

than Holland or Sweden or France or England or America of the wisdom of its course, it too has become an active promoter of the study of the History of Religions. This decision is all the more epoch-making because, so long postponed, it has now been affirmed with unmistakable emphasis. And its consequences will be reaped in the advancement

of knowledge, not within a single domain only of theological learning, but throughout the wider realm of man's religious experiences, and imperishable hopes, and ardent spiritual strivings. As Goethe has it:—

'Das Wenige verschwindet leicht dem Blick,  
Der vorwärts sieht, wie viel noch übrig bleibt.'

## Recent Biblical and Oriental Archaeology.

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### Oriental and Archæological Research.

M. HALÉVY is one of the last survivors of what Professor Oppert used to call 'the Heroic Age of Assyriology.' He was the latest to join the small band of Assyriological pioneers, and he joined as a heretic, bent upon exploding our belief in the existence of a Sumerian language. And a heretic he has remained, or, as he would himself rather express it, *Athanasius contra mundum*. The volume of his old age which he has just presented to us is an exposition and defence of his heresy.<sup>1</sup>

If this were all, I am afraid the younger world of Assyriology would pass it by without notice. But M. Halévy is too eminent a Semitic scholar to be treated with disrespect, and his book is, in spite of himself, one of the best guides that I know to the Sumerian language. The extraordinary and complicated invention which he ascribes to the Babylonian scribes is what other students call a natural growth,—that is to say, the language of the primitive inhabitants of Babylonia,—and the grammar, vocabulary, and reading-lessons which he gives us are those of the Sumerian language according to the latest researches. The *Précis* is thus a useful handbook for those who wish to study Sumerian, and in conjunction with Dr. Langdon's *Sumerian Grammar* will provide them with all the information on the subject which is at present accessible. Naturally, M. Halévy never loses an opportunity of urging his favourite thesis, and in explaining the phonetic values of the characters he displays his wonted ingenuity; but

<sup>1</sup> *Précis d'Allographie assyro-babylonienne*. By J. Halévy. Paris: Leroux. 1912.

after all the facts remain untouched, and so far as the learner is concerned it matters little whether we call them linguistic or 'allographic.'

The table of *errata* is not large for a work of the kind, and indeed I should be disposed to question whether the second of the *errata*—'Sargani-sarri' instead of 'Sargani-sar-alim'—were required. The latest discovery goes to show that the old reading 'Sargani-sar-alim' is the more correct. In the interpretation of words and characters there is, of course, plenty of room for correction or diversity of opinion, and I doubt whether M. Halévy would have seen in the words *lisan sumeri tamsil akkadi*, 'the language of Sumer is the equivalent of that of Akkad,' a statement that 'the Sumerian is fundamentally the same language as the Akkadian,' had he not had a theory to support. To the ordinary man the words simply mean that in the document to which they are attached the Akkadian or Semitic Babylonian is a translation of the Sumerian. As for M. Halévy's suggestion that *Sumer* should be read *Suwer* and assigned to a Semitic root *sawâru*, 'to rage,' it is not likely to find supporters.

It would be an advantage if Assyriologists would turn their attention to the use of the Chinese characters by the Japanese. It affords a very close parallel to the use of the Sumerian characters and texts by the Semitic Babylonians, and the same features characterize both. If M. Halévy were to apply his principles to the Japanese (and Korean) script, he would certainly maintain that Chinese is not a language. His opponents would also learn many things which throw light on the relations of the Semitic to the

Sumerian texts. For it cannot be denied that many of the criticisms which he has directed against them are just. We still have much to learn about Sumerian phonetics and grammar as well as about the Sumerian vocabulary, and when we remember that even the Assyrians made mistakes in their translations of the old Sumerian books, it is not likely that we shall ever attain to an exact knowledge of them. At present Sumerian grammar is still full of unsolved problems, and our knowledge of Sumerian phonetics is in its infancy. As I said many years ago, the first thing we have to do is to determine the pronunciation of the Sumerian words, which in an ideographically written language is a matter of great difficulty, and in this point we are almost as

far off as ever from finality. Of one thing, however, we can be sure, and that is that the pronunciation of a word must have been quite different from that of the series of ideographs by which it was so often denoted. The hideous compounds which figure as words in recent Assyriological works cannot have had a real existence. At any rate, the ideographic determinatives which accompany the words formed no part of their phonetic structure; the ideographic *PI*, 'ear,' for example, which accompanies the word *gistug*, is merely a graphic sign; *gistug* alone signified 'ear.' This and a good deal more might be learnt from a study of the Japanese script, and will justify much that M. Halévy has to say about confusing mere graphic symbols with the elements of living words.

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## Entre Nous.

### For Point and Illustration.

Messrs. Simpkin have published *The Higher Thought Kalendar for 1913* (1s. net; leather, 2s. 6d. net). There is not much in it for the money, but it is all good. In this verse is its whole philosophy:

Nature fulfilling a predestined scheme  
 In still content,  
 Breathes undisturbed a silent and supreme  
 Encouragement,  
 Though green leaves come, though dying leaves  
 depart,  
 She needs but rest,—  
 Hush! For Love holds you close against his  
 heart,  
 And Love knows best.

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The latest addition to those nicely printed little volumes called 'Authors for the Pocket,' issued by Messrs. Chatto & Windus, is *The Pocket George Borrow* (2s. net). George Borrow is not easily set forth in selections; the editor of this book has, however, succeeded not only in choosing memorable sayings, but also in making them fit for continuous reading.

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*His Will: The Teaching of Jesus Christ en-*

*forced by Quotations from Many Sources*, selected and arranged by Catherine A. Deacon (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. 6d. net). The title is taken from Dante: 'His Will our peace.' Some of the illustrations also are taken from Dante. They are all from sources that are both religious and literary. On the words, 'Didst thou not agree with me for a penny?' we find this from R. W. Dale: 'A man's best wages are not those he receives every Saturday or quarter-day: they are the wages God gives, the interest which He pays on every sound investment of life and ability in His service—increase of power, character, manhood, soul.'

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Uniform in style with the charming cheap edition of Shelley's Prose Works, Messrs. Chatto & Windus have now published *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (2 vols., 4s. net). The four volumes together give us a complete Shelley ready for packing into any corner of the travelling bag.

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The leading violin in one of our great orchestras said recently that he and his fellows would gladly go to church if they could be told anything reliable about the future life. One wonders if they could be got to read *A Little*