

A NEW INSCRIPTION CONCERNING THE JEWS  
IN EGYPT.

By JOSEPH OFFORD.

SIGNOR Dr. E. Breccia, Director of the Alexandrian Museum, has forwarded to me a report of the acquisitions made for the Collection during 1912, and among these is a Greek inscription of much importance for the history of the Jewish residents in the Delta in Ptolemaic times.

The text is engraved upon a block of marble, and gives eight lines of complete writing. It came from some ruins contained in a mound near to Alexandria, known as Kom el-Akhdar, and the Greek runs as follows :—

Υπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς ἀδελφῆς  
καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς γυναικὸς οἱ ἀπὸ Ξενεφύρεως  
Ἰουδαῖοι τὸν πυλῶνα τῆς προσευχῆς προστάντων Θεοδώρου καὶ  
Ἀχιλλίωνος.

“In honour of the King Ptolemy and of the Queen Cleopatra,  
“ his sister ; and of the Queen Cleopatra, his wife, the Jews  
“ of Xenephyris (have consecrated) the portal of the  
“ Synagogue, the presidents being Theodorus and Achillion.”

The most interesting information rendered by this inscription is in giving a new site as that of a Hebrew settlement and synagogue, in Lower Egypt, at the town of Xenephyris, a place which Stephen of Byzantium tells us was a minor city of Libya, near to Alexandria, meaning probably to the west of that metropolis.

This adds one more to the Israelite communities in Ptolemaic Lower Egypt of which previously only six were known. Of these, papyri and inscriptions, in recent years, have revealed to us *προσευχαί* at Schedia, Athribis, and Arsinoë, in the Fayoum ; and of course at Alexandria. Then there was one whose name and site are unknown, to which M. A. Bouché Leclercq, following Herr Strack, says that Euergetes II granted the right of asylum,<sup>1</sup> and finally

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire des Lagides*, III, 170, note 2.

Oxyrhynchus, which probably possessed a Jewish quarter in pre-Roman times, because in A.D. 83 a papyrus from there speaks of *οἱ ἀπ' Ὀξυρύνχων πόλεως Ἰουδαῖοι*, and also indicates a quarter of the city as being dwelt in by Jews, so they must have been there for some considerable period.<sup>1</sup>

The monarch Herr Strack refers to is the one we find in this Xenyphryis inscription, and it therefore becomes highly probable that it was the very building for which this text was graven, to which Euergetes II gave the *ἀσουλία*; for that the king is Ptolemy Physcon is certain, for his two consorts, his sister, Cleopatra II, and niece, Cleopatra III, are mentioned.

Their names are of assistance in determining the date of the text because Euergetes II married his niece in 143 B.C., and as no allusion is made to his son by her, the inscription probably dates from nearer to 143 B.C. than to 117 B.C. the only period wherein it can be assigned.<sup>2</sup>

## JEWISH NOTES.

By JOSEPH OFFORD.

THE following newly-discovered inscriptions, relating to the Jews residing in Rome, have been edited by M. Müller, of Vienna, in a pamphlet entitled "Die Jüdische Katacombe am Monteverde," and also published in *Wiener Studien*, 1912, pp. 359-369, with a commentary upon the titles given to nine synagogues in the texts (E. Bormann).

1. Names of these synagogues:—

Ἀγουστήσιοι, Ἀγριππήσιοι, Βολουμνήσιοι, καμπήσιοι, Σιβουρήσιοι, καλκαρήσιοι, βερνάκλοι (or βερνακλήσιοι), Ἐβρέοι, ἐλαίας.

<sup>1</sup> Oxyrhynchus Papyrus No. 335. See also the manumission of a slave paid for by Jews of the Synagogue in A.D. 291; a document which mentions the yet unidentified *βουλευτοῦ Ὀνειτῶν*, said in the papyrus to be in Palestine. (Oxyrhynchus Papyrus No. 1205.)

<sup>2</sup> For Jews in Egypt see "Hibeh Papyrus," No. 96, of 250 B.C., and the Magdola Papyri, No. 3, and an Essay by Dr. Mahaffy in *Mélanges Nicolle*, 1905.