

REVIEWS AND NOTICES OF PUBLICATIONS.

Assyrian Medical Texts from the Originals in the British Museum. By R. Campbell Thompson, M.A., F.S.A. (Oxford University Press, 1923). *Assyrian Medical Texts.* By the same. (Reprinted from the *Proceedings* of the Royal Society of Medicine, 1924, Vol. XVII (Section of the History of Medicine), pp. 1-34, 1924.)

THE importance of the contribution to the history of medicine which Mr. Campbell Thompson has made in the above-mentioned works is not likely to be realised by the ordinary reader who might imagine that nothing of more than antiquarian interest could possibly be gleaned from cuneiform tablets of some twenty-five centuries ago. They are of more than ordinary importance however, and although this is not the place to dilate upon the subject—for which the present reviewer is in many ways incompetent—it is worth while pointing out some of the special features which give them their general value.

It must be premised that in the former of the volumes Mr. Thompson gives us 600 medical tablets, for the most part hitherto unpublished. They are from the library of Ashurbanipal, and although, therefore, they are of the seventh century B.C., they are copies of originals which date several centuries earlier. In the reprint he presents a translation with commentary of 27 of these, and further explanatory and supplementary studies will follow in due course. Thus, chief among the difficulties has been that of identifying the vegetable drugs, and a considerable time has been devoted to the 250 or so which were known to the Assyrian botanists—the fruits of his researches into these is to appear under the title of *The Assyrian Herbal*.

The annotated translation contains a great deal of material which is of no little philological interest; it is noteworthy, for example, how often Aramaic (Syriac) rather than Hebrew supplies the necessary linguistic help. Further, in some cases there is a similarity between the old Assyrian and the later Syriac recipes, and it is highly instructive to observe how each supplements the other. It suggests itself, therefore, that a more extensive study of

later Semitic recipes, popular and other, would be likely to throw light upon some of the more ancient practices, since, as is well known, nowhere has there been such a conservatism and such a retention of old popular usages as in the field of medicine.

Specially noteworthy is the combination of the more "magical" and the more "scientific" remedies. On the one hand, we find, as it would seem, the use of sulphur for scabies; but, on the other hand, there is frequent resort to charms and incantations, dove's dung, and so forth. Just as in the observations of the stars, "astronomy" and "astrology" were intertwined, so in the history of medicine there is a hopeless tangle of what contributed to true medical science and what we are more accustomed to associate with the "medicine men" of savage tribes. Indeed, as one reads some of the more remarkable recipes it is easy to perceive that "strong" medicine was evidently felt to be most efficacious, and that a virtue was ascribed to the more offensive ingredients, which is quite in keeping with the psychology of ancient as well as of primitive peoples.

Again, the question arises of the relation between Assyrian and Egyptian medicines and between these and the Greek. The problem of the influence of the Semites upon Greek medicine—like that upon Greek astronomy—is an extremely interesting one, and it is to be hoped that Mr. Campbell Thompson will be able to continue his researches upon the subject. The question of old Palestinian medicine and of medical folklore and popular recipes also arises, and it is evident that much might be contributed by those Palestinians whose attention has been drawn to the subject. But the study of an early and mediaeval Palestinian medicine is still in its infancy.

An interest in nature can be recognised even in early literature, and already the ancient Egyptians knew of a Byblus (or Gebal) recipe; but the old Oriental peoples, as a whole, had not the scientific interest in things for their own sake, and so long as bodily ills were commonly ascribed to some sort of supernatural influence, "magic" ruled rather than medicine, and the first care was to drive out, disgust, or offend the cause of pain and disease. Mr. Campbell Thompson's work, as regards size, scope and completeness, is the first and finest of its kind, and one will look forward to his further contributions to ancient Oriental medicine.

The Egyptian Journal of Archaeology, April, 1924. Prof. Albright ingeniously locates Zilū in the Amarna Letters (Knudtzon, No. 288) at Tell Abu Sefah, east of Kantara, the Selē, Sellē and Silē of the Roman period. Some miscellaneous inscriptions are published by Prof. Sayce. Two are Babylonian seal-cylinders, said to have been found in Jerusalem or its neighbourhood. Both, in his opinion, are Amorite or Canaanite, and we would gladly know more about them, since one is interpreted as being that of the son of "Elimelech, servant of the Amorite god," and should be of interest for the old Canaanite religion. It may be noted in passing that "the use of the plural *ilāni* for the singular *ilu* (as in the Old Testament)" is not a specifically Canaanite custom, as Prof. Sayce's article seems to imply, since the same usage has been found in the Boghaz Keui treaties. The chief feature of the Journal is, however, a long and closely-written article by Prof. Edouard Naville, in which he replies to the recent studies of Dr. Alan Gardiner (followed by Prof. Peet), which refute the results reached by Brugsch, Petrie and himself as to the geography of the Exodus. Dr. Blackman on "the rite of opening the mouth in Ancient Egypt and Babylonia" draws attention to some very interesting points of contact, thus bringing the question (which, however, he does not raise) whether similar rites would not have prevailed also in the old religion of Palestine. An important review by Prof. Peet of Mr. Perry's *Origin of Magic and Religion* criticises, mainly from the Egyptological side, the theory of a rather vociferous circle of writers who have claimed to introduce a new stage in anthropological and ethnological studies. Not less important is Mr. Sidney Smith's full and useful notice of Prof. Olmstead's *History of Assyria*, a work to which attention was drawn in the last issue.

Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology, March, 1924. Prof. Halliday, who also reviews adversely Mr. Perry's exposition of the new ethnology, discusses the cults of Hector, of chief interest to us in so far as he introduces questions of Anatolian influence upon the Semites, and thus brings the very difficult problem of the part played by Asia Minor as a bridge between south-eastern Europe and south-west Asia. Such problems as the entry and influence of Philistines, Carians and so forth into Palestine are not to be discussed solely in connection with pottery

types and other features of material civilization. There are questions of the migration of beliefs and myths, and it is often difficult to determine what is or is not Semitic, what is or is not Aegean.¹ One notes, for example, that Prof. Halliday adverts to the varying Semitic and anti-Semitic tendencies of scholars in discussing Cadmus and the Cabiri; and it is thoroughly symptomatic of the present stage in our Palestinian and related studies that we speedily find that the different lands and cultures of the ancient Near East were closely interconnected—at some periods more closely than others—and it is impossible and harmful to study any one district without regard to the whole area of which it was part. In this way our Palestinian studies, like our biblical studies, are slowly being linked up with those of the lands to the west and the east. They are passing into quite a new stage, and one cannot but regard with enthusiasm the prospects that are being opened up of widening and deepening our knowledge of the “least of all lands.” When so much is said of our present-day material civilization outrunning our moral or spiritual growth one may observe that the better knowledge we are gaining of the vicissitudes of beliefs in the ancient and mediaeval east is really strengthening our armour in coping with practical problems of the day. Again, when we turn to Mr. H. J. Rose on *The Departure of Dionysos*, in the same issue, we find ourselves led into topics of divine kings and Dionysiac rites, which help us to understand, for example, the attitude of Jews and early Christians to the deification of Roman emperors, and our biblical and classical problems overlap.

To readers of the *Q.S.* the most important article in the *Revue Biblique*, April, is undoubtedly Prof. Vincent's conclusion of his brilliant study, “Le nouvel hypogée de Byblos et l'hypogée royal de Gézer.” It is a careful and illuminating reconsideration of the remarkable complex of caves described by Prof. Macalister (*Gezer*, i, 111-141), in the light of the recent discoveries at Byblus. Of

¹ The characteristic feature of the ethnological theories criticised by Prof. Peet and Prof. Halliday is the Egyptian origin of all civilization. It will be seen, therefore, how intricate these problems of influence and migration become as evidence accumulates and sweeping theories seek to dominate, or rather to “rush” the field. See further p. 151, n. 1.

"troglodyte" origin, they were used for interments at apparently about the Hyksos period (c. 1800-1600 B.C.), and the question now arises whether the "finds" do not really point to an earlier date. Egypt, South-west Asia and the Aegean world were already in close relation with each other in the days of the XIIth Egyptian dynasty, and there was already an eclecticism such as is more familiar centuries later. We have to be prepared for Aegean or general Levantine influence from a very early date, and this brings up in a new form the old problems of the Philistines and their influence upon the culture of the Mediterranean lands. Father Vincent expresses the wish that someone would give us a monograph on the "Philistine" ceramic in its relation to the introduction of Iron and the general influence of the Aegean world upon Syria and Palestine. This is much to be desired. One caution may be uttered. The present writer has expressed his own views in the *Q.S.*, 1913, p. 205 sq. (quoting from *The Expositor*, August, 1909, pp. 97 sqq.); he finds two main difficulties, both essentially historical: (1) It seems difficult to admit any preponderating Aegean influence in pottery unless other traces of the influence can be found; can one distinguish specifically Aegean from Lycian, Lydian and Carian influences for example? or may there not have been one fairly homogeneous type of culture, as there was also of religion, so that much which seems to have been borrowed may really have been shared in common? and (2) the discussion of the part played by the Philistines in the history of Palestinian civilization is apt to ignore the fact that although the Philistines (the Pulesati of the Egyptian monuments) belong to a definite period (c. 1200 B.C.), the Philistine plain was always exposed to Levantine influence, and from time to time exerted influence over the *hinterland*. In the Assyrian period (8th century B.C.) there were important independent kings of Philistia, and in the Greek age, as is well known, the Levantine influence was pretty deep. In a sense, therefore, there were Philistines both before and after the "Philistines" of the days of the rise of the Hebrew monarchies, and discussions of the "Philistine" pottery are too apt to leave these facts out of consideration. In point of fact, the external evidence itself is compelling us to reconsider our ideas of the main facts of Palestinian history during the centuries, say, from the "Amarna" age (c. 1400 B.C.) to the age of the Assyrian conquests (8th century B.C.), and it is much to be desired that critical discussions of the

archaeological history of the land should pay more heed to the critical study of the historical development.¹

Father Abel continues in the same issue of the *Revue Biblique* his important study of the topography of the Maccabean campaigns, dealing, in this issue, with the incursions into Philistia and Idumaea, and with Beth-Zur and Beth-Zacharias. He makes the ingenious suggestion that the brave Eleazar owed his surname Auaron (I Macc. ii, 5, vi, 43) to his exploit in stabbing the elephant, the Arabic *khawara*, it seems, means among other things to stab an animal from behind or in front. At first this might seem far-fetched, but it should be noticed that Arab tribes had been gradually pressing in upon Judah at this period, and that even earlier such place-names as Eshtemoa and Eshtaol could be cited as evidence of Arab influence. On the other hand, as Father Abel points out, the Greek reading of Eleazar's surname, Sauaran (Vulg. filius Saura), recalls the village of Bêt Sawir, bordering on the scene of the battle; but this may be merely a coincidence, and the Greek reading of no value. He also discusses the identification of Caphargamala. Father Dhorme writes on the end of the Assyrian Empire, with reference to the recent publication of a tablet in the British Museum (by Mr. Gadd) dealing with the fall of Nineveh. Father Jaussen publishes an Arabic inscription from Urtas and gives a very interesting account of the festival of Saint Elijah on Mount Carmel.

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¹ The "Philistine" problem is a very good example of the practical difficulties in the way of the sweeping ethnological theories of the kind adverted to above. In point of fact, this particular problem should be immeasurably simpler than the theory of the alleged Egyptian origin of civilization (see above, p. 149, n. 1): we have plenty of evidence, the area is relatively small, and the chronological limits relatively restricted. How much more intricate must be the more grandiose problem of the original home of civilization! Many years ago it was put forward (by Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire) that all animal structures could be regarded as due to one single animal; there was one fundamental type to which all actual varieties could be made to conform. Cuvier easily demolished this view, but at the present day the many striking and real points of relationship among—not animals but—the objects of material culture have tempted theories of a single fundamental type or origin—in this case Egypt; and in the world of beliefs and practices one now needs, what we have already in the world of animal life, namely, a more scientific way of handling the great mass of facts. (For the parallel from Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier I am indebted to Prof. E. W. Hobson, *Domain of Natural Science*, 1923, p. 385 *sq.*)