almostly friendly capture of the city by Cyrus, and hence in folk-history Darius and not Cyrus became the conqueror of Babylon. It is this folk-history which is perpetuated in the book of Daniel.

Precisely why Belshazzar should play such an important part in the story I cannot conjecture. All the information which we possess regarding him up to the present is very little. We know that Nabonidus had a son of this name. He seems, however, to have played a role of importance, otherwise his name would not have been substituted in the tradition represented in the book of Daniel for that of Nabonidus, as it evidently has been, adding one more element of confusion to those already existing. In the folk-history of the book of Daniel, then, Belshazzar has taken the place of Nabonidus, for reasons which we do not know. He is made the son of Nebuchadrezzar, because Nebuchadrezzar was the great king of Babylon whose name every one knew, and about whom every one was grouped in the thought of the people. Darius Hystaspes takes the place of Cyrus as conqueror of Babylon, because of his capture of the city in the war against Nebuchadrezzar III, a siege and capture which impressed the popular mind much more forcibly than that by Cyrus. Why he is called the Mede I do not know.

4. **Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin** (Dan. v. 25). — In the explanation of these words, given in vs. 26–28, we find simply *Mene, Tekel, Peres*. Turning to the Greek text we find that in the 25th verse we have not *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, but merely *Mene, Tekel, Peres*. It seems to me almost self-evident that the Greek text is correct and the Hebrew wrong. The *Mene* in the Hebrew text seems to have been repeated by accident, and the *Peres* has either been inflected, or else we have the conjunction with the plural form of the word פרסי, 'Persian.' If the Greek text be adopted and the pointing of the words be omitted entirely, which is what the story itself requires, the whole passage becomes plain. We have the three roots meaning simply, *number, weigh, divide* (or *Persian*). The last word may equally well be 'divide' or 'Persian,' so far as the root is concerned, and this ambiguity gives opportunity for the play which is found in the explanation. The problem given to Daniel is to explain what is meant by the three words on the wall, *number, weigh, divide* or *Persian*. His skill or his inspiration is shown in the finding of a meaning which so precisely fitted these three enigmatic roots to the circumstances. Remembering that the writing must have been without vowels, the conditions are very much the same as if we

should have put before us the letters N-M-BR-W-G-H-D-V-D, except that in this case there is not the same opportunity for a play upon words as the Hebrew affords in the last root. The language used is, of course, Aramaic. Daniel interprets the meaning of the root *number* as: "God hath numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end." The root *weigh* he interprets to mean: "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." The third root, which might mean equally well *divide* or *Persian*, he interprets thus: "Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

It may be asked, Why could not the Chaldæans, soothsayers, and so forth read these letters? I do not understand that the text implies that they could not read the individual characters, but merely that they could not so read them as to make any sense out of them. "To read the writing and to make known its interpretation" (v. 8), are not two altogether different things, but either parts of the same thing, or at least most closely connected one with the other. This duplicate method of expression is characteristic of the style of the book of Daniel throughout. They could not read the letters in the sense that they could not read them so as to make any sense.

Such fanciful interpretations of this passage from the Assyrian as Prince attempts in the *Proceedings* of the American Oriental Society (April, 1892, p. clxxxii.), the idea of which is derived from Clermont-Ganneau's similar attempt in the *Journal Asiatique* (8ième *Série*, i. 36 ff.; cf. *Hebraica* iii. 87–102), and Nöldeke's article in the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* (i. 414 ff.), seem to me to be based on a radical misunderstanding of the passage. The passage is simple enough if you use an unpointed text, and make from the Hebrew itself and the Greek the text correction which I have suggested above.

The untenability of Nöldeke's interpretation, and with it of the interpretations of Hoffmann (*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* ii. 45–48), Prince, and Clermont-Ganneau is set forth in a very few words and very effectively in Behrmann's commentary on the book of Daniel.

One point which Nöldeke makes in his discussion of the subject is the use of the word פרס in what he regards as an unreal sense. He says: "With the first two words the simple sense 'number' and 'weigh' may do, but פרס, 'divide,' is no longer in actual use, while the substantive פרס, in the sense 'half-mina,' was still common among the later Jews." The context (vs. 28) is the best evidence of the sense intended to be attached and capable of being attached to the root letters פרס. The word is used in the same sense in the Targum to 2 Ki. iv. 39. It is true that this is not the common root

for 'divide,' but its choice in this place is for the purpose of a play on words, since the same letters also mean 'Persian.' Nöldeke is driven to conjecture to account for the pointing in the forms תְּקֵל and פְּרֵס, words which we do not actually find pointed in this manner in any Semitic language in any sense. מְנֵא, on the other hand, is properly pointed as a participle passive of the Pe'al form of the verb מנא, 'number.' Nöldeke says that this would be the correct absolute form for the Syriac word for *mina;* but, however that may be, we do not actually find the word so pointed in the sense of *mina,* which he and the others above mentioned would give it. It is tempting to add to the possibilities of the sense of the words on the wall the further meaning *mina, shekel, half-shekel,* and the letters used are certainly capable of this further sense. On the other hand the reading and explanation of the words in vs. 26–28 make no allusion to such a sense, which would have been done, I think, had such an additional sense been intended. I am inclined to think, therefore, with Behrmann, that the tempting resemblance of these words to the words for *mina, shekel,* and *half-shekel* is due to accident.

The real difficulty in the passage is one of text corruption and of an erroneous late pointing. The correct text of vs. 25 is, as I have already pointed out, simply מנא תקל פרס. In the individual text from which our present Hebrew text is descended a scribe doubled the מנא, presumably by accident. He attached פרס to the preceding words by the conjunction ו, an alteration of text which is very common, as can be seen by a comparison of parallel passages in our Hebrew text of the Bible. Conscious of the play on the word 'Persian' contained in פרס, he further changed that word accidentally or intentionally to פרסי (cf. Dan. vi. 29; Neh. xii. 22). A ן was added to it, either to put it in the plural, or purely by accident.

The pointing of the words is very perplexing. No explanation of any sort which has yet been offered seems satisfactory. Now the Hebrew and the Greek do not altogether agree in regard to the pointing. The former has a uniform pointing מְנֵא תְּקֵל פְּרֵס. The latter has a different pointing for each word, *μανή, θεκέλ, φάρες,* which would correspond to מְנֵא תְּקֶל פָּרֶס. I am inclined to think that the pointing of the Hebrew text is the more original, and that it is intentionally artificial. The words were without pointing, not intended to be spoken. They represented merely the three radicals of the three roots without vowels. But in reading the text aloud it was necessary to pronounce these three words in some manner. They were for this purpose pointed, and intentionally so pointed that

they should not be identical with any of the inflected forms from those roots, and they were pointed in a uniform manner. The pointing of מְנָא in such a manner that it can be read as a passive participle is an accident due to the fact that that participle is regularly מְנִי and not מְנָא. The changes in the Greek are due in the case of the ε in the final syllables of θεκέλ and φάρες to the fact that those were closed, not open, syllables as in μανή.