

THE  
PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY  
AND  
PRINCETON REVIEW.

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NEW SERIES, No. 11.—JULY, 1874.

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ART. I.—ASSYRIAN MONUMENTS AND THE BIBLE.

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*The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia.* Vol. I. A selection from the historical inscriptions of Chaldæa, Assyria and Babylonia, prepared for publication by Major-General Sir H. C. Rawlinson, K. C. B., assisted by Edwin Norris, Sec. R. As. Society: London, 1861. Vol. II. and III. A selection from the miscellaneous inscription of Assyria: London, 1866 and 1870. In the third volume George Smith, of the Department of Antiquities, British Museum, takes the place of Edwin Norris as assistant editor. Each volume contains seventy atlas-folio plates of original text.

WHEN Assyria and Egypt were at the height of their power and contending for the mastery of the world, the prophet Isaiah announced, xix. 23, that "the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians." Between these mighty rivals lay the land of Palestine, coveted alike by both as the key to further conquests, trampled successively by the armies of each, the helpless prey apparently of either. The kings and people of Israel, hopeless of maintaining their independence, were only divided with uncertain vacillation upon the question, which of these great powers they should look to for support and protection against the other. The inevitable political consequence appeared to be that the chosen people must be ground to powder between these formidable foes. But the dauntless faith of their prophets did not for an instant waver. Jehovah was the omnipotent King. His people could not be crushed. Egypt and Assyria, now doing their worst against them and against each other, would yet be joined together in peaceful alliance, and combined with Israel in the service of the true and living God; and the Lord of hosts would bless them all alike, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people,

and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." Ver. 25.

Much has been said contemptuously of the bigotry and narrowness of the Jew and even of the Jewish scriptures. We may safely challenge any man to find anywhere but in these scriptures, or in those who have learned their lessons from them, a sentiment to be compared with this in magnanimity and nobleness of soul. We cannot pause, however, to hold it up to admiration, but propose to glance briefly at a partial fulfilment of this vision of the holy seer,—Assyria bringing her tribute of service to the God of Israel.

Even while oppressing his people, Assyria was doing service unto God. This ambitious empire, seeking solely its own aggrandizement, was after all but the instrument in his hand to execute his sovereign pleasure, the rod to inflict the needed chastisement upon transgressing Israel.

And Assyria in its downfall fulfilled his word. In the irredeemable desolation which has for ages obscured its very site, Ninéveh has been uttering its silent voice to tell by a most impressive example of the perishable character of all human greatness; and she has given her attestation in no uncertain or ambiguous manner to the truth and divinity of the lively oracles which, in the very acme of her splendor, presaged her doom.

Assyria, besides, has lent its aid in the exposition of the Divine Word and helped to determine the true principles of prophetic interpretation. In the passage above cited Isaiah predicts the freest intercourse between Assyria and Egypt, and the union of both with Israel in a common subjection to the Lord. Had Assyria still survived, even though reduced to a condition most unlike its former self, as Egypt does whose empire has been broken, and as Israel does with the loss of his ancient prerogatives, it might have been imagined that this prediction looked no further than to the opening of a highway between these particular states or nations and their conversion unto God, which might be anticipated in the future. But the providence of God by blotting Assyria from existence has rendered a fulfilment in this restricted sense impossible, and has thus given a hint of the broader meaning intended by the Spirit of prophecy in this and similar predictions. The language of the prophet is not to be degraded from its high intent by seeking the accomplishment of

what he announces respecting the mightiest empires of the world in states which have sunk to insignificance and are of little weight among the nations. Nor does it demand that the world should roll back again to the condition of ages long since past, and that these ancient empires should be revived and regain their former greatness, in order that it may find a fitting fulfilment in them. It looks rather to the Egypts and Assyrias of the future—that is to say, to the great powers which in the onward march of history have arisen in the place of the Egypt and Assyria of the ancient world, to divide the dominion of the earth and to sway the destinies of men. These represent to us now what the names employed by the prophet denoted in his time. And the day is surely coming when the highway of an intimate and peaceful intercourse shall be opened, and they shall together serve the Lord of Hosts. And the Israel, with whom they shall be associated in this pious consecration unto God, is not the lineal descendants of the people so named, now fallen from their former heritage as the chosen of God,—nor this same people reinstated in the possession of those peculiar prerogatives, whose restriction to a single land and a single nation belongs to a former dispensation, and agreeably to the divine purpose and covenant cannot again be renewed,—but that sacred body, the true Israel of God gathered out of all nations and from all lands to be a people to his praise.

Nineveh in its pride and lust of conquest was thus the minister of God's just judgment; in its downfall and total disappearance it was subservient to the defence and the interpretation of God's Word. But to have looked for anything further from this quarter, would have appeared chimerical in the extreme. Until Botta and Layard began their explorations thirty years ago, no one dreamed of the rich treasure-house of materials which had lain for ages unsuspected beneath the soil. These are still only partially exhumed; but they have given the most valuable information respecting an empire of which we were almost wholly ignorant. The city of the Pharaohs is stupendous even in its ruins; and the traveller gazes in bewildered astonishment upon the remains of its temples and stately edifices, with their massive columns and capitals, their immense halls, imposing gateways and lengthened passages which attest a grandeur that the lapse of ages has not been able to obliterate. But in the case

of Nineveh only shapeless mounds of earth and rubbish mark the seat of an empire that once ruled the world, whose vastness and magnificence were the marvel of antiquity, and whose streets were trodden by many successive generations of its teeming population.

Prior to the excavations just referred to, scarcely a single Assyrian object was known to be in existence. There was not a museum in Europe that possessed a specimen of Assyrian workmanship, or anything whatever representative of a style of civilization, the last vestige of which was supposed to have perished from the earth. Now every great museum has its Assyrian department; and the monumental remains of Assyria have become as familiar as those of any nation of antiquity. The life and manners of its people are exhibited in scenes faithfully portrayed by themselves. The degree of their advancement in the arts, both useful and ornamental, is shown in their structures and in articles of their handiwork. Their very language has been, to some extent, recovered; and whole volumes of inscriptions have been found which have been already, with a good measure of success, deciphered. These are leading the way to a recovery of their science, religion and history from the almost total oblivion which heretofore oppressed them. The historian and the antiquary are eagerly availing themselves of these discoveries and laboring to construct, as far as this may prove possible, a true conception of this ancient empire. And students of the Bible are busy in gathering up that which may tend to its illustration or defence. So that here again Assyria is in a new and unanticipated manner serving with Egypt. These great oppressors, which in their prosperity and power seemed to threaten the continued existence of God's earthly kingdom, are now by their monuments singularly helpful and auxiliary to that kingdom. He who used the Assyrian as the rod of his anger, now summons him from the dust of centuries as a witness to his truth.

In what we here say of the Assyrian monuments we cannot, of course, attempt to treat of the entire subject of their relation to the Bible. The field is too broad to be explored, even superficially, in a single article. We must, accordingly, pass by the graphic delineations upon the walls of their palaces, much as they offer that is inviting. We must pass by the religion and mythology of Assyria with the tablet describing the deluge,

whose recent discovery awakened so much attention. We must pass also without mention numerous minor points of a miscellaneous character, upon which the inscriptions afford us welcome light. We direct attention simply to two topics, viz: the history and chronology of the Bible as illustrated and confirmed by these monuments and chiefly by their inscriptions.

The mention made of Assyria, its cities and its monarchs, by the sacred historians and prophets, was the only contemporaneous record respecting it that was known prior to the discoveries already alluded to. Nineveh had been destroyed two hundred years when the first Greek history was written. And Herodotus made but scanty references to it, having projected a separate account of its affairs which probably he never prepared. The statements of Ctesias are still later and are believed to be quite unreliable. So that although vague memories survived of the greatness of Nineveh and its sumptuous buildings and enormous walls and vast extent, and the names of Ninus, Semiramis, Sennacherib and Sardanapalus were linked with much that was marvellous, no one could pretend to distinguish the legendary from the true.

In this unsupported testimony of Scripture, those who are ready to cavil at its teachings sought their opportunity. If ignorance is sometimes the mother of superstitious credulity, she is no less the mother of unreasonable doubt and disbelief. Where little is or can be known, hypothesis and conjecture find their chosen field and impatiently set aside any testimony, however reliable, that stands in their way. Only seven years before Botta began his explorations, Von Bohlen, professor at Königsberg, published a treatise on the book of Genesis, in which he alleged that the accounts therein given of the origin of Babylon and Nineveh are utterly untrustworthy,—that Babylon was not prior to Nineveh but the reverse,—that Nimrod was the same as Merodach-baladan, whom the writer of Genesis has blunderingly transferred to this early date,—that the invasion of Canaan by four kings from this eastern region in the time of Abraham was an incredible fiction,—that the story is concocted from the relations of a later period, and the names are mere transformations of later names, except that of Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, which is a pure invention.\* And Prof. Knobel of Giessen,

\* Die Genesis historisch-kritisch erläutert von P. Von Bohlen. pp. 126, etc.; pp. 168, etc.

seventeen years later, with some of the results of the explorations before him, was still unable to believe that a king of Elam could have been superior in Abraham's days to the king of Shinar or of Babylon.\*

Curiously enough we are enabled to verify nearly every point in the Mosaic statements which are thus impugned. Moses says (Gen. x. 10, 11) that the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel and contiguous cities in the land of Shinar; and that out of that land went forth Asshur and builded Nineveh. Now there is abundant evidence of the existence of a kingdom in the region of Babylon prior to that which was created at Nineveh. The oldest monuments and those of the rudest and most primitive character are found in the former place. And the architecture of Nineveh and its vicinity is demonstrably not original nor indigenous but modeled after that of Babylon. The territory of the latter being entirely alluvial, no building material was accessible except bricks made from the tenacious clay of the soil, either sun-dried or burnt, and, as is expressly stated of the builders of the tower of Babel, cemented with bitumen; and in these bricks straw is often found mingled with the clay, reminding us of those made by the children of Israel in Egypt. And their edifices were not constructed on the flat surface of the ground, but a solid platform of bricks was first made, which served as the base of the building, thus securing for it a firm foundation and protecting it from peril in case of the overflow of the river. But this style of construction, adopted from necessity at Babylon, was demanded by no such considerations at Nineveh, where the conditions were entirely different. There was no deficiency of stone for building, and no need of these elevated artificial foundations. The platform on which Sennacherib's palace stood covers one hundred acres, and at its loftiest extremity is ninety-five feet high. It has been estimated that it contains fourteen million five hundred thousand tons of earth, and that it would require the continuous labor of twenty thousand men for six years to construct it.† And this was simply the base on which the palace itself was built, which, elegant and elaborate as it was, was of similarly perishable materials. A lifetime could

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\* Die Genesis erklärt von August Knobel, pp. 132. † Rawlinson's Five Great Monarchies. Vol. I., p. 253.

scarcely elapse before these clay palaces must have needed repair. And after no very long period they would be so damaged that it would be impossible to repair them; they must then be rebuilt or else abandoned and others erected in their stead. All this enormous labor was thus thrown away, and the toil and expense of such vast constructions were from time to time renewed from a simple neglect to use in building the stone, which was supplied in ample quantities by the neighboring hills. Now the only conceivable reason why the Ninevites could have been led to construct their grand and costly palaces of so frail a material and to place them on such laboriously constructed and inadequate foundations, is because their habits of building had been formed in Babylonia, before they removed to Nineveh; so that when settled there they continued to build in the same manner to which they had been accustomed, though it was not really adapted to their new location.

Moses further tells us that Nimrod, who established his kingdom at Babel, was a descendant of Ham, while Asshur, who founded Nineveh, was descended from Shem. This diversity of origin of the two empires has been contested on the ground of the general sameness of the style of their civilization. But here again the monuments come to our assistance. The language of Nineveh is plainly Semitic, being kindred to the Hebrew and the Arabic. The archaic inscriptions of Babylonia yield a totally different language, which belongs to quite another family of tongues.

The antiquity and the correctness of the name Nimrod is vouched for by its being read, as Rawlinson at least believes, in the inscriptions, where it is applied to a divinity who seems to be the deified founder of the kingdom. The name in its Babylonish form means "pursuer," or, as Moses calls him, the "mighty hunter." The beginning of his kingdom is stated to have been Babel and Erech and Accad and Calueh, four cities. In like manner Asshur builded Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah and Resen, again four cities. And in the time of Abraham, Gen. xiv., we find the king of Shinar, the king of Ellasar, the king of Elam and the king of nations combined under the leadership of Chedorlaomer, once more four. Can it be a merely accidental coincidence that the standing designation of the early monarchs of this region is "king of the four nations" or "king of the four languages" reflecting the four-fold division of their realm?

The precise name Chedorlaomer does not occur upon the monuments. But the first element of it, Chedor or Kudur, recurs in the names of other kings of Elam of even earlier date who are mentioned in the inscriptions. So that this would appear to be a hereditary or at least not an unusual prefix in that line of monarchs. One Kudur-nanhundi, king of Elam, is said in one of his expeditions to have carried away the image of a goddess from the temple of Akkad, one of the cities named by Moses in the vicinity of Babylon; he must, therefore, have subjected Babylonia. Another of the same dynasty, Kudur-mabuk, whose name is stamped on bricks found at Ur of the Chaldees, styles himself "ruler of the west," employing a term which is elsewhere identified with Canaan and Phenicia. So that kings of Elam, having Kudur in their name, ruled over Babylonia and extended their sway over Canaan as early as the days of Abraham. Thus the statement of Genesis is fully justified.

Moses, as we have already seen, names four places as builded by Asshur: Nineveh, the city Rehoboth, Calah and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; and he adds "the same is the great city." These last words admit of two different interpretations, and Assyrian scholars are divided in their judgment respecting them. Mr. George Rawlinson understands them to mean that in the days of Moses Resen was the great city, surpassing not only Calah and Rehoboth-ir, but Nineveh itself. And in fact the monuments restrict the name Nineveh to that body of ruins, which lies upon the eastern bank of the Tigris, directly opposite to Mosul and adjacent to the modern village of Koyunjik. Here was the palace of Asshur-bani-pal, otherwise known as Sardanapalus. And here his renowned grandfather, Sennacherib, built his magnificent residence. From it, he went forth to achieve his numerous victories, which spread everywhere the terror of his arms. From it likewise he set out on that disastrous expedition, in which he threatened Jerusalem and suffered sudden and decisive overthrow. Other monarchs fixed their habitation elsewhere. King Sargon had his palace at a city which bore his name, twelve miles northeast of Nineveh; and eighteen miles south of Nineveh, on the bank of the river, lies another mass of ruins called Nimroud, which has been distinctly identified as the Calah of Moses. Here are other palaces, as that of Shalmaneser,—not the Shalmaneser of the Bible, who

instituted the last siege of Samaria, but an earlier monarch of that name, contemporary with king Jehu,—the palace likewise of Esar-haddon, son and successor of Sennacherib. There is evidence that Calah was a royal residence before Nineveh was, and that it was at one time a place of greater distinction. Rehoboth and Resen have not yet been identified. It would not be surprising if no vestiges of them now remain. For even though Resen may have been at one time the leading city of the four, it may have been abandoned, and, as was the case in other instances, its materials taken to build structures elsewhere.

It is noteworthy, however, that while Nineveh was the name chiefly known in foreign lands as the capital of Assyria, Moses was aware of the existence of other cities in its vicinity, which were equal if not superior to Nineveh itself. In Mr. George Rawlinson's opinion, Nineveh was but about eight miles in circuit. The limit of its walls and moats and fortifications, he claims, can be very distinctly traced. And he dismisses the statement of Diodorus Siculus, that it was four hundred and sixty stadia, or nearly sixty miles, in circumference as a gross exaggeration. Jonah, who visited Nineveh in person, speaks of it (iii. 3), as "an exceeding great city of three days' journey." This expression Mr. Rawlinson adjusts to the limited size which he assigns to the place, by supposing the "three days' journey" to apply not to the distance directly through the city, nor to the distance around the city, but to the aggregate length of its several streets. Jonah contemplated the city, as he imagines, with reference to his own mission of prophetic warning. This would involve his traversing its various streets, which would be a three days' journey. And when it is added (iv. 11) that there were in Nineveh more than six-score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand from their left hand, he understands this of the entire population, which was so ignorant of divine and spiritual things as to be unable to discern even what was plainest and most essential.

This view seems far less natural and probable, however, than another proposed by Mr. Layard and accepted by other Assyriologists and scholars, such even as Knobel and Schrader, who cannot be suspected of any undue bias in favor of scriptural statement. This is that when Moses, after naming Nineveh, the city Rehoboth, Calah and Resen, says "the same is the great

city," he means, not to designate Resen, the last-named, as the greatest and most celebrated of the four, but that these four together constitute the great city. These four cities, which were at first distinct and separate, had grown together and become virtually consolidated into one; just as Brooklyn, Boston and Philadelphia, by successive encroachments have absorbed and swallowed up what were originally separate municipalities. Nineveh proper was but one division of this vast aggregated metropolis; the other divisions bore each its own particular name as here recited. To the total thus constituted Moses gives no special name; he merely calls it the great city. Jonah, however, at a later period means by Nineveh, not that single section which was originally so denominated, but the entire aggregate of all the sections, which, taken together, were viewed as one great city. In this wider sense also Diodorus Siculus employs the term, when he describes Nineveh as a quadrangle 140 stadia or  $18\frac{1}{2}$  miles long, and 90 stadia or  $11\frac{6}{7}$  miles broad. Now precisely such a quadrangle 18 miles by 12 is formed by the remains at Khorsabad, Koyunjik, Nimrud and Keremles, which Mr. Layard therefore supposes to mark the four corners of the ancient city. This not only coincides exactly with the statements of the Greek historian, but gives a more natural sense to the words of the Hebrew prophet. The circuit of the city is thus made 60 miles; and if we accept Herodotus' estimate that a day's journey amounted to 150 stadia, which is within a fraction of 20 miles, this would be exactly three days' journey. And the 120,000 within the city, who could not distinguish their right hand from their left, may then have its most obvious meaning, and be understood of young children; so that the entire population may be estimated at 600,000.

We pass, without more particular mention, the discovery and identification of Ur of the Chaldees, from which Abraham began his migrations to the promised land, and its interesting ruins, its temple and the symbols of its idolatry, the signets of its early kings, its curious tombs and clay coffins and family vaults, reminding us of Abraham's own family burying-place at Machpelah; the flint knives, such as even down to the days of Moses and Joshua were used in the sacred rite of circumcision; the bronze tools, the plates and cups and personal ornaments buried with the dead, the skeletons themselves of those who

had been townsmen, perhaps, of Abraham in his youth, or lived, it may be, in an age preceding his. All this is curious and interesting; but it belongs rather to the monuments of Babylonia than to those of Assyria, which now more particularly engage our attention. We hasten, accordingly, to matters of greater consequence connected with Assyria itself.

After the early allusions of Genesis, which we have been thus far reviewing, Assyria drops out of notice, so far as the sacred writers are concerned (if we except its mention by Balaam, the Mesopotamian soothsayer), until the later history of the kingdom of Israel. Assyria, then aspiring to universal domination, and systematically pushing its conquests westward, came into repeated contact and collision with the chosen people. Fortunately, or, as we should rather say, providentially, the very period at which the affairs of Israel were most involved with those of Assyria is that which furnishes the most abundant, intelligible and connected monuments. The kings of Assyria mentioned in the Bible are mostly capable of being identified in the inscriptions. Their names are read, their succession indicated, the events of their reigns are recorded, sometimes with particularity and detail and in annalistic form, the occurrences being stated year by year.

The prophet Isaiah (xx. 1) states that Sargon, the king of Assyria, had sent Tartan against Ashdod, who fought against it and took it. No such king of Assyria is spoken of in the Books of Kings; and interpreters were greatly perplexed and divided upon the question, who this Sargon, king of Assyria, could be, and when he reigned. Some thought that Sargon was another name for Shalmaneser; others that he was the same as Sennacherib; others still identified him with Esar-haddon; while those who admitted him to be a monarch distinct from all the others mentioned in Scripture, and, on the ground of the statement here made by Isaiah, assigned him to his proper place in the series of Assyrian kings as the immediate predecessor of Sennacherib, nevertheless concluded that his reign must have been a short one, lasting at the utmost three or four years and perhaps continuing only a very few months.

So the matter stood until Botta's discoveries were made known. The very first successful excavation made by him at Khorsabad led him into a palace, whose spacious halls were

wainscoted with bas-reliefs on alabaster slabs representing feats of arms, sieges, the execution of prisoners and the deportation of captives. In its various scenes there repeatedly appears a majestic figure, everywhere readily recognized as the same. He wears a rich tiara striped with red. His hair and beard are black and elaborately curled. He has earrings of a cruciform pattern, and he has bracelets on his arms and wrists. His right hand is raised in an attitude of authority, or holds a long red sceptre, in his left is a flowering branch. His dress is ornamented with rosettes and fringes, and a short sword is fastened in his girdle.\* The accompanying inscriptions inform us that this is king Sargon; and of the seventeen years, during which we discover that he reigned, his own annals record the enterprises of the first fifteen. He nowhere names his father in any of his inscriptions, nor alludes to his parentage in any way, except that in general phrase he claims descent from the Assyrian king. This departure from the fixed usage of other monarchs is sufficient to show that he was not the son and lawful heir of his predecessor on the throne. He was in all likelihood a usurper, possibly of royal blood, but quite as probably of obscure descent, who took advantage of the protracted absence of Shalmaneser in his expeditions against Samaria and against Tyre to seize the royal authority for himself; just as at a later period in Persia the Psuedo-Smerdis did during the absence of king Cambyses in Egypt.

This is further confirmed by the fact that he claims for himself the glory of the capture of Samaria in his first year, the siege of which had been begun by Shalmaneser three years before. Sargon's record is: "I took the city of Samaria; twenty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty of its inhabitants I led into captivity; in their stead I assigned residences to the inhabitants of lands conquered by me." "I appointed a governor of mine over them," implying of course that he had put an end to the kingdom. Note here the precise accuracy of the sacred historian. He states, 2 Kings xviii. 9 (comp. xvii, 5) that "Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria and besieged it," but does not say that he completed the conquest. His language is, vs.

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\* Botta, Monument de Ninive, vol. II. plates 105 and 121. Menant's *Ecritures Cuneiformes*, p. 158.

10, 11: "At the end of three years *they* took it," "and the king of Assyria," who is spoken of in the general without being named—"the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria." This minute precision of the inspired writer contrasts with the blunders of the apocryphal book of Tobit i. 2, 13, 15, about the very same matter, which the inscriptions have detected. Shalmaneser (whose name is incorrectly given as Enemessar) is there said to have survived the captivity, and moreover to have been the father and immediate predecessor of Sennacherib, who, we now know, was the son and successor of Sargon.

The inspired writer further says, ver. 11, that the Israelites were transported to Habor, the river of Gozan, and to the cities of the Medes, as had been done with the Reubenites, Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh before by Tiglath-pileser, 1 Chron. v. 26. The monuments prepare the way for this statement by recording these identical names, Habor and Gozan, and informing us of conquests made in Media by preceding monarchs of Assyria.

That colonists were brought from other lands, and particularly from Babylon, to repeople Samaria is explicitly stated by Sargon. Cuthah, Hamath and Sepharvaim, named in 2 Kings xvii. 24 as additional sources of these colonists, occur on the monuments in other connections. Nehemiah, ii. 19, iv. 7, mentions Arabians among the adversaries of the Jews in Samaria; and Sargon tells us that he settled some Arab tribes in that region. He further records several other instances in which he "changed the abodes" of those whom he subdued; and pictured representations are given of men, women and children driven into exile. The captivity of the Israelites was part of a general policy pursued on a large scale by the Assyrian kings for the greater security of their conquests.

The expedition against Ashdod referred to by Isaiah is explicitly mentioned by Sargon and assigned to his twelfth year. Its occasion is stated and its successful issue declared. In consequence, the king of Egypt submitted, and even distant Meroe, which as Sargon declares had never sent ambassadors to any of the kings his predecessors, humbly entreated his favor. This was an incipient fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction uttered on the occasion of this very expedition, xx. 4: "So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners and the Ethiopians

captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt." It met a still more signal accomplishment in the reign of his grandson Esar-haddon, and his great-grandson Asshur-bani-pal or Sardanapalus, each of whom invaded Egypt, penetrating as far as Thebes, and reducing a large portion of the country temporarily at least under subjection. For the evidence of these fulfilments of prophecy, we are entirely dependent upon the Assyrian monuments, no other record of these facts having been preserved except a brief allusion in an old Greek writer Abydenus, which was, moreover, of so vague a character that it was not itself understood until the monuments explained it.\*

These captures of Thebes are nowhere intimated upon any Egyptian record yet discovered. They are not mentioned by Herodotus, nor by any other ancient author. But they are important to us for an additional reason besides the verification of Isaiah's prophecy already referred to. They serve to explain a passage in Nahum (iii. 8-10) which has been a great puzzle to commentators. The prophet, foreshowing the coming overthrow of the proud capital of Assyria, makes his appeal to the fate of her mighty Egyptian rival: "Art thou better than No-Amon (or Thebes) that was situate among the rivers and had the waters around about it? . . . Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite . . . Yet she was carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed to pieces at the top of all the streets; and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains." The most various conjectures have been proposed respecting the time, occasion and author of this capture of Thebes. It has been ascribed to different Assyrian monarchs, to Shalmaneser, to Sargon, to Sennacherib, to Esar-haddon. It has been imputed to some intestine strife, or to an invasion by the Ethiopians, the Scythians, the Carthaginians, or Nebuchadnezzar, or to its reduction by the Persians under Cambyses, which though future is supposed to be here foreseen by the prophet. And some adventurous critics, who have a short and easy way of rid-

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\* Axerdis (i. e. Esar-haddon) autem Ægyptum partesque Syriæ inferioris in suam potestatem redegit. Cory's Ancient Fragments of the Phœnician, Chaldean, Egyptian, etc., and other writers, p. 63.

ding themselves of troublesome passages, in their despair of any solution, denied the genuineness of these verses and threw them out of the text. Vance Smith,\* in 1857, says: "What the particular event was which Nahum mentions, we have not the means of deciding." Otto Strauss,† commenting upon Nahum in 1853, felt constrained to believe that Thebes could not have suffered a defeat of any moment prior to the time of Cambyses; because, as he alleges, a virtually complete history of this city can be made out from the Egyptian monuments, and no hint is there given of its having been captured or its inhabitants exiled. The Assyrian monuments, however, supply the fact of which we are in quest. Thebes was taken by Esar-haddon.

This again may be fruitful of further consequences. It may not only aid us in expounding this passage in the book of Nahum, but may help us to fix approximately the date of the book itself and the time when this prophet exercised his ministry. In the absence of any positive statement in Scripture respecting the age of Nahum, or any decisive criterion for its precise determination, the suffrages of the best biblical critics have been divided between two periods, which seemed to possess the highest measure of probability. One is shortly after the overthrow of Sennacherib in the reign of Hezekiah. The other is in the succeeding reign of Manasseh, after he had been taken captive by Esar-haddon. It may be premature in the present state of our knowledge to venture a decision of this question; but the now ascertained capture of Thebes by Esar-haddon appears to incline the balance in favor of the later date.

As the captivity of Manasseh just referred to is recorded in Chronicles (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11), but not in Kings, it has been in some quarters discredited; and the statement that the king of Assyria carried him away not to Nineveh, but to Babylon, was an occasion of cavil. But, singularly enough, the monuments afford confirmation to both particulars. Two prisms have been found inscribed alike with the events of Esar-haddon's reign. On these "Manasseh, king of Judah" is named in a list of subject princes. And Esar-haddon entitles himself not only "king of Assyria" but "ruler of Babylon," and there is evidence that he not only held possession of this city but had a palace there.

\* The Prophecies relating to Nineveh and the Assyrians, p. 216. † Nahumi de Nino Vaticinium, p. 101.

The first interference of Assyria in the affairs of Israel which is recorded in the sacred history is (2 Kings xv. 19) that of Pul, the king of Assyria in the time of Menahem. But more than a century prior to this date, at least according to the ordinary computation, an Assyrian king Shalmaneser (not the one spoken of in the Bible, but an earlier monarch) left a record of his exploits and of the events of his reign engraved upon an obelisk, which is now in the British Museum ; upon this there is a sculptured representation of Israelites bringing him gifts and the declaration that he received tribute from "Jehu the son of Omri." There can be little doubt that this is king Jehu, who was anointed by direction of Elisha and who abolished the worship of Baal in Israel, which had been introduced by Ahab and his father Omri. The identity is shown by the name and the date and by the contemporary mention on the same obelisk of Hazael as king in Damascus as well as of his predecessor Benhadad, or, as Prof. Oppert reads the name, Benhadri. That Jehu is called the son of Omri creates no difficulty. The Assyrians may not have been acquainted with the domestic affairs of the reigning house, nor have known that Jehu reached the throne by a successful usurpation instead of being the son and legitimate successor of the preceding king and thus a descendant of Omri. Or as king of Samaria he may be called the son of Omri, just as Samaria itself is on Assyrian monuments called Beth-Omri, or the habitation of Omri, because, as the Book of Kings informs us, it was built by that monarch.

It is nowhere, indeed, mentioned in the Bible that Jehu paid tribute to the king of Assyria, nor even, which is perhaps more probable, that he sent him presents in acknowledgment of the service rendered to himself in his humbling Hazael, king of Syria. But there is an interesting confirmation of the fact that Assyria was already at that early date disposed to intervene in the affairs of the chosen people in the 83d Psalm. That Psalm has by the best critics, such as Hengstenberg, Dr. Addison Alexander and others, been on wholly independent grounds supposed to relate to an event in the reign of king Jehoshaphat, and to describe a formidable combination of foes, which at that time threatened destruction to Judah, but over which he gained a signal victory. Now in reciting the confederate forces the Psalmist says, ver. 8: "Asshur also is joined with them." The

reign of Jehoshaphat preceded that of Jehu by about eight years.

The most famous of the kings of Assyria is Sennacherib. His various campaigns are recorded upon a clay hexagonal prism. That which is of the most interest to us is the one directed against king Hezekiah. The inscription runs thus: "Because Hezekiah king of Judah would not submit to my yoke I came up against him, and by force of arms and by the might of my power I took forty-six of his strong fenced cities; and the smaller towns which were scattered about, I took and plundered a countless number. And from these places I captured and carried off as spoil two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, old and young, male and female, together with horses and mares, asses and camels, oxen and sheep, a countless multitude. And Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem him in, and raising banks of earth against the gates so as to prevent escape. . . . Then upon this Hezekiah there fell the fear of the power of my arms, and he sent out to me the chiefs and the elders of Jerusalem with thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver and divers treasures, a rich and immense booty." This corresponds identically with the sacred narrative, which informs us that Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them; and that he required of Hezekiah thirty talents of gold, the exact sum named in the inscription, and three hundred talents of silver, while according to the inscription Hezekiah gave him eight hundred.

At first sight this looks like a discrepancy, but it admits of a ready reconciliation. We might suppose that Hezekiah, in his anxiety to appease Sennacherib, brought more than was exacted of him; or that the sums brought at two different times are in Sennacherib's statement added together. But no such supposition is necessary. Two talents of varying weight were in use in Palestine, the talent of silver being heavier than that of gold, as among us a pound avoirdupois is different from a pound troy, and both from a pound sterling. There were two talents likewise in Assyria. Now a careful estimate has shown that the heavier talent of Palestine stands to the lighter talent of Assyria precisely in the relation of eight to three; so that the three

hundred talents of silver of the Book of Kings is identical in amount with the eight hundred talents of Sennacherib's inscription.\*

We are further told, in Kings, that Sennacherib's camp at this time was at Lachish, 2 Kings, xviii. 14, 17; and the monuments exhibit him seated on his throne at Lachish and laying siege to that city. His disastrous overthrow is not reported in his own inscriptions for the same reason that the French do not display a picture of Waterloo or of the surrender of Metz in the national gallery at Versailles, and for the same reasons that the Egyptians made no record of the capture of Thebes. As, however, the Assyrians have not hesitated to tell us of the surrender of the Egyptian capital, so on the other hand the Egyptians preserved the memory of Sennacherib's miraculous discomfiture, from whom Herodotus learned it, and has given the well-known account of it contained in his history.

The limited space at our disposal obliges us to pass without mention other interesting and important points of connection with the Bible history. In addition to those already referred to, the familiar names of Ahab, Menahem, Pekah and Hoshea, kings of Israel, are read upon the monuments, as well as those of Azariah and Ahaz, kings of Judah, Rezin of Damascus, the adversary of Ahaz and even Tabeal, of whom Isaiah speaks 7 : 6 as the father of the aspirant to the throne of Judah. What has already been adduced may sufficiently illustrate the striking confirmations of scriptural statements afforded by these Assyrian records; the aid they furnish in the solution of difficulties and removal of obscurities; the additional completeness given to our knowledge where we had but meagre accounts before; the testimony borne to the fulfilment of prophecies which we cannot otherwise establish; and the help that is given us even in sacred criticism and in fixing the date of inspired books.

Without pausing longer, therefore, upon the relation of these monuments to the Scripture history, we proceed to direct attention briefly to their bearing upon sacred chronology. The Assyrian computation of time has many coincidences with the Hebrew. Their names for the months are the same that were adopted by the Jews after the captivity. The Assyrians had a

\* Brandis, Münz-, Mass- und Gewichtssystem in Vorderasien, p. 98. Schrader, Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament, p. 197.

twofold mode of reckoning the year like the Jews, who began their ecclesiastical year with the month Nisan, and their civil year with the month Tisri. As the Jews had their jubilee period of fifty years, so the Assyrians a somewhat analogous period of sixty years. And further, they both estimated time not from a fixed epoch, but by the years of the reigning monarch. We leave these minor particulars, however, for a matter of much greater consequence.

The monuments thus far reviewed consist mainly of inscriptions by different monarchs, recording the events of their reign, sometimes in the order of their occurrence, and sometimes not. From these alone it would be impossible to construct an Assyrian chronology. They contain the names of certain kings, but do not fix their succession, except as this can in some cases be inferred from the mention of the father, and perhaps the grandfather of the reigning monarch. Neither do they determine the lengths of their reigns. An inscription may be dated from a particular year in the reign of a given king, or it may furnish data from which it can be ascertained how many years he had been upon the throne when it was prepared, but there is no clue to the length of time that he may have reigned after the inscription was set up. Thus far, therefore, we have a number of disconnected facts, but no means of either discovering the order of their priority or of computing the intervals that separate them. What is needed is some reliable chronological scheme into which these separate facts can be fitted—something which shall do for Assyrian inscriptions what the lists of Manetho have done for those of Egypt. Fortunately this lack has now been in some measure at least supplied; and that, too, not from any foreign sources, but from the monuments themselves.

In excavating the palace of Sardanapalus, at Koyunjik, an apartment was found which has been called the chamber of records, or the royal library. The entire floor was covered to the depth of a foot or more with small terracotta tablets, inscribed with Assyrian characters, so minute in many cases as to require the aid of a magnifying glass to decipher them. Clay, rather than parchment or paper, was their common writing material; and baked clay constituted their books or permanent records. The contents of these tablets are of the most various description. They relate to history, law, religion and language; they

contain public documents and private transactions, such as deeds, contracts, articles of sale, etc.

In searching through this vast miscellany now deposited in the British Museum, Dr. Hincks lighted upon a mutilated tablet, which he describes in his report to the trustees of that institution for 1854, and whose significance he at once divined. It contained simply a long list of names, divided at intervals by a horizontal stroke. The first name after each stroke is mostly that of a king of Assyria, although sometimes the royal name does not follow the stroke immediately, but stands second or third, or even later in the series. This Dr. Hinks correctly supposed to be a chronological tablet or canon of the Assyrian kings, and of the annual eponyms, who were successively appointed during their reigns. As in Athens, the first archon was the eponym—that is to say, he gave his name to the year during which he held office; so in Assyria certain leading officers, or men of rank, were designated as eponyms year by year, and the year of their appointment was denominated from them. Thus, for example, an Assyrian document is dated on “the 24th day of the month Shebat, in the eponymy of Metaggil-assur, the 16th year of Sargon.” And turning to the canon just spoken of we find corresponding to the 16th year of Sargon this identical name, Metaggil-assur. A cylinder, which records two expeditions of Sennacherib, is dated from the eponymy of Nabuliha. In the list of eponyms this corresponds to the third year of Sennacherib; we know accordingly that the cylinder belongs to that year. It may, therefore, with confidence be assumed that the kings are arranged upon this tablet in the true order of their reigns; and that the number of names included between each pair of horizontal lines expresses the length of the several reigns, each name denoting a year.

As many as seven of these tablets have been found, corroborating and supplementing each other, and covering in all 250 years. Some of them in addition to the bald list of names occasionally connect certain facts with the year of their occurrence as a rebellion, a military expedition, a ratification of peace, a pestilence, the completion of buildings, the consecration of temples, or—which is of special value—the occurrence of eclipses. These last have been subjected to computation with the view of ascertaining their precise date and thus obtaining fixed points

from which to estimate the remainder of the canon. Thus the tablet states that an eclipse of the sun occurred in the eponymy of Pur-el-salhe on the 20th of the month Sivan, which answers to the middle of our June. There were only two total eclipses of the sun, visible at Nineveh, which will at all meet the requirements of the case. One took place June 15th, B. C. 763, and the other June 13th, B. C. 809. If with Sir Henry Rawlinson we assume that the former of these is the one intended, and then count regularly down the column of eponyms till we come to the reign of Sargon, we find the first year of that monarch, which was the year of the overthrow of Samaria, to have been B. C. 721, the very year which was assigned to this overthrow from data contained in the Bible alone, before the Assyrian canon had ever been heard of.

If this canon had tallied with the Biblical chronology as accurately as this at every point, it would leave nothing more to be desired. So complete a correspondence throughout between two systems of chronology so entirely independent of one another as the Biblical and the Assyrian would have afforded the highest measure of confirmation to both. It would be too much to hope, however, that such a result as this could offer itself on the surface or could be reached without much patient and pains-taking investigation. No branch of historical inquiry is more intricate or perplexing than the harmonizing of dates. It need not surprise us, therefore, if we encounter some difficulty here.

And in fact there is a twofold apparent discrepancy, one arising out of the order of the Assyrian kings as shown upon these tablets, and the other out of the length assigned to their several reigns. The first difficulty is this : In 2 Kings 15 : 19 we read that " Pul, the king of Assyria, came against the land ; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver." And in 1 Chron. 5 ; 26 it is said that " the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria, and he carried away the Reubenites, and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh." It appears from the monuments that there were kings of Assyria having " Vul " as one constituent of their names ; and it was supposed prior to the discovery of the chronological tablets that one of these was the Pul or Phal of the Bible. But this is now precluded and the very existence of Pul has been discredited by reason of the cir-

cumstance that no king bearing this name, or one at all resembling it, occurs in this native list for a hundred years before or after the time of the facts first recited.

The second difficulty is that according to the inscriptions king Shalmaneser (the third of the name according to Prof. Oppert, or the second according to other Assyriologists) in his fifth year defeated the combined forces of Ahab and Benhadad, and twelve years later fought with Hazael and received tribute from Jehu. Now if we reckon by the Assyrian canon, the battle with Ahab would seem to have taken place B. C. 854, when according to the Biblical chronology Ahab had been dead for 42 years. If we base our estimate upon the Assyrian canon, Jehu's tribute was paid B. C. 842, five years after the termination of his reign according to the biblical chronology. In other words, there is a seeming discrepancy between the Assyrian estimate of the interval from Ahab's reign to the fall of Samaria, and the biblical estimate of the same interval, the Assyrian estimate being the shorter by at least 42 years.

In regard to these two points Assyrian scholars are themselves divided. Rawlinson, to whom Schrader, Lepsius and others have given their adhesion, accepts the newly found canon and supposes that the figures of the Bible here require correction. Prof. Oppert, on the other hand, affirms the exactness of of the scriptural reckoning and seeks to explain the tablets in accordance with it.

Upon the former hypothesis there is a mystery about king Pul which is still unexplained. There have been various conjectures as to the reason why his name finds no place in the recognized list of sovereigns. Pul may be another name for one of the monarchs recorded on the list, and is perhaps to be identified either with Tiglath-pileser, as Schrader thinks, or with his immediate predecessor. Or he may have been the heir to the throne, and actually associated in the dominion of the empire, and hence entitled to the name of "king," though he did not ultimately succeed to sole sovereignty. Or, as Rawlinson supposes, he may have been a pretender to the throne, who held sway for a season over certain parts of the empire, and assumed the title of king of Assyria. Or, as others imagine, though not actually reigning, he may have been a general in supreme command, or a high officer of the realm, who as the representative

of the monarch, affected royal state and was addressed as king. But which or whether any one of these is the true solution, can only be determined when some additional light is gained.

In regard to the numbers, it is claimed upon this same hypothesis of the superior correctness of the Assyrian canon that in nothing could errors of transcription more easily arise in the text of Scripture than in this; that some numbers and dates in the Bible history are plainly wrong, as has always been confessed, because they are inconsistent with one another; and since these eponyms were used, as we have seen, for designating the year in current business transactions as well as in government records, the exact accuracy of these official lists must be assumed, or all affairs public and private, in which precision of dates was requisite, would have been involved in confusion.

On the other hand, Prof. Oppert claims that in the narrative given in the Bible, and especially in the Books of Kings, so many mutual checks are afforded by the numbers in the parallel lines of kings in Judah and in Israel, that the few errors which have crept into the text instantly betray themselves, and are corrected by other numbers bearing on the same point; and where no such self-correction occurs, the assumption of error in even a single instance involves the error of so many more which support and verify it, that the hypothesis of mistake becomes well-nigh incredible. In the present state of knowledge on the subject, therefore, he judges it to be far more rational to abide by the tried and well-known chronology of Scripture, and to adjust the Assyrian canon, of whose real meaning and construction so little is yet known, into conformity with it. Prof. Oppert's own hypothesis is that this canon is not continuous throughout, but that there is an interruption of forty-seven years, not indicated on the tablets, immediately preceding the reign of Tiglath-pilneser; that during this time the regular succession of Assyrian kings was broken and no eponyms accordingly were appointed, but kings of Babylon held sway over Nineveh, and reigned as kings of Assyria. Of these monarchs Pul was one. This receives confirmation from Ptolemy's canon of the kings of Babylon, from which it appears that there was reigning at this time a king called Porus, or Por, in which name none who are familiar with the transformations of proper names in ancient writers will hesitate to recognize that of Pul, the liquid "r"

being by a frequent change substituted for "1." And the non-appearance of his name on any Assyrian inscriptions, and its omission as well as that of this entire period of foreign rule from the chronological tablets has its parallel in the singular silence of Egyptian monuments respecting the Hyksos period, which was of much longer duration, the absence of any inscription from the Hyksos kings, and the uniform omission of their names from all royal lists, with no suggestion of their existence or of any break in the continuity of the series.\*

Where such high authorities differ, and the investigation may be said to have only just begun, it would be premature to venture a final decision. We may hope that the progress of further discovery will show where the truth lies, and how the reconciliation is to be effected. Meanwhile it should be distinctly apprehended that the question at issue is not one of facts, but of numbers and dates, and the credit of the sacred historians will not suffer, however it may be decided.

The Assyrian records in relation to the very matters before us corroborate the statements of fact made by the sacred writers. That Ahab was contemporary with Benhadad, that Benhadad was succeeded by Hazael as king of Syria, and that twelve years after the death of Ahab, Jehu was on the throne of Israel, is affirmed alike by the Books of Kings and by the Assyrian inscriptions. The only variance is as to the question whether what both alike affirm to have occurred took place a few years earlier or a few years later.

If it shall finally appear that there is any mistake here in the figures of the Bible we shall welcome their correction. Meanwhile we cannot but remember that it is only a few years since Sir Henry Rawlinson said of Ptolemy's Babylonish Canon, which is one of the best accredited systems of chronology that has come down to us from antiquity, "the more I study this contemporary chronological document (of the Assyrian eponyms),

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\* We are indebted to a friend for the suggestion of an interesting parallel in modern times. The volumes of the British Record Commission, devoted to the publication of the Statutes of the Realm, pass at once from the reign of Charles I. to that of Charles II., with no intimation of an interruption in the regular series of legitimate monarchs, and no suggestion that the Commonwealth or the Protector ever existed. The indisposition to recognize an unwelcome intruder, which has quietly dropped the name of Oliver Cromwell from the official lists of English sovereigns, may easily have operated in the same manner in ancient Assyria.

the less confidence I have in Ptolemy's numbers."\* And yet now he has himself abandoned those combinations, in the interest of which this slighting remark was made. Mr. Rawlinson has changed his opinions before, and he may see cause to change them again. And if he has found out that the Assyrian canon is consistent with that of Ptolemy, he may likewise one day discover that it does not conflict with the chronology of the Bible.

But the length to which this article has already been protracted admonishes us not to continue this discussion further. We have seen in a few particulars how the Assyrians have been made to serve with the Egyptians. The monuments of Assyria have, like those of Egypt, become tributary to the defence and illustration of the word of God. Her haughty monarchs, her Sargons and Shalmanesers and Sennacheribs, who in lifting their hand against the people of God were but executing His work of chastisement, were likewise serving him in making their boastful records of their own achievements. They thought of nothing but perpetuating their own glory, and yet they were really making their inscriptions in the interests of Jehovah's kingdom, though they had never heard his name, or heard it only to despise it. And now long ages after the power of Nineveh has been broken and her proud magnificence has mouldered into dust, these testimonies to God's truth are exhumed from among her ruins, and by them Assyria renders homage to the God of Israel.

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\*Athenæum for 1862, 2, p. 83 ; quoted by Lepsius in his *Chronologischer Werth der Assyrischen Eponymen*, p. 46.