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

MY last article was devoted chiefly to the study of the Assyrian records of Sargon's campaign against Ashdod. In the present one I propose to examine the Scripture account, or, to speak more strictly, the brief historical note contained in Isaiah xx. 1, along with the symbolic action and prophecy that occupy the remainder of that chapter. My object will be to explain the passage with a view to showing the complete agreement which exists between the Scriptures of truth and the history engraved on the monuments of Assyria.

In Isa. xx. 1, 2, we read: “In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the King of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it; at that time the Lord spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz,” etc. Now, it is not a little interesting and surprising to discover in the historical records of Assyria an admirable explanation of how it came about that this important and somewhat critical campaign against Ashdod was entrusted to the Tartan, instead of being undertaken by the King in person.

In the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. xi., plate iii., Professor Bezold furnishes us with a copy in cuneiform of a fragment of the Eponym Canon, covering a considerable portion of the reign of Sargon. The events recorded on this fragment are set down in strict chronological order, and by a close comparison with the Annals we are able to assign them to the successive years of the reign. Accordingly, in presenting my readers with a translation, I have placed in the left-hand margin the successive years in which the different events took place, and in the right the corroborations.

tive references to the Annals, as given by Winckler. Flanked with these appendices, our fragment reads thus :

B.C.	" ru	
?	. . . . . he entered.	
?	. . . . . Ta]-ba-la.	
718	. . . . .	Annals, 4th year, lines 42-45.
717	. . . . . du karru	
716	. . . . . of Minni.	Annals, 6th year, lines 53-75.
715	. . . . . prefects were appointed.	
714	. . . . . the town of Mutsatsir Khaldia.	Annals, 8th year, lines 123-138.
713	. . . . . the chief men in the country of Ellip.	Annals, 9th year, lines 139, 158, 166.
"	. . . . . he entered.	
"	. . . . . the town of Mutsatsir.	
712	In the land.	Annals, 10th year, lines 196-208.
711	To the town of Markasa.	Annals, 11th year, lines 208-214.
710	To the town of Bit-Zeri. The king was away in Kis.	
709	Sargon took the hands of Bel.	Annals, 13th year, line 309.
"	Kummukh was conquered: a prefect appointed.	Annals, 13th year, lines 388-401.
"	The king departed from Babylon.	
"	Dur-Yakin was destroyed.	Annals, 13th year, lines 358, 359.
"	Into their temples they (viz., the gods of the Babylonian cities) entered.	Annals, 13th year, lines 363, 364.
?	. . . . . in the country of Karalla."	

To illustrate the above let me take the seventh line, containing the words, "The town of Mutsatsir Khaldia," to which I have prefixed the date 714 B.C., the eighth year of Sargon. On referring to the Annals, we find that in his eighth year Sargon made an expedition against Urzana of Mutsatsir, an ally and vassal of Ursa of Ararat. Urzana escaped, but the town of Mutsatsir was captured, and Khaldia, the national god, carried captive. Again, in the twelfth line, to which the date 711 B.C. is prefixed, we read, "To the town of Markasa." Markasa was the capital of Gamgum, a State in Northern Syria. In 711 B.C., the very year of the fall of Ashdod, the Annals record an expedition to Gamgum just before the account of the Ashdod campaign. We are now in a position to examine the words in the previous line, "*In the land.*" This is the phrase used in the Eponym Canon to denote that the king stayed at home in such and such a year, and did not lead his troops out in person. As the dates 713 B.C., 711 B.C., affixed respectively to the eighth and

twelfth lines, can both be proved from the Annals, it follows that no other date than 712 B.C. can be affixed to these words “In the land.” Let us see, then, how this deduction is borne out by the Annals. Under 712 B.C., the tenth year of Sargon, the Annals record an expedition against Milid, the capital of the province afterwards known to the classical writers as Melitene. This expedition to all appearance was led by Sargon himself, to judge from the frequent use of the first person in the record given in the Annals. But this is a case in which we must not trust appearances. The kings of Assyria, in the language they use in their inscriptions, seem to have been guided by the motto, “*Quod facit per alium facit per se,*” and indications are not wanting that such was the case in the present instance. The record of the Annals for this tenth year of Sargon is unique. The former portion, as in the previous years, is occupied with the king’s warlike doings; but in line 196 an entirely fresh subject is introduced with the words, “At that time the treasures of the mountains of Syria,” and although the Annals are somewhat obliterated in this portion, yet the purport of the passage is perfectly plain. To quote the words of Dr. Pinches: “At this time, as Sargon says, he received the treasure of the land of Heth (the highlands of Syria), among the things sent being copper, iron, lead, or tin, white marble from the Amanus Mountains, royal garments of the colour of *uknu* stone (lapis-lazuli), something which came from the mountain Ba’il-sapuna (Baal-zephon), ‘a great mountain,’ and silver, which, in consequence of the large consignments received at Dûr-Sargina (Khorsabad), became in value like copper.”¹ This is the earliest mention of the city and palace of Dûr-Sargina, the king’s darling project. “Day and night,” says Sargon, “I pondered over the building of that town. . . . Day and night I planned and arranged to establish that town, to raise up sanctuaries, the dwellings of the great gods, and palace-halls, the abodes of my lordship, and I gave orders for the building thereof.”² It was to erect this city and palace, or at any rate to preside over the commencement of the undertaking, that Sargon elected to remain at home in his tenth year, 712 B.C., and to entrust the expedition sent to depose Azuri of Ashdod to the care of his Tartan.

Returning now to the text of Isaiah xx., the words, “and he fought against Ashdod and took it,” are regarded by Ewald and Delitzsch as parenthetical. According to Ewald, who wrote prior to the discovery of the Assyrian monuments,

¹ See Pinches’ “Old Testament,” pp. 368, 369.

² See Sargon’s Cylinder Inscription, lines 43 and 49.

this "is merely a prefatory remark, and made in order to dismiss the narrative concerning Tartan, that he took the city after a siege which is subsequently, in ver. 3, said to have lasted three years, whilst ver. 2 returns to the commencement of ver. 1."¹ Cheyne also notices the parenthesis, which he applies to Sargon, and both he and Ewald point to a parallel at the close of Isa. vii. 1. The language of ver. 1 is, however, ambiguous, and leaves us in doubt whether Ashdod was captured by Sargon or his Tartan. Ewald not unnaturally attributed it to the latter, who is the first person mentioned in the verse. Besides, not having the monuments to help him, he could hardly be expected to divine that there were in reality two expeditions to Ashdod, the first led by the Tartan, the second by his master. The judgment of this same great commentator as to the length of the interval between the coming of the Tartan and the capture of the city is based, so he tells us, on the words of ver. 3: "Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot *three years*," etc. To this important verse we shall presently return, but as our interpretation of it must necessarily depend in some measure on the construction we put on what precedes, it will be necessary to examine first the seemingly strange command given to the prophet in ver. 2: "At that time"—viz., the time of the Tartan's coming to Ashdod—"the LORD spake by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot." To understand this command, it is necessary to note closely the terms employed. The prophet is told to *loose* the sackcloth *from off* his loins. The sackcloth garment here referred to can hardly be the *ketoneth* or loose tunic worn next the skin, for then we should expect to meet with the Hebrew idiom '*al habbásár*, "on the flesh," as in the description of the dress worn by Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27, and Joram, 2 Kings vi. 30. In all probability it was the dark, hairy garment worn by the Old Testament prophets, referred to in 2 Kings i. 8, and Zech. xiii. 4. Compare also Matt. iii. 4 and Heb. xi. 37. The command to loose such a garment and then to walk about would mean, of course, to take it off, for the simple reason that it would be impossible to walk about in it with any ease, except it were girded up round the waist.² This, too, is further indicated by

¹ See Ewald's "Prophets of the Old Testament," *in loco*.

² Compare Ps. xxx. 11 (12), "Thou hast *loosed* my sackcloth and girded me with gladness," where the verb *páthach* is used in precisely the same sense. The garment of sorrow is "put off" (A.V.) in order that the robe of gladness may be put on.

the words “*from off thy loins.*” But if the garment which the prophet was thus to throw aside was only an outer one, then we may rest assured that he was not required to go stark naked. His action was not to be such as to shock decency, yet it would nevertheless be quite sufficient to attract attention among a people so careful and punctilious in the matter of dress as the Orientals. Another evidence that Isaiah was not required to go about without any clothing may be got by comparing the closing words of ver. 2, “naked and barefoot,” with the very significant addition made to them in ver. 4. The term “naked,” then, is here used in the same comparative sense in which we find it employed in other passages—*e.g.*, 1 Sam. xix. 24; Micah i. 8; John xxi. 7. Compare also 2 Sam. vi. 14 with ver. 20 of the same chapter.

To proceed to ver. 3. In the R.V. and A.V. this verse reads thus: “And the Lord said, Like as My servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and (‘a’ R.V.) wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia”; but in the R.V.M. we read: “Like as My servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot to be for three years a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia.” Which of these two readings is to be preferred? At first we naturally incline to the former, as being the reading with which we are more familiar. Nevertheless, the Hebrew accents favour the latter. But to this it has been objected that the Masorettes, who fixed the accents, were shocked at the idea of Isaiah walking naked for three years.¹ Yet surely this must be a mistake. The Masorettes understood their own language far too well to imagine for a moment that the prophet was commanded to do any such thing. They knew from the terms employed that the garment he was to put off was an outer one. But, independently of this, there are several good reasons that can be adduced for our preferring in this instance the marginal reading of the R.V. In the first place, as B. Stade justly remarks, the symbolic act was meant to lend weight to the prophetic word that followed it. As, then, that word was once spoken, so the act that preceded it was once performed.² Again, if we suppose the symbolic act to have been continued

¹ See Cheyne’s “Prophecies of Isaiah,” *in loco*.

² “Prophetæ autem res, quæ typi essent rerum futurarum, eo tantum consilio gesserunt, ut adjuvarent verbum ab ipsis dictum, quippe cum quæ oculis vidimus itemque audivimus non tam celeriter oblivioni tradi soleant, quam quæ tantum audivimus. Uti ergo verbum a propheta semel pronuntiatum stat et efficax est usque ad eventum, ita etiam actio symbolica semel facta.”—“De Isaiaë Vaticiniis Æthiopicis,” p. 66. For symbolic acts performed by prophets see 1 Kings xi. 30 and xxii. 11; Jer. xxvii. 2, 3; Ezek. xii. 1-7.

for a space of three years, then, as Professor Birks points out, the exposition of the act contained in ver. 3 must have been delayed for that period, which seems most unlikely. Further, such an act, if continuous for three years, would be out of all proportion with its object; while, if done at intervals only, its meaning as a prediction of time would be quite obscured.¹ No less convincing are the arguments of Dr. Kay, who defends the Masoretic pointing on four grounds: (1) That in ver. 2 Isaiah receives no commandment from God to walk naked and barefoot for three years; (2) that the three years can scarcely be included in the symbolic act, because there is nothing in the history symbolized that corresponds to it—*i.e.*, it is not said or suggested that the captives would be compelled to walk naked for three years, or Egypt be called on to suffer humiliation for a like period; (3) that it is in accordance with chap. xvi. 14 to take the three years as the limit of time within which the prophetic act should be verified by the event; (4) that the constant repetition of the act would have tended to weaken the impression made.² It appears, then, from the united weight of the above reasons that we may safely follow the Masoretic punctuation, and read with the R.V.M., "To be for three years a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia."

Before, however, leaving this verse, justice requires that I should notice an alternative reading proposed by the learned Vitranga. Vitranga draws attention to the text of the Septuagint in Isa. xx. 3: 'Ὁν τρόπον πεπόρευεται ὁ παῖς μου Ἡσαΐας γυμνὸς καὶ ἀνυποδέτος τρία ἔτη, τρία ἔτη ἔσται εἰς σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις καὶ Αἰθίοψιν. On the strength of this reading he supposes (1) that some words have fallen out of the present Hebrew text; (2) that the Septuagint is here corrupt, so that for the first *τρία ἔτη* we should read *τρῆς ἡμέρας*, and translate, "Like as My servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot *three days*, a three years' sign on the Egyptians and Ethiopians"; (3) that in ver. 2 there is an ellipsis in the record given of the words in which the Divine command was conveyed to the prophet, and that, as a matter of fact, Isaiah had been directed by God to walk naked three days, each day signifying a year.³ This is certainly ingenious,

¹ See Birks' "Commentary," *in loco*.

² See "The Speaker's Commentary," *in loco*.

³ See Vitranga's "Isaiah," ninth edition, p. 597. Basle, 1732. "Forte esse aliquam ellipsin in verbis prophetæ, ubi explicat mandatum Dei ad se editum, vel illius mandati expositionem a Deo datam. Quid si enim mandatum esset prophetæ, in publicum prodire et incedere nudum ac discaleatum per triduum, ita ut tres dies, stylo sacro, significarent tres annos; ut integra sententia esset: *Ut incedit servus meus Jesaias*

but it will be seen that in supposing all this we are supposing a good deal. A simpler explanation of the repetition of the words *τρία ἔτη* in the Septuagint is that the translators did not know whether to join them to the preceding or the succeeding context, and solved the difficulty by giving a reading which would take in both.

To return now to the thread of my argument. If on the strength of the reasons given above we follow the R.V.M. in ver. 3, and read “to be for three years a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia,” the question next arises, What is the meaning of these words? To this B. Stade replies that the “three years” are merely in the place of an accusative of time, which shows us how long Isaiah’s action would be the type of a future event. When the three years were fulfilled Egypt and Ethiopia would be led into exile; up to that time Isaiah’s having once walked naked and barefoot would be a type.¹ With this explanation I agree in the main, but not with the words which follow. “Some,” remarks Stade, “have hesitated over the definite number ‘three years.’ The construction certainly suffers from ambiguity. Still, these words cannot have been written by another hand after the fulfilment, for what Isaiah prophesied in this passage *never had a fulfilment*, unless, perchance, you recall the expeditions of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, which took place more than thirty years after the capture of Ashdod.”² That the construction with regard to the “three years” is not so ambiguous as might at first sight appear I have already endeavoured to show. But when the learned commentator ventures to affirm that a prophecy of Isaiah, limited in time, never had a fulfilment he is guilty of a rather daring thing. If Isaiah’s prophecy was not fulfilled within the given time, then, accord-

per TRES DIES, TRIUM ANNORUM signum super Ægypto et Arabia. Est observatu dignum in Versione LXX. verba τρία ἔτη bis haberi hoc loco, acsi quid plus legissent suo tempore quam Masorethæ in Codice suo exhibent.”

¹ “De Isaiaë Vaticiniis Æthiopicis,” pp. 66, 67. “Contra si **שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים** conjugis iis quæ sequuntur, ut recte fecerunt punctatores, hæc verba nil nisi Accusativi loco posita sunt, quæ nobis indicat, quamdiu illa actio typus rei futuræ fuerit. Tribus annis impletis in exilium ducta erit Ægyptus atque Æthiopia, usque ad illud tempus, quod Isaias semel nudus et discalceatus incessit, typus est.”

² *Ibid.*, p. 67. “Nonnulli in numero definito **שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים** hæsitaverunt. Structura certe ambiguitate laborat. Attamen a manu alia post eventum scribi hæc verba non potuerunt, nam quæ Isaias hoc loco vaticinatus est, *nunquam habuerunt eventum*, nisi forte revoce ad expeditiones illas Asarhaddonis et Assurbanipalis. Quæ vero plus triginta annis post Azotum captam fuerunt.” The italics are mine.

ing to the law contained in Deut. xviii. 20-22, he ought to have been put to death. Further, such an affirmation is glaringly opposed to common-sense, for if the prediction never had a fulfilment, how came the Jews to enshrine it in their sacred writings? The fact that this strange episode of the prophet walking naked and barefoot forms a part of the Jewish Scriptures is a voucher for the fulfilment of the prophecy within the appointed time. It is, therefore, with a feeling of mingled astonishment and indignation that we read from the pen of another able and learned writer the following remark: "The fulfilment of this prophecy *did not take place as quickly as the prophet perhaps desired.*"¹ Is this, we ask, a right or worthy view of inspiration, that the prophets uttered threatenings merely according to their own private likes and dislikes? If so, then St. Peter is mistaken when he tells us that, "No prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."²

Now with regard to the time of the fulfilment of this particular prophecy, the natural thing is to connect it with the fall of Ashdod, as Ewald does, and to suppose that shortly after the capture of that city the woeful spectacle predicted actually took place. The fragment Sm. 2022 has already shown us that the coming of the Tartan to Ashdod took place at the beginning of Sargon's ninth year, according to the reckoning there adopted—*i.e.*, at the beginning of the tenth year, 712 B.C., according to the better known reckoning of the Annals. In the spring, then, or early summer of 712 B.C., the Tartan arrived at that town. There was no siege, so far as we know, only the deposing of Azuri and the setting up of Akhimiti in his place. Now, it was just at this time, or possibly soon after the Tartan's departure, so I imagine, that Isaiah was inspired to utter this prophecy. If the Assyrian commander stayed only a short time at Ashdod,³ then on his leaving the hopes of the Egyptian party, both in that town and in Jerusalem, would speedily revive, for just at that epoch Egypt appeared to be the rising power, also Egypt was near and Assyria at a distance. Thus the state of feeling at the moment would fit in well with the prophetic warning. The question, then, is, What was the interval between the visit of the Tartan to Ashdod, and the fall of that city beneath the

¹ See Professor Maspero's "Passing of the Empires," p. 254. The italics are mine.

² See 2 Pet. i. 21.

³ His services may have been required in the campaign against Milid (Melitene), and in the conquest of Kammanu (Comana), in the extreme north-west of the empire.

arms of Sargon? Now, the Annals tell us that Ashdod fell in the following year, 711 B.C., but the crucial point is this: *At what time of the year did Ashdod fall?* This is what we have now to endeavour to ascertain.

On the cylinder discovered by Mr. Smith, the Great King informs us that he crossed the Tigris and Euphrates in flood—*i.e.*, in April or May, when the waters of those rivers are swollen through the melting of the snows in the uplands of Armenia.¹ A lesser inundation takes place in November, but, to judge from other instances, it seems most natural to understand Sargon to be speaking of the spring floods. Thus Esarhaddon, speaking of his tenth campaign, says: “In the month Nisan (March-April), the first month, I set out from my town of Assur. The Tigris and Euphrates in their flood I crossed.” It appears, then, that the campaign against Ashdod formed the very first event of the year 711 B.C. The King started for that city in the month Nisan, or in the next month, Iyyar, at latest. Yet it is not a little remarkable that in the Annals, which are strictly chronological, this campaign is recorded not as the first, but as the second and closing event, of the year, being preceded by the campaign against Gamgum. How is this apparent discrepancy to be reconciled, and what is the way out of the difficulty? A glance at the map will show that the country of Gamgum lies a little to the north of Carchemish, and therefore only slightly off the track of an Assyrian army advancing to the west. It would, then, be a natural thing, so one thinks, for the Great King to set matters right in Gamgum, and put down the rebellion which had broken out there, before advancing further on his way to Ashdod. Such a supposition would at any rate explain how it is that according to one account Sargon starts for Ashdod at the beginning of the year, whilst according to another this Ashdod campaign is the closing event and follows after that against Gamgum. Now, there are not wanting other indications that this was the course actually pursued by the Assyrian King. On the Great Inscription of Khorsabad, lines 85, 86, the march to Gamgum is described thus: “In the rage of my heart, with the chariot of my feet, and my cavalry who do not retreat from the place of the turning of my hands to Marqasa”²—the capital of Gamgum—“I marched in haste.” Here it will be observed that the language used, except in one single instance,³ is word for word identical with that in which

¹ The Tigris reaches its greatest height about May 10 or 12, the Euphrates at the close of the month. See Maspero's “Dawn of Civilization,” p. 549.

² The modern Marash.

³ In the Khorsabad inscription, *šuhut*, “rage,” takes the place of the synonymous word *uggat*, “wrath,” found in the Annals.

the King describes his hasty march to Ashdod in line 220 of the Annals, given in my last article, and also exceedingly like the description of this same march to Ashdod which meets us a little further on in the Khorsabad Inscription—viz., in lines 97, 98. Further, we note that in both instances the terms employed are highly dramatic, and at the same time strongly personal. Such expressions as "the chariot of my feet," "my cavalry who do not retreat from the place of the turning of my hands," leave no doubt upon the mind that both campaigns were undertaken by the King in person, whilst the similarity and all but identity of the language, coupled with the geographical situation of Gamgum and Ashdod relative to Assyria, lead us to think that they may very possibly have formed parts of one and the same campaign, and that the reason why they are recorded as separate campaigns by the royal scribe is merely for the sake of effect, which may very well have been the case, seeing that the description of the wrath of the Great King and the speed of his advance is altogether so dramatic.

But if Sargon thus subdued Gamgum on his way to the west, then it would be midsummer at earliest before he reached Ashdod. What took place then? Yamani, according to Sargon's statement, had already fled at the mere report of the approach of the Assyrian army. But what of his royal city and the neighbouring towns? "Ashdod, Gimtu, Asdudimmu I besieged, I captured," says Sargon. He would have us believe that these Philistine cities fell such an easy prey to his arms that one might apply to them the words of the prophet when he foretells the capture of the Assyrian strongholds in the last tragic crisis of that empire: "All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with the first-ripe figs; if they be shaken they fall into the mouth of the eater."¹ But there is no proof, after all, that the fall of Ashdod was so easy and so rapid. Ashdod, as its name indicates, was a very strong place.² The hill on which it stood, according to the map of the Palestine Exploration Fund, is the highest spot for two and a half miles round. Dr. Thomson speaks of it as "this high and ample mound."³ Herodotus calls Ashdod "a great city of Syria," and tells us that it was taken by Psammetichus after a siege of twenty-nine years! We may feel incredulous as to the

¹ Nahum iii. 12.

² Ashdod, from root *shâdad*, "to be strong," signifies "a strong place." The modern village of Esdûd lies on the slope of a low hill, commanded by a higher hill, which was formerly the citadel. According to the account of a native, this higher hill would amply repay excavation. See "The Survey of Western Palestine," vol. ii., p. 421.

³ See "The Land and the Book," first edition, p. 541.

truth of the old historian's statement; nevertheless, it is significant as to the strength of the place. Further, on the present occasion, as Sargon tells us, its water defences had been newly repaired, and the men behind its walls were looking for help to the young and seemingly vigorous power of Egypt-Ethiopia. It may be presumed, then, that Ashdod did not fall quite such an easy prey as the conqueror would have us believe, and the more so as the Great King hastened to attack it without collecting his war material. It fell, indeed, within the year—*i.e.*, before the first month Nisan (March-April) of the following year—but we should be inclined to place its fall some time in the early winter, or even later.

We are now in a position to discuss the three years which were to elapse between the giving of the sign and its fulfilment. The sign was enacted and the prophecy uttered probably at the time of the Tartan's visit or shortly after—*i.e.*, about midsummer 712 B.C. Ashdod fell, so I imagine, some eighteen months later, in the winter of the following year. How can this period be spoken of as three years? The answer lies, first, in the Jewish mode of reckoning time, according to which parts of years are counted as whole years; and, secondly, in the arrangement of the Jewish civil and economic year. In 1 Kings xxii. 1 we read of three years without war between Syria and Israel, while the very next verse tells us that war broke out again in the third year. Our Saviour speaks of His body as about to lie three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, whereas, according to our mode of speech, He lay in the grave one whole day and parts of two others. So, then, the eighteen months between the summer of 712 B.C. and the winter of 711 B.C. would count as three years, if it could be shown that this period embraced *one whole year and parts of two others*. Now, it appears from Exodus xxiii. 16 that the end of the civil and economic year of the Jews coincided with the autumnal ingathering of the fruits, the Feast of Tabernacles being there described as “the feast of ingathering at the end” (or outgoing) “of the year, when thou gatherest in thy labours out of the field.” The economic year must, then, like the Sabbatic year mentioned in Lev. xxv. 9, have commenced on the first day of the seventh month, the month Tisri (September-October). On the supposition, then, that this civil year is the one referred to by the prophet, it is plain that the interval between the giving of the sign with the accompanying prophecy and the fall of Ashdod, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, would be justly described as three years, seeing that it embraces one civil year—*viz.*, from Tisri 712 B.C.

to Tisri 711 B.C.—and parts of two others. A very interesting parallel to this meets us in Isa. xxxvii. 30, where we read: "And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof." This prophecy was uttered probably in the late summer of 701 B.C., shortly before the close of the civil year, and whilst Sennacherib's army was still in the land.¹ The second year spoken of commenced with the autumnal sowing time, which was close at hand, but which, owing to the terrible devastation of the land, the people would be unable to make use of. Not till another sowing time had come round—not till the beginning of a third year—would they be able to resume the round of agricultural labours, to sow, and reap, and plant vineyards. Thus taken, the prophet's words, though mentioning a second and third year, signify only a period of some fifteen or sixteen months.² In the same way it appears to me that the "three years" is to be understood in the passage now before us, so that the prophecy was literally fulfilled if Egyptian and Ethiopian captives were led away from Ashdod in the manner described any time after the first day of Tisri (September-October), 711 B.C. Now, as Ashdod did not fall until the early winter, or even later, according to the reasonings and calculations given above, this may very well have been the case so far as the question of time is concerned.

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(To be continued.)

ART. II.—THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE PSALMS.

IT has been truly said that "the history of the Psalter, if it could be written, would be a history of the spiritual life of the Church." No book in the long story of the world's literature has had so widespread a use or made so universal an appeal to the heart of man. It is a witness to the power of the subjective in religion in all lands and ages, not least, whatever critics may say, in our own. Mr. R. E. Prothero, fellow of All Souls, Oxford, has quickened in us this sense of

¹ The time of year of the destruction of Sennacherib's army is indicated by the words of Isa. xviii. 5: "Afore the harvest, when the blossom is over and the flower becometh a ripening grape."

² This is the view of the passage adopted by Cheyne and Birks. See Cheyne's "Prophecies of Isaiah," and Birks' "Commentary," *in loco*.