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ARTICLE VI.

TESTIMONY OF ASSYRIAN INSCRIPTIONS TO THE TRUTH
OF SCRIPTURE.

By Rev. Thomas Laurie, formerly Missionary of the A. B. C. F. M. at Mosul.

STANDING on the highest part of Mosul, and looking across the Tigris, the eye rests on a long range of ancient mounds. At the southern end is the irregular platform on which stands the village of Nebby Yoonas, with its spacious mosque and populous cemetery. Towards the northern extremity rises the huge plateau of Kouyunjik, large enough to hold four such villages and still have room to spare. Its sides are too steep for direct ascent, but by following the narrow paths that wind obliquely upward, one can ride to the very top, where he will find a broad surface, cultivated from time immemorial, and rewarding the toil of the Fellah as richly as the plain below.

But this mound, though noted as containing the palace of ancient Nineveh, is only one of many. There are others at Khorsabad, twelve miles to the north; at Nimroud, twenty miles in the opposite direction, and at Kala Shergat, thirty miles further down on the opposite bank of the Tigris. The traveller finds them at Babylon and Borsippa, Senkerah and Niffer. Along the Khabor and Euphrates, and on the plains of Babylonia and Chaldea as well as Mesopotamia and Assyria.

Many of these have been recently explored, and wonderful things have been brought to light; for, deep down in their interior have lain buried, for thousands of years, palaces of monarchs who reigned from the time when Abraham dwelt in tents down to the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, or from a period about six hundred years before the founding of Troy, down almost to the expulsion of Tarquin and the commencement of the Roman Republic.

It is not the object of this Article to repeat the account of

the discovery of these antiquities, which has been so well done both by Mons. Bottà the pioneer, and Mr. Layard his worthy successor in the work. The magnificent success of the latter has somewhat eclipsed the achievements of the other; but, with the generosity of the true scholar, he tells us that "To Mons. Botta belongs the honor of having discovered the first Assyrian monuments." That was a success that crowned months of persevering effort, made wholly at his own expense and in the face of just such opposition as Layard has described so graphically.

Nor does the writer intend to enter on any description of these antiquities as works of art. That is a subject which demands a separate discussion by one more familiar with such themes.

The present Article proposes merely to give a brief notice of the inscriptions, their interpretation, and a few of the historical facts learned from them by those who have studied them most thoroughly, especially the identification of Scripture names and the corroboration they furnish of the sacred record.

Most of the large mounds already explored contain, buried up at various depths, extensive remains of ancient palaces. The walls of these are very thick, built of sun-burnt brick and coated to the height of ten feet or more with thick slabs of a dark-colored marble (sulphate of lime). These are covered with sculptures and cuneiform inscriptions, which depict many a scene and narrate many an event of that olden time. The visitor treads halls trodden by men who died more than three thousand years ago. He sees "men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea" (Ezek. 23:14,15), such as idolatrous Jerusalem saw when she "doted upon the Assyrians her neighbors, captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men" (ver. 12).

It is as if, instead of reading the account, the visitor

looked on "the king of kings coming from the north with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies and much people; he slays with the sword the villages in the fields; he makes a fort against the city; he casts a mount against it; he lifts up the buckler against it; he sets engines of war against the walls, and with his axes he breaks down the towers. The walls shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots; when he enters into the gates or through the breach with the hoofs of his horses, he treads down every street, he slays the inhabitants by the sword, and strong garrisons go down to the ground. His soldiers make a spoil of wealth and merchandise. They break down the walls, and destroy pleasant houses." "A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth. The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing escapes them" (Ezek. 26: 7—12. Joel 2: 3).

Besides these warlike scenes, the king is often seen seated at the feast, with his servants and cup-bearers in attendance; or we are transported suddenly into the excitement of a royal hunt, and see lions and other beasts of prey fall before the king. Then again we behold him in the house of his gods, offering sacrifices and pouring out libations; or he is receiving the tribute of conquered provinces, borne by a long line of men, whose dress as well as the gifts they present, mark them as belonging to different and distant nations.

Some of the sculptures show manuscripts unrolled as they are read, telling us that the Assyrians were acquainted with writings on parchment or papyrus. Clay seals also, which seem to have been attached to such documents, burned up or long since decayed, and scribes writing down the list of the slain or the number of captives, corroborate this testimony.

Printing was known to those early ages, as is testified by their bricks, millions of which were evidently stamped with the name of the king before they were burned. In Babylonia the stamp was all in one piece; but in Assyria the letters seem to have been made by separate impressions.

The letters on the marble walls, as also the intaglios on seals and cylinders, were engraved with a sharp instrument; and where the inscription was on the floor of a palace, the letters were often filled up with some soft metal, illustrating that passage of Job (19: 23, 24): "O that my words were now written, that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever."

But the great question has been how to decipher these ancient records. Fragments of cuneiform inscription were for a long time in the possession of the learned before they could give any clue to their meaning. Grotefend labored on them as far back as 1802, and Burnouf, Lassen, and others entered into his labors, with but partial success. "In what language are they written? Are the characters letters, like ours, or syllables, like the Chinese? Do they read from right to left like the Shemitish, or from left to right like the languages of modern Europe? were inquiries which baffled investigation, till Col. Rawlinson deciphered the Persian portion of the trilingual inscription at Behistun, or as it is in some maps, Bisûtûn near Kermanshah. This celebrated monument of antiquity consisted of sculptures in bass-relief and four hundred lines of cuneiform characters engraved on the perpendicular face of a precipice more than three hundred feet above the base, and dates from the year 511 B. C. The reading of the Persian portion of this, accomplished for the more difficult and complicated Assyrian versions, what the Greek of the Rosetta stone did for the hieroglyphics of Egypt: it furnished a key to unlock at least the outer door; and when, by a long and patient use of this, scholars were prepared for a further advance, ten thousand inscribed tablets of clay, from the palace of Asshur bani pal, son of Esarhaddon, who began to reign 660 B. C., came to introduce them into the inner chambers of these repositories of ancient lore. This "library" of the palace at Kouyunjik (see p. 147), as it has been called, contained, besides other records of Assyrian science, a number of grammars, alphabets, and vocabularies explaining the differences between the more ancient Babylonian and the then Assyrian language of the

court. Col. Rawlinson speaks of five varieties of language used in the inscriptions, viz. Babylonian, Achoemenian, Medo-Assyrian, Assyrian, and Elymæan. (Query: Is the Scythic-Chaldean, he speaks of elsewhere, another name for the earlier of these, or does it precede the whole, and make six instead of five varieties in the inscriptions?)

There are two kinds of inscriptions: the Hieratic, written from left to right, and employed on public monuments and records; and the Cursive, which is written from right to left, and used on private and less important documents. (See Layard's *Nineveh*, etc., II., 131, 132.)

But the grand difficulty lies in the enormous number of the characters: the phonetic signs alone amount to more than three hundred. These, moreover, are possessed of variant powers, so that one character often expresses six or seven different syllabic sounds. Then there are simple and compound ideographs, whose phonetic value can be learned only from the clay tablets already mentioned. These already give from three to four thousand ideographs, and Col. R. thinks there were at least twenty thousand in common use.

Besides Col. R., who for a number of years has resided at Bagdad, filling the post of Resident once held by Claudius James Rich, Rev. Dr. Hincks deserves honorable mention as a decipherer of Assyrian inscriptions. His name stands high among the cultivators of this branch of science; and though sometimes differing in minuter points, his readings agree in the main with those of Col. R.

But a Rev. Mr. Forster, previously somewhat noted for his translation of the Sinaitic inscriptions in Wady Mukattel, is the discoverer of what is called the "Pictorial," in distinction from the "Historical" method of interpretation of Col. R. and Dr. Hincks. It is so called because, while they find in the inscriptions a most important series of historical records, he finds not the most distant allusion to such records, but only puerile explanations of the accompanying sculptures, of which the following may serve as illustrations: — Describing the black Nimrood obelisk, he says: "In the third tab-

let, on the second side, the group consists, conformably with its legend, of a two-horned and one-horned wild ox, and a wild ox or antelope. The inscription further describes these oxen as in the act of lowing; and the attitude and expression of the one-horned animal strikingly corroborates this particular of the legend!"

Again, instead of the name of Darius the king, in the Behistun inscription, he reads: "Wakar, wakâ karnin namak kuki," and thus interprets: "a cut-short man engraving many captives, fastened by a single rope, by cutting and striking with a mallet;" thus making an unknown artist climb to such a height and perform such a work to immortalize himself, and that without even giving his name, but only designating himself as "a cut-short man!" certainly a most remarkable manifestation of a vainglorious desire for fame. In keeping with this, he makes the Ferouher, the well-known symbol of Deity (see the figure on the back and title-page of Mr. Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains*), to be the figure of the sculptor, suspended in his palm-leaf crate, before the cliff; the iron cap on his head was probably to protect it from the falling fragments! and the hoop round his waist, with the coil of rope about it, was to prevent him from swinging against the rock, while the ring in his left hand is a tambourine which he beats as he sings vociferously the contents of the inscriptions in commemoration of the completing of his work. He adds that "the writing states he worked by moon-light and was elevated by wine!" and finally that the king is snapping his fingers at the last figure, for the words for snapping the fingers are there!!

Lest such a brilliant display of the wisdom and erudition of the distinguished author of the "Pictorial" method should lead the reader to doubt whether Col. R. be not an arrant cheat, let him read the testimony of Mr. Layard, as long ago as 1848. In the 2d vol. of *Nineveh and its Remains*, p. 134, he says: "Even a superficial examination of the ingenious reasoning of Prof. Grotfend, which led to the first steps in the inquiry, and an acquaintance with subsequent discoveries of Rawlinson and other eminent philologists,

must at once remove all doubt as to the general accuracy of the results. There may undoubtedly be interpretations and forms of construction open to criticism; but as to the general correctness of the translations of the inscriptions of Persepolis and Behistûn, there cannot be a question;” and in a note he tells us that “the transcription, in cuneiform letters, of a hieroglyphical legend on a vase at Venice, is a test of the general accuracy of the deciphering of both characters. The name of the king was found to be that of Artaxerxes, and was so read *independently* from the Persian and Egyptian texts, by Major (Col.) R. and Sir Gardner Wilkinson.”

In his recent work, Mr. Layard says: “Doubts appear to be still entertained by many eminent critics as to the progress actually made in deciphering the cuneiform writing. These doubts may have been confirmed by too hasty theories and conclusions which, on further investigation, their authors have been the first to withdraw; but the unbiassed inquirer can scarcely now reject the evidence of the general accuracy of the interpretations of the inscriptions. Had they rested on a single word or paragraph, their soundness might have been questioned; but when several independent investigators have arrived at the same results, and have not only detected numerous names of persons, nations, and cities, in historical and geographical series, but have found them mentioned in proper connection with events recorded by writers sacred and profane, scarcely any stronger evidence can be desired.”¹

The whole progress of discovery since, has only tended to confirm the confidence of scholars in the correctness of the renderings of Col. R. and his coadjutors. Besides the facts that will be adduced in a subsequent part of this Article, a late London paper informs us that recently, when Mr. Loftus uncovered, at Kouyunjik, a magnificent sculpture of the king pouring a libation over four dead lions, before an altar bearing an offering, he hastily copied an inscription of three lines, just over the altar, and sent it off to Col. R., then at Bagdad, without saying a word about the sculpture; and

¹ Babylon and Nineveh, p. viii.

the return of post brought the following translation : " I am Asshur bani pal (660 B. C.), the supreme monarch, the king of Assyria, who having been excited by the inscrutable deities Assur and Beltis, have slain four lions. I erected over them an altar sacred to Ishtar (Ashtoreth), the goddess of war. I have offered a holocaust over them. I have sacrificed a kid? over them."

A statement of some of the results to which Col. R. has arrived in the course of his investigations, may here not be unacceptable to the readers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

He says that the Babylonian language was essentially a primitive Hebrew. Its roots are the same, its structure analogous, its conjugations very similar, and the names of objects mostly identical. All the primitive brick inscriptions of Chaldea were Scythic till 1300 B. C. This language was in use a thousand years before its Semitic modification, and its cuneiform inscriptions seem to have been first used by the Babylonian Scyths, whose ethnic name was Akkad. In its pronominal system it resembles most the Mongol and Muntchoo, but not in its vocabulary. In general organization, it was like the cuneiform Scythic of Elymais and Media; yet differing from that as much as the Turkish Mongol and Muntchoo do from each other.

The Akkadim built all the primitive structures, and had a different nomenclature, both mythological and geographical, from their successors; hence the use of variants to express the old Scythic and more modern Semitic names of the same persons and things.

In Scripture, the names of the cities of Nimrod are all Scythic except Babel. Shinar, i. e. Shi nahar, "the two rivers," is probably the Scythic for Babel, as Sheshach was for Ur, Jer. 25: 26.

In the inscriptions, Babylonia is first called Akkad, and then Shamir (query — Shinar?) and Akkad are distinguished from Babylonia proper.

The Assyrian inscriptions narrate foreign conquests, and only incidentally touch on domestic history. But the Babylonian are exactly the reverse; and, while a genealogical

document has not been found in Chaldea, geographical, statistical, sacerdotal, and architectural ones abound.

As regards the races whose records are found in the inscriptions, Col. R. thinks the Nimrod of Scripture and the original Median dynasty of Berosus the same. Then came the Scythian dynasty, from Susiana or Elymais, which was followed by the Chaldean monarchy, established 1796 B. C. To this succeeded an Arab dynasty, 1518 B. C.; which, in turn, was supplanted by the Assyrian, 1273 B. C. Assyria then became independent: previous to that time, her rulers had not assumed the regal title, nor had the Babylonian kings ever assumed the title of "kings of Assyria."

All the specimens of Assyrian art now in Europe, as well as the few that have found their way to this country, belong to what is called the Assyrian period, which extended from 1273 to 612 B. C. There were no structures on the upper Tigris, of any importance, till about 1300 B. C.; and the civilization and art of all that region was evidently imported from Chaldea on the decline of that monarchy.

In the days of Tiglath Pileser I. (1130 B. C.), northern Syria and the plateau of Anatolia were, according to one of his inscriptions, inhabited by a Scythic population. Southern Syria was dependent on Egypt. The Casluchim or Kasmonians, who according to Scripture were the ancestors of the Philistines, were at that time the predominant tribe in Palestine; and the Aramean stock was confined to the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

It is an interesting question, Who were the Chaldeans? But with all the light thrown on it by the inscriptions, Col. R. still finds it difficult to answer. He hesitates whether to call them Scythian or Shemitish, though on the whole he inclines to the former opinion. The names of their kings were Shemitish; but yet they were always closely allied with the Elamites and Nimri, who were Scyths.

There seems to have been a war of races in Babylonia about the time of Abraham, if indeed it did not continue long after. In this struggle for supremacy, as long after in England, the opposing factions were distinguished by dif-

ferent colors : thus the Scyths were the black, and the Shemites the red ; and Kudur Mapula, who was contemporary with Abraham, and is styled on the monuments "the ravager of Syria," may thus be identified with the Chedorlaomer of Scripture ; for Kudur the Red, supposing he were a Shemite, would be Kudur el ahmar ; and there may be worse etymologies than that which, out of Kudur el ahmar, makes the scriptural Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14: 1).

And this suggests one valuable contribution of these discoveries to biblical literature in the identification of Scripture names.

According to Gen. 10: 10, "the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar."

Babel is well known as Babylon ; Erech (Gr. *'Ορχοε*) is identified, by the inscriptions, with the modern Warka. Accad is, in like manner, discovered at Niffer, a town in the marshes of Southern Babylonia, that must be familiar to the readers of Layard's "Babylon and Nineveh." Calneh is not yet identified, though we may expect soon to be able to ascertain its location also.

The record proceeds, ver. 11, "And out of that land went forth Asshur," or, as in the margin, "Nimrod went out into Assyria (the inscriptions may soon enable the Hebrew scholar to determine which is the true reading), and builded Nineveh and the city Rehoboth, and Calah and Resen between Nineveh and Calah."

Nineveh is now recognized in the mounds directly opposite Mosul, including Kouyunjik, Nebby Yoonas, and their connections. Rehoboth is not yet identified ; but Calah is ascertained to be the ancient name of the Nimroud which has become so famous since Layard began his excavations among its ruins. Several things have led Col. R. to suspect that this might be the ancient Calah ; and at length the discovery of a statue of the god Nebo confirmed his anticipations. This statue stood in one of the apartments of the palace at Nimroud, bearing an inscription of twelve lines, to the purport that the head sculptor of Calah dedicated

this image of the god Nebo to Phullukha and to the lady Semiramis the queen of the palace. Nebo is mentioned in Isa. 46: 1, and Mount Nebo may have been a high-place dedicated to this god. Phullukha, who reigned until 747 B. C., the third of that name, was the Pul of Scripture mentioned 2 Kings 15: 19 and 1 Chron. 5: 26. In this last passage the Septuagint has *Φαλώχ*, almost identical with the Assyrian Phullukha. Col. R. is disposed to identify him also with the Belochus of Eusebius. The Upper royal line of Assyria ended in him after a rule of 546 years. If further proof of the identification of Calah be wanting, it is furnished in the discovery of another obelisk in Nimroud, erected by "Shalmanrish (Shalmanezar) circ. 1000 B. C., the founder of Calah, son of Assur dan pal (Sardanapulus), and recording twenty-seven of his battles.

If Nimroud be Calah, then we may expect Resen to be found in Karakosh, Karamles, or Yarumjee, places all of which may be said to lie between Nineveh and Nimroud, and at each of which ancient mounds still exist.

Again, Gen. 14: 1, states that Amraphel, King of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, etc., made war on the cities of the plain. Chedorlaomer has been already referred to. The inscriptions also furnish a clew to the position of Ellasar, for according to them, Ellasar or Larsa is the old Babylonian name of the modern Irak or Senkereh in Mesopotamia, situated between Babylon and the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates. Was the Larissa of Xenophon an Assyrian namesake of the Babylonian Larsa?

Col. R. reads on a cylinder from Kileh Shergat, but somewhat doubtfully, the name of Amraphel (God Phul), king of Shinar, contemporaneous with the event referred to.

But in Gen. 11: 28 and 31, we are told that Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees. In assigning the location of this, there is hardly a district from the Arabian Desert to the mountains of Armenia, and from Assyria to the Euphrates that has not furnished, according to some writer, the modern representative of this ancient city. Karl Ritter has

given the weight of his authority in favor of Orfa (Edessa), where the A. B. C. F. M. has now an outstation of the Mission at Aleppo. But if Col. R. reads the inscriptions aright, the honor of being the birthplace of Abraham, is to be assigned to some old Chaldean ruins west of the Euphrates, not far from the Arab town of Sheikh esh Shuyookh—ruins so old and till lately so utterly unnoticed, that they are not to be found even on our best maps. There in the ruins of Mughcier or Um Qeer is the rightful claimant of the honor. Um qeer means the mother of bitumen, and is a name derived from wells of that substance in the vicinity. Mughcier, in Arabic means “changed,” and had the Arabs been aware of its ancient glory, they could not have given it a name more appropriate. Changed indeed must be those desolate heaps from what they were when Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and went forth with them to go into the land of Canaan. We will learn more from these ruins when we come to the corroboration of sacred history furnished by the inscriptions.

Shalmanezar, king of Assyria, — not the founder of Calah, but another who reigned 730–721 B. C. — carried Israel away captive to Habor and Halah, and the river of Gozan 2 Kings 17: 6, and 18: 9–11. Halah or Khalah is supposed to be the same with Calah already identified with Nimroud. Khabor is still the name of the large river of Northern Mesopotamia, that rising on the southern declivities of Mt. Taurus drains the whole region between Haran and Jezireh, and flowing between the Abdulazeez range, and the mountains of Sinjar, empties into the Euphrates at Karkesia; and Gozan is now ascertained to be the old Assyrian name of Nisibis, a city situated on a branch of the Khabor, now called the Jerujer, but more anciently the Mygdonius. Such a coincidence seems to leave little doubt as to the scene of the captivity of the ten tribes under Shalmanezar.

The Assyrians transplanted the inhabitants of Cuthah and Sepharvaim (Sippara of Greek historians) to Samaria to take the place of the exiled Jews (2 Kings 17: 24). And

these colonists are the ancestors of the Samaritans so much hated by the Jews. Cuthah is pointed out by the inscription at the modern Ibrahim, and Sepharvaim under the name of Sippara at Mosseyib a little above Babylon on the Euphrates.

Cuthah called in Scripture the city of Nergal, who was the god of the chase, was also known to the Arabs as the city of Nimrod, the god of hunting being often confounded by them with the mighty hunter.

The Babylonian Talmud states that Nergal was a cock Rushi. David Kimchi Abarbanel and other Jewish commentators adopt this idea in their writings, and whether correctly or not, at least prove the high antiquity of this worship. That the Rabbins also associated the evil principle with this bird, appears from another passage of the same Talmud which directs him who wishes to know evil spirits to sift ashes on the bed, and in the morning he will find on them the footsteps of a cock. These things in connection with Babylonian Jews, showing a priest standing before the image of a cock on an altar, seem to afford some clue to the origin of the Yezidees.

Again, the Ahava where Ezra proclaimed a Fast, to seek the protection of God for the captives on their return to Judea is now called Hib, a well-known town on the Euphrates in nearly the same latitude with Bagdad. The historians of Julian call it Dacira, and the Talmudh Tidakira. The real name was Ahi or Ihi, and the Chaldean da-kira (of bitumen) refers to the famous bitumen springs at that place. Is this also the 'Ava' of 2 Kings 17: 24, which seems to be also called Ivah in ch. 18: 34?

It would be too tedious to mention all the names of men and places identified by inscriptions found among their ruins. Among Kings, the names of Jehu, Hazael, Menahem, Hezekiah, Rezin, Omri, Hiram of Tyre, and Illuloeus of Sidon, were as well known in Assyria as in Palestine; and of places Libnah and Lachish, Gaza and Askelon, Jerusalem and Samaria, and many more familiar to us were no less so to the readers of monumental records on the banks of the Tigris.

Tiglath Pileser 2d, records on one of his monuments, that Menahem of Samaria, Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, the kings Byblos, Casias, Carchemish, Hamath, and even a queen of Arabia Petraea were his tributaries.

Col. R. is disposed to locate the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10: 1,) who visited Solomon 250 years previously, in the last named country, but the limits of this article forbid more than a simple statement of the fact.

Our English translation of Jer. 50: 23, reads "How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken!" The Hebrew word rendered "hammer" is Pateesh, and the inscriptions tell us that before Assyria became independent, it was governed by Satraps from Babylonia called "Patees." Should not then the passage be rendered "How is the Satrap or Ruler of the whole earth cut asunder. How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!" The idea would then be the fall of that great power, that gave rulers to the whole world as it did to Assyria, which is certainly both more intelligible and much more forcible than our present translation.

The corroborations of Scripture history furnished by the inscriptions are exceedingly striking, and a specimen of them will now be given.

In 2 Kings 3: 27, we are told that the King of Moab, when he saw that the battle was too sore for him, and that he could not cut his way through the besieging army, took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And Grotefend deciphered an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar which contains the record of his offer to let his son be burned to death in order to ward off the afflictions of Babylon. Were not these like the prophecy of Caiaphas "that it was expedient that one man die for the people that the whole nation perish not;" the blind gropings and groanings of a fallen race after the deliverance God provides for us through the death of his only begotten Son?

Again, Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii.) sent an embassy to Sennacherib the King of Assyria at Lachish, and from sub-

sequent statements we infer that Lachish was taken and destroyed. What say the inscriptions? Over a beautiful and highly finished bas-relief of the king seated on his throne in royal apparel¹ with the officers of his army about him, and many prisoners before him, some of whom are in the hands of the tormentors, and according to the tender mercies of heathenism, are being flayed alive, is the inscription, "Sennacherib the mighty king, king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment at the gate of the city of Lachisha, — I give permission for its slaughter."

But in this connection is a confirmation of Scripture more striking yet. It would be expecting too much to look for a perfect identity between the inscriptions of the Assyrian monarch and the record of inspiration. An autocratic king is not likely to publish or to perpetuate the memory of his own defeat. But let us compare the two and see how far they agree.

The inspired record says, that Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them (2 Kings 18: 13), and that when Hezekiah offered to purchase a peace, the invader appointed to him three hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold. This it will be borne in mind was the sum originally demanded, not from all the towns, but from Hezekiah and Jerusalem alone. The writer does not go on to specify the sum which Hezekiah actually gave, but only that he gave all the silver which was found in the house of the Lord, and in the royal treasury. He also cut off all the gold from the doors and pillars of the temple with which they had been overlaid, but nowhere does he tell us the amount that was thus procured and given to the Assyrian. Scripture also informs us how Sennacherib took advantage of this submissive spirit of Hezekiah, and, after repeated insulting messages and threats, advanced to the destruction of Jerusalem. But Hezekiah we are told trusted in God, and in answer to his prayer the Lord slew 185,000 of the invaders in a single night, so that the King of Assyria

¹ See Layard's *Babylon and Nineveh*, p. 149.

returned to Nineveh without inflicting further injury on the holy city.

Of course the grandiloquent annals of an oriental monarch, would not narrate the slaughter of his 185,000 soldiers. But he says according to the inscriptions: "Because Hezekiah King of Judah did not submit to my yoke, forty-six of his strong fenced cities, and innumerable smaller towns which depended on them; I took and plundered, but I left to him Jerusalem his capital city and the inferior towns around it," — a very significant admission in view of the Scripture reason for his retreat — "and because Hezekiah still refused to do me homage I attacked and carried off the whole population, fixed and nomade which dwelt around Jerusalem, with thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver, the accumulated wealth of the nobles of Hezekiah's court and of their daughters, with the officers of his palace, men slaves and women slaves, I returned to Nineveh and I accounted their spoil for the tribute which he refused to pay me."

It will be observed that the discrepancy between the two accounts amounts to 500 talents of silver, the one having 300 talents of silver, where the other has 800.

Now without resorting to the supposition of an error in transcription, the difference may be satisfactorily accounted for, if we remember that, while the Bible merely states what was demanded of Hezekiah, the inscription states the whole amount carried off, which of course would include a great deal more. Sennacherib too, smarting under the loss of his army, and writing for posterity, had every motive to magnify the amount of the spoil. He makes no mention of any spoil from the smaller cities, but it can hardly be supposed that he found none, and, as it would tell most for himself, and against Hezekiah, to represent it as all taken from him, he has so represented it. He may have swelled the amount also by counting in the value of the men slaves and women slaves which he boasts of having carried away, as well as other plunder, while Scripture mentions only the demand of the amount to be

paid in the precious metals. Sennacherib evidently makes the most of the matter, for he does not say that Hezekiah paid the amount, but "I attacked and carried off the whole population," etc., "with thirty talents of gold," and so on, leaving the reader to infer that the whole was plunder taken by force, and not a payment to purchase peace.

But if Mr. Layard calls this as it stands "one of the most remarkable coincidences of historic testimony on record," and says that too much stress cannot be laid on it as proof of the general accuracy of the historical details in the inscriptions, we may also point to it as a witness to the accuracy of the sacred records. This, like every other new discovery, has been attempted to be used for their discredit, only to result in establishing their claims more triumphantly than ever.

Another corroboration of Scripture furnished by these discoveries, has reference to the account in Daniel (chap. iv.) of Nebuchadnezzar driven from among men and dwelling for a season with the beasts of the field. An inscription now in the East India house at London, according to Col. R., describes the various works of that monarch at Babylon and Borsippa. The enumeration is doubtless the counterpart of that expression, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" In the midst of the list occurs a remarkable passage which the decipherer could not but regard as the official version of that terrible calamity.

Abruptly breaking off from the account of the architectural decoration of Babylon, it denounces the Chaldean Astrologers. It says "The king's heart was hardened against them. He would grant no benefactions for religious purposes. He intermitted the worship of Merodach, and put an end to the sacrifice of victims. *He labored under the effects of enchantment.*" There is much more that is obscure in this episode, and at its close the architectural narrative is abruptly resumed. But how much clearer a record of that awful visitation could we expect from Nebuchadnezzar?

Another illustration is in connection with his son Belshazzar. This name has always been a stone of stumbling to those who stumble at the word. For history makes no mention of such a king, and testifies that the king who then reigned in Babylon, instead of perishing in that city according to Daniel, when defeated by the Persians in the field, took refuge in his stronghold of Borsippa, and after his surrender there was assigned an honorable retirement in Carmania.

Indeed, in the Oxford Chronological Tables, the most recent and accurate that we have, Belshazzar is confounded with Neriglissar, whose reign preceded that of Nabonidus the father of Belshazzar.¹ Now what light do the inscriptions throw on this matter? Among the many records of monarchs who founded and repaired the temples in the different cities of Babylonia, are four cylinders, giving the history of the temple of the Moon in Ur of the Chaldees. They record its erection a thousand years before Nabonidus, and that it was repaired in his reign (cir. 550 B. C.); thus making it date back to 1550 B. C. — Abraham was born about 1996 B. C., and died, if that date is correct, in 1821 B. C. According to Dr. Hales he was born in 2153 B. C., and died in 1978 B. C.; so that which ever of these dates is the correct one, he died at least 271 years before the foundation of this Sabian temple, in his native place, and left Ur 371 years previous to that event. — These cylinders all finish the architectural inscription with a special prayer and invocation for the welfare of the king's eldest son Balsharezer; and the important point about this is, that such a thing was never done except when the son so mentioned was associated with his father in the government; so that it can be seen at once how Nabonidus, with one army, was defeated in the open country, took refuge in Borsippa, and was dismissed to Carmania, as historians testify, while his son Belshazzar, to whom was assigned the defence of the capital, perished in the manner

¹ It would be superfluous here to remind the readers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* that the term Ben (son) in the expression "Son of Nebuchadnezzar" (Dan. 5: 22), means descendant as well as son.

narrated by the prophet. That he did so, is most unexpectedly confirmed by another inscription, the celebrated one at Behistun, which relates that the pretender who rebelled against Darius Hystaspes, assumed the name of Nabuchudruchur the son of Nabonidus; which he never would have done had it not been known that Belshazzar, the eldest son, was dead; for to him, then, the throne would have belonged, and not to Nabuchudruchur. As for the identity of Balsharezer and Belshazzar, there need be no scruple when we remember that the Nergalsharezer of the monuments is Neriglissar of the Greeks, with whom Belshazzar has, by some, been confounded.

Such are a few of the results already achieved in this most interesting department of research; and, as it is yet in its infancy, we may look for much more valuable fruits when the explorations shall have been more thorough, and the interpretation of the inscriptions more complete. Now there must of necessity be some mistakes; but the greater the amount of materials collated and studied, the more certain and reliable will be the results of study. Col. R. is now in England, where, since May 1855, he has been translating and editing the mass of inscriptions already found; and the learned world may well hope for a rich feast when the results of his labors shall be given to the press.

It is interesting also to know that a society has been formed in England, with a capital of £10,000, for the purpose of exploring the ruins of Assyria and Babylonia, with special reference to Biblical literature. Its explorers take photographs of all the important antiquities they discover; and facsimiles, with letter-press descriptions, are published under the supervision of Mr. Layard.

These discoveries have already inaugurated a new era in our knowledge of the past; and not only do they corroborate the facts already ascertained, but also add new and fruitful territories to the land already in possession