

Recent Biblical Archaeology.

BY PROFESSOR A. H. SAYCE, LL.D., OXFORD.

'The Witness of the Monuments.'¹

I HAVE no hesitation in saying that this is a book which ought to be in the hands, not only of every Oriental archæologist, but of every student of the Old Testament Scriptures as well. Nothing like it has ever been published in this country. The accurate and beautifully executed illustrations with which almost every page is filled, make it a veritable treasure-house of archæological lore. There are more than three hundred of them, the larger number being photographs, while the exactitude of the rest is guaranteed by the fact that they have been drawn by the practised hand of Mr. Rylands, the Secretary of the Society of Biblical Archæology. Most of them are published for the first time, and they all alike throw light on the history and records of ancient Israel. All the appliances of modern science have been used to make them as perfect as possible, though the volume in which they are contained is a marvel of cheapness. It is not so long ago since such a work, with its sumptuous print and paper, would have cost, not fifteen shillings, but fifteen pounds. No less than thirty of the plates are in colour.

The letterpress is equally illustrative of the religion, history, and civilization of the Old Testament. Mr. Ball is a good Semitic scholar, whose painstaking accuracy is well known, and who is beginning to be one of the veterans of Assyriology. He gives translations of all the inscriptions which bear upon the literature of the Old Testament, and it will be found that they are all thoroughly brought up to date. The references to parallel passages in the Bible, as well as the black type in which biblical names are printed, will be specially helpful to the reader. A chapter is added on the history and origin of the Semitic alphabet, with a comparative table of its earlier forms, together with the cuneiform and hieroglyphic characters from which it has been supposed to be derived; and at the end of the volume is a list of biblical proper names with their significations

¹ *Light from the East; or, The Witness of the Monuments: An Introduction to the Study of Biblical Archæology.* By C. J. Ball. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1899.

in either Hebrew or in some other Oriental language.

Mr. Ball generally preserves an impartial attitude on disputed points; indeed, as regards the Hittite monuments, his language may be described as over-cautious. But it goes without saying that in some cases he assumes without question the soundness of theories of which he has been a leading advocate. Thus the connexion between the beginnings of Chinese writing and the primitive characters of Sumerian Babylonia is taken for granted, and though I fully agree with him in believing that the culture of the Pharaonic Egyptians came from Babylonia, I should doubt whether at present we are justified in saying more of the Babylonian origin of the Egyptian hieroglyphs than that it is possible.

Here and there, naturally, I should be inclined to differ from Mr. Ball's theories and conclusions. In a growing science like that of archæology, where so much of the evidence is still imperfect, this of course is inevitable. I should question, for instance, his ingenious derivation of the name of Shinar from the Sumerian *gi-shimmar* or 'palm-tree.' I have, indeed, long since given up the suggestion I made in 1870 that Shinar is a form of Sumer, though I see that it still holds its ground among the majority of Assyriologists. But it does not seem to have been observed that the name is applied to Babylonia by the king of Alasia in one of the Tel el-Amarna letters, where it is written Sankhar. Whether, therefore, we identify Alasia with Coele-Syria, like Maspero, or with Cyprus, like W. Max Müller and Winckler (with whom I am disposed to agree), at anyrate the name was in use in Western Asia before the Mosaic age. It is not until we come to the eighth century before our era that we find it has been shifted to the oasis of Singara.

Nor, again, can I find any evidence that the Babylonian Narudu stands for Namrudu or Nimrod, much less that it was a title of Gilgames. And what does Mr. Ball mean by saying that 'from the fragmentary context' of the tablets discovered by Mr. Pinches, 'it is certain that the persons intended by these names (Chedor-laomer, Arioch, and Tidal) are not those mentioned in Gn 14'? There is nothing in the tablets in ques-

tion to show anything of the kind. I have often wondered, by the way, why no one has started the theory that the tablets were written by a Jewish exile in Babylonia. The rebus-like fashion in which the names are written not only presupposes familiarity with them on the part of the writer, but also reminds us of the Jewish *atabash*, while there are curious similarities between the language of the tablets and passages in the Old Testament (notably Ps 120⁵).

I hope it will not be long before a second edition of Mr. Ball's book is called for. In preparation for this I would direct his attention to two points which require correction. On p. 53 the reader will be puzzled by finding the 'Abil-Ishtar' of the text miscalled 'Ilu-Ishtar' at the head of the section; and on p. 98 the pseudo-Sesostris, in the pass of Karabel, mentioned by Herodotus, is confounded with the image of Niobê on Mount Sipylus, which is referred to by Homer but not by Herodotus. I may also add that the suggestion that the biblical Nisroch might be the Assyrian Nusku was first made, not by Halévy, but by myself in the *Theological Review*, 1873, p. 27. But it is not one of the suggestions of which I am proud.

In conclusion, let me draw attention to two plates representing the ornamented centres of bronze dishes discovered at Nineveh. On the one, covered as it was intended to be with water, Mr. Rylands believes with great probability that we have a picture of the brood of Tiamât, on the other a representation of the firmament and the four regions of the earth.

The volume is appropriately dedicated to Professor Hommel, to whose untiring labours and keen penetration biblical archæology owes so much.

Recent Discoveries in Armenia.

THE explorations of Drs. Belck and Lehmann in Armenia have resulted in the discovery of many important monuments of the ancient kingdom of Ararat. A large number of fresh Vannic inscriptions has been found, and several of those which were already known have been re-examined and corrected. Among the most interesting is an inscription of Sarduris III., the son of Argistis, who was afterwards the antagonist of Tiglath-pileser III., in which mention is made of the Assyrian king, Assur-nirari, 'the son of A-da-di-ni-

ra-ri.' The name, consequently, which it has been the fashion to read Ramman- (or Rimmon-) nirari, turns out to have been pronounced Hadad-nirari; and Hadad, rather than Ramman or Rimmon, must have been the ordinary pronunciation of the name of the air-god in Assyrian. Another equally interesting inscription is that of Rusas II. (a contemporary of Esar-haddon), which describes campaigns carried on against the Moschi (*Muskini* or *Meshech*) and Hittites (*Khatê*). Another inscription, found above the plain of Keshish-Göll, is believed by the discoverers to belong to the period when the old kingdom of Biainas or Van had passed away, and the Aryan Armenians of later history were beginning to occupy the country. At all events, no royal name is met with in it.

A considerable proportion of the new texts belong to Menuas, who seems to have been the most powerful and longest-lived of the Vannic kings. In one of them a war with the Assyrians is referred to. Another records the conquest of Barsuas on the shores of Lake Urumiyeh. Careful copies have also been taken of the inscription of Menuas on the stela of Kelishin, under Mount Rowandiz, in spite of Kurdish robbers and inclement weather, and the Assyrian text on the one side of the stone proves to be a continuation of the Vannic text on the other side. I have just received a post card from Dr. Belck, in which he tells me that he and Dr. Lehmann have at length succeeded in reaching the neighbouring pass of Sidikan, and finding there the monument the existence of which was known, though it was considered to be either illegible or inaccessible. After a fortnight of hard work the two explorers have made out the text, which is engraved on all four sides of the stone, partly in Vannic, partly in Assyrian. Only the upper part of it has been destroyed.

Excavations at Toprak-kaleh, near Van, have brought to light numerous small objects, including clay tablets, one of which, inscribed on both sides, appears to relate to political affairs. The inscriptions in all these cases are in the Vannic language and system of cuneiform writing. But the explorers have also been fortunate enough to discover a new Assyrian monument. This is an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser I., engraved on a rock near Melasgert, and is a companion text to the one at the sources of the Tigris, in which the Assyrian monarch commemorates his conquests in the north.