ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN INSCRIPTIONS IN THEIR BEARING ON OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

XVII. Esarhaddon.

The Scriptural references to this king are comparatively scanty. In 2 Kings xix. 37; Isaiah xxxvii. 38, he is named as succeeding to the throne of Assyria on the murder of his father Sennacherib, by his brothers Adrammelech and Sharezer, who made their escape to Ararat, or Armenia. In Ezra iv. 2, the "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" in the cities of Samaria (Ezra iv. 10), who are enumerated as "the Dinartes, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites," speak of themselves as having been settled in that region since the days of "Esarhaddon king of Assur," when they had been brought there by the "great and noble Asnapper," who is thus possibly identified with the king of Assyria[1] of 2 Kings xvii. 24, who "brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria." The chronology of the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah, makes it probable that he was the king of Assyria whose captains "took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon" (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11.)

We have to see what light these scanty notices receive from the fuller records of the Assyrian Inscriptions. The materials for such an enquiry have been brought before us in a full and exhaustive work on "The History of Esarhaddon," by Mr. Ernest A. Budge.

[1] Possibly also, however, with the Assyrian general under whom the migration was effected. The name Asnapper does not occur in any Assyrian inscription, and it is, perhaps, scarcely probable that it should have been used for Esarhaddon by writers who knew the name of that monarch.

(1) The reign of this monarch extended from B.C. 681 to B.C. 688. The earliest of his records has come down to us in a fragmentary state, and begins abruptly in the middle of a sentence. The king is engaged in a war which disturbs and alarms him. He is encouraged by the assurance of help from his country's gods, leads forth his army, pursues his enemies, and defeats them in a pitched battle in the country of Khani-rabhat.

The imperfect condition of the fragments deprives us of the names of these enemies of the Assyrian king, but both Mr. Budge (pp. 21–23) and Mr. Fox Talbot (*Records of the Past*, 101) assume that, had they been preserved, they would have been found identical with those of the two assassin brothers. There are not a few touches in the inscription which suggest this hypothesis.

"In heart I was discouraged, and was stricken down my liver.
As regards the making of the royalty of the house
of my father, the extension of my dominion,
to the gods Assur, Sin (the moon), Samas (the sun), Bel, Nabu, Nergal,
the goddess Istar of Nineveh, (and) the goddess Istar of Arbela
My hands I lifted up and they were kind to prayers,
By their grace established a trusting heart, they sent and said, March! do not restrain thyself, with thy bands we march and we abhor thy enemies."

The situation was clearly one of imminent peril. The conspiracy was widely spread. The king had to nerve himself and his army for a war from which natural impulses might have led him to shrink. He needed the assurance of a divine protection to strengthen him in his conflict against overwhelming odds.

The inscription records the perils of the campaign.

"Snow-storming in the month Sebat (=January) came the mighty darkness,

I feared not.
Like a *sisinni* bird flying,
Against the officer Gab-khakh of the lands
I opened out my forces;
The road to Nineveh with difficulty quickly
I descended and
beyond me, in the region of the country of
Khani-rabhat, the whole of these warriors
powerful, in front of my army placed themselves
and girded on their weapons;
The fear of the great gods, my lords, overwhelmed them."

The mention of the snowstorm is significant as suggesting a march in the direction of the mountainous regions of Ararat or Armenia to which the parricidal rebel-brothers had fled after their father's death (2 Kings xix. 37; Isa. xxxvii. 38).

(2) The next inscription bears upon the somewhat singular fact that Manasseh was carried as a prisoner to Babylon and not to Nineveh, the usual residence of the Assyrian kings (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11). Merodach Baladan, as we have seen, had proved himself a somewhat turbulent tributary, and his proposed alliance with Hezekiah (Isa. xxxix. 1) was obviously intended as an assertion of independence against his suzerain. Esarhaddon complains in an inscription (Budge, p. 27), that Nabu-zir-mapisti-ezir, the son of Merodach, had acted in the same spirit.

"The gifts of a brother he presented not, and to do homage he approached not,
And his ambassadors to my presence
He sent not, and concerning the peace of my kingdom (or 'the health of my majesty') he asked not,
his evil deeds within Nineveh I heard, and my heart groaned and was stricken down my liver."

The king despatched an army against him. He fled to Elam and was defeated there, and his brother, Nahid-Merodach—

"from the country of Elam fled and to make submission to me to the country of Assyria came, and he besought my lordship.
The sea-coast, to its whole extent, the dominion of his brother, I entrusted to him.
Yearly a sum unvarying with his numerous presents to Nineveh he came, and kissed my two feet."

The same inscription records a victory over the king of Zidon, and over Arabian rulers. It is noticeable as connecting itself with the two Scriptural instances of female sovereigns, the Queen of Sheba, and Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, that two of these are queens. (*Records of the Past,* iii. 107).

In another inscription (Budge, p. 49) the king records the overthrow of another Chaldæan and the appointment of another satrap.

"I spoiled the country of Beth-dakkuri
Which is within the land of Chaldæa, an enemy of Babylon;
I burned Samas-ibni its king,[1]
A ravager wicked, not revering the memory of the lords,
Who the lands of the sons of Babylon
And Borsippa, by violence had carried away. And,
As for myself the fear of the gods, Bel and Nebo I knew.
Their lands I restored, and
to the sons of Babylon and Borsippa
I caused to be entrusted.
Nebo-sallim son of Balasu
Upon his throne I caused to be seated, and he repented of his transgressions (or 'he performed acts of homage')."

The reference to the king's acknowledgment of the Babylonian deities Bel and Nebo is strikingly illustrated by the title which he assumes, in conjunction with that of "the Great King, the king of Assyria," of "priest of Babylon" (Budge, pp. 17, 18). It is obvious that that

[1] Comp. Jer. xxix. 22; Dan. iii. 11, as examples of the prevalence of this mode of punishment.

character implied visits to Babylon in which he appeared as the representative of the national religion. So in a contract inscription given by Mr. George Smith in his *Assyrian Discoveries* (p. 415) he is described simply by the title of "King of Babylon." The inscriptions of Assur-bani-pal, the son of Esarhaddon, shew that he had been associated in the kingdom during his father's life-time, and, as he records that he then entered upon the occupation of the palace at Riduti

> "the place where Esarhaddon the father, my begetter
> within it grew up, and ruled the dominion of Assyria,"

it is probable that the older king retired to the city in which he had lived during the life of his father Sennacherib, and which he had restored and fortified (Lenormant, *Ancient Hist.*, i. 406). He was, it may be noted, the only Assyrian king who thus resided at Babylon, and the narrative of 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 11, which relates that he there received the homage of Manasseh is therefore in strict accordance with the facts recorded in the inscriptions. The homage of Manasseh, however, was not confined to Babylon. One of the longest of Esarhaddon's inscriptions records the erection of a great palace at Nineveh and in this he dwells on the fact that he had gathered "twenty-two kings of the land of the Hittites" to take part in its construction (Budge, p. 79). A separate list of these kings is given in p. 103, and foremost among them we find the names of "Baal, king of Tyre," and "*Manasseh, king of Judah,*" followed by those of the kings of Edom, Moab, Gaza, Askelon, Ekron, Beth-Ammon, Ashdod, Salamis, Paphos, and "Yatnan (=Cyprus) in the midst of the sea."

A list of this kind clearly implies an expedition which ended in the entire subjugation of all the countries which appear in the map of Syria. Of such an expedition we

have no direct record in Esarhaddon's own inscriptions, but in the annals of his son Assurbanipal we find it distinctly recognised, and learn that it included the conquest of Egypt, then under the Ethiopian king Tirhakah, on whose power both Hezekiah and the king of Tyre had relied (Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, p. 321), *R. P.*, i. 58.

"Tirhakah, king of Egypt and Ethiopia
Of whom Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, my
father, my begetter, his overthrow had accomplished
And had taken possession of his country."

He had in addition appointed kings and governors in Egypt among whom it is interesting to find the name of Necho, afterwards conspicuous as invading Judah in the reign of Josiah. The twenty-two kings who were brought to the palace at Nineveh were obviously collected together to impress the Assyrians with the fact of the entire subjugation of the rebellious provinces.

(3) Of the transportation of the Babylonians, Cuthæans and other tribes to Samaria no direct record has as yet been discovered in the inscriptions. Such a measure was, perhaps, too constant a sequel of conquest to call for special notice, and Esarhaddon has left proofs that he adopted the policy of deportation to its full extent. Of all the Hittite cities, taking the word in its widest connotation, none suffered so severely as Sidon. Esarhaddon relates (*R. P.*, iii. p. 111), that he "swept away its villages and rooted up its citadel," and further

"I carried off as my spoils,
Men and women without number,
Oxen and sheep and mules,
I swept them all off to Assyria.
I assembled the kings of Syria
And the sea-coast, all of them.
The city of Sidon I built anew

And I called it 'the city of Esarhaddon.'[1]
Men captured by my arms, natives of the lands
And seas of the East
Within it I placed to dwell,
And I set my own officers in authority over them."

The fate reserved for the captives who had been conspicuous in their resistance is stated further on.

"I collected them;
to Assyria I carried them off,
And in front of the great entrance of Nineveh
Along with *bears*, dogs, and . . .
I left them to stay for ever."

R. P., iii. p. 3.

Those who had not resisted escaped the doom of deportation and had to bear only the lighter yoke of tribute and subjugation. Among the names of the nations thus subdued we find the Telassar of 2 Kings xix. 12; Isaiah xxxvii. 12. They had been conquered, as these Scripture references shew, by Sennacherib. It would seem that they rebelled against his son. It was natural however, that the captives who were thus brought together should be utilized. Their fate was like that of the Israelites in Egypt under the Pharaoh who "knew not Joseph." Esarhaddon determined to erect a palace that should surpass in its magnificence all that Assyria had seen.

"I caused crowds of them to work in fetters
in making bricks:
The small palace
I pulled down the whole of it,
Much earth in baskets
From the fields I brought away,

[1] The inscriptions on the rocks of the Nahr-el-kelb near Beyrout, in which Esarhaddon describes himself as "King of Egypt, Thebes and Ethiopia," present an interesting coincidence. He records his victory in a spot near Sidon, but the victory has been really gained not over Hittites or Phœnicians, but over Egypt and Ethiopia.

And with stones of equal size
I completed the mounds."

R. P., iii. 120.

Materials as well as labour were brought from all the conquered countries. Great beams and rafters of cedar and cypress from the ranges of Sirar and Lebanon, slabs of marble and alabaster from the mountain quarries were brought to Nineveh. The doors were inlaid with cunning work of cypress and cedar, and fitted to the gateways. The characteristic features of Assyrian art, which have survived the chances and changes of more than two thousand years, were there in all their magnificence.

"Bulls and lions, carved in stone,
which with their majestic mien
deter wicked enemies from approaching,
the guardians of the footsteps, the saviours
of the paths, of the King who constructed them,
right and left I placed them
at the gates."

R. P., iii. 121.

The ornamentation of the interior reminds us of the palace of Solomon and the "ivory house" of Ahab.

"Of fine cedar-wood and ebony
I made the ceilings of the apartments.
The whole of that palace
With *veneered* slabs of ivory and *alabaster*
I embellished, and I embroidered its tapestries.
With flat roofs, like a floor of lead,
I covered the whole building,
And with plates of pure silver and bright copper
I lined the interior."

R. P., iii. 122.

Within and without it was to surpass all that had been known before.

"The mighty deeds of Asshur my lord
which in foreign hostile lands
he had done

by the skill of sculptors I erected within it.
Cedars like those of the land of Khamana,
which all other trees and shrubs
excel, I planted around it.
Its courts greatly I enlarged,
its stalls very much improved,
for the stabling of horses within it.
Walls I skilfully made
and I covered them properly.
That great building from its foundation
I built and I finished. I filled with beauties
the Great Palace of my Empire,
and I called it 'The Palace which rivals the world.'"

R. P., iii. 122.

It was dedicated with a solemn sacrifice and a gathering of many peoples. He had won his victories, as his inscriptions shew, in fighting for his country's gods, and conquering those who were worshippers of other deities.

"Ashur, Ishtar of Nineveh, and the gods of Assyria
All of them I feasted within it.
Victims precious and beautiful
I sacrificed before them,
And I caused them to receive my gifts.
I did for those gods whatever they wished.
The great Assembly of my kingdom,
the chiefs, and the people of the land, all of them
according to their tribes and cities
on lofty seats
I seated within it
and I made the company joyful.
With the wine of grapes I furnished their tables
and I let martial music resound among them."

R. P., iii. 123.

The Assyrian, however, looks beyond the immediate present into the long vista of the years to come for himself and his successors. The character of his son Assurbani-pal, whom, as we have seen, he associated with him in the empire, might well have seemed to justify the hope

which he expresses. Such prayers have, at all events, been always prominent in the liturgies of kings.

"In the name of Ashur, king of the gods, and the gods of Assyria
all of them, with sound limbs, cheerful mind,
brightness of heart and a numerous offspring,
within it long may I continue to dwell!
And long may its glory endure!
In the . . . a fine race of horses,
mares, mules, and camels,
able to carry munitions
for a whole army, with its foreign spoils
every year without fail
May it receive them within it.
Within this Palace
May the bull [1] of good fortune, the genius of good fortune,
the guardian of the footsteps of my majesty,
the giver of joy to my heart,
for ever watch over it! Never more
may its care cease!

* * * * *

In future days, under the kings my sons
whom *Ashur* and *Ishtar* to the government of this land and people
shall name their names,
when this Palace
shall grow old and decay,
the man who shall repair its injuries,
and in like manner as I the tablet written
with the name of the King my father,
along with the tablet written with my own name
have placed, so do Thou [2] after my example
read aloud the tablet written with my name.
Then pour a libation on the altar, sacrifice a victim,
and place it with the tablet written with thine own name,
so shall Ashur and Ishtar
hear thy prayers." *R. P.*, iii. 123, 124.

What has been called the "irony of History," what pre-

[1] The form of the guardian deity that stood in front of the entrance of the palace.

[2] The unknown successor after many centuries of Assyrian greatness.

sented itself to the mind of Herodotus as the Nemesis of a Divine order against those that were proud and lifted up, displayed itself here also. The greatness of Assyria culminated in the reigns of Esarhaddon and his son Assurbanipal. The conquest of Tirhakah gave him the right to style himself "King of Egypt and Ethiopia." He was also, as we have seen, not only king of Assyria, but also priest, or vicegerent, of the gods of Babylon. His son carried the boundaries still further into Arabia and Elam. Under the name of Sardanapalus he became known to the Greeks as the type of oriental manificence and luxury. He completed the great palaces which Sennacherib and Esarhaddon had begun. His inscriptions (*R. P.*, i. 55, ix. 37, vii. 65), are among the fullest Assyrian records that are left to us; but, except in the passages already cited, they have no direct contact with Biblical history.

The reign of Assurbanipal was, however, but a short one (B.C. 668–660), and with his successor a rapid process of decadence set in. Under his elder son, Tiglath-pileser II. (660–647) Babylon became independent. Under Assurilidi (647–625) Media rose to a new unity and strength under Cyaxares, who in alliance with Nabopolassar, the Babylonian king, threatened the Assyrian empire with destruction. The invasion of the Scythian hordes who poured over Asia laid waste its provinces, while it postponed its fall for nineteen years by engaging the attention and occupying the forces of the confederate foes. Under the Grecised form of Assaracus, possibly another form of Esarhaddon, the last of the great line of Assyrian kings fell before Nabopolassar and Cyaxares, and in B.C. 606 the fate which Nahum foretold, and which Ezekiel saw in its consummation, had fallen on Nineveh and its palaces of pride. Of this king there are no extant inscriptions and those of his predecessors are meagre and few, and present no points of contact with the history of Israel.

The names of those prophets suggest, however, a passing glance at the history of Nineveh as seen from their point of view before bringing this paper to its close. The date of Nahum cannot be fixed with certainty and the range of conjecture runs from the reign of Uzziah to that of Manasseh. On the whole the balance seems to me to turn in favour of the hypothesis which makes him a contemporary of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon. On this assumption he may have been among the captives of Judah who were carried to the waters of Hiddekel or came to Nineveh in the train of Manasseh, and may have seen the proud city and the stately palaces that rose upon its banks. To him it was a "city of blood." "The noise of the whip, and the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots" made harsh music in his ear (Nah. iii. 1, 2). It was a "lions' den, the feeding-place of the young lions, with victims strangled and torn in pieces, the holes filled with prey and the dens with ravin" (Nah. ii. 12).

But, as a prophet to whom God had given a faith in a righteous order, he knew that this could not last. He pointed to the fall of No-Amon, the Egyptian Thebes, which had probably occurred before the attack of the Assyrian armies on the defeat of Tirhakah by Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal, as a foreshadowing of the fall of Nineveh. She "went into captivity, her young children were dashed in pieces at the top of all her streets. They cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound with chains" (Nah. iii. 8–10). So should it be with the great Assyrian capital. She also should be drunken with the cup of the wine of the wrath of God. And "her strongholds, like fig-trees with the first-ripe fruits should fall into the mouth of the eater" (Nah. iii. 12). Her "spoil of silver and her spoil of gold, her pleasant furniture (*lit.* vessels of desire) should be the prey of her spoiler. She also should

be empty, and waste, and void, the very chaos of a city, all faces in her gathering blackness. The gates of the city should be opened, and her palaces dissolved" (Nah. ii. 6, 9, 10). The fire should devour her bars. The labours of the clay and the mortar and the brick-kiln should be fuel for the devouring flames. His last words are prophetic of the perpetual desolation which was her righteous doom: "There is no healing of thy bruise: thy wound is grievous, all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap their hands over thee, for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (Nah. iii. 19).

What Nahum thus saw in the future of the visions of God, Ezekiel looked upon from the banks of Chebar as brought to its completion. The doom of Assyria becomes in its turn a warning to the pride of a restored and mighty Egypt under a later Pharaoh (probably Hophra, the Apries of Herodotus). With imagery drawn, it may be, from the forest-parks and gardens in which Esarhaddon had exulted, he paints Assyria as "a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches and with a shadowing shroud, exalted above all the trees of field, and all the fowls of heaven" (symbols of the conquered nations) "making their nests in its boughs, and the beasts of the field resting under its shadow" (Ezek. xxxi. 3–6). No "tree in the garden of God" was "like to him for beauty. All the trees of Eden envied him" (*Ibid.* 8, 9). And therefore "he was cut down, his branches were fallen and his boughs broken by all the rivers of the land, and all the peoples of the earth were gone down from his shadow and had left him." He too had passed to Sheol, the dark under-world of the dead, and "Lebanon mourned for him, and the trees of the field fainted for him" (*Ibid.* 15). Assyria took its place in that region of shadows and of darkness, where the mighty ones of the past rest in their graves, waiting for the coming of yet another and another, as the giant forms of empires

founded upon wrong took their place among the things that had been.

With this survey of the history of the last of the great Assyrian kings I close this series of papers, interrupted too long by the pressure of new duties, likely now to be interrupted, had I intended to continue them, by an absence of some months from England, and therefore from materials without which I could not hope to complete them. It is some consolation to think, on this suspension of my work, that the greater part of what I contemplated at the outset has been already accomplished. The Assyrian records in their bearing upon the history of the Old Testament are, as we have seen, full of deepest interest. Those of Babylon in the period that follows under Nebuchadnezzar are comparatively, as far as is yet known, scanty and contain little beyond the chronicle of his works as the builder of that great Babylon the magnificence of which swelled his heart with pride. Those of Persia, though in the case of Darius Hystaspes, as full as any of the Assyrian, and throwing light on the internal history of the Persian monarchy, present but few direct points of contact with the history of the people of Israel. They had ceased to hold a position among the nations of the earth worthy of a place in the chronicles of a great empire. The events of the return from Babylon, the figures of Zerubbabel and Joshua the son of Jozedek, of Ezra and Nehemiah, important as they were to those whom they affected, interesting as they are to us, as preserving that people for a future revival and expansion, and for the exercise of a spiritual power greater than they had possessed in the days of their outward greatness, were as nothing to the chroniclers of Persia.

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