

and sat, or write and wrote), words regularly changed their tense or other relationship by changing their vowels while keeping the consonants *the same*. Hence the hieroglyphic sign came to represent only the consonants involved, and not the vowels. Consequently, the same sign sometimes indicated any one of several words that were entirely unrelated, but happened to have the same consonants. Thus the picture of an eye, which means "to see," is also commonly used to mean "to do," since this word has the same consonants. In time weak consonants in certain words ceased to be pronounced at all, so that a sign came to represent a succession of two consonants instead of three, or even to represent only one consonant. Since often the same picture could stand for any one of several words, it became customary to put a general picture, called a determinative, before a noun to indicate the class of objects to which it belonged. Then the picture indicating the specific word would be usually followed by another sign to represent a word that contained only its last two consonants, and by still a fourth sign to show its final consonant. These peculiar features of the hieroglyphic writing make it extremely difficult to represent in Latin letters, and have resulted in great variety in the forms in which historians have spelled Egyptian proper names in Latin letters. Thus we find the name of the god Amun often written in our histories as Amen or Amon. The "heretic king," Akhenaton (see below), may be referred to, in various books, as Achnaton, Echnaton, Akhnaton, or Ikhnaton. King Thutmose sometimes appears as Tutmosis or Tothmes.

For nearly three thousand years hieroglyphics continued to be written on Egyptian monuments, but for ordinary usage another type of writing became much more common. Papyrus plants were found in great abundance along the Nile, and it was easy to use them to make a sort of paper called papyrus. On