessions without the most strictly-worded licences, in which are clauses precluding all unscientific work and frustrating all enterprises undertaken entirely for personal gain. The exploiting of the ancient tombs simply for mercenary purposes gives the excavator far too much the appearance and character of a ghoul.

The archæologist, so eager to add to his knowledge by new discoveries, should remember that there is already quite enough material on hand to keep him busy for the rest of his life, material which urgently requires his attention and his protection. The standing monuments of Egypt are still unstudied in any degree of completeness; and if only the various antiquarian societies would send out their scholars to make careful records of the remains which are already accessible, instead of urging them to unearth something new, Egyptology would be established on a much more solid basis. What scholars are thoroughly acquainted with the vast stores of Egyptological material in the museums of the world or with the wonderful paintings and reliefs upon the walls of the temples, tombs, and mortuary chapels now in view throughout Egypt? Why excavate more remains until these are studied, unless the desired sites are in danger, or unless some special information is required? Why fill up our museums with antiquities before public opinion has been sufficiently educated to authorise the employment of larger numbers of curators? Why add to the burden of Egypt by

increasing the number of monuments which have to be protected? It is to be remembered that in some cases the longer an excavation is postponed the better chance there will be of recording the discoveries adequately. Our methods improve steadily, our knowledge grows, the number of expert excavators increases; and each year finds us more fit than we were formerly for the delicate and onerous task of searching the dead.

It will be seen, then, that excavation is not a thing which may be lightly entered upon. It is a very serious business, and involves a grave duty to the public. Even if the arguments in favour of scientific research which I have suggested at the beginning of this paper are considered to be those of a casuist, as no doubt they will be by a certain class of readers, no one will deny that the study of the past has a broadening influence upon our minds, and therefore is not to be trifled with.

In Egypt, where scientific excavations are conducted entirely by Europeans and Americans, one has to consider, finally, one's duty to the Egyptians, who care not one jot for their history, but who, nevertheless, as the living descendents of the Pharaohs should be the nominal stewards of their ancient possessions. What right have we as foreigners to dig out the graves of the ancient Egyptians?

Our right is a limited one. The Egyptians of the present day have no interest in antiquities except when considered as merchandise. They have no idea of what is called scientific work, and excavations conducted by them have not the slightest similarity to those under the supervision of modern archæologists. Yet neither the activities of the native plunderer nor the pressing need for the study of the history of the Nile Valley permits the Government to refrain altogether from allowing excavation; and therefore the work has to be done by trained archæologists without regard to their nationality. This internationalisation of the work can be justified also on the ground that antiquities of so ancient a kind are in many respects the property of the whole world; and, following

out this argument, it will at once be apparent that archæologists must work solely for the benefit of mankind in general, since they are dealing with the property of all men. By admitting the right of non-Egyptian scientists to excavate in Egypt because all the world has the right to hold shares in these mines of information, one admits the existence of the excavator's duty to the world. That duty must never be overlooked. It consists in getting the greatest possible amount of information out of a discovery with the least possible damage to the things found. Any excavations authorised in Egypt which are not of an absolutely scientific character are injustices to the Egyptians and to all men. It is the business of the Egyptologist to work for the welfare of Egypt as well as for the benefit of the world; and if he fail to make the relics of the Pharaohs yield their *full* burden and act to their *utmost* capacity for the purpose of teaching the Egyptians of the future the qualities of their race, and assisting the occupying Power and the world at large to estimate those qualities and their bearing on modern thought, then his excavations are not moral and should not be authorised.

To the few Egyptologists of what one may call the modern scientific school these principles are so obvious that it may seem somewhat absurd to put them into words as I have done here. I am, however, answering repeated inquiries; and, moreover, it is an unfortunate fact that high principles on the subject of excavation are conspicuously absent among all but this small group of Egyptologists. The *savant* is often possessed only by the joy of discovery and the mad desire to find something new. He rushes into excavation like a fighter into the fray, and the consequence is disastrous. He should realise far more keenly than he sometimes does the seriousness of his undertakings and the great responsibilities which are involved. It is only by this realisation that he can justify his labours in the field. It is only by the most scrupulously conscientious work that he can convince the interested public at all of the morality of excavation.