

ARTICLE VIII.

THE TELL-EL-AMARNA LETTERS.

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I READ some months ago that the only Professor of Egyptology of whom our American universities can boast, delivered an address in Chicago about "The World's Greatest Reformer." I felt confident that the subject of that address was the man to whom we owe the fact, that the most important archæological find in recent years took place in Tell-el-Amarna. That man was Amenophis IV., an Egyptian king of the eighteenth dynasty. The same Professor has called him the "most interesting figure in Egyptian history."¹ He was all this because, in a land having such a mighty pantheon as Egypt, he sought to establish and perpetuate the worship of the god of the sun-disk, 'Aten, as supreme, blotting out so far as possible the names, memory, and worship of the others; in a word, he sought to establish a sort of solar monotheism. He abandoned, therefore, Thebes, whose special god, Amon, shared the greatness of the capital, and built a new city far down the Nile, upon its right bank, almost half-way between Thebes and Memphis, upon the plains where Tell-el-Amarna now stands.

This city he called "Brilliance of the Sun." Here he built a magnificent temple to the sun, and a palace as royal residence. This enterprise was only the more likely to succeed, if, after deposing the priests of Amon in Thebes

¹ See art. "Sketch of Egyptian History," by Professor J. H. Breasted, in *Biblical World*, Vol. vii. p. 451.

and blotting out the god's name from the inscriptions, he should, in a new capital, away from the old associations, seek to advance the purposes of the reform. To this new city also Amenophis brought the royal archives, as a hieratic note upon one of the Amarna tablets informs us. Letter 23 in Winckler's edition of the letters has an Egyptian note which has been thus translated:— "[Year] 2 + X, first month of winter, . . . day, at the time when the court was in the Southern capital (Thebes) in the castle, *ḳim i' ḥwt*. Copy of the Naḥarina letter which the ambassador Pt-r-zi, and the ambassador [Bubri] brought." Part of the royal archives of Amenophis have come to us from the ruins of his royal city, but his efforts at religious reform were miserably defeated. With his death the movement came to an end, and the new capital was abandoned. It fell into decay, its royal archives were buried beneath the accumulations of time, only to see the light in our own day.

In 1887, some Arabs discovered on the site of Tell-el-Amarna some of these archives, and they proved to be— not Egyptian papyri, not records in the hieroglyphics of the Nile Valley, but clay tablets inscribed with the cuneiform characters of the Euphrates Valley. A sensation was created at once, and several wild guesses were hazarded as to the find, which it is not worth while here to recount.¹ The tablets were soon disposed of by the Arabs, and found their way, a few of them to the great Egyptian museum at Boulak, but most of them to the museums of Berlin and London,—two or three into the hands of private individuals. Berlin has more tablets than London, although perhaps London has proportionately more that are in good condition. In all there are about three hundred. It is greatly to be lamented that a large proportion of them have come to us in a badly mutilated condition,—the old story

¹ Cf., for example, the later suggestion that one of the letters mentions an Ionian (No. 42, line 16).

in these matters. In very many there is no context at all, and often an otherwise well-preserved letter is broken off just where we had thought to get a valuable piece of information. The tablets themselves are much like other Assyrian and Babylonian tablets, but vary greatly in size, in shape, and in the composition of the clay. Some tablets from the same author are distinguished with comparative ease by the individuality of the clay. Those from Mitani are of a very red clay, unusual and noticeable. Some of those from Mitani are also unusual in size, being the largest letter tablets yet discovered, and find prominent exhibition in the British Museum.

The London texts were published by Dr. Karl Bezold, and the Berlin, by Dr. Hugo Winckler, the London texts being printed, and the Berlin autographed, giving the latter a distinct advantage. The Berlin edition embodies also the Boulak tablets which Dr. Winckler copied in Egypt, under commission from Berlin. Dr. Bezold also published later, under the title "Oriental Diplomacy," a transliteration of the texts in his London edition, without translation. Very many magazine and newspaper articles have discussed these letters in English, French, and German; some of them have contained translations of some of the letters. Prominent among the latter are those of Sayce,¹ Delattre,² and Zimmern,³ the latter being the most valuable. The entire collection is now made available by Dr. Winckler's transliteration and translation of the whole, with vocabulary and list of proper names.⁴ The book contains also Sheil's transliteration,⁵ with Winckler's translation of the tablet recently discovered by Dr. Bliss, our own fellow-country-

¹ Records of the Past, New Series.

² In Proc. Soc. Bib. Arch., Vol. xiii. p. 317.

³ Zeitschrift für Assyriologie, Vols. v. and vi.

⁴ Die Tafeln von Tell-el-Amarna. Berlin. 1896.

⁵ Maspero's Recueil, xv.

man at Tell-el-Hesy, or Lachish. An English translation of this work has also already appeared.¹

Before coming to an account of these letters, a brief discussion of the fortunes of Palestine up to the time of the letters will be useful, and necessary to an understanding of the conditions then prevailing. According to the earliest light we have from the monuments with regard to Palestine, the country was under Babylonian influence and domination, more or less fully maintained.

The first rulers of Babylon, of whom we have records,² are Sargon of Accad, and Naram-Sin. According to a cylinder of Nabonidus,³ Sargon reigned thirty-two hundred years before him, making Sargon's date, if these figures are to be believed, of which I have much doubt, 3800 B.C. Sargon tells us in his inscriptions⁴ of his successful campaigns in the Mediterranean coast lands, including Palestine, and even Cyprus. His son and successor, Naram-Sin, also made successful expeditions to the far West, and even into the Sinai Peninsula.⁵ It seems likely that this influence and control from the Euphrates continued in all the centuries following, at least occasionally. About the year 3000 we have inscriptions of Gudea telling of cedars and stone brought from the far West for his building operations.⁶ About 2300 again, Babylon was under the domination of the Elamites, and their kings claim rule over not only Babylon, but also over all the lands of the West.⁷ This is about the time of Abraham, and helps to make the fourteenth chapter of Genesis historically possible. This chap-

¹The Tell-el-Amarna Letters. Berlin. [Professor Metcalf is the translator.—Eds.]

²Passing by the rulers lately brought to notice by Hilprecht in his publication of Texts unearthed by the Pennsylvania expeditions.

³See Schrader's Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek, Bd. iii, 2. Hälfte, 104.

⁴*Ibid.*, 1. Hälfte, 102. ⁵*Ibid.*, 98-106.

⁶Keil. Bibl., Bd. iii, 1. Hälfte, 34, 36.

⁷Cf. Hommel, *Geschichte des alten Morgenlandes*, 59.

ter tells us of the pre-Semitic inhabitants of Palestine, viz., Rephaim, Zuzim, Emin, Horites, all non-Semitic peoples, and of the Amorites, of whom later. It was also about this time when King Ḥammurabi, according to some the Amraphel of Gen. xiv., united North and South Babylonia, putting an end to the Elamite domination. According to Hommel,¹ this king had made himself known in the West. His son and grandson at any rate bore Canaanitish names, and the latter's son, Amni-Satana, calls himself in his inscriptions "King of the West lands."²

Babylonian power, influence, and culture seem then to have largely prevailed through all these years, as we shall more fully see, even on down to the time of the Tell-el-Amarna letters. This seems to have been true, even during and despite the fact of long years of Egyptian domination, of which we come now to speak.

Aahmes, the first king of the eighteenth dynasty, drove out the Hyksos from their seats of power, ending their rule in Egypt, and building on the borders of Palestine a fortress as basis of future operations and as a protection against future invasion. So began militarism in Egypt. Aahmes' grandson, Thothmes I., marched triumphantly through all Palestine and Syria, even pressing on to the Euphrates, but made no permanent acquisitions. The following rulers, Thothmes II. and his sister, made no further expeditions, but Thothmes III., on coming to the throne, carried on the work of conquest in fifteen great campaigns, reducing the whole country as far as the Euphrates to tribute, building fortresses and establishing garrisons,—those garrisons whose maintenance in Tell-el-Amarna times was neglected to the great sorrow of the letter-writers. Thothmes III. has left us long lists of the conquered cities, valuable geographical and historical data. Among these cities it is that the names Jacob-el, Joseph-el,

¹Gesc. des alten Morgenlandes, 59. ²*Ibid.*

and Beth-ya occur. The following kings, Amenophis II. and Thothmes IV., maintained, even if with difficulty, their possessions in the North. Then come the two kings to whom our letters are addressed, Amenophis III. and IV., or, as they are called here by their titles, Nimmuria and Naphuria (Neb-wa'-a(b)-Re and Nofer-Cheperu=Re). Egyptian records give no account of their expeditions into Palestine, and the presumption at least is against the possibility that the latter, the great Reformer, could have had time for expeditions of war.¹ Where Egyptian records are wanting, the Tell-el-Amarna letters bring us information, giving a vivid picture of the state of affairs in Palestine and Syria.

From Aahmes to Amenophis III. was a period of nearly two hundred years. We must believe that, during this time, Egyptian influence was powerfully felt in all the life and culture of Palestine, but our letters will lead us to the conclusion already mentioned, that, despite these long years of Egyptian domination, the influence of Babylon was still felt, and her civilization and culture prevailed. Some account of the letters themselves is now in place.

SUMMARY OF THE LETTERS.

I. There are, in the first place, letters between Egypt, and Babylon, Assyria, Mitani, and Alasia, countries maintaining relations of friendship with Egypt, possibly as a result of a wholesome fear of the great conquerors who had gone before. They sought by correspondence, by exchange of presents, and by intermarriage, to preserve hospitable relations. They invariably address one another as "Brother," and all the letters begin with long and profuse greetings, in stereotyped forms; such, for example, as this: "To Nimupiria, king of Egypt, my brother:—from Kalli-

¹ For these facts of Egyptian history see any good history of Egypt.

ma-Sin, king of Karduniaš [Kasshite name for Babylon]. It is very well with me and my land. May it be well with you, your wives, your sons, your daughters, your horses, your chariots, and your whole land." ¹

1. Egypt and Babylon.—At this time in Babylon the Kasshite dynasty was in power. Very little has been known of these rulers, and these letters have made possible quite a reconstruction of the kings of the period, although absolute clearness and certainty has not yet been obtained. The latest reconstructions of these facts are to be found in Hilprecht's Introduction to his new Edition of Tablets, found by the Philadelphia Expeditions, in Niebuhr's "Chronologie," and in Winckler's "Altorientalische Forschungen." The following Babylonian kings are mentioned in the Tell-el-Amarna letters: Karaindaš,² with whom friendly relations with Egypt began; (here possibly a break); Kallima Sin's father,³ name unknown, his daughter was, however, wife of Amenophis III.⁴; Kallima-Sin, to whom Amenophis III. writes one letter,⁵ and from whom went four letters to Egypt³; (here Burnaburiaš I., not named here, but from whom some inscriptions have come⁶); Kurigalzu I.,⁷ son of Burnaburiaš I.,⁸ and father of the following; and Burnaburiaš II., who wrote six letters to Amen-

¹ Winckler, No. 4, Kallima-Sin of Babylon to Amenophis III. of Egypt, p. 13.

² No. 8, line 8; name also in the "Synchronistische Geschichte," Schrader's Keil. Bibl., Bd. i, 194, an inscription from him in Bd. iii, 1. Hälfte, 152.

³ Often in Kallima-Sin's letters, Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5.

⁴ So No. 1, line 12. ⁵ No. 1.

⁶ So Winckler in the above, and see Syn. Gesch., Keil. Bibl., Bd. i, 194; Bd. iii, 1. Hälfte, 152.

⁷ Another king of the same name is known, mentioned in No. 7, line 19, and No. 9, Reverse, lines 16-17; in the former place, as refusing to join an alliance with Canaanites against Egypt, out of respect for Amenophis III. See also Keil. Bibl., Bd. iii, 1. Hälfte, 154, and Bd. i, 97.

⁸ According to Keil. Bibl., Bd. iii, 1. Hälfte, 154.

ophis IV.¹ The new names are those of the second Burnaburiaš and Kallima-Sin.

Intermarriages occupy much of the correspondence. Kallima-Sin's father married his daughter to Amenophis III.; Kallima-Sin himself married his daughter to the same Pharaoh, and he also negotiated for an Egyptian wife. A son of Burnaburiaš II. had married a daughter of Amenophis IV., and was residing at the Egyptian court. Amenophis requested a daughter from Burnaburiaš, and was refused, although another woman was promised. There is much dickering over these marriages, the required dowries, the prices paid for the wives, and over their proper escort; showing that bargains in royal marriages are not a modern invention, but one of hoary antiquity. Amusing things are said; for example, Kallima-Sin's request for Amenophis III.'s daughter was refused, but the latter writes² that he would be well enough pleased with any beautiful woman whom he could pass off for a king's daughter.

Relations of friendship had been prevailing during the reigns of six Babylonian princes, the time covered being, however, not so very long, as Amenophis III. was cotemporary with the last part of the reign of Kallima-Sin's father, and with the reigns of Kallima-Sin, Burnaburiaš I., Kurigalzu I., and Burnaburiaš II. Amenophis III., in a letter to Kallima-Sin,³ speaks of the fact that his father, Thothmes IV., had been in treaty relations with Kallima-Sin. Presents were freely exchanged,—chariots, horses, slaves, couches, gold and silver, enamel, precious stones and woods, inlaid ivory objects, and stuffed animals,—and not much bashfulness is manifested in plainly asking for such favors. Mutual promises are made for transfer from one land to the other of whatever products are desired. Trade relations were active; merchant caravans, though often subject to plunder, were passing back and forth; the inter-

¹Nos. 6-11. ²No. 3, lines 15-18. ³No. 1.

change of products, yes travel, visits from one land to the other, must have been frequent. One of Burnaburiaš' caravans was waylaid in Hinatôn, the city mentioned in Joshua xix. 14. In such cases international law required of Egypt, as holding suzerainty over Palestine, indemnification, and punishment of the guilty parties. As to the treatment of ambassadors, there was often complaint, and Burnaburiaš seems to have felt the weight of the proverb, "If you would have a thing done well, do it yourself," for he tells Amenophis III. that there is no trusting to officers. Amenophis III. says Kallima-Sin's ambassadors are liars, who misrepresent and falsify his messages. Despite these active relations, Burnaburiaš seems to have had no adequate idea of the distance of Egypt from Babylon, and was angry because Pharaoh had not immediately heard of his being ill, and, consequently, had sent no letter of sympathy. From a note dropped in No. 7, line 31, it seems that the Kasshite Babylonians were lords over Assyria,—which at this time was probably under Aššur-uballiṭ. One note of correction to "Oriental Diplomacy" might be made. There Bezold has ascribed L. 4 to Burnaburiaš, probably because of mention of a marriage with Pharaoh. The heading of the letter is broken off. It may, however, with almost absolute certainty, be ascribed to Kallima-Sin. The marriage may equally well apply here, and in line two of the text the sign "KA" is found, which in this connection can only be explained as the first sign of the name Kallima-Sin.¹

2. Assyria and Egypt.—One letter from Aššur-uballiṭ of Assyria to Amenophis IV. He says his father, Aššur-nâdin-aḥī, had been on good terms with Egypt. We find here the same mutual exchange of presents, the same demand for gold, and the same readiness to supply whatever is wanted. Aššur-uballiṭ is already known from the monuments²; his father, however, is not mentioned there.

¹ So in Winckler, No. 5, although no reason assigned.

² Syn. Gesch., Keil. Bibl., Bd. i, 194.

3. Mitani and Egypt.—Here are five letters of Duš-ratta, king of Mitani, to Amenophis III., and three to Amenophis IV., and one to Tí, the mother of Amenophis IV., and wife of Amenophis III. The location of Mitani and the character of the native language have been, and are still, in doubt. The king of Mitani could write better Assyrian than the Palestinian writers, even though the language of Mitani was one of a different family. Among the Tell-el-Amarna letters is one written in the language of Mitani,¹ an unknown language, but apparently an agglutinative Mongolian dialect. Several attempts at translation have been made, most notable by Zimmern, Brünnow, and Sayce.²

In this connection might be best mentioned the fact, that there are, besides, two other letters in unknown languages, one from Tarḥundarauš of Aršapi (=Rezeph of 2 Kings xix. 12 ?).³ Of the other letter, even less is known.⁴ It is very interesting to see this use of the cuneiform in writing different languages. Originally the invention of the pre-Semitic inhabitants of the Euphrates Valley, and the medium of their language,—the Sumerian,⁵—it was adopted, along with religion and culture, by the Semitic Babylonian conquerors, and not without difficulty made to express the Babylonian. And here we find it compelled to do duty in expressing the language of three other

¹No. 27 in the Berlin edition of the texts, not embodied in Winckler's new work.

²*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Vol. v. 169, 209, 260. Also by Conder in *Quart. State. Pal. Explor. Fund*, 1889, p. 245. Commented on also by Winckler in *Sitzungsbericht Berliner Acad. Wissensch.*, 1888, p. 1341.

³No. 10 in Berlin texts. Sayce has made this Hittite, and calls it a Tartar dialect, in *Proc. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, June, 1889. From this letter and other sources he has made out one hundred and fifty Hittite words. Conder in *Quart. State. Pal. Explor. Fund*, 1890, p. 115, follows Sayce.

⁴No. 238 in the Berlin texts. C. J. Ball in *Academy*, Vol. xxxvi. (1889), No. 916, p. 343, has compared its language with the Chinese.

⁵Strange to say, McCurdy, in *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, has given his voice against the Sumerian theory.

non-Semitic peoples and, as we shall see, it was used also to write the allied Semitic language of the Canaanites.

But we must return to Mitani, and its location. One of the many hieratic notes found in these letters, identifies Mitani with Naḥarina.¹ The country is called in the letters either Mitani² or Ḥanigalbat.³ In an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser I.,⁴ Ḥanigalbat is named, and in close connection also, Mitani. The great conqueror in the course of a campaign against the Nairi lords, to the east and north of the Euphrates, marched against Milidia in Ḥanigalbat, probably on the upper Euphrates. Later he says he hunted wild oxen in Mitani, and in Araziki which lies before Ḥatti. This would also indicate a region near the Euphrates, probably on its eastern side.⁵ The Egyptian Naḥarina=Naḥaraim (compare Mesopotamia of the Greeks, Hebrew, Aram Naḥaraim, and Padan-aram in the Bible, though the mutual relation of these words is not sure) is now usually located between the Euphrates and its tributary, the Balih, on the east.⁶ That some territory in this neighborhood is meant, seems sure. The inscriptions referred to accord fairly well with its location between these rivers.

Relations of friendship had prevailed between Egypt and

¹ No. 23. There are about a dozen of these Egyptian notes in all; many of them are unintelligible, but several have been deciphered by the Egyptologists.

² Usually.

³ In No. 1, line 38, from Amenophis III. to Kallima-Sin; in No. 15, line 22, and Reverse, line 1, from Assyria; and in the Mitani letters, No. 18, line 17, and No. 21, line 49; also in one Palestinian letter, No. 256, lines 10, 20.

⁴ Keil. Bibl., Bd. i, 32, 38.

⁵ Winckler thinks he finds another reference to the country in Esarhaddon, Keil. Bibl., Bd. ii, 129, where "Pitanni" is read. So in Sitzungsbericht Berliner Acad. Wissensch., 1888, p. 134.

⁶ See, for example, Hommel, *Gesch. des alten Morgenlandes*, p. 75. Much discussed in English journals. In McCurdy, Vol. i. p. 84. Some have been disposed to locate the biblical "Aram of the two rivers" here.

Mitani since the time of Dušratta's grandfather, Artatama, confirmed from the first by intermarriage. Thothlimes IV. married Artatama's daughter. Amenophis III. married Giluhipa, a daughter of Šutarna, Dušratta's father, and also a daughter of Dušratta, Taduhipa. There was much diplomacy over these marriages, with discussion of dowries and prices for the wives, outfits, and faces. There is the same interchange of presents, chariots, horses, slaves, oil and precious stones, including personal adornments for the women, especially for Tí,¹ mother of Amenophis IV., who plays an important rôle in the letters, and perhaps in Egyptian history. One of these letters,² addressed to Amenophis IV., is really a very skillful piece of diplomatic correspondence, bringing all possible influences to bear to lead Amenophis IV. to send some golden images promised by his father to Dušratta. It is a long letter,—nine pages,—and tries all that flattery, persuasion, convincing proof of the promises made, withholding of things promised, and threats could do to secure his end. On the same subject he writes the Queen mother Tí, urging her to remind her son of the promise her husband had made.

A few other points in these letters are interesting. Dušratta tells³ Amenophis III. that he had completely defeated the Hatti-Hittites—who had made an inroad into Mitani, this being, perhaps, the beginning of the operations of the Hittites, of which we shall soon hear. Again, a religious item, for we are told that Ištar of Nineveh had in Šutarna's day gone down to Egypt, and there had been revered by the Egyptians, and later returned, and now in Dušratta's reign the same thing is repeated, the king sending her with the hope that she would be honored as before, and in due time returned.⁴ This is also important, as prov-

¹The question of her origin has been much discussed; for example, by Sayce in English periodicals.

²No. 21. ³In No. 16, line 30. ⁴No. 20, lines 13-32.

ing apparently that Dušratta's dynasty had extended its sway over Nineveh, and therefore speaks much for the greatness and power of Mitani. In leaving Mitani it is worth remembering that Brugsch, the Egyptologist,¹ in 1880, found mention in Egyptian records of a marriage, contracted by Amenophis III. with a Mesopotamian princess, Kirgipu, daughter of Šutarna of Nahrina, and at the time of his discovery expressed a hope that some time the fact might be confirmed from the cuneiform inscriptions of the East. Thus strangely has his hope been fulfilled by tablets found not in the East, but on the Nile.

4. Egypt and Alašia.—There follow a number of letters² from Alašia, some of which, however, having no headings, are only with probability here assigned. As to the identification of Alašia, there is difference of opinion. Sayce³ has identified it with the Alosha or Arosha of the Egyptologists; so also Tomkins⁴ and Maspero.⁵ Hommel⁶ takes apparently the same view in making it a country stretching along the coast to the north of Phœnicia. Winckler, without assigning reasons so far as I know, identifies it with Cyprus. This conjecture is, at any rate, supported by the fact that the Alašian was continually sending large quantities of copper to Egypt, and by the mention of ships, as bearers of the Alašian messengers. A hieratic note⁷ says at the close of one of these letters, "Letter of the prince of —." Cyprus was known in Assyrian records from the earliest days as *mât Yatnana*. The present king's father had had dealings with the former kings of Egypt. The transfer of a great variety of articles is mentioned. One matter of extradition is interesting. An Alašian had died in Egypt, and his king requests Pharaoh to collect his prop-

¹ See Adolph Erman in *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache*, 1890, p. 112.

² Nos. 25-33. ³ In *Records of the Past, New Series*, Vol. ii. p. 60.

⁴ According to Sayce in *Acad.*, Vol. xxxvi., No. 869, p. 424.

⁵ In *Recueil*, x. pp. 3-4. ⁶ *Gesch. des alten Morgenlandes*, 75.

⁷ To No. 29.

erty and return it to his family. The Alašians seem to have regarded the Hittites as threatening, urging Pharaoh to have no dealings with them. Müller has referred No. 36¹ to the king of Ḫatti, the name being broken off except the last syllable, "ti," and Winckler thinks it possible that No. 35 is Pharaoh's reply; but, as the letters have no context, no information is obtainable. Before leaving the letters of these royal friends of Egypt, mention should be made of one,² apparently a traveler's pass, given by one of the Asiatic kings to his messenger, Akia, and addressed to the kings of Canaan, vassals of Egypt, claiming for him their protection and their help.

¹ *Asien und Europa*, 396. ² No. 14.

(To be concluded.)