

ART. III.—A GLIMPSE AT ANCIENT CHALDÆAN  
LIFE.

1. *La Magie chez les Chaldéens.* Par FRANÇOIS LENORMANT. Paris: 1874.
2. *La Divination et la Science des Présages chez les Chaldéens.* Par FRANÇOIS LENORMANT. Paris: 1875.
3. *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient.* Par S. MASPERO. Paris: 1876.

**D**ISTINGUISHED as this age has been for the revelations of ancient history and national life which have marked it, in no direction has this been more striking than in the resurrection of ancient ages in the region of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Though the oldest historical country in the world, the recovery of its literature and monuments from the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh has enabled us to restore the busy life of its swarming population with as surprising if not as minute an exactness of detail as has so long charmed us in the case of the ancient dwellers in the valley of the Nile.

The most ancient inscriptions and relics that have reached our times show that two distinct elements of population were mingled in the towns and villages of Chaldæa and Babylonia. To these the names have respectively been given of the Soumirs, or people of Sennaar or Shinar, and the Accadians, a race of a different stock. The bulk of the Accadians lived in the southern provinces, next the Persian Gulf—that is, in Chaldæa, properly so called; and, indeed, that district bears the name of Accad in the cuneiform inscriptions. The bulk of the Soumirs, on the contrary, settled north of this, in Babylonia, or as Scripture calls it, the land of Shinar, a name of which Soumir is only a phonetic variation. The two peoples were, however, at no age of which we have any records, absolutely distinct in their geographical limits: from the first we see them mingled with each other, over the whole country from Assyria to the ocean, though retaining their distinctive languages and genius.

The earlier history of these two races is veiled in obscurity, but the peculiarities of their respective languages, religions, and customs, with the notices of the classics and the evidence of local names, enable us to trace one of the most curious and interesting chapters of the primitive movements of mankind.

The Accadians, it is found, were of a very different family of mankind from the Soumirs, for their language, as still largely preserved in the inscriptions of Nineveh, proves them to have

belonged to what is known as the Turanian or Mongol stock, to which, in our days, the Finns, Lapps, Hungarians, Turks, and Basques of Spain belong, in Europe, while the Tartar nations of Asia, the Turkomans, the Siberian tribes, to the shores of the Arctic Ocean, the Chinese and the Japanese are its Asiatic representatives; the Indians of the New World also apparently belonging to it. Among the ancients the whole race were known as Scythians—"the most ancient of men"—and a tradition existed that as such it had for many centuries before the dawn of history been in possession of all Asia.<sup>1</sup>

A branch of this great race had wandered in pre-historic times to the plains of Mesopotamia, bringing with them the germs of a civilisation which is not readily associated with our ideas of the Turanian races. Their earliest home seems to have been in the lofty regions north of the Hindoo Koosh, and so tenaciously did the recollection of their highland birth-place cling to their hearts that even on the rich flats of the Euphrates and Tigris they still called themselves "Accadians," or Mountaineers, and so fondly cherished their reverence for mountain heights as the places of worship most pleasing to the gods, that they essayed all over their new country to imitate the cloudy peaks of their early fatherland by gigantic temple towers, with tops rising to the heavens.

The physical appearance of this primitive race may perhaps be gathered from the general resemblance, amidst variation in details, amongst all the Turanian races of the present day, from the marshes of Finland to the banks of the Amour. It seems as if it had been the first branch of the human family that separated from the common home of the earliest men, and thus, by its premature isolation, preserved a distinct physiognomy.<sup>2</sup> Yet it nevertheless varies so much that, while some tribes have all the characteristics of white races, others pass imperceptibly into the yellow-skinned; so that, on the one hand, we have the Hungarians, perhaps the handsomest people of Europe, belonging to it; and, on the other, the Chinese. To which of all these the ancient Accadians bore most resemblance might seem a question impossible to settle; but the study of ancient languages and literature, now pursued with so much intelligence, has strangely aided the solution, by showing that the Accadians bore a specially close relation in their language, religion, and superstitions, to the Ougro-Finnish branch of the Turanian stock, which is now represented in Europe by the Finns, the Lapps, and the Hungarians. Even this identification, however, leaves a wide field for conjecture respecting them, for, if it is not to be forgotten

<sup>1</sup> Justin. II. c. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant's "Histoire Ancienne," i. 64.

that while the Ougro race of Tartars gave us the word Ogre, from their hideousness, the modern Finns and Hungarians stand a splendid comparison for good looks with any other branch of the human family.

From their first arrival on the banks of the lower Euphrates, the Accadians formed a nation, and could boast of the knowledge of writing, of the principal industries of civilisation, of a fixed body of laws, and of a fully-developed religious system. Their writing, indeed, was yet in an early stage, for it still sought to present by an image each object it wished to express, though these pictures had already degenerated into rude hieroglyphics which were little better than arbitrary signs. Thus the idea of God had been originally embodied in the representation of a star with eight rays, and that of a king by the figure of a bee; but the star had gradually passed into a cross of wedge or arrow-shaped characters, and the bee had come to be nothing more than the rudest imitations of the insect by the same wedges or arrows. Of these, however, the cuneiform writing of Babylon and Assyria was only a further development.

Among these hieroglyphics we find special signs to indicate the precious and commoner metals, which must have been known to the Accadians before they left their distant mountain home, where minerals and metals of various kinds crop out to the very surface, and must have early developed the crafts of the miner, the metal worker, and the jeweller. The oldest tombs in the country contain objects in gold and copper; knives, hatchets, sickles, bracelets, and earrings.<sup>1</sup> Metal, however, seems to have as yet been scarce. Iron, unknown in the very earliest tombs, occurs sparingly in somewhat later ones, but there is no silver, zinc, or platinum. They could, however, make bronze from copper and tin, and they used lead for jars and pipes. But bronze was the ordinary metal. The richer fair ones of Accadia might boast of golden earrings of not inelegant pattern, and of golden beads and other ornaments; but most of their sex had to content themselves with bangles of bronze, and it was bronze of which the household bowls, the bolts for tessellating marble pavements, the rings for ornamenting walls, the weapons of the soldier, the implements of the husbandman, the hooks of the fisher, the chains and nails of every-day use, and the toe and finger rings, and the armlets and bracelets, were made. Strange to say, along with these relics occur stone implements of many kinds, exactly similar to those found in ancient caves and barrows, and regarded as indicating the remote antiquity of our race—a deduction entirely discredited by their use along with the

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<sup>1</sup> Rawlinson's "Two Great Monarchies," i. 120.

metals in the case of the Accadians, which is only one of many similar instances of the same fact.

Of the laws of the Accadians we know little, and space forbids more than the notice of their established recognition and force. Their religious ideas are of more direct interest, for they formed the groundwork of those amidst which Abraham in later times grew up.

The world, in the conceptions of these early tribes, was like a bowl reversed, the convex representing the expanse of land and sea; the hollow concave, the abyss in which dwelt darkness and the dead. Like other ancient races, they fancied their own country the centre of the world. Far beyond the Tigris rose the mountains of the East, which supported the sky and joined earth and heaven. The sky itself was a vast canopy resting on the edges of the earth, outside the great stream of Ocean which flowed round the whole world, and revolving round the Mountain of the East as its central pivot, drawing the stars with it in its course. Between heaven and earth, wandered sun and moon and the five planets, which were all alike thought to be a kind of living creature; and beneath them passed the snows, the winds, the thunder and the rains. The earth rested on the abyss, but the Accadians did not trouble themselves with asking by what that, in its turn, was supported.

This universe was peopled by a crowd of beings of many kinds, for, while mankind and the lower creatures were limited to the narrow bounds of the earth and the lower air, the world, the abyss beneath, the air above, and the upper sky, had vast mysterious populations of their own.

The primeval revelation of the One Living and True God underlies the ancient religion of the Accadians, but it early became so buried under the inventions of idolatry and the spread of a pantheistic view of Nature, that it was practically lost as early as the days of Abraham. As in India and Egypt, the mystery of the Universe became darker and darker the more men sought to understand it by their unaided reason. Life, as identified with motion and force, was attributed to the vast whole, so that God and Nature became identical. All things were part of the great world-soul, though anything like a philosophic expression of the thought belongs to a later age.

As we see it in its full development in later ages, the Chaldaean religion rested primarily on this conception, but from this all-pervading Essence countless emanations proceeded, which were recognised and worshipped as divine. That the sign for "God" should have been a star, indicates the turn of their thoughts. Over all the East the mighty heavens shine with a surpassing brightness, and the sun by day rules in all the more southern regions with unclouded and immeasurable glory. To the simple

childlike sons of Nature in such lands nothing was so natural as the worship of the heavenly bodies, when once the knowledge of the true God had been virtually lost.

The highest being in the later Chaldean pantheon was the supreme god, El—a word meaning “the God,” and that by which Jehovah is revealed in the early portions of the Scriptures themselves. The attributes or nature of this supreme existence were, however, too vast and comprehensive to permit of any image or tangible conception of Him being formed, and hence He did not attract the adorations of the people, since the human mind instinctively craves a sensuous rather than a spiritual worship. There is no evidence of any temple having been built to Him in Chaldæa, though Babylon owed to Him its name—Bab-El—the gate or city of El. He was “the One God,” but without any defined personality; a sublime and mysterious conception too vague to excite the religious emotions or to influence the conduct of life. The after-glow of Paradise was early fading into black night.

Under El, or Ilou, the universal and mysterious source of Being, came a triad emanating from him—Anou, who represented primordial chaos; Nouah, the intelligence which quickens all things; and Bel, the creating power which orders them. Next came a second triad, which showed the influence of the heavenly bodies in the religious system of the nation. It consisted of Sin, the Moon-god; Samas, the Sun; and Bin, the god of the air, the winds, the rain, and the thunder. These three were emanations of the first triad as that was an emanation direct from El. But with each member of both triads there was associated, more or less clearly, a female deity, for the gross conceptions of earth were always transferred in idolatry to the gods. Yet it is striking that the great doctrine of the Trinity should have so strange a parallel in the earliest religions of mankind. In India, as among the Accadians, the Supreme Being was represented from the remotest times in the threefold light of a Father, an acting Power, and a divine enforcing Spirit, as if echoes of the eternal truth had lingered in the world for a time after the voice of God had ceased to speak in Eden.

The descending scale of emanations from the higher deities led, next, to the gods of the five planets, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, which were respectively represented by Adar, Mardouk, Nergal, Istar, and Nebo; but these were only secondary manifestations of the higher gods of the second triad. These twelve great gods formed the nobility of the Accadian heaven, and are constantly mentioned in the inscriptions as the objects of public worship throughout the whole country. Their names almost alone enter into the composition of proper names. Beneath these thrones and princes of the sky,

Babylon, and Assyria after it, acknowledged legions of lesser gods—emanations from those higher in rank, but mostly honoured only by local worship. Every city, town, stream, and hill had its god, and there were special divinities of each district. Nor was the divine hierarchy even yet exhausted, for all the stars were regarded as living beings, possessing more or less of divinity, and linked to all the rest, however faintly, by a mysterious emanation from them.

This full development of the Accadian religious system was not, however, attained as yet in pre-historic ages, for the most ancient times appear to have known only of gods and elementary spirits, good and bad, without any graduation into a settled hierarchy. The mysterious El, reigning in lonely, incomprehensible grandeur, over all, seems to have been wanting in their theology, which was more like that of the Chinese of to-day than anything higher. For that supreme after-gleam of Paradise we are indebted to their Cushite conquerors of Semitic race; but even among them it passed away ere long from the worship or living interest of men at large, to reappear only in the faith of Abraham and become through him the great inheritance of mankind as the doctrine of the One Living and True God.

A great religious revolution, about two thousand years before Christ, marks the transition from the simpler faith of former ages and that of the future, on the banks of the Euphrates. About that time—that is, as nearly as may be, about the time of Abraham—a new dynasty united under its rule the two provinces of Chaldaea and Babylon, and introduced a more elaborate idolatry than had been previously known. Was it to separate him from this that the Father of the Faithful was summoned to set out for a distant land? Had he stayed in Mesopotamia the establishment and universal acceptance of the new heathenism must have corrupted his descendants.

The names of many of the old Accadian gods were the same as prevailed in later ages, but there was as yet no attempt at an associated and graduated hierarchy of divinities. Each deity was adored, with his spouse, in a particular town, which in most cases remained the seat of his chief temple even in after-times. Nature-worship, in which the one great principle of life was regarded as manifesting itself in countless forms, varied in each tribe and locality; some worshipping one special influence, some another, as the gross physical knowledge of so remote an age led them to regard one natural object or class of phenomena as of greater importance than others.

Our knowledge of these primitive times has been greatly increased by the discovery in the ruins of the library of the palace of Nineveh, of a document conveying much information respecting the superstitious ideas then prevailing. It has been pub-

lished by Sir Henry Rawlinson and Mr. Norris, in fac-simile, in their collection of the "Cuneiform Inscriptions of Asia," and has been translated and made the subject of his curious book on "La Magie chez les Chaldéens," by M. Lenormant, of Paris. It is interesting as disclosing the superstitions which in later ages became the special care of the Magi, a priestly corporation adopted into the later Chaldean religion as a heritage from the past, and forming the various classes of "magicians," "wise men," and "astrologers" mentioned in the book of Daniel.

Accadian Magic rested in the belief of the existence of countless personal spirits existing everywhere, at one time separate, at another confounded with the objects they animated. They produced all the phenomena of Nature, and directed and vivified all existences. They caused good and evil, guided the movements of the heavens, led up the seasons in their order, made the winds blow, the rains fall, caused atmospherical phenomena, beneficent or destructive; gave the earth its fecundity, made the plants germinate and grow, presided at the birth and maintained the life of all things; and, on the other hand, scattered abroad death and disease. The whole universe was full of them—the heaven of the stars, the earth, and the regions over it. All the elements gave them dwelling-places—the air, the fire, the solid earth, and the water. Each object had such spirits of its own. But it is noteworthy that there is no trace in the oldest Accadian religion of a conception of one Supreme God, such as we find in the ancient Aryans, and as prevailed afterwards in Babylon through the influence of the Semitic Cushites. Like the Tartar and Mongolian races of to-day, they seem never to have risen above a mere worship of Nature in its several elements and phenomena. The knowledge of the living God had faded away from among them, and was to be restored, first vaguely and ignorantly, and then with a divine fulness, by the nobler races of Shem.

The Accadians strove to solve the mystery of evil, as was afterwards done in Zoroastrianism, by the simple means of a second principle actively opposed to the good. As there were spirits beneficent by nature, so there were others naturally malignant, and these are spread throughout the universe. The sky, the earth, and the air are full of them, and, in all, they are face to face with the good, and wage deadly war with them, day and night, for ever. The triumph of calamity represents their victory for the time: that of happiness, their temporary defeat. Each heavenly body, each element, each phenomenon, each object, and each living being has an attendant evil spirit as well as a good one. Constant strife thus reigns throughout all Nature, for nothing escapes this unending struggle of good and evil. Yet the Accadians had no higher conception than that of

physical evil. Moral evil is scarcely ever hinted at in the writings that have reached us ; almost the only sin recognised being, apparently, the neglect of the prescribed propitiatory rites, and especially the failure to maintain friendly relations with evil spirits by magical arts, duly performed by recognised magicians. The only resort to which men can betake themselves to escape diseases and calamities is to avail themselves of the incantations of these functionaries, for all diseases and disasters are caused by evil spirits, and these the magicians can drive off or counteract by the mysterious words of their spells, and by their sacred rites and talismans.

This extraordinary system of demonology, as developed by the Babylonians and Assyrians, had a widely-spread influence on antiquity, and attracts at once by its importance in the history of the human mind, and by its inherent singularity. At the head of the countless army of demons were two classes who came more closely than others to a divine rank—the *mas*, or “soldiers” and “fighters ;” the other, the *lammas*, or “giants.” These are the geni of the “Arabian Nights” and of Eastern imagination at large. Under these were the *utuq*, who were demons properly so-called ; but these have, themselves, classes—the *alal*, or “destroyers ;” the *gigim*, a word of which the meaning is unknown ; the *telal*, or “warriors ;” and the *maskim*, or “spreaders of snares.” Of this awful hierarchy of evil some have far higher power than others, ranging through the universe, and being able to disturb the order of Nature at their will. Thus, in one of the formulas of the magicians which remain, we read of seven evil spirits of the heavens—“seven spirits of fire”—who were the exact counterpart of the seven planetary gods invested with the government of the universe. We know most, however, of the *maskim*, or “spreaders of snares,” whose abode is in the abyss under the earth, and who surpass all other demons in power and terror. Earthquakes were attributed to them, and they wreak their fell will in the heavens and on earth, troubling even the stars and their movements. Coming forth from the Mountains of the Setting Sun, they pass again to their gloomy abode through those of the rising sun ; they are the terror of the solid world, and have “no glory in heaven or on earth.” “The god Fire, who raises himself on high, the great Lord, who extends the supreme power of the god of the sky, who exalts the earth, his possession, his delight,” tries vainly to oppose their ravages. An incantation still remains in which this god addresses himself to a divinity who acts as mediator before the god Ea, thus :—

The god Fire approaches Silik-moulou-khi, and prays :— And he has heard the prayer, in the silence of the night. He has entered into the palace to his father Ea, and has said to him—Father, the god



Fire has come hither and has uttered his prayer to me. Thou who knowest the actions of the Seven (Maskim) tell us where they dwell; open thine ear! Then Ea answered—"My son, the Seven dwell on the earth—they come out of the earth—they go back into the earth—they shake the walls of the abyss of waters."

Ea then gives directions how to overcome these terrible spirits. Among other aids he reveals a supreme magical name before whose power they may be expected to quail, and appoints divine helpers to support the god Fire in his struggle to conquer and chain down the dread adversaries.

Their fell influence on men is described in a conjuration:—

The vastness of their invasion of the earth burns like fire, east, west, north, and south. They fiercely attack the dwellings of men. In the town and in the field they cause all to wither. They oppress the freeman and the slave alike. They rain like hail in the heavens and on the earth.

It seems also as if they were the same, in some aspects, as "the spirits of the winds" breathing the deadly and burning blasts, which cause so much disease and suffering in the East.

The other classes of demons are more directly mixed up with ordinary human affairs, laying incessant snares for man, and causing all kinds of evils to him.

They, "the brood of hell" (say the conjurations), bring trouble above and confusion below. They go from house to house. They glide into the doors like serpents. The barren woman is made barren by them; the child is snatched by them from the knees of its father. They are the voice that cries and pursues after man. . . . They sail land after land. They make the slave raise himself above his proper place; they make the son leave his father's house; they scare off the bird; they drive the nestling away into the wild; they make the ox run off; they make the lamb flee—they are the evil spirits who spread snares.

It is curious to find that these dreadful beings habitually live in waste, abandoned, and savage places, and that it is from these they come to the abodes of men, to torment them. The tablets give a list of demons according to the places they choose for their haunts—the desert, the barren tops of mountains, pestilential marshes, and the ocean waters. The *utuq*, it is said, live in the desert; the *mas* keep on the tops of mountains; the *gigim* wander in solitary places, and the *telal* glide about the streets of towns. But the desert especially is their chosen home. In the Magic texts demons are constantly mentioned who lurk for men in the depths of the wilderness, and the exorcisms prescribed have for their object to drive these adversaries away from these lonely spots, when the traveller is passing through them.

All the maladies of life were attributed to the presence and work of demons in the body of the sufferer, an idea which in the twelfth century before Christ led to a very curious incident in the relations of Egypt with Chaldaea. The conquests of Egypt had then been extended to the west border of Mesopotamia, and the King Rameses XII. had married a daughter of the lord of Bakhten, whom he had met on an Eastern progress. Some years after, when Rameses was in Thebes, a messenger from his father-in-law presented himself, asking the king to send a physician to the queen's sister, in Bakhten, to cure her of an unknown malady and from possession by a demon. A priestly physician was forthwith sent from Egypt, but his art entirely failed, and he had to return to Thebes without curing the princess. Eleven years later another messenger presented himself, saying that a physician would not do; the malady could only be cured, and the demon expelled, by the direct power of one of the gods of Egypt. Forthwith the sacred ark of one of the gods of Thebes was sent back with the envoy, and reached Bakhten after a tedious journey of six months. The demon, at last, on its arrival, was vanquished and fled from the person of the princess, but her father was naturally unwilling to return a deity who had wrought such a miracle. Hence, for three years and six months, the sacred ark was detained in Mesopotamia, but at the end of that time the queen's father had a dream, in which he thought he saw the captive god fly off to Egypt in the form of a golden sparrow-hawk, and he was attacked by an illness at the same time. This seemed a warning to return the ark, and it was immediately sent back to its temple at Thebes.

When a demon had once been chased from the body, the only security against its return lay in the strength of the incantations used to prevent its doing so, and by a good spirit taking its place in the lately possessed. To be the habitation of good spirits was the highest wish of any one.

The Chaldaeans believed that all diseases were the work of demons, and hence there were no physicians, strictly so called, either in Babylon or Assyria. Medicine was not a science, so much as a branch of Magic. It employed incantations and exorcisms, with the use of philtres and enchanted drinks, which possibly had in them something really curative. The disease, however, was regarded as a personal being. Thus the Plague and Fever are spoken of as two demons specially distinguished by personal attributes.

"The hateful *idpa*," says a fragment, "affects the head of a man; the evil-working *namtar* affects his life; the *utuq*, his forehead; the evil-working *alal* his lungs; the evil-working *gigim* his bowels; the *telal* his hand."

Besides these malevolent beings, there were others which

terrified by apparitions, and were closely connected with the shades of the dead shut up in the dark dwellings of the gloomy under-land. Of these there were ghosts, spectres, and vampires, the two former terrifying by their appearance only, while the third attacked men. Thus, in the Descent of Istar to the lower world, the goddess appeals to the guardian of its gate to open to her :

“Guardian, open thy gate that I may enter. If thou dost not I will assail and break it down. I will assail its bars. I will break its posts. I will make the dead come out to devour the living. I will give them power over the living.”

This comprises all we know as yet of the old Chaldæan Magic from the tablets, but the progress of decipherment will doubtless reveal much hereafter. What is thus known reveals a reign of miserable superstition. Life must have been a bondage to imaginary terrors, and hardly less so to the endless ceremonial details by which safety from evil spirits was to be secured. Thus an ailment of the head was to be cured by knotting a woman's turban to the right and arranging it smoothly in the form of a band to the left. It was to be divided into fourteen slips, and with these the forehead was to be encircled—and the hands and feet. The patient was then to sit on his bed and be sprinkled with holy water, and thus the ailment would be carried off into the skies like a strong wind, and would sink into the earth like spilt water. The power of numbers also played a great part in this strange pharmacy, but on this subject our information is very slight. But the special and chief power in expelling the demons of disease and misfortune lay in the secret and mysterious supreme name. It alone could stay the *maskim*. This great name, however, remained known to the god Ea alone, for any man who found it out would, by merely doing so, gain a power greater than that of the gods.

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE.

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#### ART. IV.—CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

##### III.

**T**HERE are two tests by which all great institutions may be tried, viz., principles and results ; and it is a happy thing to know that there is no reason to fear the application of either of these tests to the Church Missionary Society. As for results, we have the concurrent testimony of all classes, civilians, military men, clergy, bishops, governors, and governors-general. And as for principles, we may with the utmost confidence challenge the