

ARTICLE VII.

HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BY REV. GEORGE H. WHITTEMORE, A.M., ROCHESTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THIS is the title of a small volume by the Rev. George Rawlinson, M.A., Camden Professor of Ancient History, Oxford, of which an American reprint, with additions by Professor Horatio B. Hackett, of Rochester Theological Seminary, has lately been published.¹ Externally its choice style is worthy of the famous Riverside Press, Cambridge; while the names above given are a guarantee of the intrinsic value of the work. It is a happy day when the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" can command the services of so accomplished a scholar as Professor Rawlinson, who fourteen years since gave a course of Bampton Lectures on the same subject, and who, in the prefatory words of the American editor, "is well known as the author of our ablest works relating to the old Asiatic monarchies connected with Jewish history, and occupying a prominent place in the Old Testament." Dr. Hackett, fresh from his great task of marshalling American scholarship for the perfecting of Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, may certainly indulge the modest aspiration that his supplementary contributions to this small, but comprehensive treatise, so much in the line of his life's employment, "will be found to harmonize with the author's design, and may prove acceptable to the reader."

The object of the book is to exhibit the testimony of profane history to the trustworthiness of the biblical records. The Bible is peculiarly adapted to receive such confirmation, if it can be shown to exist, because it is so largely made up of personal and national history. It is so human, as well as so divine a book. The connection of religion and history has been well set forth by Auberlen, in his "Divine Revelation," remarking

¹ Boston: Henry A. Young and Co. 1873.

upon Jehovah's declaration to Abraham, that the object of his being chosen was that he might command his children, and his house after him, to walk in the way of the Lord (Gen. xviii. 19): "Here the careful transmission of the divine revelation is made a duty; for, as in the Acts (xviii. 25; xix. 9, 23; ix. 2) and elsewhere, genuine religious instruction has always been historical. It consisted of the declaration and explanation of the facts, and the careful impressing of the words of revelation on the mind. So there was formed, without doubt, a certain form of the account of the main facts. The New Testament furnishes an instructive analogy in the synoptic tradition of the life of Jesus. Whatever we may think of the relation of the three synoptic Gospels to one another, one main consideration for the explanation of their connection will be the similar oral tradition."

The least reflection will verify this trait of the sacred records. Divine communications are made to their recipients in connection with great events, like the deluge or the Egyptian bondage. The things related were not done in a corner. The ordinary and the miraculous events of Jewish history occurred, many of them, on the broad stage of Israel's relations to the greatest nations of their day and of all time. Such being the case, if the historical accuracy of the Bible can be proved, the value of it is, that it is evidently unstudied and secondary; for the mind of the writer is often plainly on subjects of higher importance, so that he has left matters of history imperfectly explained, or obscurely alluded to, which yet are shown from other sources to be correctly stated. If, then, he has been substantially faithful in that which was least his concern, — the notation of the external circumstances, — how much more may we confide in his fidelity to the true riches of heavenly communications made to him. We proceed to some account of the volume before us, and some general notice of what it has accomplished.

The work proper contains eight chapters, to which the American editor has added Appendices on the Assyrian Story of the Flood and the Moabite Stone. The introductory

chapter presents the historic character of biblical religion as affording a contact with profane history, and announces, as the scope of the work, a comparison of the sacred and secular records, in their various points of contact, during the Old Testament period. Attention is justly directed to the many opportunities existing for confutation, if the Bible were untrue; and, with the presumption thus shown to be in its favor, from the number and variety of the tests it has victoriously sustained, the hope is confidently expressed of exhibiting an all but universal "harmony, which seems to have reached a stage that entitles it to take its place among the evidences of religion."

Passing, in the second chapter, to institute the comparison with reference to the earliest records of the Bible, it is recognized that historical illustration, strictly speaking, is impossible for the first two thousand years or more of the race, until the time of Abraham, which may be called, in a general way, the epoch of the commencement of profane history. Recourse is therefore had to the traditions of different leading races, or divisions of races, concerning paradise, the fall, primeval longevity, the discovery of the arts, and the deluge. These traditions are largely contemporaneous with the statements of the Bible, and the conclusion is deemed irresistible that the Hebrew account of the deluge is the authentic one, from which the others have been more or less deflected; for, upon the supposition of the truth of the sacred narrative, the others can be not unreasonably regarded as corruptions, while the reverse cannot be shown probable. Additional tradition on this subject is brought forward in the American edition, and reference is made to the important confirmation of scripture from the Assyrian Story of the Flood, as recently deciphered and made known by Mr. George Smith, of the British Museum, London, since the publication of the English edition. It may be allowable here to add, that, even since he made the translation given in the Appendix to the American edition, Mr. Smith has discovered a new and interesting fragment belonging to the

deluge series of inscriptions. In a letter to the London Daily Telegraph, respecting the collection brought home by the expedition of Assyrian discovery confided to his charge, he says: "When last year I published a translation of the text in question, I was obliged to note with regret that in the first column of the inscription there were about fifteen lines entirely lost. The lacuna occurred at a point of high interest to students and the world in general; for the Divine Instructor of Sisit was about to give orders for the embarkation in the ark. It is needless, therefore, to say with what satisfaction I lighted upon the welcome tablet which fills up this very important gap. The fragment I found during the Daily Telegraph expedition belongs to the first column of the deluge series of inscriptions; it continues the speech of the god Hea, the commencement of which is on the portion of the tablet already in the Museum. On the fragment of the old collection, Hea tells Sisit to warn the world, because of the wickedness of the people; on the Daily Telegraph portion, Hea continues by predicting the flood, and then commands Sisit, as follows: 'On the coming of the flood which I shall send, thou shalt enter into the ship, and the door of the ship turn, thou shalt send into the midst of it thy corn, thy furniture and goods, thy gold and silver, thy male slaves, and thy female slaves, the sons of the army, the beasts of the field, the animals of the field; all that thou hearest thou shalt do; . . . they shall spread, and they shall guard the door of the ship. Sisit attended and opened his mouth, and spake, and said to the god Hea, his lord.' Five lines of the speech of Sisit follow this. They are too mutilated for exact translation; and then in the answer, Sisit refers to the difficulties in the way of the work. I need not dwell upon the interest of placing this account side by side with that contained in the book of Genesis."

The triumphant verification of the tenth chapter of Genesis, and its accord with the latest ethnological and linguistic inquiry, are alluded to by both editors; the English writer citing the high authority as an Orientalist of his distin-

guished relative, Sir Henry Rawlinson, and the commentator Kalisch, while Dr. Hackett mentions the declaration of the great Karl Ritter, that in geography, as well as ethnography, no writings of antiquity are so corroborated by modern researches as this passage of Genesis and the works of Herodotus. Besides the local tradition of the tower of Babel and confusion of tongues, which it is thought may have been perverted into the Greek myth of the giants warring upon the gods and attempting to scale heaven, a remarkable concurrent fact is found in the heterogeneous character of the old monumental language of Babylon, with its preponderant Ethiopian vocabulary, Turanian structure, and admixture of Semitic and Aryan elements.

The tenth chapter of Genesis is resorted to as the beginning of history proper, which is "the history of states," according to a German authority. In satisfactory consistency with the biblical statements are the extant ruins and records, which go to confirm the relations of Assyria to Babylonia given in this chapter, especially the prior age of the latter kingdom, against the contrary traditional view derived from Ctesias.

Passing from general history to the biography of Abraham, its representation of Egypt, when he visited it, as a monarchy, with a sovereign whose title was Pharaoh (Perao, "the great house," compare "Sublime Porte,"), and who reigned over a great grain-producing country, is indisputably confirmed by history proper, by the hieroglyphics, and by the notorious fertility of the country. After his return from Egypt, Abraham rescued his nephew Lot from a great monarch of Elam, Chedorlaomer, whose supremacy is in accord with the demonstrated ascendancy of an Elamitic dynasty in Babylonia itself, at a somewhat earlier epoch. The last part of Genesis again makes Egypt prominent, in the story of Joseph, and here there is only an embarrassment of illustrative riches. They have long been accessible to American and English readers, in translations of Hengstenberg's compact work, "Egypt and the Books of Moses." A few contested points,

which objectors cannot maintain, may be indicated. It is admitted that there are no depictions of camels on the Egyptian monuments, and that they are not mentioned, in ancient writers, as found there; but, as Dr. Hackett convincingly observes, neither does the Bible say anything of the use of camels among the Egyptians. It merely records that Abraham, enjoying the favor of Pharaoh, was a very prosperous herdsman, and among his possessions this wandering stranger very naturally had camels. As for asses, single individuals are credited, on the best ancient and modern authority, with owning seven or eight hundred. The Hebrew term for "east wind," in Gen. xli., includes the southeast wind, which is very frequent in Egypt, and very destructive, if of long continuance. Gesenius gives the term as perhaps put for any violent wind between the east and south; in confirmation of which Dr. Robinson adduces the Arabic *shürkiyeh*, i.e. east wind, applied to the violent south wind of the desert, whence the Italian *sirocco*, also mostly applied to southerly winds. The monuments contradict Herodotus and Plutarch in their statements as to the absence of the vine, and of wine drinking, in Egypt, but confirm the plain testimony of these writers that animal food was in regular use by the higher classes. The existence of eunuchs in Egypt is in debate between such authorities as Rosellini and Wilkinson; but then it is uncertain whether the Hebrew term may not have acquired, so early as the date of the Pentateuch, the secondary meaning, "officer," which is so often its translation in our Bible. To deny the possibility of famine in Egypt, is to contradict the statements of Strabo and Pliny, of Mohammedan and other writers, and the monuments. Joseph's alliance with the daughter of the high-priest of On may have been less a breach of Egyptian exclusiveness than appears at first sight; for it is to be remembered that Solomon had afterwards a royal Egyptian spouse, while Joseph was naturalized, advanced to high dignity, and might have received a special dispensation for a marriage which it was the royal pleasure to have contracted.

A period of less than two centuries embraced, in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, is next taken up. A half century, perhaps, after the death of Joseph arose that new king who "knew not Joseph"; who was actually, as some think, ignorant of his services to Egypt, or was, as others believe, regardless of their merited fame. The strangeness of this circumstance is diminished by the view of some scholars that this epoch was nearly coincident with the expulsion of the Hyksos, and the rise of the eighteenth dynasty. As Moses was eighty years old when he led forth his countrymen, and as we do not know how near his birth was to the commencement of the Egyptian cruelties, we may consider the Egyptian bondage as, perhaps, about a century in duration. And here almost every feature is susceptible of confirmation and illustration, from various sources, ancient and modern, equally with the time of Joseph. As concurring with the history of the oppression, may be specified the extensive use of brick building-material, the employment of straw in its manufacture, the enforced labor of captives at this task, and the hard life of the farm-laborer, all known from independent sources. Many Egyptian usages presented in Exodus, and the later part of the Pentateuch, as the prominence of the chariot force in the army, the taking of the field in war, and the adjudication of causes by the king personally, the possession of precious ornaments, domestic and agricultural customs, have the sanction of monumental or other ancient authority. It is noted as interesting that the only important exception to this statement, the employment of midwives, which is not depicted upon the monuments, is yet accredited from the practice of the present day, which also elucidates the strange expression "when ye see them upon the stools." "Two or three days," says an English writer upon the modern Egyptians, Mr. Lane, "before the expected time of delivery, the *layah* (midwife) conveys to the house the *kursee elwilâdeh*, a chair of a peculiar form, upon which the patient is to be seated during the birth." Finally, the art of writing, and the artizanship requisite for making the

Tabernacle and its sacred furniture, would be naturally possessed by some of the Hebrews, at a time when arts and manufactures were most flourishing in Egypt.

An interesting evidence of the Exodus itself is to be gathered from Manetho, and the later historian Chaeremon, both Egyptian priests, as reported by Josephus. They agree as to the withdrawal of a profane multitude from Egypt, in the general epoch of the Exodus, they connect with the event the names of Moses and Joseph (it will be remembered that Joseph's body was carried up, Ex. xiii. 19), and give Southern Syria as the destination of the movement, but they represent the case as an expulsion of insurgent and defiled persons. These different features, as well as the accounts given by Diodorus Siculus, from the Greek historian Hecataeus, and by Tacitus, may be conciliated with the biblical record, by the supposition of intentional flattering misrepresentation, mingled with perverted tradition. The words of Marcus von Niebuhr are here in place: "The Old Testament alone is an exception to patriotic untruth."

We turn aside here from the strict course of a review, to notice, as related to the general theme, a comment by Matthew Arnold, in "Literature and Dogma," upon the passage of the Red Sea. Depreciating the biblical, as well as all other alleged miracles, on the ground that they fulfil neither of two indispensable conditions for their reception; viz. that they must be shown to have arisen in a time eminently unfavorable to amplification and the production of legend; or, they must be shown to be recorded in documents of an eminently historical mode of birth and publication (the latter, it will be observed, the thesis which Prof. Rawlinson believes to be demonstrated in his present Essay), he adduces what follows: "It was said that the waters of the Pamphylian Sea miraculously opened a passage for the army of Alexander the Great. Admiral Beaufort, however, tells us that 'though there are no tides in this part of the Mediterranean, a considerable depression of the sea is caused by long-continued north winds; and Alexander, taking advantage of such a moment, may

have dashed on without impediment'; and we accept the explanation as a matter of course. But the waters of the Red Sea are said to have miraculously opened a passage for the children of Israel; and we insist on the literal truth of *this* story, and reject natural explanations as monstrous." We hardly know for whom Mr. Arnold speaks. We do know that many Christian scholars, believing, according to the Bible, that the hand of God was signally exerted in all which befell the Egyptians, are grateful for the confirmation of their faith, and the removal of anything seemingly fantastic in the plagues of Egypt, when these are shown to be the ordinary evils to which the land was liable, intensified by God's decree, for the authentication and accomplishment of his will as pronounced by Moses. So of the culminating event, the passage of the Red Sea, Dr. Edward Robinson long since said: "The miracle was wrought by natural means, supernaturally applied," a view, the details of which cannot here be given, but which is confirmed by the observations connected with the opening of the Suez canal. In all these cases, the "natural explanation," so far as it goes, instead of being rejected as monstrous, is the support and ally of the special and wonderful character of the incidents. Mr. Arnold might, perhaps, find pleasure and profit in the philosophical view of the unity of God's action, albeit discriminated in our conceptions of the natural and supernatural, presented in the concluding note to "Prophecy a Preparation for Christ," the Bampton Lectures for 1869, by Dr. R. Payne Smith, Dean of Canterbury, and a delegate to the late meeting of the Evangelical Alliance. He is considering the difficulty of drawing any line of distinction between God's gifts where they are the result of his working in nature, and when the working of God was special and extraordinary, and observes, in terms which are applicable to what we have been discussing: "It may be that these two methods of working, apparently so different to us, are not different in themselves. . . . Really the difference may be that in one God reveals his presence more than in the other; in natural operations his arm is

hidden, in supernatural he makes it bare in the sight of all his people."

As for the concluding division of this period, the forty years in the wilderness, the fact of such a wandering is inexpugnably grounded in the historic consciousness of the Jewish people, as much so as the voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers in that of New Englanders. Daniel Webster was not glorifying a myth in 1820, at Plymouth. No more was the author of the one hundred and fifth Psalm when he celebrated God's providence over the great progenitors of his people, and over the Israelites themselves, brought out of Egypt, fed in the wilderness, and planted in Canaan. Among the objections against this part of the history, it hardly seems necessary to allude to Colenso, and his tedious "sums" in Arithmetic. "In any case," says Professor Rawlinson, "a difficulty which is merely numerical is of no great account. Numbers, which, in early times, so far as we have any evidence on the subject, were always expressed in some abbreviated form by conventional signs, are far more liable to corruption than any other parts of ancient manuscripts." Dr. Hackett appends to this chapter a statement of the Rev. F. W. Holland, an experienced traveller in the Sinaitic peninsula, who sees no objection from the physical conditions of the region to the events of the Exodus.

And now, for four centuries, from the death of Moses to the accession of David (1451-1055 B.C., common chronology), we are enshrouded in the "Dark Ages" of Hebrew history. The Israelites were, during a large part of this time, engaged in inglorious struggles with local enemies who have left only their names upon the page of history. Yet even so there is a certain harmony with the known condition of other nations in that time. While the Hebrews had their hands full at home, in conquering their domain, Egypt records no contact with her former vassals, and Babylonia and Assyria became engaged in long internecine contests. With this general notice we pass over many interesting points, such as the tradition preserved in North Africa, of Joshua's wars with

the Canaanites, Damascene testimony to David's wars, the vindication of the Bible in the early pre-eminence which it assigns to Sidon over Tyre, Egyptian testimony corroborating that of the Bible, to the predominance of the Hittites and the Philistines, in the north and south of Palestine respectively, and the illustration of the term *Shophetim*, "Judges," by the name *Suffetes*, borne by the chief magistrates of the Phoenician colonies. Side by side with the comparative dearth of historical light upon this period, there exists a wealth of geographical attestation, which has been displayed by Robinson, Stanley, Ritter, Thomson, and others. Dean Stanley has indicated the peculiar fitness of the book of Joshua for submission to this test, in calling it the "Domesday Book" of the land of Canaan.

In the fifth chapter of the work before us, devoted to another period of between four and five centuries, commemorated in the Kings and Chronicles, the sudden and transient glory of the empire which Solomon inherited and aggrandized, is shown to be in harmony with the analogy of Oriental history, to which also belongs the character of his empire as an aggregation of separate subject kingdoms. Tyrian history confirms the fact of his sway, of his intercourse with King Hiram, or Hiram, and of the building of the Temple. Recent discoveries in Nineveh and Palestine illustrate the recorded style of the Solomonian architecture. Moreover the peculiar internal condition of decadence in Egypt and Assyria, known from the monuments, allows, at just the date of Solomon's empire, of a Jewish eminence which might otherwise have been disputed.

We are precluded from giving even a cursory outline of the illustrations achieved for the subdivision of this period, embracing the two centuries and a half of the divided kingdom. The realm is too vast and intricate. It must be explored patiently, step by step. The Assyrian records have here been the great mine, and new treasures may constantly be expected. But the venerable Moabite stone, with its consentient and additional testimony upon the relations of Israel

and Moab, as presented in the Bible, affords the hope that our own countrymen may, ere long, be successful in discovering other valuable witnesses on the east of the Jordan. Coming to the great landmark of the Assyrian captivity, there is an exact agreement between the Hebrew and the Assyrian dates for the fall of the kingdom of Israel, 721 B.C. Sargon claims the glory of the exploit, in the Assyrian annals, a monarch of whom we should otherwise know but his name, mentioned by Isaiah (xx. 1), and for twenty-five hundred years the sole known relic of his even disputed, separate, personal, existence. Upon comparing his monumental record with 2 Kings xvii. 6: "The king of Assyria took Samaria," and with 2 Kings xviii. 9, 10: "Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years *they* took it" (during which time Shalmaneser may have died or been deposed), it will be seen that the three separate and superficially unaccordant statements relating to the same event, admit of a delicate coincidence in favor of Sargon's claim. The annals of Sennacherib, son and successor of the preceding monarch, relate his first successful campaign against Hezekiah, at length, and in marked correspondence with the Jewish account, while the absence of any record of the terrible destruction which befell his host in the second expedition, accords with the custom of commemorating only the successes of royalty, and of ignoring its disasters, though the latter may become known indirectly, from mention in succeeding times. Herodotus, however, has a confirmatory account, derived from the Egyptian priests, of a calamity which occurred to Sennacherib. The silence of the Jewish records concerning Assyria from about the time Josiah (639-608 B.C.) began to reign, agrees with that empire's fall, and the capture of its chief city Nineveh, in 625 B.C.

Victorious Babylon next comes upon the scene of Old Testament history. Forty years after its joint conquest with the Medes of Assyria, it conquered Jerusalem, 586 B.C. Josephus gives the statement of Berosus that, "Nebuchadnezzar, having conquered the Jews, burnt the Temple at

Jerusalem, and, removing the entire people from their homes, transported them to Babylon"; and as his history proceeded from native sources, we can afford to dispense with the, as yet undiscovered, monumental annals of Nebuchadnezzar, especially as the scriptures, Berosus, and the canon of Ptolemy agree in the length of his reign as forty-three years. In general, for the four centuries between Rehoboam and Zedekiah, Rawlinson thus remarks upon the direct historical illustrations from profane sources: "They include notices of almost every foreign monarch mentioned in the course of the narrative, and of the Jewish or Israelite kings, Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Ahaziah, Menahem, Pekah, Ahaz, Hoshea, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. All these monarchs occur in profane history in the order, and at or near the time, which the sacred narrative assigns to them. The synchronisms which the narrative supplies, are borne out wherever there is any further evidence on the subjects." We quote, also, in this connection, the following valuable canon found a little farther on: "Exact chronology with respect to events in the remote past is unattainable. The judicious student of ancient history must be content for the most part with approximate dates, and will rely far more upon well attested synchronisms than upon schemes which have a mere numerical basis." It may be added, concerning the Assyrians, that, upon this foundation of chronology and history, it is possible to reconstruct their national life, manners, and customs, so far as alluded to in the historical books of the Bible, and in the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Nahum, in exact accord with the monumental portraiture of this fierce, warlike, and, at the same time, magnificent and luxurious people.

The like illustration of Babylonian history and traits connects itself, not indeed exclusively, but in a marked degree, with the career of Daniel, "the historian of the Captivity," and to this period chapter sixth of the work is devoted. The length of the Captivity, according to scripture, and as determined by the profane chronology of the period from the accession of Nebuchadnezzar to the taking of Babylon by

Cyrus, agrees notably with the dates which Daniel gives incidentally, and, as it were, by the way. The obscurity, in the early part of his narrative, attaching to the statements that, having been carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, he was appointed to a three years' course of study, upon the completion of which he was summoned with his companions before the king, and that, after this, in the *second* year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the lives of the wise men were endangered by a royal decree, is explained, by the fact, according to Berosus in Josephus, that Nebuchadnezzar was not actually king when he undertook that expedition, his father being then alive. Daniel's statement is like that which a writer of the present day might make, in saying that President Grant ended the rebellion. Between *Prince* Nebuchadnezzar's expedition against Syria 606, or 605 B.C., and his second year as king, 603 B.C., sufficient time had elapsed for "three years'" instruction, according to Hebrew reckoning. The representation in Daniel of the character, extent, and glory of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, is upheld by Abydenus and Berosus, and strongly confirmed by modern research; for it must be borne in mind that the destitution of monumental records for Nebuchadnezzar's reign, which has been mentioned, relates to the formal state annals, while in reality this monarch has impressed himself upon Babylon more indelibly than the first Napoleon left his mark upon Paris. "Nine-tenths of Babylon itself," says the work before us, "and nineteen twentieths of all the other ruins that in almost countless profusion cover the land, are composed of bricks stamped with his name." Less than twenty years since, a cylinder was discovered in Lower Babylon, which has cleared up the mystery about Belshazzar, a king of whom Berosus, Herodotus, and Ptolemy have no account. The Nabonnedus whom they mention as the last king, tells us in this inscription that he had associated with himself in the government, his son Belsharezer. All discordance between sacred and profane history thus vanishes, and with this conjoint sovereignty of father and son, may be compared the terms of the reward

ffered to the decipherer of the handwriting on the wall. He should be made "the *third* ruler in the kingdom."

In the case of Persia, as with Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, the confirmation of the biblical allusions to history, government, and manners, is ample. At the outset, however, we meet with a perplexity, attaching, singularly enough, to another personage connected with the fall of Babylon, of which we have just spoken. It is strange that two long-veged questions of history, one of them, even now, partly unsolved, should concern the two dynasties affected by that event, the conquering as well as the conquered. After the victorious siege, well authenticated as the work of Cyrus the Persian, we find Darius the Mede apparently the conquering hero, according to the book of Daniel, for he at once steps forth as the principal character among the victors, and we read of what "it pleased" him to do. Careful attention, however, shows that Daniel's statements are consistent with allusions in and out of the Bible to Cyrus, and with the pointings of secular history, confessedly obscure though they are, towards a colleague of his. We may then believe that "Darius the Median took (received) the kingdom" as a viceroy, with which the first verse of the ninth chapter entirely agrees, where he is spoken of as "made king over the realm of the Chaldeans." From the Persian supremacy over Babylon until the prophecy of Malachi is a period of about a century and a quarter, of which a little more than a century is covered by the books of Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah. Ezra mentions the Persian kings in the following order: Cyrus, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, Darius, Artaxerxes. This may correspond with the list as given by profane authorities: Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes, on the sufficiently authenticated supposition of more than one name borne by the second and third in the list, or of their designation in Ezra by royal titles, and in the profane writers by personal names, while the absence of Xerxes from Ezra is accounted for by the long gap in his history, from the sixth year of Darius, B.C. 515, to the seventh year of Artaxerxes, B.C. 458. But within this interval falls

the book of Esther, the scene of which is at the court of Xerxes, for whose identity with the Ahasuerus (compare, as a royal title, Pharaoh) of Esther, Rawlinson adduces such critics as DeWette, Gesenius, Hävernicks, and Dean Milman, and assigns the exact Semitic equivalency of the Hebrew *Achashwerosh* with the Persian *Khshayarsha*, which the Greeks rendered by Xerxes, together with the notes of time given in the Hebrew narrative. As to the characteristics and actions ascribed to him in the Bible: "Proud, self-willed, amorous, careless of contravening Persian customs; reckless of human life, yet not actually bloodthirsty; impetuous, facile, changeable,—the Ahasuerus of Esther corresponds in all respects to the Greek portraiture of Xerxes." Passing over the very satisfactory refutation of alleged errors and inaccuracies in this part of Scripture, we give the American editor's pregnant quotation from Prof. Stuart, at the close of this seventh chapter of the volume: "The fact that the feast of Purim has come down to us from time almost immemorial, proves as certainly that the main events in the book of Esther happened, as the Declaration of Independence and the celebration of the Fourth of July prove that we separated from Great Britain and became an independent nation. The book of Esther is an essential document to explain the feast of Purim." This name, Dr. Hackett remarks, which means *lots*, was given to the feast ironically by the Jews, with reference to Haman's frustrated conspiracy against them (Esther ix. 24–26; 2 Macc. xv. 36).

Such is a glance over the field of this subject, in which our notice has rested briefly upon some of its more general and conspicuous features. When it has been traversed, as we hope it may be by many, under the guidance of this admirable work, we believe that it will not be possible to dissent from Prof. Rawlinson's estimate of the force of the whole agreement between the sacred and the profane sources. It is, first, the death-blow of the legendary or mythical view of the Old Testament narratives, as the fictions of moral teachers to inculcate moral truths. It being clear that the narrative

deals with real persons and real facts, we are bound, in the second place, to accept it without reserve, because the miraculous portions are as indissolubly connected with those ordinary portions which are upborne by the tests of historical criticism, as was Antonio's blood with Shylock's pound of flesh. A final conclusion is, that the scriptures were written, for the most part, by eye-witnesses of what is recorded. If so, nothing but a truthful intention is needed to render them competent witnesses, and no one will now deny them this. Prof. Rawlinson quotes Strauss, as saying: "It would, most unquestionably, be an argument of *decisive* weight in favor of the credibility of the biblical history, could it indeed be shown that it was written by eye-witnesses"; and adds, as his closing words: "This is exactly what the minute accuracy of the sacred writers, and their close agreement with contemporary records and the best profane historians, shows almost to a certainty. The credibility of the biblical history would thus seem to be, even according to rationalism itself, established." The final note in the American edition consists of a most fitting suggestion as to the even greater force with which the line of argument that has been followed may be applied to the New Testament, closing with the remark: "It is no exaggeration to say, that the well-informed reader, who will study carefully the book of the Acts, and compare the incidental notices to be found there with the geography and the political history of the times, and with the customs of the different countries in which the scene of the transactions is laid, will receive an impression of the writer's fidelity and accuracy equal to that of the most forcible treatises on the truth of Christianity."

We linger to felicitate professional scholars and students, sober, religious, thinking men and women, Sabbath-school teachers and scholars,—all who respect and desire knowledge,—on the treasure here offered to them. It is much to possess a condensed statement, on so important a theme, of the studies of such men as Professors Rawlinson and Hackett, of Sir Henry Rawlinson, of Sir J. G. Wilkinson,

the distinguished writer upon the Egyptians, and of Dr. Pusey, with the great erudition of his Lectures upon Daniel and of his Commentaries upon the Minor Prophets. That which could otherwise be had only in costly works, and which would have to be searched for with great outlay of time, as well as money, is here presented in compact and attractive form. Of course, it will take time and thought to avail one's self of this distilled lore ; but those who will give them may feel that they are placed in communication with the last results of Christian scholarship.