

inscription, such a notion is absolutely excluded. A new people, however, and one that appears here for the first time in an Egyptian inscription, is mentioned—Israel—which is viewed by the Pharaoh as implicated in the troubles of the preceding years. The circumstance that *Chor* (Palestine) is mentioned immediately after Israel may point to the Palestinian origin of that people, which naturally was well enough known to the Egyptians, and is called in question only by modern pentateuchal criticism.

While, then, the meaning of Merenptah's allu-

sion to the Israelites is involved in considerable obscurity, the fact remains that they are named, and that, too, in the connexion I have explained. This is extremely important, because it lends new support to the old conjecture that Merenptah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

In conclusion, I would only remark that neither in Ex. xiv. 26 ff., nor in the unquestionably ancient song of Ex. xv., is it said that the Pharaoh himself perished in the Red Sea. These passages speak only of his host and his chariots.

II.

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Referring to your notice of this interesting and important discovery in your June number, and to the article of Professor Flinders Petrie in the *Contemporary*, I beg to offer a few suggestions as to its import and relation to biblical history, and in favour of one of the explanations proposed by the discoverer.

To begin, I cannot believe that Merenptah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. He was one of the Pharaohs of the Oppression, but the Exodus itself apparently took place in the short reign of his successor Siptah, the last king of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and the immediate predecessor of the time of anarchy recorded by Rameses III. in the 'Harris Papyrus,' and which led to the rise of a new dynasty. A few years following Merenptah's death were occupied by Seti II. and by a usurper; and the short and inglorious reign of Siptah, the next legitimate king, who seems to have left no issue, may have terminated abruptly in the Red Sea. With him in any case the great Nineteenth Dynasty, whose kings knew neither Joseph nor Jehovah, ceased from the earth.

To turn to the inscription itself. It is evident that it relates chiefly to the war against the Lybian invaders, which is treated in great detail, and with the usual grandiloquence of Egyptian official bulletins. The part relating to Palestine and to Israel is quite subordinate and supplementary, and relates to the sequel of the great war. It was not unnatural that certain of the Canaanite dependencies of Egypt should take advantage of the Lybian invasion either to assert their independence or to inaugurate revolutionary disturbances which had to be quelled on the expulsion of the Lybians.

The reference to Israel is even less definite, and may well have applied to the people when resident

in Goshen and its eastern extension to the head of the Red Sea.

During the Lybian war, if there was excitement among the Canaanites, this must have been felt even more strongly by the Israelites on the eastern frontier, who would watch the conflict with hopes of deliverance from their bondage, either by the victory of the Lybians or by the weakening of the Egyptian power, and may even have been tempted to overt acts of rebellion or to treasonable plots. At the close of the war, and after the suppression of the Canaanite revolts, these would be punished, possibly by the execution of some of the headmen, and by the plundering of some of the Israelite towns or settlements supposed to be most disaffected, and not improbably by the revival or re-enactment of some of the old edicts of Rameses II. respecting the destruction of the male children, as well as by the increase of the forced labour required of the people,—a measure the more suitable, because of the necessity of repairing the damage caused to towns and temple enclosures by the Lybian invasion.

The question next occurs—Is there any reference in the Bible to all this? The great Lybian war is not mentioned explicitly; but there are traces of its effects to which the discovery of Professor Flinders Petrie should now direct attention.

One possible reference is that in Ps. lxxviii. to misconduct of the Ephraimites at this period, which, whatever it was, is recalled in connexion with their selfish policy in far later times. Ephraim was no doubt the leading tribe in the age immediately succeeding that of Joseph, and may have had some military organisation for defence against the Eastern nomads. In the troubled reign of Merenptah the Ephraimites may have been

supposed to have failed in their duty, either to their countrymen or to the Government. In connexion with this, the references to Joshua in Exodus are supposed to import that he had been engaged in some military operations before his employment under Moses.¹

But of more importance is the reference to the 'affliction' and the 'cry' of the people at the time of the call of Moses, which are said to have caused God to intervene in their behalf, though previously He had appeared to disregard their miseries. This would seem to imply the aggravation of their sufferings shortly before the Exodus, and to this the Lybian war would certainly tend, and Merenptah's inscription testifies to it. We may perhaps add the statement in Ex. v. that the Israelites were scattered over all the land of Egypt in search of material for their bricks. In the earlier oppression of Rameses II. they seem to have been chiefly collected in two *corvées* at Rameses and Pithom; but the later work imposed by Merenptah would scatter them more widely; and this might continue until their final gathering for their departure.

We may thus read Merenptah's statement as referring to incipient rebellion among the Hebrew population in the eastern part of Lower Egypt, consequent on the Lybian invasion, and to its suppression and punishment when that invasion had been repelled. We may further regard these events as producing that general and bitter cry which entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts, as it will always do in such cases, and which is assigned as the immediate cause of the Divine interference in their behalf. When the tyrant has filled up the measure of his iniquity, and the oppressed are led to turn from human schemes to supplicate the help of God, is the time when the Almighty arm intervenes manifestly in the history

¹ Ch. xxxiii. 11, where the expression translated 'young man' may refer to a military function; also Ex. xvii. 13, xxiv. 13. See also 1 Chron. vii. 20.

of the world. Such a crisis in certain quarters is pretty evidently approaching in the present day, and Merenptah's inscription may have been disinterred as a special lesson to us at this time, lest we may neglect or injure the Lord's oppressed and persecuted people, who are at this moment, both in Russia and Turkey, suffering worse cruelties, and on a greater scale, than those inflicted on Israel in Egypt.

P.S.—Since mailing the MS. of the above note, I have received the July number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, and observe that several of your correspondents take similar views to that above given. I did not refer to the collision of Ephraim with the Philistines mentioned in 1 Chron. vii., because it seems to refer to an earlier period. It has, however, this bearing on the matter, that, like the reference in Ps. lxxviii., it shows Ephraim to have been an armed and military tribe on the eastern frontier, and this position may have continued till the reign of Merenptah, and may have been connected with the military training of Joshua the son of Nun.

But what if there has been an error in the reading, and if there is no reference in the inscription to Israel, but only to some town or district in Palestine, as has been suggested. I do not think this probable. Yet, even so, there still remains the fact that the Lybian invasion produced some disaffection in Palestine, and if so, probably much more among the oppressed Israelites in Egypt, followed by subsequent repression. Thus the incidental references in the Bible would not lose their value; and we should still rejoice that our attention has been called to them, and to the lessons they convey, by Merenptah's inscription. They will still come into the category of slight and undesigned coincidences, in which the old history so often anticipates modern discovery.

At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

THE LIFE OF JAMES McCOSH. EDITED BY WILLIAM MILLIGAN SLOANE. (*T. & T. Clark.* 8vo, pp. viii + 287, with portraits. 9s.) When the 'Life' of Principal Cairns was published, there

were men, we have been told, who thought they knew him, to whom it came as a great revelation. The 'Life' of President McCosh will come as a revelation to almost every one. He lived in two