

ART. III.—“THE YEAR THAT TARTAN CAME UNTO  
ASHDOD” (ISA. XX.).

IT is now more than half a century ago since that brilliant, penetrating genius the Rev. Edward Hincks, guided possibly by the identity of the second and third syllables, was able to pick out in the inscriptions of Sargon the three consecutive cuneiform characters which form the name *As-du-du*, Ashdod.<sup>1</sup> Despite the long interval that has since elapsed, and all that has been written on the subject, there is reason to think that the records of Sargon's campaign against Ashdod, thus early discovered, have not yet received all the attention they deserve. The correspondence in this passage of history between the Assyrian inscriptions and Holy Writ is so close that it calls for the fullest and most minute investigation. True it is that, from a literary standpoint, the inscriptions of Assyria are often exceedingly bald, thus presenting a strange contrast to the inspired writings. Nevertheless, the details they furnish and the very phrases employed throw a strong light on the Bible, both on prophecy and narrative, and so help to clear up some of the numerous difficulties which confront the thoughtful student. I propose, therefore, to lay before my readers the accounts which Sargon has left us of his Ashdod campaign, and then to examine their bearing on that remarkable and difficult passage, Isa. xx.

In the Nineveh Gallery of the British Museum, Table-case C, are the fragments of two cylinders containing the Annals of Sargon, King of Assyria, 722-705 B.C. One of these cylinders is unique, in that a portion of it, marked K. 4818, and bearing the library stamp, “Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria,” is adorned with figures, so that we seem to have here an *édition de luxe* of the contemporary history of the day. But that which constitutes the chief interest of these shattered fragments in the eye of the archæologist and historian is that they furnish certain dates and details either not found in, or seemingly at variance with, the better-known Annals of Sargon, written on the palace walls at Khorsabad.<sup>2</sup> Let us, then, pick out from the débris in Table-case C one particularly precious morsel—the fragment Sm. 2022, marked No. 4, on the floor of the case. Sm. 2022 is one

<sup>1</sup> Hincks' communication to the Royal Irish Society was made in June, 1849, only two and a half years after the first Assyrian marbles sent to Europe had found a home in the Museum of the Louvre.

<sup>2</sup> See “Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons,” by H. Winckler, vol. i., Introduction, pp. xi, xii.

of the larger of the small fragments, and has two inscribed faces. The longer face, with which we are concerned, is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in height, and has a dividing line drawn across it near the bottom. Immediately below this line, and somewhat to the left, there can be seen with the help of a magnifying-glass a group of nine cuneiform indentations, arranged in three parallel horizontal rows. Even the uninitiated will easily understand that we have here a representation of the number "9." It is this group, then, which gives to the fragment its special interest, for it tells us, as I am about to show, "the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod." Now, since this coming of the Tartan, or Assyrian commander-in-chief, to Ashdod was the beginning of the Ashdod troubles, it may be well for me to place before my readers a literal translation of this fragment, not omitting the portion above the dividing line, which, as we shall see, has an important bearing on what follows. The fragment Sm. 2022, then, may be thus translated :

" as a spoil . . . . .  
 Matti, of the country of Atuná,<sup>1</sup> who to [Mita of]  
 the country of Muská<sup>2</sup> trusted  
 the capture of Amris<sup>3</sup> and his spoiling . . . .  
 saw, and his heart trembled. For [to pay]  
 tribute to the yoke of the god Ashur [they sent]  
 their envoy, who a message [of grace]  
 to the country of Sikris<sup>4</sup> in the country of Media  
 to my presence brought, and [kissed my feet.]"

" In my 9th year . . . . .  
 . . . great . . . . .  
 . . . Ashdod . . . . ."

The above fragment presents two difficulties. In the first place, the portion above the dividing line, which must, of course, refer to Sargon's eighth year, records the capture of Amris and the sending of tribute by Matti and others to the King of Assyria in Media as taking place in that same eighth year; whereas in the better-known Annals from Khorsabad

<sup>1</sup> Atuná, or Tunna, possibly the Dana of Xenophon's "Anabasis," lib. i., cap. ii., 20, on the northern slope of the Taurus, from which a pass, called the Cilician Gates, led over into Cilicia.

<sup>2</sup> Muská, or Muski, the Meshech of Gen. x. 2 and Ezek. xxxviii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Amris, or Ambaris, King of Tabal, was Sargon's son-in-law. He had received from Sargon the neighbouring province of Cilicia as a dowry along with his daughter. His subsequent rebellion called forth the bitter reproaches of the Assyrian king. Tabal—the Tubal of Gen. x. 2—lay to the north of Cilicia, and was bordered on the north-east by Muská.

<sup>4</sup> Sikris was one of six Median provinces conquered by Sargon in his sixth year, and which revolted from him in the following year. See Winckler's version of the annals, lines 73 and 84.

the capture and carrying off of Amris are set down under Sargon's ninth year, in which year also, as in our fragment, the Great King is represented as carrying on a campaign in Media and the Far East. Now, as the annals in this portion reach us in *two* versions—viz., from Halls II. and V. of the palace at Khorsabad—there can be no mistake as to the correctness of the date given.<sup>1</sup> Are we, then, to suppose the number “9” on fragment Sm. 2022 to be a mere slip of the pen? This also is out of the question. To form the number “9” the scribe had to make nine indentations. To form the number “10,” which would make our fragment tally with the Khorsabad Annals, only one, or at the most two, indentations would be required.<sup>2</sup> Equally unlikely is it that the scribe who wrote Sm. 2022 should have been in ignorance of the exact date of the recent events he was recording. But the best proof that the “9” is neither a slip of the pen nor an error of ignorance is afforded by another small fragment, Sm. 2021, also to be found in Table-case C, and which Winckler justly regards as belonging to the same cylinder as Sm. 2022. The fragment Sm. 2021, which is also marked with a dividing line, reads as follows:

“ . . . . . together with their dwellings  
a heavy spoil I carried off . . . . . ”

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“ In my 5th year, which in . . . . .  
Assurli, king of the country of Karalla . . . . . ”

Here we notice a difference in the number of the year exactly similar to that in Sm. 2022, seeing that the revolt of Assurli of Karalla, here set down under Sargon's fifth year, is in the Annals assigned to the sixth year, no mention being there made of that king and his country under the fifth year.<sup>3</sup> The conclusion is thus inevitable, first, that the fragments Sm. 2021 and Sm. 2022 are portions of one and the same cylinder, and, second, that the reckoning of time on this cylinder, supposing the year to begin with the same month Nisan, is one year later than the reckoning adopted in the Annals. In other words, the Annals make Sargon's reign to commence in the year B.C. 722, his accession year; whereas our cylinder, which, after Winckler, we will call Cylinder B,

<sup>1</sup> The carrying off of Amris in Sargon's ninth year is vouched for by the inscriptions on two slabs given by Winckler in “Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons.” See vol. ii., p. 7, plate 14, lines 6 and 9; also p. 18, plate 38, lines 12 and 14.

<sup>2</sup> If a three-cornered stylus were used, it could be done with a twist of the instrument in one stroke, or at any rate without taking the stylus off the clay.

<sup>3</sup> See Winckler's version of the Annals, lines 58-64.

regards 721 B.C. as the commencement of the reign.<sup>1</sup> From this conclusion we obtain the following remarkable result: The capture of Samaria is assigned by the Annals to the accession year of Sargon, and recorded as the very first event in his reign. But according to this new reckoning of time on Cylinder B, that event would not be included in the reign of Sargon at all, but would be looked upon as falling in the reign of his predecessor, Shalmaneser IV. When, then, it is objected that our sacred records in 2 Kings xvii. 3-6 assign the capture of Samaria to Shalmaneser, we can answer that they are no more at fault than Cylinder B, which from its ornate decoration may well have been intended for one of Sargon's palace halls.<sup>2</sup>

The second difficulty in Sm. 2022 is connected with the mention of Ashdod in the part below the dividing line. According to the reckoning of time adopted on this fragment, something must have happened at Ashdod at the beginning of Sargon's ninth year—*i.e.*, at the beginning of the tenth year, according to the better-known reckoning of the Annals, the year 712 B.C. Now, when we turn to the Annals and examine the record of this tenth year, we find no mention whatever of Ashdod. Not till we come to the second and closing portion of the record for the eleventh year do we meet with the account of the famous campaign against that city.<sup>3</sup> What, then, is the solution of this second difficulty? Simply this: that the mention of Ashdod on the fragment Sm. 2022 does not refer to the siege of that town, which, as just stated, forms the second and closing event in the record for the following year, but in all probability does refer to the first of those political events which led up to the siege—*viz.*, the coming of the Tartan to Ashdod. To make this plain, I will now give the different accounts of the Ashdod imbroglio found in the inscriptions of Sargon, beginning with the one

<sup>1</sup> I can give no explanation of this. The reckoning cannot be from Sargon's eponym year, which was 720 B.C. See Schrader's "Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament," vol. ii., p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> The fragment K. 4818, mentioned above as being adorned with figures, is regarded by Winckler as belonging to Cylinder B—*i.e.*, to the same cylinder as Sm. 2022. For another and excellent explanation of the difficulty in 2 Kings xvii. 3-6, see Sayce's "Higher Criticism," pp. 419, 420.

<sup>3</sup> For the capture of Ashdod as happening in Sargon's eleventh year, see the inscription on the slab which figures as plate 27 on p. 13 of vol. ii. of Winckler's work. The rebellion of Azuri is mentioned in line 6 of the inscription; then, a little further on, in line 13, we read, "In my twelfth year." Compare also p. 14, plate 30, line 2, "In my twelfth year," and note the verbal accordance between plate 30, lines 1, 2, and plate 27, lines 12 and 13.

in the Annals (lines 215-228) already referred to, which runs thus :

- 215 “ . . . . . Azuri, King of Ashdod, not to bring tribute his heart was set, and to the kings in his neighbourhood proposals of rebellion against Assyria he sent. Because of the evil he did, over the men of his land I changed his lordship. Akhimiti, his own brother, to sovereignty over them I appointed. The Khatte,<sup>1</sup> plotting rebellion, hated his lordship ; and
- 220 Yatna, who had no title to the throne, who like themselves the reverence due to my lordship did not acknowledge, they set up over them. In the wrath of my heart, riding in my war chariot,<sup>2</sup> with my cavalry, who do not retreat from the place whither I turn my hands, to Ashdod, his royal city, I marched in haste. Ashdod, Gimtu,
- 225 Asdudimmu, I besieged and captured. The gods dwelling therein, himself, together with the people of his land, gold, silver, [the treasures] of his palace, I counted for a spoil. Those towns I built anew. People of the countries conquered by my hands I settled therein, my officers as governors over them I set, and with the people of Assyria I numbered them, and
- 228 they bore my yoke. In my twelfth year Marduk-apal-iddina,<sup>3</sup> etc.

The above extract forms, as already stated, the second and closing portion of the record given in the Annals under Sargon's eleventh year, 711 B.C., the earlier portion of the record for this year being occupied with the account of the expedition against Muttallu of Gangum.<sup>4</sup> Very similar to this account of the siege of Ashdod is the one given in the Great Inscription of Khorsabad, lines 90-112. As, however, this latter contains some additional particulars, and especially one remarkable variation, the usurper Yatna being here styled Yamani, I subjoin the closing portion of it (lines 97-112), which reads thus :

- 97 “ In the rage of my heart the main body of my army I did not muster, I did not collect my munition of war. With my warriors, who the place whither I turn
- 100 my hands do not retreat from, to Ashdod I marched. Now he, Yamani, the advance of my expedition heard of from afar, and to the frontier of Egypt<sup>5</sup> on the border of the country of Melukkhka he fled. His whereabouts was not seen. Ashdod, Gimtu, Asdudimmu,

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, Hittites, men of the land of Heth. See Pinches' "Old Testament," p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Lit., "The chariot of my feet."

<sup>3</sup> The Merodach-baladan of Scripture.

<sup>4</sup> The same order is observed in the Great Inscription of Khorsabad, the campaign against Gangum immediately preceding that against Ashdod.

<sup>5</sup> *Mutsuri* = Heb. מצור, Isa. xix. 6 and xxxvii. 25.

- 105 I besieged, I captured. His gods, his wife, his sons, his daughters, the goods, treasures, and valuables of his palace, with the people of his land,  
 I counted for a spoil. Those towns anew  
 I built. People of the countries conquered by my hands,  
 who within . . . of the rising sun, I settled therein, and my officers over them I appointed, with the men of Assyria I numbered them, and they bore my yoke. The king of Melukhkha  
 110 who, within . . . an inaccessible region, a path . . .  
 . . . who from ancient days, the *ádu* of Nannar, his fathers to the kings my fathers  
 their messengers did not send to inquire after their welfare, the might of Ashur Nebo and Merodach<sup>1</sup> [he heard of] from afar, and the dread of my royal splendour overwhelmed him, and fear overpowered him.
- 112 Into strong fetters, iron bonds, he cast him; to Assyria the road [he caused him to take, and] brought him to my presence."

With the close of the above extract, compare the following brief notice in the Inscription from Hall XIV. of the palace at Khorsabad:

"Yamani of Ashdod feared my arms; his wife, his sons, his daughters, he left, and to the frontier of Egypt on the border of Melukhkha he fled, and sat him down like a *sharaku*.<sup>2</sup> Over the whole of his wide land and scattered people my officers as governors I appointed, and I increased the realm of Ashur, the king of the gods.  
 . . . [the king] of Melukhkha, the brightness of Ashur my lord overwhelmed him, he put iron bonds on his hands and feet, and caused him to be brought to Assyria to my presence."

Other short notices of the campaign against Ashdod are as follows: First, in the Inscriptions on the Pavement of the Doors, No. IV., Sargon is described as the hero,

"who took Samaria and the whole land of Beth-Omri, who carried captive Ashdod";

in which passage the association of Samaria with Ashdod has no historical or chronological signification, but is purely geographical. Again, in the Bull Inscription, lines 17-21, we read of Sargon as

- 17 "Carrying captive the princes of Carchemish, Hamath, Kummukh, and Ashdod, the wicked Khatte, who do not fear the name of the gods and plot rebellions: who over the whole of their land appointed his officers as prefects, and numbered them with the people of Assyria."

There now only remains the most interesting, but sadly obliterated, account of the Ashdod campaign, found by the

<sup>1</sup> Sargon's three favourite divinities, regarded by him as the bestowers of sovereign power, Assur being the national god of Assyria, Nebo and Merodach the gods of the mother-city of Babylon.

<sup>2</sup> I am unable to explain this expression.

late Mr. George Smith of the British Museum on the broken cylinder which Winckler calls Cylinder A. This cylinder is marked “No. 1” on the floor of Table-case C, and entered as K. 1668 + D.T. 6 in the Museum Guide. Mr. Smith very naturally looked on the fragments Sm. 2022 and K. 1668 as well-nigh contiguous parts of the same cylinder. He therefore joined them together, and filling in the lacunæ with that skill in which he stands unrivalled, furnished us with the translation given in Chapter xv. of his “Assyrian Discoveries.” Experts, however, have since decided that Sm. 2022 and K. 1668 belong to different cylinders; and, even if their judgment in this instance should be at fault, it would still be impossible to join on Sm. 2022 to K. 1668. For, as we have already seen, the lower part of Sm. 2022 refers to the ninth year of Sargon—*i.e.*, to the tenth year according to the reckoning adopted in the Annals—whilst the siege of Ashdod, recorded on K. 1668, belongs to the eleventh year according to the annalistic reckoning. The great interest which attaches to the account given on K. 1668 warrants me in presenting it to my readers in its entirety.<sup>1</sup> The record reads thus:

“ from . . . . .  
 Akhimiti . . . . .  
 his own brother, over [them] . . . . .  
 tribute and gift . . . . .  
 5 as of kings [former] . . . . .  
 on him I placed . . . . .  
 The wicked people . . . . .  
 not to bring tribute . . . . .  
 [they planned, and] . . . . .  
 10 their prince, revolt . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 they expelled him . . . . .  
 Yamani, a soldier . . . . .  
 to sovereignty over them [on the throne] . . . . .  
 15 of his lordship they set [him, and] . . . . .  
 their city . . . . .  
 of battle . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 20 . . . . . together . . . . .  
 . . . . . its environs, a moat . . . . .  
 . . . . . cubits in depth . . . . .  
 they reached the underground waters.<sup>2</sup> In order to . . . . [The  
 people]  
 of Philistia, Judah, E[dom],

<sup>1</sup> For the fragment K. 1668 in the cuneiform, see “Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons,” vol. ii., plate 44.

<sup>2</sup> This was the plan adopted by Merodach-baladan when fortifying Dur-Yakin. See the Great Inscription of Khorsabad, line 128. Jerusalem could have no such defences; nevertheless, “There the LORD will be with us in majesty,” says Isaiah (xxxiii. 21), “a place of broad rivers and

- 25 Moab, dwelling beside the sea,<sup>1</sup> bringing the tribute [and]  
 gift of Ashur, my lord, . . . . .  
 speaking seditions, acting with base wickedness,  
 who, in order to stir up rebellion against me, to Pharaoh  
 King of Egypt, a prince who did not save them,<sup>2</sup>  
 30 brought their offerings of peace, and requested of him  
 an alliance. I, Sargon, the lawful prince,<sup>3</sup>  
 reverencing the oath of Nebo and Merodach, guarding  
 the name of Ashur, the Tigris and Euphrates,  
 when the surging flood was at its height, the flower of my army  
 35 as on dry land I caused to march through. Now he, Yamani,  
 their king, who to his [own strength]  
 trusted, and did not submit to my lordship,  
 the advance of my expedition from afar he heard of, and  
 the brightness of Ashur, my lord, overwhelmed him, and  
 40 . . . . . of the bank of the river  
 . . . . . waters  
 . . . . . distant  
 . . . . . he fled  
 45 . . . . . Ashdod."

The reader is now in possession of the different historical texts bearing on the campaign against Ashdod, and he will see that they furnish us with a fairly circumstantial account of the sequence of political events which led up to and ended in the siege and capture of that town. In the first place, Azuri, King of Ashdod, deliberately refused to pay the wonted tribute to Assyria, and attempted to stir up rebellion amongst the neighbouring States. This led Sargon to depose Azuri, and set his brother Akhimiti on the throne. In order to effect this, he must have despatched an armed force to Ashdod. It is in all probability the despatch of such a force, and the successful achievement of the end in view, which were recorded on the fragment Sm. 2022 below the dividing line. As the prophet Isaiah informs us, this first expedition to Ashdod was led by the Tartan. Possibly this may be the reason why it was not thought worthy to be recorded in the Annals under Sargon's tenth year, 712 B.C. But when we come to the eleventh year, 711 B.C., and the annalist very properly and suitably records the whole series of events leading up to the siege, two things at once strike us: first, that all these events could not possibly have happened in the single year 711 B.C.; and secondly, as stated above, that a force must have previously

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*streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."*

<sup>1</sup> *Matu Pīlīste, matu Yaūdi, matu U[dumu], matu Mābi asībāt tamtīm.*

<sup>2</sup> *Pir'u, sar matu Mutsri, malku la musezibusunu.* Compare Isa. xxx. 5, 7.

<sup>3</sup> In allusion to the meaning of the name Sargon.

been despatched at the beginning of the troubles to accomplish the deposition of Azuri and the placing of Akhimiti on the throne. On the retirement of this force sedition must again have broken out in Ashdod, for it appears that the anti-Assyrian party were able, after a longer or shorter interval, once more to get the upper hand, to expel Akhimiti, and to set up in his stead a Greek adventurer, Yatna-Yamani. The town was then strongly fortified and surrounded by a moat. This could easily be done, owing to the abundance of water from the hills of Judah, which finds its way to the sea underneath the plains of Philistia, a little below the surface of the ground. These are "the underground waters" of which Sargon speaks. Meanwhile, the news of what was going on at Ashdod appears to have reached the Great King at the beginning of his eleventh year, according to the reckoning of the annalist—viz., in the spring of 711 B.C., at a time when, through the melting of the snows in Armenia, the Tigris and Euphrates were at their height. So enraged was Sargon that, without waiting to collect a large force, he started off at once with a picked body of cavalry, crossed those rivers in flood, and marched with all speed to the disaffected province. Such, at least, is his own account, but I shall presently adduce reasons which lead me to think that he did not reach Ashdod so soon as we might expect from the description of his march, but stopped on his way to put down a revolt in the country of Gamgum. In hastening to the West, Sargon tells us that he was urged on not merely by wrath, but by the intelligence that the whole of Southern Syria, including Judah, Edom, and Moab, as well as Philistia, was ripe for revolt, relying on ample promises of support from Pharoah, King of Egypt. His object, therefore, was to prevent a very dangerous rebellion, and in this, as he assures us, he was completely successful. For at the mere report of the advance of the Assyrian force, and whilst his foes were still at a distance, the adventurer Yamani fled to Melukhkha, a country on the Egyptian frontier, leaving Ashdod and her daughter towns apparently an easy prey to the invader. If anything were wanting to complete this success, it was supplied by the action of the King of Melukhkha. Through the special grace of Ashur, Nebo, and Merodach, this monarch, whose ancestors from the remotest ages had never paid homage to Assyria, was so affected by the splendour of Sargon's arms that he threw the fugitive into chains and handed him over to the Great King.

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