

INTRODUCTION

WITH this volume The Metropolitan Museum of Art commences an enterprise which, though far from being pioneer work, has the merit and privilege of renewing a task long neglected—that, namely, of using the fullest mechanical resources of the time to present the sepulchral art of Thebes in faithful reproduction for the benefit of those who must perforce study the wonders of the world in books. The heroic age of Egyptology lies nearly a century behind us when gentlemen of France and England, following the first gleams of inward light thrown by the genius of Champollion on the sun-bathed monuments of Egypt, were kindled to an enthusiastic quest, and, happily for us, employed their pencils even more than their pens through long years of toil. The determination, industry, and public spirit required to carry such enterprises on to the printing point are, however, rarer gifts, and not all reached this promised land of research. Thebes by its extent, its associations, the comparative accessibility of its monuments, and their brilliant coloring, naturally attracted special devotion, and more than one worker became a well-known resident on the sacred hill of burial. Some of their names still cling about the ruins of the houses they built for shelter there—ruins which retain potent memories of international comradeship in a romantic pursuit. If, owing to its inevitable weakness in inscriptional material, we disregard the encyclopaedic work of the *Description de l'Égypte*, F. Caillaud (in Egypt, 1815–22) was the first adventurous spirit to publish serious