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CHALDEA

From the Earliest Times to the Rise of Assyria

(Treated As a General Introduction to the Study of Ancient History)

by

ZÉNAÏDE A. RAGOZIN

Member of the "Société Ethnologique" of Paris; of the "American

Oriental Society"; Corresponding Member of the "Athénée

Oriental" of Paris; Author of "Assyria," "Media," Etc.

"He (Carlyle) says it is part of his creed that history is

poetry, could we tell it right."--EMERSON.

Fourth Edition

[Illustration: SHAMASH THE SUN-GOD. (From the Sun Temple at Sippar.)]

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MDCCCXCIII

TO THE MEMBERS OF

THE CLASS,

IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF MANY HAPPY HOURS, THIS

VOLUME AND THE FOLLOWING ONES ARE AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED BY THEIR FRIEND.

THE AUTHOR.

IDLEWILD PLANTATION,

SAN ANTONIO,

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79. SCORPION-MAN \_Smith's Chald. Gen.\_ 311

80. STONE OBJECT FOUND AT ABU-HABBA 312

[Illustration: THE COUNTRIES ABOUT CHALDEA.]

INTRODUCTION.

I.

MESOPOTAMIA.--THE MOUNDS.--THE FIRST SEARCHERS.

1. In or about the year before Christ 606, Nineveh, the great city, was

destroyed. For many hundred years had she stood in arrogant splendor,

her palaces towering above the Tigris and mirrored in its swift waters;

army after army had gone forth from her gates and returned laden with

the spoils of conquered countries; her monarchs had ridden to the high

place of sacrifice in chariots drawn by captive kings. But her time came

at last. The nations assembled and encompassed her around. Popular

tradition tells how over two years lasted the siege; how the very river

rose and battered her walls; till one day a vast flame rose up to

heaven; how the last of a mighty line of kings, too proud to surrender,

thus saved himself, his treasures and his capital from the shame of

bondage. Never was city to rise again where Nineveh had been.

2. Two hundred years went by. Great changes had passed over the land.

The Persian kings now held the rule of Asia. But their greatness also

was leaning towards its decline and family discords undermined their

power. A young prince had rebelled against his elder brother and

resolved to tear the crown from him by main force. To accomplish this,

he had raised an army and called in the help of Grecian hirelings. They

came, 13,000 in number, led by brave and renowned generals, and did

their duty by him; but their valor could not save him from defeat and

death. Their own leader fell into an ambush, and they commenced their

retreat under the most disastrous circumstances and with little hope of

escape.

3. Yet they accomplished it. Surrounded by open enemies and false

friends, tracked and pursued, through sandy wastes and pathless

mountains, now parched with heat, now numbed with cold, they at last

reached the sunny and friendly Hellespont. It was a long and weary march

from Babylon on the Euphrates, near which city the great battle had been

fought. They might not have succeeded had they not chosen a great and

brave commander, Xenophon, a noble Athenian, whose fame as scholar and

writer equals his renown as soldier and general. Few books are more

interesting than the lively relation he has left of his and his

companions' toils and sufferings in this expedition, known in history as

"The Retreat of the Ten Thousand"--for to that number had the original

13,000 been reduced by battles, privations and disease. So cultivated a

man could not fail, even in the midst of danger and weighed down by

care, to observe whatever was noteworthy in the strange lands which he

traversed. So he tells us how one day his little army, after a forced

march in the early morning hours and an engagement with some light

troops of pursuers, having repelled the attack and thereby secured a

short interval of safety, travelled on till they came to the banks of

the Tigris. On that spot, he goes on, there was a vast desert city. Its

wall was twenty-five feet wide, one hundred feet high and nearly seven

miles in circuit. It was built of brick with a basement, twenty feet

high, of stone. Close by the city there stood a stone pyramid, one

hundred feet in width, and two hundred in height. Xenophon adds that

this city's name was Larissa and that it had anciently been inhabited by

Medes; that the king of Persia, when he took the sovereignty away from

the Medes, besieged it, but could not in any way get possession of it,

until, a cloud having obscured the sun, the inhabitants forsook the city

and thus it was taken.

4. Some eighteen miles further on (a day's march) the Greeks came to

another great deserted city, which Xenophon calls Mespila. It had a

similar but still higher wall. This city, he tells us, had also been

inhabited by Medes, and taken by the king of Persia. Now these curious

ruins were all that was left of Kalah and Nineveh, the two Assyrian

capitals. In the short space of two hundred years, men had surely not

yet lost the memory of Nineveh's existence and rule, yet they trod the

very site where it had stood and knew it not, and called its ruins by a

meaningless Greek name, handing down concerning it a tradition absurdly

made up of true and fictitious details, jumbled into inextricable

confusion. For Nineveh had been the capital of the Assyrian Empire,

while the Medes were one of the nations who attacked and destroyed it.

And though an eclipse of the sun--(the obscuring cloud could mean

nothing else)--did occur, created great confusion and produced important

results, it was at a later period and on an entirely different occasion.

As to "the king of Persia," no such personage had anything whatever to

do with the catastrophe of Nineveh, since the Persians had not yet been

heard of at that time as a powerful people, and their country was only a

small and insignificant principality, tributary to Media. So effectually

had the haughty city been swept from the face of the earth!

5. Another hundred years brought on other and even greater changes. The

Persian monarchy had followed in the wake of the empires that had gone

before it and fallen before Alexander, the youthful hero of Macedon. As

the conqueror's fleet of light-built Grecian ships descended the

Euphrates towards Babylon, they were often hindered in their progress by

huge dams of stone built across the river. The Greeks, with great labor,

removed several, to make navigation more easy. They did the same on

several other rivers,--nor knew that they were destroying the last

remaining vestige of a great people's civilization,--for these dams had

been used to save the water and distribute it into the numerous canals,

which covered the arid country with their fertilizing network. They may

have been told what travellers are told in our own days by the

Arabs--that these dams had been constructed once upon a time by Nimrod,

the Hunter-King. For some of them remain even still, showing their huge,

square stones, strongly united by iron cramps, above the water before

the river is swollen with the winter rains.

6. More than one-and-twenty centuries have rolled since then over the

immense valley so well named Mesopotamia--"the Land between the

Rivers,"--and each brought to it more changes, more wars, more

disasters, with rare intervals of rest and prosperity. Its position

between the East and the West, on the very high-road of marching armies

and wandering tribes, has always made it one of the great battle grounds

of the world. About one thousand years after Alexander's rapid invasion

and short-lived conquest, the Arabs overran the country, and settled

there, bringing with them a new civilization and the new religion given

them by their prophet Mohammed, which they thought it their mission to

carry, by force of word or sword, to the bounds of the earth. They even

founded there one of the principal seats of their sovereignty, and

Baghdad yielded not greatly in magnificence and power to Babylon of old.

7. Order, laws, and learning now flourished for a few hundred years,

when new hordes of barbarous people came pouring in from the East, and

one of them, the Turks, at last established itself in the land and

stayed. They rule there now. The valley of the Tigris and Euphrates is

a province of the Ottoman or Turkish Empire, which has its capital in

Constantinople; it is governed by pashas, officials sent by the Turkish

government, or the "Sublime Porte," as it is usually called, and the

ignorant, oppressive, grinding treatment to which it has now been

subjected for several hundred years has reduced it to the lowest depth

of desolation. Its wealth is exhausted, its industry destroyed, its

prosperous cities have disappeared or dwindled into insignificance. Even

Mossul, built by the Arabs on the right bank of the Tigris, opposite the

spot where Nineveh once stood, one of their finest cities, famous for

the manufacturing of the delicate cotton tissue to which it gave its

name--(\_muslin\_, \_mousseline\_)--would have lost all importance, had it

not the honor to be the chief town of a Turkish district and to harbor a

pasha. And Baghdad, although still the capital of the whole province, is

scarcely more than the shadow of her former glorious self; and her looms

no longer supply the markets of the world with wonderful shawls and

carpets, and gold and silver tissues of marvellous designs.

8. Mesopotamia is a region which must suffer under neglect and

misgovernment even more than others; for, though richly endowed by

nature, it is of a peculiar formation, requiring constant care and

intelligent management to yield all the return of which it is capable.

That care must chiefly consist in distributing the waters of the two

great rivers and their affluents over all the land by means of an

intricate system of canals, regulated by a complete and well-kept set

of dams and sluices, with other simpler arrangements for the remoter and

smaller branches. The yearly inundations caused by the Tigris and

Euphrates, which overflow their banks in spring, are not sufficient;

only a narrow strip of land on each side is benefited by them. In the

lowlands towards the Persian Gulf there is another inconvenience: the

country there being perfectly flat, the waters accumulate and stagnate,

forming vast pestilential swamps where rich pastures and wheat-fields

should be--and have been in ancient times. In short, if left to itself,

Upper Mesopotamia, (ancient Assyria), is unproductive from the

barrenness of its soil, and Lower Mesopotamia, (ancient Chaldea and

Babylonia), runs to waste, notwithstanding its extraordinary fertility,

from want of drainage.

9. Such is actually the condition of the once populous and flourishing

valley, owing to the principles on which the Turkish rulers carry on

their government. They look on their remoter provinces as mere sources

of revenue for the state and its officials. But even admitting this as

their avowed and chief object, they pursue it in an altogether

wrong-headed and short-sighted way. The people are simply and openly

plundered, and no portion of what is taken from them is applied to any

uses of local public utility, as roads, irrigation, encouragement of

commerce and industry and the like; what is not sent home to the Sultan

goes into the private pouches of the pasha and his many subaltern

officials. This is like taking the milk and omitting to feed the cow.

The consequence is, the people lose their interest in work of any kind,

leave off striving for an increase of property which they will not be

permitted to enjoy, and resign themselves to utter destitution with a

stolid apathy most painful to witness. The land has been brought to such

a degree of impoverishment that it is actually no longer capable of

producing crops sufficient for a settled population. It is cultivated

only in patches along the rivers, where the soil is rendered so fertile

by the yearly inundations as to yield moderate returns almost unasked,

and that mostly by wandering tribes of Arabs or of Kurds from the

mountains to the north, who raise their tents and leave the spot the

moment they have gathered in their little harvest--if it has not been

appropriated first by some of the pasha's tax-collectors or by roving

parties of Bedouins--robber-tribes from the adjoining Syrian and Arabian

deserts, who, mounted on their own matchless horses, are carried across

the open border with as much facility as the drifts of desert sand so

much dreaded by travellers. The rest of the country is left to nature's

own devices and, wherever it is not cut up by mountains or rocky ranges,

offers the well-known twofold character of steppe-land: luxuriant grassy

vegetation during one-third of the year and a parched, arid waste the

rest of the time, except during the winter rains and spring floods.

10. A wild and desolate scene! Imposing too in its sorrowful grandeur,

and well suited to a land which may be called a graveyard of empires and

nations. The monotony of the landscape would be unbroken, but for

certain elevations and hillocks of strange and varied shapes, which

spring up, as it were, from the plain in every direction; some are high

and conical or pyramidal in form, others are quite extensive and rather

flat on the summit, others again long and low, and all curiously

unconnected with each other or any ridge of hills or mountains. This is

doubly striking in Lower Mesopotamia or Babylonia, proverbial for its

excessive flatness. The few permanent villages, composed of mud-huts or

plaited reed-cabins, are generally built on these eminences, others are

used as burying-grounds, and a mosque, the Mohammedan house of prayer,

sometimes rises on one or the other. They are pleasing objects in the

beautiful spring season, when corn-fields wave on their summits, and

their slopes, as well as all the surrounding plains, are clothed with

the densest and greenest of herbage, enlivened with countless flowers of

every hue, till the surface of the earth looks, from a distance or from

a height, as gorgeous as the richest Persian carpet. But, on approaching

nearer to these hillocks or mounds, an unprepared traveller would be

struck by some peculiar features. Their substance being rather soft and

yielding, and the winter rains pouring down with exceeding violence,

their sides are furrowed in many places with ravines, dug by the rushing

streams of rain-water. These streams of course wash down much of the

substance itself and carry it far into the plain, where it lies

scattered on the surface quite distinct from the soil. These washings

are found to consist not of earth or sand, but of rubbish, something

like that which lies in heaps wherever a house is being built or

demolished, and to contain innumerable fragments of bricks, pottery,

stone evidently worked by the hand and chisel; many of these fragments

moreover bearing inscriptions in complicated characters composed of one

curious figure shaped like the head of an arrow, and used in every

possible position and combination,--like this:

[Illustration: 1.--CUNEIFORM CHARACTERS.]

11. In the crevices or ravines themselves, the waters having cleared

away masses of this loose rubbish, have laid bare whole sides of walls

of solid brick-work, sometimes even a piece of a human head or limb, or

a corner of sculptured stone-slab, always of colossal size and bold,

striking execution. All this tells its own tale and the conclusion is

self-apparent: that these elevations are not natural hillocks or knolls,

but artificial mounds, heaps of earth and building materials which have

been at some time placed there by men, then, collapsing and crumbling to

rubbish from neglect, have concealed within their ample sides all that

remains of those ancient structures and works of art, clothed themselves

in verdure, and deceitfully assumed all the outward signs of natural

hills.

12. The Arabs never thought of exploring these curious heaps. Mohammedan

nations, as a rule, take little interest in relics of antiquity;

moreover they are very superstitious, and, as their religious law

strictly forbids them to represent the human form either in painting or

sculpture lest such reproduction might lead ignorant and misguided

people back to the abominations of idolatry, so they look on relics of

ancient statuary with suspicion amounting to fear and connect them with

magic and witchcraft. It is, therefore, with awe not devoid of horror

that they tell travellers that the mounds contain underground passages

which are haunted not only by wild beasts, but by evil spirits--for have

not sometimes strange figures carved in stone been dimly perceived in

the crevices? Better instructed foreigners have long ago assumed that

within these mounds must be entombed whatever ruins may be preserved of

the great cities of yore. Their number formed no objection, for it was

well known how populous the valley had been in the days of its splendor,

and that, besides several famous cities, it could boast no end of

smaller ones, often separated from each other by a distance of only a

few miles. The long low mounds were rightly supposed to represent the

ancient walls, and the higher and vaster ones to have been the site of

the palaces and temples. The Arabs, though utterly ignorant of history

of any kind, have preserved in their religion some traditions from the

Bible, and so it happens that out of these wrecks of ages some biblical

names still survive. Almost everything of which they do not know the

origin, they ascribe to Nimrod; and the smaller of the two mounds

opposite Mosul, which mark the spot where Nineveh itself once stood,

they call "Jonah's Mound," and stoutly believe the mosque which crowns

it, surrounded by a comparatively prosperous village, to contain the

tomb of Jonah himself, the prophet who was sent to rebuke and warn the

wicked city. As the Mohammedans honor the Hebrew prophets, the whole

mound is sacred in their eyes in consequence.

13. If travellers had for some time been aware of these general facts

concerning the Mounds, it was many years before their curiosity and

interest were so far aroused as to make them go to the trouble and

expense of digging into them, in order to find out what they really

contained. Until within the last hundred years or so, not only the

general public, but even highly cultivated men and distinguished

scholars, under the words "study of antiquity," understood no more than

the study of so-called "\_Classical\_ Antiquity," i.e., of the language,

history and literature of the Greeks and Romans, together with the

ruins, works of art, and remains of all sorts left by these two nations.

Their knowledge of other empires and people they took from the Greek and

Roman historians and writers, without doubting or questioning their

statements, or--as we say now--without subjecting their statements to

any criticism. Moreover, European students in their absorption in and

devotion to classical studies, were too apt to follow the example of

their favorite authors and to class the entire rest of the world, as far

as it was known in ancient times, under the sweeping and somewhat

contemptuous by-name of "Barbarians," thus allowing them but a secondary

importance and an inferior claim to attention.

14. Things began greatly to change towards the end of the last century.

Yet the mounds of Assyria and Babylonia were still suffered to keep

their secret unrevealed. This want of interest may be in part explained

by their peculiar nature. They are so different from other ruins. A row

of massive pillars or of stately columns cut out on the clear blue sky,

with the desert around or the sea at their feet,--a broken arch or

battered tombstone clothed with ivy and hanging creepers, with the blue

and purple mountains for a background, are striking objects which first

take the eye by their beauty, then invite inspection by the easy

approach they offer. But these huge, shapeless heaps! What labor to

remove even a small portion of them! And when that is done, who knows

whether their contents will at all repay the effort and expense?

15. The first European whose love of learning was strong enough to make

him disregard all such doubts and difficulties, was Mr. Rich, an

Englishman. He was not particularly successful, nor were his researches

very extensive, being carried on entirely with his private means; yet

his name will always be honorably remembered, for he was \_the first\_ who

went to work with pickaxe and shovel, who hired men to dig, who measured

and described some of the principal mounds on the Euphrates, thus laying

down the groundwork of all later and more fruitful explorations in that

region. It was in 1820 and Mr. Rich was then political resident or

representative of the East India Company at Baghdad. He also tried the

larger of the two mounds opposite Mosul, encouraged by the report that,

a short time before he arrived there, a sculpture representing men and

animals had been disclosed to view. Unfortunately he could not procure

even a fragment of this treasure, for the people of Mosul, influenced by

their \_ulema\_--(doctor of the law)--who had declared these sculptures to

be "idols of the infidels," had walked across the river from the city in

a body and piously shattered them to atoms. Mr. Rich had not the good

luck to come across any such find himself, and after some further

efforts, left the place rather disheartened. He carried home to England

the few relics he had been able to obtain. In the absence of more

important ones, they were very interesting, consisting in fragments of

inscriptions, of pottery, in engraved stone, bricks and pieces of

bricks. After his death all these articles were placed in the British

Museum, where they formed the foundation of the present noble

Chaldea-Assyrian collection of that great institution. Nothing more was

undertaken for years, so that it could be said with literal truth that,

up to 1842, "a case three feet square inclosed all that remained, not

only of the great city Nineveh, but of Babylon itself!"[A]

16. The next in the field was Mr. Botta, appointed French Consul at

Mosul in 1842. He began to dig at the end of the same year, and

naturally attached himself specially to the larger of the two mounds

opposite Mosul, named KOYUNJIK, after a small village at its base. This

mound is the Mespila of Xenophon. He began enthusiastically, and worked

on for over three months, but repeated disappointments were beginning to

produce discouragement, when one day a peasant from a distant village

happened to be looking on at the small party of workmen. He was much

amused on observing that every--to him utterly worthless--fragment of

alabaster, brick or pottery, was carefully picked out of the rubbish,

most tenderly handled and laid aside, and laughingly remarked that they

might be better repaid for their trouble, if they would try the mound on

which his village was built, for that lots of such rubbish had kept

continually turning up, when they were digging the foundations of their

houses.

17. Mr. Botta had by this time fallen into a rather hopeless mood; yet

he did not dare to neglect the hint, and sent a few men to the mound

which had been pointed out to him, and which, as well as the village on

the top of it, bore the name of KHORSABAD. His agent began operations

from the top. A well was sunk into the mound, and very soon brought the

workmen to the top of a wall, which, on further digging, was found to be

lined along its base with sculptured slabs of some soft substance much

like gypsum or limestone. This discovery quickly brought Mr. Botta to

the spot, in a fever of excitement. He now took the direction of the

works himself, had a trench dug from the outside straight into the

mound, wide and deep, towards the place already laid open from above.

What was his astonishment on finding that he had entered a hall entirely

lined all round, except where interruptions indicated the place of

doorways leading into other rooms, with sculptured slabs similar to the

one first discovered, and representing scenes of battles, sieges and the

like. He walked as in a dream. It was a new and wonderful world suddenly

opened. For these sculptures evidently recorded the deeds of the

builder, some powerful conqueror and king. And those long and close

lines engraved in the stone, all along the slabs, in the same peculiar

character as the short inscriptions on the bricks that lay scattered on

the plain--they must surely contain the text to these sculptured

illustrations. But who is to read them? They are not like any known

writing in the world and may remain a sealed book forever. Who, then,

was the builder? To what age belong these structures? Which of the wars

we read about are here portrayed? None of these questions, which must

have strangely agitated him, could Mr. Botta have answered at the time.

But not the less to him remains the glory of having, first of living

men, entered the palace of an Assyrian king.

18. Mr. Botta henceforth devoted himself exclusively to the mound of

Khorsabad. His discovery created an immense sensation in Europe.

Scholarly indifference was not proof against so unlooked-for a shock;

the revulsion was complete and the spirit of research and enterprise was

effectually aroused, not to slumber again. The French consul was

supplied by his government with ample means to carry on excavations on a

large scale. If the first success may be considered as merely a great

piece of good fortune, the following ones were certainly due to

intelligent, untiring labor and ingenuous scholarship. We see the

results in Botta's voluminous work "Monuments de Ninive"[B] and in the

fine Assyrian collection of the Louvre, in the first room of which is

placed, as is but just, the portrait of the man to whose efforts and

devotion it is due.

19. The great English investigator Layard, then a young and enthusiastic

scholar on his Eastern travels, passing through Mosul in 1842, found Mr.

Botta engaged on his first and unpromising attempts at Koyunjik, and

subsequently wrote to him from Constantinople exhorting him to persist

and not give up his hopes of success. He was one of the first to hear of

the astounding news from Khorsabad, and immediately determined to carry

out a long-cherished project of his own, that of exploring a large mound

known among the Arabs under the name of NIMRUD, and situated somewhat

lower on the Tigris, near that river's junction with one of its chief

tributaries, the Zab. The difficulty lay in procuring the necessary

funds. Neither the trustees of the British Museum nor the English

Government were at first willing to incur such considerable expense on

what was still looked upon as very uncertain chances. It was a private

gentleman, Sir Stratford Canning, then English minister at

Constantinople, who generously came forward, and announced himself

willing to meet the outlay within certain limits, while authorities at

home were to be solicited and worked upon. So Mr. Layard was enabled to

begin operations on the mound which he had specially selected for

himself in the autumn of 1845, the year after that in which the building

of Khorsabad was finally laid open by Botta. The results of his

expedition were so startlingly vast and important, and the particulars

of his work on the Assyrian plains are so interesting and picturesque,

that they will furnish ample materials for a separate chapter.

FOOTNOTES:

[A] Layard's "Discoveries at Nineveh," Introduction.

[B] In five huge folio volumes, one of text, two of inscriptions, and

two of illustrations. The title shows that Botta erroneously imagined

the ruins he had discovered to be those of Nineveh itself.

II.

LAYARD AND HIS WORK.

1. In the first part of November, 1845, we find the enthusiastic and

enterprising young scholar on the scene of his future exertions and

triumphs. His first night in the wilderness, in a ruinous Arab village

amidst the smaller mounds of Nimrud, is vividly described by him:--"I

slept little during the night. The hovel in which we had taken shelter,

and its inmates, did not invite slumber; but such scenes and companions

were not new to me; they could have been forgotten, had my brain been

less excited. Hopes, long-cherished, were now to be realized, or were to

end in disappointment. Visions of palaces underground, of gigantic

monsters, of sculptured figures, and endless inscriptions floated before

me. After forming plan after plan for removing the earth, and

extricating these treasures, I fancied myself wandering in a maze of

chambers from which I could find no outlet. Then again, all was

reburied, and I was standing on the grass-covered mound."

2. Although not doomed to disappointment in the end, these hopes were

yet to be thwarted in many ways before the visions of that night became

reality. For many and various were the difficulties which Layard had to

contend with during the following months as well as during his second

expedition in 1848. The material hardships of perpetual camping out in

an uncongenial climate, without any of the simplest conveniences of

life, and the fevers and sickness repeatedly brought on by exposure to

winter rains and summer heat, should perhaps be counted among the least

of them, for they had their compensations. Not so the ignorant and

ill-natured opposition, open or covert, of the Turkish authorities. That

was an evil to which no amount of philosophy could ever fully reconcile

him. His experiences in that line form an amusing collection. Luckily,

the first was also the worst. The pasha whom he found installed at Mosul

was, in appearance and temper, more like an ogre than a man. He was the

terror of the country. His cruelty and rapacity knew no bounds. When he

sent his tax-collectors on their dreaded round, he used to dismiss them

with this short and pithy instruction: "Go, destroy, eat!" (i.e.

"plunder"), and for his own profit had revived several kinds of

contributions which had been suffered to fall into disuse, especially

one called "tooth-money,"--"a compensation in money, levied upon all

villages in which a man of such rank is entertained, for the wear and

tear of his teeth in masticating the food he condescends to receive from

the inhabitants."

3. The letters with which Layard was provided secured him a gracious

reception from this amiable personage, who allowed him to begin

operations on the great mound of Nimrud with the party of Arab workmen

whom he had hired for the purpose. Some time after, it came to the

Pasha's knowledge that a few fragments of gold leaf had been found in

the rubbish and he even procured a small particle as sample. He

immediately concluded, as the Arab chief had done, that the English

traveller was digging for hidden treasure--an object far more

intelligible to them than that of disinterring and carrying home a

quantity of old broken stones. This incident, by arousing the great

man's rapacity, might have caused him to put a stop to all further

search, had not Layard, who well knew that treasure of this kind was not

likely to be plentiful in the ruins, immediately proposed that his

Excellency should keep an agent at the mound, to take charge of all the

precious metals which might be discovered there in the course of the

excavations. The Pasha raised no objections at the moment, but a few

days later announced to Layard that, to his great regret, he felt it his

duty to forbid the continuation of the work, since he had just learned

that the diggers were disturbing a Mussulman burying-ground. As the

tombs of true believers are held very sacred and inviolable by

Mohammedans, this would have been a fatal obstacle, had not one of the

Pasha's own officers confidentially disclosed to Layard that the tombs

were \_sham ones\_, that he and his men had been secretly employed to

fabricate them, and for two nights had been bringing stones for the

purpose from the surrounding villages. "We have destroyed more tombs of

true believers," said the Aga,--(officer)--"in making sham ones, than

ever you could have defiled. We have killed our horses and ourselves in

carrying those accursed stones." Fortunately the Pasha, whose misdeeds

could not be tolerated even by a Turkish government, was recalled about

Christmas, and succeeded by an official of an entirely different stamp,

a man whose reputation for justice and mildness had preceded him, and

whose arrival was accordingly greeted with public rejoicings. Operations

at the mound now proceeded for some time rapidly and successfully. But

this very success at one time raised new difficulties for our explorers.

4. One day, as Layard was returning to the mound from an excursion, he

was met on the way by two Arabs who had ridden out to meet him at full

speed, and from a distance shouted to him in the wildest excitement:

"Hasten, O Bey! hasten to the diggers! for they have found Nimrod

himself. It is wonderful, but it is true! we have seen him with our

eyes. There is no God but God!" Greatly puzzled, he hurried on and,

descending into the trench, found that the workmen had uncovered a

gigantic head, the body to which was still imbedded in earth and

rubbish. This head, beautifully sculptured in the alabaster furnished by

the neighboring hills, surpassed in height the tallest man present. The

great shapely features, in their majestic repose, seemed to guard some

mighty secret and to defy the bustling curiosity of those who gazed on

them in wonder and fear. "One of the workmen, on catching the first

glimpse of the monster, had thrown down his basket and run off toward

Mossul as fast as his legs could carry him."

[Illustration: 2.--TEMPLE OF ÊA AT ERIDHU (ABU-SHAHREIN). BACK-STAIRS.

(Hommel.)]

5. The Arabs came in crowds from the surrounding encampments; they could

scarcely be persuaded that the image was of stone, and contended that it

was not the work of men's hands, but of infidel giants of olden times.

The commotion soon spread to Mosul, where the terrified workman,

"entering breathless into the bazars, announced to every one he met

that Nimrod had appeared." The authorities of the town were alarmed, put

their heads together and decided that such idolatrous proceedings were

an outrage to religion. The consequence was that Layard was requested by

his friend Ismail-Pasha to suspend operations for awhile, until the

excitement should have subsided, a request with which he thought it

wisest to comply without remonstrance, lest the people of Mosul might

come out in force and deal with his precious find as they had done with

the sculptured figure at Koyunjik in Rich's time. The alarm, however,

did not last long. Both Arabs and Turks soon became familiar with the

strange creations which kept emerging out of the earth, and learned to

discuss them with great calm and gravity. The colossal bulls and lions

with wings and human heads, of which several pairs were discovered, some

of them in a state of perfect preservation, were especially the objects

of wonder and conjectures, which generally ended in a curse "on all

infidels and their works," the conclusion arrived at being that "the

idols" were to be sent to England, to form gateways to the palace of the

Queen. And when some of these giants, now in the British Museum, were

actually removed, with infinite pains and labor, to be dragged down to

the Tigris, and floated down the river on rafts, there was no end to the

astonishment of Layard's simple friends. On one such occasion an Arab

Sheikh, or chieftain, whose tribe had engaged to assist in moving one of

the winged bulls, opened his heart to him. "In the name of the Most

High," said he, "tell me, O Bey, what you are going to do with these

stones. So many thousands of purses spent on such things! Can it be, as

you say, that your people learn wisdom from them? or is it as his

reverence the Cadi declares, that they are to go to the palace of your

Queen, who, with the rest of the unbelievers, worships these idols? As

for wisdom, these figures will not teach you to make any better knives,

or scissors, or chintzes, and it is in the making of these things that

the English show their wisdom."

6. Such was the view very generally taken of Layard's work by both Turks

and Arabs, from the Pasha down to the humblest digger in his band of

laborers, and he seldom felt called upon to play the missionary of

science, knowing as he did that all such efforts would be but wasted

breath. This want of intellectual sympathy did not prevent the best

understanding from existing between himself and these rangers of the

desert. The primitive life which he led amongst them for so many months,

the kindly hospitality which he invariably experienced at their hands

during the excursions made and the visits he paid to different Bedouin

tribes in the intervals of recreation which he was compelled to allow

himself from time to time--these are among the most pleasurable memories

of those wonderful, dreamlike years. He lingers on them lovingly and

retraces them through many a page of both his books[C]--pages which, for

their picturesque vividness, must be perused with delight even by such

as are but slightly interested in the discovery of buried palaces and

winged bulls. One longs to have been with him through some of those

peerless evenings when, after a long day's work, he sat before his cabin

in the cool starlight, watching the dances with which those

indefatigable Arabs, men and women, solaced themselves deep into the

night, while the encampment was lively with the hum of voices, and the

fires lit to prepare the simple meal. One longs to have shared in some

of those brisk rides across plains so thickly enamelled with flowers,

that it seemed a patchwork of many colors, and "the dogs, as they

returned from hunting, issued from the long grass dyed red, yellow, or

blue, according to the flowers through which they had last forced their

way,"--the joy of the Arab's soul, which made the chief, Layard's

friend, continually exclaim, "rioting in the luxuriant herbage and

scented air, as his mare waded through the flowers:--'What delight has

God given us equal to this? It is the only thing worth living for. What

do the dwellers in cities know of true happiness? They never have seen

grass or flowers! May God have pity on them!'" How glorious to watch the

face of the desert changing its colors almost from day to day, white

succeeding to pale straw color, red to white, blue to red, lilac to

blue, and bright gold to that, according to the flowers with which it

decked itself! Out of sight stretches the gorgeous carpet, dotted with

the black camel's-hair tents of the Arabs, enlivened with flocks of

sheep and camels, and whole studs of horses of noble breed which are

brought out from Mosul and left to graze at liberty, in the days of

healthy breezes and fragrant pastures.

7. So much for spring. A beautiful, a perfect season, but unfortunately

as brief as it is lovely, and too soon succeeded by the terrible heat

and long drought of summer, which sometimes set in so suddenly as hardly

to give the few villagers time to gather in their crops. Chaldea or

Lower Mesopotamia is in this respect even worse off than the higher

plains of Assyria. A temperature of 120° in the shade is no unusual

occurrence in Baghdad; true, it can be reduced to 100° in the cellars of

the houses by carefully excluding the faintest ray of light, and it is

there that the inhabitants mostly spend their days in summer. The

oppression is such that Europeans are entirely unmanned and unfitted for

any kind of activity. "Camels sicken, and birds are so distressed by the

high temperature, that they sit in the date-trees about Baghdad, with

their mouths open, panting for fresh air."[D]

8. But the most frightful feature of a Mesopotamian summer is the

frequent and violent sand-storms, during which travellers, in addition

to all the dangers offered by snow-storms--being buried alive and losing

their way--are exposed to that of suffocation not only from the

furnace-like heat of the desert-wind, but from the impalpable sand,

which is whirled and driven before it, and fills the eyes, mouth and

nostrils of horse and rider. The three miles' ride from Layard's

encampment to the mound of Nimrud must have been something more than

pleasant morning exercise in such a season, and though the deep trenches

and wells afforded a comparatively cool and delightful retreat, he soon

found that fever was the price to be paid for the indulgence, and was

repeatedly laid up with it. "The verdure of the plain," he says in one

place, "had perished almost in a day. Hot winds, coming from the desert,

had burnt up and carried away the shrubs; flights of locusts, darkening

the air, had destroyed the few patches of cultivation, and had completed

the havoc commenced by the heat of the sun.... Violent whirlwinds

occasionally swept over the face of the country. They could be seen as

they advanced from the desert, carrying along with them clouds of dust

and sand. Almost utter darkness prevailed during their passage, which

lasted generally about an hour, and nothing could resist their fury. On

returning home one afternoon after a tempest of the kind, I found no

traces of my dwellings; they had been completely carried away. Ponderous

wooden frame-works had been borne over the bank and hurled some hundred

yards distant; the tents had disappeared, and my furniture was scattered

over the plain."

9. Fortunately it would not require much labor to restore the wooden

frames to their proper place and reconstruct the reed-plaited,

mud-plastered walls as well as the roof composed of reeds and

boughs--such being the sumptuous residences of which Layard shared the

largest with various domestic animals, from whose immediate

companionship he was saved by a thin partition, the other hovels being

devoted to the wives, children and poultry of his host, to his own

servants and different household uses. But the time came when not even

this accommodation, poor as it was, could be enjoyed with any degree of

comfort. When the summer heat set in in earnest, the huts became

uninhabitable from their closeness and the vermin with which they

swarmed, while a canvas tent, though far preferable in the way of

airiness and cleanliness, did not afford sufficient shelter.

10. "In this dilemma," says Layard, "I ordered a recess to be cut into

the bank of the river where it rose perpendicularly from the water's

edge. By screening the front with reeds and boughs of trees, and

covering the whole with similar materials, a small room was formed. I

was much troubled, however, with scorpions and other reptiles, which

issued from the earth forming the walls of my apartment; and later in

the summer by the gnats and sandflies which hovered on a calm night over

the river." It is difficult to decide between the respective merits of

this novel summer retreat and of the winter dwelling, ambitiously

constructed of mud bricks dried in the sun, and roofed with solid wooden

beams. This imposing residence, in which Layard spent the last months of

his first winter in Assyria, would have been sufficient protection

against wind and weather, after it had been duly coated with mud.

Unfortunately a heavy shower fell before it was quite completed, and so

saturated the bricks that they did not dry again before the following

spring. "The consequence was," he pleasantly remarks, "that the only

verdure on which my eyes were permitted to feast before my return to

Europe, was furnished by my own property--the walls in the interior of

the rooms being continually clothed with a crop of grass."

[Illustration: 3.--VIEW OF EUPHRATES NEAR THE RUINS OF BABYLON.

(Babelon.)]

11. These few indications are sufficient to give a tolerably clear idea

of what might be called "Pleasures and hardships of an explorer's life

in the desert." As for the work itself, it is simple enough in the

telling, although it must have been extremely wearisome and laborious in

the performance. The simplest way to get at the contents of a mound,

would be to remove all the earth and rubbish by carting it away,--a

piece of work which our searchers might no doubt have accomplished with

great facility, had they had at their disposal a few scores of thousands

of slaves and captives, as had the ancient kings who built the huge

constructions the ruins of which had now to be disinterred. With a

hundred or two of hired workmen and very limited funds, the case was

slightly different. The task really amounted to this: to achieve the

greatest possible results at the least possible expense of labor and

time, and this is how such excavations are carried out on a plan

uniformly followed everywhere as the most practical and direct:

12. Trenches, more or less wide, are conducted from different sides

towards the centre of the mound. This is obviously the surest and

shortest way to arrive at whatever remains of walls may be imbedded in

it. But even this preliminary operation has to be carried out with some

judgment and discernment. It is known that the Chaldeans and Assyrians

constructed their palaces and temples not upon the level, natural soil,

but upon an artificial platform of brick and earth, at least thirty feet

high. This platform was faced on all sides with a strong wall of solid

burned brick, often moreover cased with stone. A trench dug straight

from the plain into the lower part of the mound would consequently be

wasted labor, since it could never bring to anything but that same blind

wall, behind which there is only the solid mass of the platform. Digging

therefore begins in the slope of the mound, at a height corresponding to

the supposed height of the platform, and is carried on straight across

its surface until a wall is reached,--a wall belonging to one of the

palaces or temples. This wall has then to be followed, till a break in

it is found, indicating an entrance or doorway.[E] The burrowing process

becomes more and more complicated, and sometimes dangerous. Shafts have

to be sunk from above at frequent intervals to introduce air and light

into the long and narrow corridor; the sides and vault have to be

propped by beams to prevent the soft earthy mass from falling in and

crushing the diggers. Every shovelful of earth cleared away is removed

in baskets which are passed from hand to hand till they are emptied

outside the trench, or else lowered empty and sent up full, through the

shafts by means of ropes and pulleys, to be emptied on the top. When a

doorway is reached, it is cleared all through the thickness of the

wall, which is very great; then a similar tunnel is conducted all along

the inside of the wall, the greatest care being needed not to damage the

sculptures which generally line it, and which, as it is, are more or

less injured and cracked, their upper parts sometimes entirely destroyed

by the action of fire. When the tunnel has been carried along the four

sides, every doorway or portal carefully noted and cleared, it is seen

from the measurements,--especially the width--whether the space explored

be an inner court, a hall or a chamber. If the latter, it is sometimes

entirely cleared from above, when the rubbish frequently yields valuable

finds in the shape of various small articles. One such chamber,

uncovered by Layard, at Koyunjik, proved a perfect mine of treasures.

The most curious relics were brought to light in it: quantities of studs

and small rosettes in mother-of-pearl, ivory and metal, (such as were

used to ornament the harness of the war-horses), bowls, cups and dishes

of bronze,[F] besides caldrons, shields and other items of armor, even

glass bowls, lastly fragments of a royal throne--possibly the very

throne on which King Sennacherib sat to give audience or pronounce

judgments, for the palace at Koyunjik where these objects were found was

built by that monarch so long familiar to us only from the Bible, and

the sculptures and inscriptions which cover its walls are the annals of

his conquests abroad and his rule at home.

[Illustration: 4.--MOUND OF BABIL. (RUINS OF BABYLON.) (Oppert.)]

A description of the removal of the colossal bulls and lions which were

shipped to England and now are safely housed in the British Museum,

ought by rights to form the close of a chapter devoted to "Layard and

his work." But the reference must suffice; the vivid and entertaining

narrative should be read in the original, as the passages are too long

for transcription, and would be marred by quoting.

[Illustration 5.--BRONZE DISH.]

FOOTNOTES:

[C] "Nineveh and its Remains," and "Discoveries in Nineveh and Babylon."

[D] Rawlinson's "Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient World," Vol. I.,

Chap. II.

[E] See Figure 15, on p. 53.

[F] See Figures 5, 6, and 7.

III.

THE RUINS.

"And they said to one another, Go to, let us make brick, and

burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and slime

for mortar."--\_Gen.\_ xi. 3.

1. It is a principle, long ago laid down and universally recognized,

that every country \_makes\_ its own people. That is, the mode of life and

the intellectual culture of a people are shaped by the characteristic

features of the land in which it dwells; or, in other words, men can

live only in a manner suited to the peculiarities of their native

country. Men settled along the sea-shore will lead a different life,

will develop different qualities of mind and body from the owners of

vast inland pasture-grounds or the holders of rugged mountain

fastnesses. They will all dress differently, eat different food, follow

different pursuits. Their very dwellings and public buildings will

present an entirely different aspect, according to the material which

they will have at hand in the greatest abundance, be it stone, wood or

any other substance suitable for the purpose. Thus every country will

create its own peculiar style of art, determined chiefly by its own

natural productions. On these, architecture, the art of the builder,

will be even more dependent than any other.

[Illustration: 6.--BRONZE DISH (RUG-PATTERN).]

2. It would seem as though Chaldea or Lower Mesopotamia, regarded from

this point of view, could never have originated any architecture at all,

for it is, at first sight, absolutely deficient in building materials of

any sort. The whole land is alluvial, that is, formed, gradually,

through thousands of years, of the rich mud deposited by the two

rivers, as they spread into vast marshy flats towards the end of their

course. Such soil, when hardened into sufficient consistency, is the

finest of all for cultivation, and a greater source of wealth than mines

of the most precious ore; but it bears no trees and contains no stone.

The people who were first tempted to settle in the lowlands towards the

Persian Gulf by the extraordinary fertility of that region, found

nothing at all available to construct their simple dwellings--nothing

but reeds of enormous size, which grew there, as they do now, in the

greatest profusion. These reeds "cover the marshes in the summer-time,

rising often to the height of fourteen or fifteen feet. The Arabs of the

marsh region form their houses of this material, binding the stems

together and bending them into arches, to make the skeletons of their

buildings; while, to form the walls, they stretch across from arch to

arch mats made of the leaves."[G]

[Illustration: 7.--SECTION OF BRONZE DISH.]

3. There can be no doubt that of such habitations consisted the villages

and towns of those first settlers. They gave quite sufficient shelter in

the very mild winters of that region, and, when coated with a layer of

mud which soon dried and hardened in the sun, could exclude even the

violent rains of that season. But they were in no way fitted for more

ambitious and dignified purposes. Neither the palaces of the kings nor

the temples of the gods could be constructed out of bent reeds.

Something more durable must be found, some material that would lend

itself to constructions of any size or shape. The mud coating of the

cabins naturally suggested such a material. Could not this same mud or

clay, of which an inexhaustible supply was always on hand, be moulded

into cakes of even size, and after being left to dry in the sun, be

piled into walls of the required height and thickness? And so men began

to make bricks. It was found that the clay gained much in consistency

when mixed with finely chopped straw--another article of which the

country, abounding in wheat and other grains, yielded unlimited

quantities. But even with this improvement the sun-dried bricks could

not withstand the continued action of many rainy seasons, or many

torrid summers, but had a tendency to crumble away when parched too dry,

or to soak and dissolve back into mud, when too long exposed to rain.

All these defects were removed by the simple expedient of baking the

bricks in kilns or ovens, a process which gives them the hardness and

solidity of stone. But as the cost of kiln-dried bricks is naturally

very much greater than that of the original crude article, so the latter

continued to be used in far greater quantities; the walls were made

entirely of them and only protected by an outward casing of the hard

baked bricks. These being so much more expensive, and calculated to last

forever, great care was bestowed on their preparation; the best clay was

selected and they were stamped with the names and titles of the king by

whose order the palace or temple was built, for which they were to be

used. This has been of great service in identifying the various ruins

and assigning them dates, at least approximately. As is to be expected,

there is a notable difference in the specimens of different periods.

While on some bricks bearing the name of a king who lived about 3000

B.C. the inscription is uncouth and scarcely legible, and even their

shape is rude and the material very inferior, those of the later

Babylonian period (600 B.C.) are handsome and neatly made. As to the

quality, all explorers agree in saying it is fully equal to that of the

best modern English bricks. The excellence of these bricks for building

purposes is a fact so well known that for now two thousand years--ever

since the destruction of Babylon--its walls, temples and palaces have

been used as quarries for the construction of cities and villages. The

little town of HILLAH, situated nearest to the site of the ancient

capital, is built almost entirely with bricks from one single mound,

that of KASR--once the gorgeous and far-famed palace of Nebuchadnezzar,

whose name and titles thus grace the walls of the most lowly Arab and

Turkish dwellings. All the other mounds are similarly used, and so far

is the valuable mine from being exhausted, that it furnishes forth, to

this day, a brisk and flourishing trade. While a party of workmen is

continually employed in digging for the available bricks, another is

busy conveying them to Hillah; there they are shipped on the Euphrates

and carried to any place where building materials are in demand, often

even loaded on donkeys at this or that landing-place and sent miles away

inland; some are taken as far as Baghdad, where they have been used for

ages. The same thing is done wherever there are mounds and ruins. Both

Layard and his successors had to allow their Arab workmen to build their

own temporary houses out of ancient bricks, only watching them narrowly,

lest they should break some valuable relic in the process or use some of

the handsomest and best-preserved specimens.

[Illustration: 8.--VIEW OF NEBBI YUNUS]

4. No construction of bricks, either crude or kiln-dried, could have

sufficient solidity without the help of some kind of cement, to make

them adhere firmly together. This also the lowlands of Chaldea and

Babylonia yield in sufficient quantity and of various qualities. While

in the early structures a kind of sticky red clay or loam is used, mixed

with chopped straw, bitumen or pitch is substituted at a later period,

which substance, being applied hot, adheres so firmly to the bricks,

that pieces of these are broken off when an attempt is made to procure a

fragment of the cement. This valuable article was brought down by water

from IS on the Euphrates (now called HIT), where abundant springs of

bitumen are to this day in activity. Calcareous earth--i.e., earth

strongly mixed with lime--being very plentiful to the west of the lower

Euphrates, towards the Arabian frontier, the Babylonians of the latest

times learned to make of it a white mortar which, for lightness and

strength, has never been surpassed.

[Illustration: 9.--BUILDING IN BAKED BRICK (MODERN). (Perrot and

Chipiez.)]

5. All the essential materials for plain but durable constructions being

thus procurable on the spot or in the immediate neighborhood, the next

important point was the selection of proper sites for raising these

constructions, which were to serve purposes of defence as well as of

worship and royal majesty. A rocky eminence, inaccessible on one or

several sides, or at least a hill, a knoll somewhat elevated above the

surrounding plain, have usually been chosen wherever such existed. But

this was not the case in Chaldea. There, as far as eye can see, not the

slightest undulation breaks the dead flatness of the land. Yet there,

more than anywhere else, an elevated position was desirable, if only as

a protection from the unhealthy exhalations of a vast tract of swamps,

and from the intolerable nuisance of swarms of aggressive and venomous

insects, which infest the entire river region during the long summer

season. Safety from the attacks of the numerous roaming tribes which

ranged the country in every direction before it was definitely settled

and organized, was also not among the last considerations. So, what

nature had refused, the cunning and labor of man had to supply.

Artificial hills or platforms were constructed, of enormous size and

great height--from thirty to fifty, even sixty feet, and on their flat

summits the buildings were raised. These platforms sometimes supported

only one palace, sometimes, as in the case of the immense mounds of

Koyunjik and Nimrud in Assyria, their surface had room for several,

built by successive kings. Of course such huge piles could not be

entirely executed in solid masonry, even of crude bricks. These were

generally mixed with earth and rubbish of all kinds, in more or less

regular, alternate layers, the bricks being laid in clay. But the

outward facing was in all cases of baked brick. The platform of the

principal mound which marks the place of ancient UR, (now called

MUGHEIR),[H] is faced with a wall ten feet thick, of red kiln-dried

bricks, cemented with bitumen. In Assyria, where stone was not scarce,

the sides of the platform were even more frequently "protected by

massive stone-masonry, carried perpendicularly from the natural ground

to a height somewhat exceeding that of the platform, and either made

plain at the top, or else crowned into stone battlements cut into

gradines."[I]

[Illustration: 10.--MOUND OF NIMRUD. (Hommel.)]

6. Some mounds are considerably higher than the others and of a peculiar

shape, almost like a pyramid, that is, ending in a point from which it

slopes down rapidly on all sides. Such is the pyramidal mound of Nimrud,

which Layard describes as being so striking and picturesque an object as

you approach the ruins from any point of the plain.[J] Such also is the

still more picturesque mound of BORSIP (now BIRS NIMRUD) near Babylon,

the largest of this kind.[K] These mounds are the remains of peculiar

constructions, called ZIGGURATS, composed of several platforms piled one

on the other, each square in shape and somewhat smaller than the

preceding one; the topmost platform supported a temple or sanctuary,

which by these means was raised far above the dwellings of men, a

constant reminder not less eloquent than the exhortation in some of our

religious services: "Lift up your hearts!" Of these heavenward pointing

towers, which were also used as observatories by the Chaldeans, great

lovers of the starry heavens, that of Borsip, once composed of seven

stages, is the loftiest; it measures over 150 feet in perpendicular

height.

[Illustration: 11.--MOUND OF MUGHEIR (ANCIENT UR).]

7. It is evident that these artificial hills could have been erected

only at an incredible cost of labor. The careful measurements which have

been taken of several of the principal mounds have enabled explorers to

make an accurate calculation of the exact amount of labor employed on

each. The result is startling, even though one is prepared for something

enormous. The great mound of Koyunjik--which represents the palaces of

Nineveh itself--covers an area of one hundred acres, and reaches an

elevation of 95 feet at its highest point. To heap up such a pile of

brick and earth "would require the united exertions of 10,000 men for

twelve years, or of 20,000 men for six years."[L] Then only could the

construction of the palaces begin. The mound of Nebbi-Yunus, which has

not yet been excavated, covers an area of forty acres and is loftier and

steeper than its neighbor: "its erection would have given full

employment to 10,000 men for the space of five years and a half."

Clearly, none but conquering monarchs, who yearly took thousands of

prisoners in battles and drove home into captivity a part of the

population of every country they subdued, could have employed such hosts

of workmen on their buildings--not once, but continually, for it seems

to have been a point of honor with the Assyrian kings that each should

build a new palace for himself.

[Illustration: 12.--TERRACE WALL AT KHORSABAD. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

8. When one considers the character of the land along the upper course

of the Tigris, where the Assyrians dwelt, one cannot help wondering why

they went on building mounds and using nothing but bricks in their

constructions. There is no reason for it in the nature of the country.

The cities of Assyria--NINEVEH (Koyunjik), KALAH (Nimrud), ARBELA,

DUR-SHARRUKIN (Khorsabad) were built in the midst of a hilly region

abounding in many varieties of stone, from soft limestone to hard

basalt; some of them actually stood on rocky ground, their moats being

in part cut through the rock. Had they wanted stone of better quality,

they had only to get it from the Zagros range of mountains, which skirts

all Assyria to the East, separating it from Media. Yet they never

availed themselves of these resources, which must have led to great

improvements in their architecture, and almost entirely reserved the use

of stone for ornamental purposes. This would tend to show, at all

events, that the Assyrians were not distinguished for inventive genius.

They had wandered northward from the lowlands, where they had dwelt for

centuries as a portion of the Chaldean nation. When they separated from

it and went off to found cities for themselves, they took with them

certain arts and tricks of handicraft learned in the old home, and never

thought of making any change in them. It does not even seem to have

occurred to them that by selecting a natural rocky elevation for their

buildings they would avoid the necessity of an artificial platform and

save vast amount of labor and time.

[Illustration: 13.--RAFT BUOYED BY INFLATED SKINS. (ANCIENT.) (Kaulen.)]

[Illustration: 14.--RAFT BUOYED BY INFLATED SKINS. (MODERN.) (Kaulen.)]

9. That they did put stone to one practical use--the outward casing of

their walls and platforms--we have already seen. The blocks must have

been cut in the Zagros mountains and brought by water--rafted down the

Zab, or some other of the rivers which, springing from those mountains,

flow into the Tigris. The process is represented with perfect clearness

on some of the sculptures. That reproduced in Fig. 13 is of great

interest, as showing a peculiar mode of transport,--rafts floated on

inflated skins--which is at the present moment in as general and

constant use as it appears to have been in the same parts three thousand

years ago and probably more. When Layard wished to send off the bulls

and lions which he had moved from Nimrud and Koyunjik down the Tigris to

Baghdad and Busrah, (or Bassorah), there to be embarked for Europe, he

had recourse to this conveyance, as no other is known for similar

purposes. This is how he describes the primitive, but ingenious

contrivance: "The skins of full-grown sheep and goats, taken off with as

few incisions as possible, are dried and prepared, one aperture being

left, through which the air is forced by the lungs. A framework of

poplar beams, branches of trees, and reeds, having been constructed of

the size of the intended raft, the inflated skins are tied to it by

osier twigs. The raft is then complete and is moved to the water and

launched. Care is taken to place the skins with their mouths upward,

that, in case any should burst or require refilling, they can be easily

reached. Upon the framework are piled bales of goods, and property

belonging to merchants and travellers.... The raftmen impel these rude

vessels by long poles, to the ends of which are fastened a few pieces of

split cane. (See Fig. 14.) ... During the floods in spring, or after

heavy rains, small rafts may float from Mosul to Baghdad in about

eighty-four hours; but the larger are generally six or seven days in

performing the voyage. In summer, and when the river is low, they are

frequently nearly a month in reaching their destination. When they have

been unloaded, they are broken up, and the beams, wood and twigs, sold

at considerable profit. The skins are washed and afterward rubbed with a

preparation, to keep them from cracking and rotting. They are then

brought back, either on the shoulders of the raftmen or upon donkeys, to

Mossul and Tekrit, where the men engaged in the navigation of the Tigris

usually reside." Numerous sculptures show us that similar skins were

also used by swimmers, who rode upon them in the water, probably when

they intended to swim a greater distance than they could have

accomplished by their unassisted efforts. (See Figure 16.)

[Illustration: 15.--EXCAVATIONS AT MUGHEIR (UR).]

10. Our imagination longs to reconstruct those gigantic piles as they

must have struck the beholder in their towering hugeness, approached

from the plain probably by several stairways and by at least one ascent

of a slope gentle enough to offer a convenient access to horses and

chariots. What an imposing object must have been, for instance, the

palace of Sennacherib, on the edge of its battlemented platform (mound

of Koyunjik), rising directly above the waters of the Tigris,--named in

the ancient language "the Arrow" from the swiftness of its current--into

the golden and crimson glory of an Eastern sunset! Although the sameness

and unwieldy nature of the material used must have put architectural

beauty of outline out of the question, the general effect must have been

one of massive grandeur and majesty, aided as it was by the elaborate

ornamentation lavished on every portion of the building. Unfortunately

the work of reconstruction is left almost entirely to imagination, which

derives but little help from the shapeless heaps into which time has

converted those ancient, mighty halls.

[Illustration: 16.--WARRIORS SWIMMING ON INFLATED SKINS. (Babelon.)]

11. Fergusson, an English explorer and scholar whose works on subjects

connected with art and especially architecture hold a high place, has

attempted to restore the palace of Sennacherib such as he imagines it to

have been, from the hints furnished by the excavations. He has produced

a striking and most effective picture, of which, however, an entire half

is simply guesswork. The whole nether part--the stone-cased,

battlemented platform wall, the broad stairs, the esplanade handsomely

paved with patterned slabs, and the lower part of the palace with its

casing of sculptured slabs and portals guarded by winged bulls--is

strictly according to the positive facts supplied by the excavations.

For the rest, there is no authority whatever. We do not even positively

know whether there was any second story to Assyrian palaces at all. At

all events, no traces of inside staircases have been found, and the

upper part of the walls of even the ground-floor has regularly been

either demolished or destroyed by fire. As to columns, it is impossible

to ascertain how far they may have been used and in what way. Such as

were used could have been, as a rule, only of wood--trunks of great

trees hewn and smoothed--and consequently every vestige of them has

disappeared, though some round column bases in stone have been found.[M]

The same remarks apply to the restoration of an Assyrian palace court,

also after Fergusson, while that of a palace hall, after Layard, is not

open to the same reproach and gives simply the result of actual

discoveries. Without, therefore, stopping long to consider conjectures

more or less unsupported, let us rather try to reproduce in our minds a

clear perception of what the audience hall of an Assyrian king looked

like from what we may term positive knowledge. We shall find that our

materials will go far towards creating for us a vivid and authentic

picture.

[Illustration: 17.--VIEW OF KOYUNJIK. (Hommel.)]

12. On entering such a hall the first thing to strike us would probably

be the pavement, either of large alabaster slabs delicately carved in

graceful patterns, as also the arched doorways leading into the adjacent

rooms (see Figs. 24 and 25, pp. 69 and 71), or else covered with rows of

inscriptions, the characters being deeply engraven and afterwards filled

with a molten metallic substance, like brass or bronze, which would give

the entire floor the appearance of being covered with inscriptions in

gilt characters, the strange forms of cuneiform writing making the whole

look like an intricate and fanciful design.

[Illustration: 18.--STONE LION AT THE ENTRANCE OF A TEMPLE. NIMRUD.

(Perrot and Chipiez.)]

13. Our gaze would next be fascinated by the colossal human-headed

winged bulls and lions keeping their silent watch in pairs at each of

the portals, and we should notice with astonishment that the artists had

allowed them each an extra leg, making the entire number five instead of

four. This was not done at random, but with a very well-calculated

artistic object--that of giving the monster the right number of legs,

whether the spectator beheld it in front or in profile, as in both cases

one of the three front legs is concealed by the others. The front view

shows the animal standing, while it appears to be striding when viewed

from the side. (See Figures 18 and 27, pp. 59 and 75.) The walls were

worthy of these majestic door-keepers. The crude brick masonry

disappeared up to a height of twelve to fifteen feet from the ground

under the sculptured slabs of soft grayish alabaster which were solidly

applied to the wall, and held together by strong iron cramps. Sometimes

one subject or one gigantic figure of king or deity was represented on

one slab; often the same subject occupied several slabs, and not

unfrequently was carried on along an entire wall. In this case the lines

begun on one slab were continued on the next with such perfect

smoothness, so absolutely without a break, as to warrant the conclusion

that the slabs were sculptured \_after\_ they had been put in their

places, not before. Traces of paint show that color was to a certain

extent employed to enliven these representations, probably not over

plentifully and with some discrimination. Thus color is found in many

places on the eyes, brows, hair, sandals, the draperies, the mitre or

high headdress of the kings, on the harness of horses and portions of

the chariots, on the flowers carried by attendants, and sometimes on

trees. Where a siege is portrayed, the flames which issue out of windows

and roofs seem always to have been painted red. There is reason to

believe, however, that color was but sparingly bestowed on the

sculptures, and therefore they must have presented a pleasing contrast

with the richness of the ornamentation which ran along the walls

immediately above, and which consisted of hard baked bricks of large

size, painted and glazed in the fire, forming a continuous frieze from

three to five feet wide. Sometimes the painting represented human

figures and various scenes, sometimes also winged figures of deities or

fantastic animals,--in which case it was usually confined above and

below by a simple but graceful running pattern; or it would consist

wholly of a more or less elaborate continuous pattern like Fig. 22,

23, or 25, these last symbolical compositions with a religious

signification. (See also Fig. 21, "Interior view," etc.) Curiously

enough the remains--mostly very trifling fragments--which have been

discovered in various ruins, show that these handsomely finished glazed

tiles exhibited the very same colors which are nowadays in such high

favor with ourselves for all sorts of decorative purposes: those used

most frequently were a dark and a pale yellow, white and cream-color, a

delicate pale green, occasionally orange and a pale lilac, very little

blue and red; olive-green and brown are favorite colors for grounds.

"Now and then an intense blue and a bright red occur, generally

together; but these positive hues are rare, and the taste of the

Assyrians seems to have led them to prefer, for their patterned walls,

pale and dull hues.... The general tone of their coloring is quiet, not

to say sombre. There is no striving after brilliant effects. The

Assyrian artist seeks to please by the elegance of his forms and the

harmony of his hues, not to startle by a display of bright and strongly

contrasted colors.[N]"

[Illustration: 19.--COURT OF HAREM AT KHORSABAD. (RESTORED.) (Perrot and

Chipiez.)]

[Illustration: 20.--CIRCULAR PILLAR-BASE.]

14. It has been asked: how were those halls roofed and how were they

lighted? questions which have given rise to much discussion and which

can scarcely ever be answered in a positive way, since in no single

instance has the upper part of the walls or any part whatever of the

roofing been preserved. Still, the peculiar shape and dimensions of the

principal palace halls goes far towards establishing a sort of

circumstantial evidence in the case. They are invariably long and

narrow, the proportions in some being so striking as to have made them

more like corridors than apartments--a feature, by the by, which must

have greatly impaired their architectural beauty: they were three or

four times as long as they were wide, and even more. The great hall of

the palace of Asshur-nazir-pal on the platform of the Nimrud mound

(excavated by Layard, who calls it, from its position, "the North-West

palace") is 160 feet long by not quite 40 wide. Of the five halls in the

Khorsabad palace the largest measures 116 ft. by 33, the smallest 87 by

25, while the most imposing in size of all yet laid open, the great hall

of Sennacherib at Koyunjik, shows a length of fully 180 ft. with a width

of 40. It is scarcely probable that the old builders, who in other

points have shown so much artistic taste, should have selected this

uniform and unsatisfactory shape for their state apartments, unless they

were forcibly held to it by some insuperable imperfection in the means

at their disposal. That they knew how to use proportions more pleasing

in their general effect, we see from the inner open courts, of which

there were several in every palace, and which, in shape and dimensions

are very much like those in our own castles and palaces,--nearly square,

(about 180 ft. or 120 ft. each way) or slightly oblong: 93 ft. by 84,

124 ft. by 90, 150 ft. by 125. Only two courts have been found to lean

towards the long-and-narrow shape, one being 250 ft. by 150, and the

other 220 by 100. But even this is very different from those

passage-like galleries. The only thing which entirely explains this

awkward feature of all the royal halls, is the difficulty of providing

them with a roof. It is impossible to make a flat roof of nothing but

bricks, and although the Assyrians knew how to construct arches, they

used them only for very narrow vaults or over gateways and doors, and

could not have carried out the principle on any very extensive scale.

The only obvious expedient consisted in simply spanning the width of the

hall with wooden beams or rafters. Now no tree, not even the lofty cedar

of Lebanon or the tall cypress of the East, will give a rafter, of equal

thickness from end to end, more than 40 ft. in length, few even that.

There was no getting over or around this necessity, and so the matter

was settled for the artists quite aside from their own wishes. This

also explains the great value which was attached by all the Assyrian

conquerors to fine timber. It was often demanded as tribute, nothing

could be more acceptable as a gift, and expeditions were frequently

undertaken into the distant mountainous regions of the Lebanon on

purpose to cut some. The difficulty about roofing would naturally fall

away in the smaller rooms, used probably as sleeping and dwelling

apartments, and accordingly they vary freely from oblong to square; the

latter being generally about 25 ft. each way, sometimes less, but never

more. There were a great many such chambers in a palace; as many as

sixty-eight have been discovered in Sennacherib's palace at Koyunjik,

and a large portion of the building, be it remembered, is not yet fully

explored. Some were as highly decorated as the great halls, some faced

with plain slabs or plastered, and some had no ornaments at all and

showed the crude brick. These differences probably indicate the

difference of rank in the royal household of the persons to whom the

apartments were assigned.

[Illustration: 21.--INTERIOR VIEW OF ONE OF THE CHAMBERS OF THE HAREM AT

KHORSABAD. (RESTORED.) (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

15. The question of light has been discussed by eminent

explorers--Layard, Botta, Fergusson--at even greater length and with a

greater display of ingenuity than that of roofing. The results of the

learned discussion may be shortly summed up as follows: We may take it

for granted that the halls were sufficiently lighted, for the builders

would not have bestowed on them such lavish artistic labor had they not

meant their work to be seen in all its details and to the best

advantage. This could be effected only in one of three ways, or in two

combined: either by means of numerous small windows pierced at regular

intervals above the frieze of enamelled bricks, between that and the

roof,--or by means of one large opening in the roof of woodwork, as

proposed by Layard in his own restoration, or by smaller openings placed

at more frequent intervals. This latter contrivance is in general use

now in Armenian houses, and Botta, who calls it a \_louvre\_, gives a

drawing of it.[O] It is very ingenious, and would have the advantage of

not admitting too great a mass of sunlight and heat, and of being easily

covered with carpets or thick felt rugs to exclude the rain. The second

method, though much the grandest in point of effect, would present none

of these advantages and would be objectionable chiefly on account of the

rain, which, pouring down in torrents--as it does, for weeks at a time,

in those countries--must very soon damage the flooring where it is of

brick, and eventually convert it into mud, not to speak of the

inconvenience of making the state apartments unfit for use for an

indefinite period. The small side windows just below the roof would

scarcely give sufficient light by themselves. Who knows but they may

have been combined with the \_louvre\_ system, and thus something very

satisfactory finally obtained.

[Illustration: 22.--COLORED FRIEZE IN ENAMELLED TILES.]

[Illustration: 23.--COLORED FRIEZE IN ENAMELLED TILES.]

16. The kings of Chaldea, Babylonia and Assyria seem to have been

absolutely possessed with a mania for building. Scarcely one of them but

left inscriptions telling how he raised this or that palace, this or

that temple in one or other city, often in many cities. Few contented

themselves with repairing the buildings left by their predecessors. This

is easy to be ascertained, for they always mention all they did in that

line. Vanity, which seems to have been, together with the love of booty,

almost their ruling passion, of course accounts for this in a great

measure. But there are also other causes, of which the principal one was

the very perishable nature of the constructions, all their heavy

massiveness notwithstanding. Being made of comparatively soft and

yielding material, their very weight would cause the mounds to settle

and bulge out at the sides in some places, producing crevices in others,

and of course disturbing the balance of the thick but loose masonry of

the walls constructed on top of them. These accidents could not be

guarded against by the outer casing of stone or burnt brick, or even by

the strong buttresses which were used from a very early period to prop

up the unwieldy piles: the pressure from within was too great to be

resisted.

[Illustration: 24.--PAVEMENT SLAB.]

17. An outer agent, too, was at work, surely and steadily destructive:

the long, heavy winter rains. Crude brick, when exposed to moisture,

easily dissolves into its original element--mud; even burned brick is

not proof against very long exposure to violent wettings; and we know

that the mounds were half composed of loose rubbish. Once thoroughly

permeated with moisture, nothing could keep these huge masses from

dissolution. The builders were well aware of the danger and struggled

against it to the best of their ability by a very artfully contrived and

admirably executed system of drainage, carried through the mounds in all

directions and pouring the accumulated waters into the plain out of

mouths beautifully constructed in the shape of arched vaults.[P] Under

the flooring of most of the halls have been found drains, running along

the centre, then bending off towards a conduit in one of the corners,

which carried the contents down into one of the principal channels.

[Illustration: 25.--SECTION OF ORNAMENTAL DOORWAY (ENAMELLED BRICK OR

TILES). KHORSABAD. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

18. But all these precautions were, in the long run, of little avail, so

that it was frequently a simpler and less expensive proceeding for a

king to build a new palace, than to keep repairing and propping up an

old one which crumbled to pieces, so to speak, under the workmen's

hands. It is not astonishing that sometimes, when they had to give up an

old mansion as hopeless, they proceeded to demolish it, in order to

carry away the stone and use it in structures of their own, probably not

so much as a matter of thrift, as with a view to quickening the work,

stone-cutting in the quarries and transport down the river always being

a lengthy operation. This explains why, in some later palaces, slabs

were found with their sculptured face turned to the crude brick wall,

and the other smoothed and prepared for the artist, or with the

sculptures half erased, or piled up against the wall, ready to be put in

place. The nature of the injuries which caused the ancient buildings to

decay and lose all shape, is very faithfully described in an inscription

of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, in which he relates how he

constructed the Ziggurat of Borsip on the site of an ancient

construction, which he repaired, as far as it went. This is what he

says: "The temple of the Seven Spheres, the Tower of Borsip which a

former king had built ... but had not finished its upper part, from

remote days had fallen into decay. The channels for drawing off the

water had not been properly provided; rain and tempest had washed away

its bricks; the bricks of the roof were cracked; the bricks of the

building were washed away into heaps of rubbish." All this sufficiently

accounts for the peculiar aspect offered by the Mesopotamian ruins.

Whatever process of destruction the buildings underwent, whether natural

or violent, by conquerors' hands, whether through exposure to fire or to

stress of weather, the upper part would be the first to suffer, but it

would not disappear, from the nature of the material, which is not

combustible. The crude bricks all through the enormous thickness of the

walls, once thoroughly loosened, dislodged, dried up or soaked

through, would lose their consistency and tumble down into the courts

and halls, choking them up with the soft rubbish into which they

crumbled, the surplus rolling down the sides and forming those even

slopes which, from a distance, so deceivingly imitate natural hills.

Time, accumulating the drift-sand from the desert and particles of

fertile earth, does the rest, and clothes the mounds with the verdant

and flowery garment which is the delight of the Arab's eyes.

[Illustration: 26.--WINGED LION WITH HUMAN HEAD. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

19. It is to this mode of destruction the Assyrian kings allude in their

annals by the continually recurring phrase: "I destroyed their cities, I

overwhelmed them, I burned them in the fire, \_I made heaps of them\_."

However difficult it is to get at the treasures imbedded in these

"heaps," we ought not to repine at the labor, since they owe their

preservation entirely to the soft masses of earth, sand and loose

rubbish which have protected them on all sides from the contact with

air, rain and ignorant plunderers, keeping them as safely--if not as

transparently--housed as a walnut in its lump of candied sugar. The

explorers know this so well, that when they leave the ruins, after

completing their work for the time, they make it a point to fill all the

excavated spaces with the very rubbish that has been taken out of them

at the cost of so much labor and time. There is something impressive and

reverent in thus re-burying the relics of those dead ages and nations,

whom the mysterious gloom of their self-erected tombs becomes better

than the glare of the broad, curious daylight. When Layard, before his

departure, after once more wandering with some friends through all the

trenches, tunnels and passages of the Nimrud mound, to gaze for the last

time on the wonders on which no man had looked before him, found himself

once more on the naked platform and ordered the workmen to cover them up

again, he was strongly moved by the contrast: "We look around in vain,"

says he, "for any traces of the wonderful remains we have just seen, and

are half inclined to believe that we have dreamed a dream, or have been

listening to some tale of Eastern romance. Some, who may hereafter

tread on the spot when the grass again grows over the Assyrian palaces,

may indeed suspect that I have been relating a vision."

[Illustration: 27.--WINGED BULL. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

20. It is a curious fact that in Assyria the ruins speak to us only of

the living, and that of the dead there are no traces whatever. One might

think people never died there at all. Yet it is well known that all

nations have bestowed as much care on the interment of their dead and

the adornment of their last resting-place as on the construction of

their dwellings--nay, some even more, for instance, the Egyptians. To

this loving veneration for the dead history owes half its discoveries;

indeed we should have almost no reliable information at all on the very

oldest races, who lived before the invention of writing, were it not for

their tombs and the things we find in them. It is very strange,

therefore, that nothing of the kind should be found in Assyria, a

country which stood so high in culture. For the sepulchres which are

found in such numbers in some mounds down to a certain depth, belong, as

is shown by their very position, to later races, mostly even to the

modern Turks and Arabs. This peculiarity is so puzzling that scholars

almost incline to suppose that the Assyrians either made away with their

dead in some manner unknown to us, or else took them somewhere to bury.

The latter conjecture, though not entirely devoid of foundation, as we

shall see, is unsupported by any positive facts, and therefore was never

seriously discussed. The question is simply left open, until something

happens to shed light on it.

[Illustration: 28.--MAN-LION. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

21. It is just the contrary in Babylonia. It can boast few handsome

ruins or sculptures. The platforms and main walls of many palaces and

temples have been known from the names stamped on the bricks and the

cylinders found in the foundations, but they present only shapeless

masses, from which all traces of artistic work have disappeared. In

compensation, there is no country in the world where so many and such

vast cemeteries have been discovered. It appears that the land of

Chaldea,--perhaps because it was the cradle of nations which afterwards

grew to greatness, as the Assyrians and the Hebrews--was regarded as a

place of peculiar holiness by its own inhabitants, and probably also by

neighboring countries, which would explain the mania that seems to have

prevailed through so many ages, for burying the dead there in unheard of

numbers. Strangely enough, some portions of it even now are held sacred

in the same sense. There are shrines in Kerbela and Nedjif (somewhat to

the west of Babylon) where every caravan of pilgrims brings from Persia

hundreds of dead bodies in their felt-covered coffins, for burial. They

are brought on camels and horses. On each side of the animal swings a

coffin, unceremoniously thumped by the rider's bare heels. These coffins

are, like merchandise, unladen for the night--and sometimes for days

too--in the khans or caravanseries (the enclosed halting-places), where

men and beasts take their rest together. Under that tropical clime, it

is easy to imagine the results. It is in part to this disgusting custom

that the great mortality in the caravans is to be attributed, one fifth

of which leave their bones in the desert in \_healthy\_ seasons. However

that may be, the gigantic proportions of the Chaldean burying-grounds

struck even the ancient Greek travellers with astonishment, and some of

them positively asserted that the Assyrian kings used to be buried in

Chaldea. If the kings, why not the nobler and wealthier of their

subjects? The transport down the rivers presented no difficulties.

Still, as already remarked, all this is mere conjecture.

[Illustration: 29.--FRAGMENT OF ENAMELLED BRICK. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

22. Among the Chaldeans cities ERECH (now WARKA) was considered from

very old times one of the holiest. It had many extremely ancient temples

and a college of learned priests, and around it gradually formed an

immense "city of the dead" or Necropolis. The English explorer, Loftus,

in 1854-5, specially turned his attention to it and his account is

astounding. First of all, he was struck by the majestic desolation of

the place. Warka and a few other mounds are raised on a slightly

elevated tract of the desert, above the level of the yearly inundations,

and accessible only from November to March, as all the rest of the time

the surrounding plain is either a lake or a swamp. "The desolation and

solitude of Warka," says Loftus, "are even more striking than the scene

which is presented at Babylon itself. There is no life for miles around.

No river glides in grandeur at the base of its mounds; no green date

groves flourish near its ruins. The jackal and the hyæna appear to shun

the dull aspect of its tombs. The king of birds never hovers over the

deserted waste. A blade of grass or an insect finds no existence there.

The shrivelled lichen alone, clinging to the weathered surface of the

broken brick, seems to glory in its universal dominion over those barren

walls. Of all the desolate pictures I have ever seen that of Warka

incomparably surpasses all." Surely in this case it cannot be said that

appearances are deceitful; for all that space, and much more, is a

cemetery, and what a cemetery! "It is difficult," again says Loftus, "to

convey anything like a correct idea of the piles upon piles of human

remains which there utterly astound the beholder. Excepting only the

triangular space between the three principal ruins, the whole remainder

of the platform, the whole space between the walls and an unknown extent

of desert beyond them, are everywhere filled with the bones and

sepulchres of the dead. There is probably no other site in the world

which can compare with Warka in this respect." It must be added that the

coffins do not simply lie one next to the other, but in layers, down to

a depth of 30-60 feet. Different epochs show different modes of burial,

among which the following four are the most remarkable.

[Illustration: 30.--RAM'S HEAD IN ALABASTER. (British Museum.)]

[Illustration: 31.--EBONY COMB. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

[Illustration: 32.--BRONZE FORK AND SPOON. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

23. Perhaps the queerest coffin shape of all is that composed of two

earthen jars (\_a\_ and \_b\_), which accurately fit together, or one

slightly fits into the other, the juncture being made air-tight by a

coating of bitumen (\_d\_, \_d\_). The body can be placed in such a coffin

only with slightly bent knees. At one end (\_c\_) there is an air-hole,

left for the escape of the gases which form during the decomposition of

the body and which might otherwise burst the jars--a precaution probably

suggested by experience (fig. 36). Sometimes there is only one jar of

much larger size, but of the same shape, with a similar cover, also made

fast with bitumen, or else the mouth is closed with bricks. This is an

essentially national mode of burial, perhaps the most ancient of all,

yet it remained in use to a very late period. It is to be noted that

this is the exact shape of the water jars now carried about the streets

of Baghdad and familiar to every traveller.

[Illustration: 33.--ARMENIAN LOUVRE. (Botta.)]

24. Not much less original is the so-called "dish-cover coffin," also

very ancient and national. The illustrations sufficiently show its shape

and arrangement.[Q] In these coffins two skeletons are sometimes found,

showing that when a widow or widower died, it was opened, to lay the

newly dead by the side of the one who had gone before. The cover is all

of one piece--a very respectable achievement of the potter's art. In

Mugheir (ancient Ur), a mound was found, entirely filled with this kind

of coffins.

[Illustration: 34.--VAULTED DRAINS. (KHORSABAD.) (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

[Illustration: 35.--VAULTED DRAIN. (KHORSABAD.) (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

25. Much more elaborate, and consequently, probably reserved for the

noble and wealthy, is the sepulchral vault in brick, of nearly a man's

height.[R] In these sepulchres, as in the preceding ones, the skeleton

is always found lying in the same position, evidently dictated by some

religious ideas. The head is pillowed on a large brick, commonly covered

with a piece of stuff or a rug. In the tattered rags which sometimes

still exist, costly embroideries and fringed golden tissue have more

than once been recognized, while some female skeletons still showed

handsome heads of hair gathered into fine nets. The body lies on a reed

mat, on its left side, the right hand stretched out so as to reach with

the tips of the fingers a bowl, generally of copper or bronze, and

sometimes of fine workmanship, usually placed on the palm of the left

hand. Around are placed various articles--dishes, in some of which

remnants of food are found, such as date stones,--jars for water, lamps,

etc. Some skeletons wear gold and silver bangles on their wrists and

ankles. These vaults were evidently family sepulchres, for several

skeletons are generally found in them; in one there were no less than

eleven. (Fig. 39, p. 89.)

[Illustration: 36.--CHALDEAN JAR-COFFIN. (Taylor.)]

26. All these modes of burial are very old and peculiarly Chaldean. But

there is still another, which belongs to more recent times, even as late

as the first centuries after Christ, and was used by a different and

foreign race, the Parthians, one of those who came in turns and

conquered the country, stayed there awhile, then disappeared. These

coffins are, from their curious form, known under the name of

"slipper-shaped." They are glazed, green on the outside and blue on the

inside, but of very inferior make: poor clay, mixed with straw, and only

half baked, therefore very brittle. It is thought that they were put in

their place empty, then the body was laid in, the lid put down, and the

care of covering them with sand left to the winds. The lid is fastened

with the same mortar which is used in the brick masonry surrounding the

coffin, where such a receptacle has been made for it; but they more

usually lie pell-mell, separated only by thin layers of loose sand.

There are mounds which are, as one may say, larded with them: wherever

you begin to dig a trench, the narrow ends stick out from both sides. In

these coffins also various articles were buried with the dead, sometimes

valuable ones. The Arabs know this; they dig in the sand with their

hands, break the coffins open with their spears, and grope in them for

booty. The consequence is that it is extremely difficult to procure an

entire coffin. Loftus succeeded, however, in sending some to the British

Museum, having first pasted around them several layers of thick paper,

without which precaution they could not have borne the transport.

[Illustration: 37.--"DISH-COVER" TOMB AT MUGHEIR. (Taylor.)]

[Illustration: 38.--"DISH-COVER" TOMB. (Taylor.)]

27. On the whole, the ancient Chaldean sepulchres of the three first

kinds are distinguished by greater care and tidiness. They are not only

separated by brick partitions on the sides, and also above and below

by a thin layer of brick masonry, but the greatest care was taken to

protect them against dampness. The sepulchral mounds are pierced through

and through, from top to bottom, by drainage pipes or shafts, consisting

of a series of rings, solidly joined together with bitumen, about one

foot in diameter. These rings are made of baked clay. The top one is

shaped somewhat like a funnel, of which the end is inserted in

perforated bricks, and which is provided with small holes, to receive

any infiltration of moisture. Besides all this the shafts, which are

sunk in pairs, are surrounded with broken pottery. How ingenious and

practical this system was, we see from the fact that both the coffins

and their contents are found in a state of perfect dryness and

preservation. (Fig. 41, p. 90.)

[Illustration: 39.--SEPULCHRAL VAULT AT MUGHEIR. (Taylor.)]

[Illustration: 40.--STONE JARS FROM GRAVES. (LARSAM.) (Hommel.)]

28. In fact the Chaldeans, if they could not reach such perfection as

the Assyrians in slab-sculpture, on account of not having stone either

at home or within easy reach, seem to have derived a greater variety of

architectural ornaments from that inexhaustible material of

theirs--baked clay or terra-cotta. We see an instance of it in

remnants--unfortunately very small ones, of some walls belonging to that

same city of Erech. On one of the mounds Loftus was puzzled by the large

quantity of small terra-cotta cones, whole and in fragments, lying about

on the ground. The thick flat end of them was painted red, black or

white. What was his amazement when he stumbled on a piece of wall (some

seven feet in height and not more than thirty in length), which showed

him what their use had been. They were grouped into a variety of

patterns to decorate the entire wall, being stuck with their thin end

into a layer of soft clay with which it was coated for the purpose.

Still more original and even rather incomprehensible is a wall

decoration consisting of several bands, composed each of three rows of

small pots or cups--about four inches in diameter--stuck into the soft

clay coating in the same manner, with the mouth turned outward of

course! Loftus found such a wall, but unfortunately has given no design

of it. (Figures 43 and 44.)

[Illustration: 41.--DRAIN IN MOUND. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

29. As to the ancient Babylonian, or rather Chaldean, art in sculpture,

the last word has by no means been said on that subject. Discoveries

crowd in every year, constantly leading to the most unexpected

conclusions. Thus, it was long an accepted fact that Assyria had very

few statues and Babylonia none at all, when a few years ago (1881),

what should a French explorer, Mr. E. De Sarzec, French consul in Basra,

bring home but nine magnificent statues made of a dark, nearly black

stone as hard as granite, called diorite.[S] Unfortunately they are all

headless; but, as though to make up for this mutilation, one head was

found separate,--a shaved and turbaned head beautifully preserved and of

remarkable workmanship, the very pattern of the turban being plain

enough to be reproduced by any modern loom.[T] These large prizes were

accompanied by a quantity of small works of art representing both men

and animals, of a highly artistic design and some of them of exquisite

finish of execution. This astounding find, the result of several years'

indefatigable work, now gracing the Assyrian rooms of the Louvre in

Paris, comes from one of the Babylonian mounds which had not been opened

before, the ruins of a mighty temple at a place now called TELL-LOH, and

supposed to be the site of SIR-BURLA, or SIR-GULLA, one of the most

ancient cities of Chaldea. This "Sarzec-collection," as it has come to

be generally called, not only entirely upsets the ideas which had been

formed on Old-Chaldean art, but is of immense historical importance from

the inscriptions which cover the back of every statue, (not to speak of

the cylinders and other small objects,) and which, in connection with

the monuments of other ruins, enable scholars to fix, at least

approximately, the date at which flourished the city and rulers who have

left such extraordinary memorials of their artistic gifts. Some place

them at about 4500 B.C., others about 4000. However overwhelming such a

valuation may be at first sight, it is not an unsupported fancy, but

proofs concur from many sides to show that the builders and sculptors of

Sir-gulla could in no case have lived and worked much later than 4000

B.C. It is impossible to indicate in a few lines all the points, the

conjectures, the vexed questions, on which this discovery sheds light

more or less directly, more or less decisively; they come up continually

as the study of those remote ages proceeds, and it will be years before

the materials supplied by the Sarzec-Collection are exhausted in all

their bearings.

[Illustration: 42.--WALL WITH DESIGNS IN TERRA-COTTA CONES, AT WARKA

(ERECH). (Loftus.)]

[Illustration: 43.--TERRA-COTTA CONE, NATURAL SIZE. (Loftus.)]

FOOTNOTES:

[G] Rawlinson's "Five Monarchies," Vol. I., p. 46.

[H] Ur of the Chaldees, from which Abraham went forth.

[I] Rawlinson's "Five Monarchies," Vol. I., p. 349.

[J] Figure 10.

[K] Figure 71, p. 281.

[L] Rawlinson's "Five Monarchies," Vol. I., pp. 317 and 318.

[M] See Fig. 20, p. 63. There is but one exception, in the case of a

recent exploration, during which one solitary broken column-shaft was

discovered.

[N] G. Rawlinson's "Five Monarchies," Vol. I., pp. 467, 468.

[O] See Fig. 33, p. 83.

[P] Figures 34 and 35, p. 84.

[Q] Figs. 37 and 38, p. 87.

[R] Fig. 39, p. 89.

[S] See Fig. 59, p. 217.

[T] See Figs. 44 and 45, p. 101.

IV.

THE BOOK OF THE PAST.--THE LIBRARY OF NINEVEH.

1. When we wish to learn the great deeds of past ages, and of mighty men

long dead, we open a book and read. When we wish to leave to the

generations who will come long after us a record of the things that were

done by ourselves or in our own times, we take pen, ink and paper, and

write a book. What we have written is then printed, published in several

hundreds--or thousands--of copies, as the case may be, and quickly finds

its way to all the countries of the world inhabited by people who are

trained from childhood to thought and study. So that we have the

satisfaction of knowing that the information which we have labored to

preserve will be obtainable any number of years or centuries after we

shall have ceased to exist, at no greater trouble than procuring the

book from the shelves of a bookstore, a public or a private library. It

is all very simple. And there is not a small child who does not

perfectly know a book by its looks, and even has not a pretty correct

idea of how a book is made and what it is good for.

2. But books are not always of the shape and material so familiar to us.

Metal, stone, brick, walls and pillars, nay, the very rocks of nature's

own making, can be books, conveying information as plainly as our

volumes of paper sheets covered with written or printed lines. It only

needs to know how to read them, and the necessary knowledge and skill

may be acquired by processes as simple as the art of ordinary reading

and writing, though at the cost of a somewhat greater amount of time and

pains.

3. There are two natural cravings, which assert themselves strongly in

every mind not entirely absorbed by the daily work for bread and by the

anxious care how to procure that work: these are the wish, on the one

hand, to learn how the people who came before us lived and what they

did, on the other--to transmit our own names and the memory of our deeds

to those who will come after us. We are not content with our present

life; we want to stretch it both backward and forward--to live both in

the past and the future, as it were. This curiosity and this ambition

are but parts of the longing for immortality which was never absent from

any human soul. In our own age they are satisfied mainly by books;

indeed they were originally the principal causes why books began to be

made at all. And how easy to satisfy these cravings in our time, when

writing materials have become as common as food and far cheaper, and

reading may be had for nothing or next to nothing! For, a very few

dollars will supply a writer with as much paper as he can possibly use

up in a year, while the public libraries, the circulating and college

libraries and the reading-rooms make study a matter more of love and

perseverance than of money.

4. Yet if the papermill and the printing press were the only material

aid to our researches into the past, these researches would stop

short very soon, seeing that printing was invented in Europe scarce

four hundred years ago, and paper has not been manufactured for more

than six hundred years at the outside. True, other materials have

been used to write on before paper: bark of trees, skins of

animals--(parchment)--cunningly worked fibres of plants--(papyrus,

byblos)--even wooden tablets covered with a thin layer of wax, on

which characters were engraved with a pointed instrument or

"style,"--and these contrivances have preserved for us records which

reach back many hundreds of years beyond the introduction of paper.

But our curiosity, when once aroused, is insatiable, and an area of

some twenty, or thirty, or forty centuries seems to it but a narrow

field. Looking back as far as that--and no kind of manuscript

information takes us much further--we behold the world wondrously

like what it is now. With some differences in garb, in manners, and a

much greater one in the range of knowledge, we find men living very

nearly as we do and enacting very nearly the same scenes: nations

live in families clustered within cities, are governed by laws, or

ruled by monarchs, carry on commerce and wars, extend their limits by

conquest, excel in all sorts of useful and ornamental arts. Only we

notice that larger regions are unknown, vaster portions of the

earth, with their populations, are unexplored, than in our days. The

conclusion is clearly forced on us, that so complicated and perfect

an organization of public and private life, a condition of society

implying so many discoveries and so long a practice in thought and

handicraft, could not have been an early stage of existence. Long

vistas are dimly visible into a past far vaster than the span as yet

laid open to our view, and we long to pierce the tantalizing gloom.

There, in that gloom, lurk the beginnings of the races whose high

achievements we admire, emulate, and in many ways surpass; there, if

we could but send a ray of light into the darkness of ages, we must

find the solution of numberless questions which suggest themselves as

we go: Whence come those races? What was the earlier history of other

races with which we find them contending, treating, trading? When did

they learn their arts, their songs, their forms of worship? But here

our faithful guide, manuscript literature, forsakes us; we enter on a

period when none of the ancient substitutes for paper were yet

invented. But then, there were the stones. \_They\_ did not need to be

invented--only hewn and smoothed for the chisel.

5. Fortunately for us, men, twenty-five, and forty, and fifty centuries

ago, were actuated by the same feelings, the same aspirations as they

are now, and of these aspirations, the passionate wish of perpetuating

their names and the memory of their deeds has always been one of the

most powerful. This wish they connected with and made subservient to

the two things which were great and holy in their eyes: their religion

and the power of their kings. So they built, in brick and stone, at an

almost incalculable expense of time, human labor and human life, palaces

and temples. On these huge piles they lavished treasures untold, as also

all the resources of their invention and their skill in art and

ornament; they looked on them with exulting pride, not only because they

thought them, by their vastness and gorgeousness, fit places for public

worship and dwellings worthy of their kings, but because these

constructions, in their towering grandeur, their massive solidity, bid

fair to defy time and outlast the nations which raised them, and which

thus felt assured of leaving behind them traces of their existence,

memorials of their greatness. That a few defaced, dismantled, moss-grown

or sand-choked fragments of these mighty buildings would one day be the

\_only\_ trace, the sole memorial of a rule and of nations that would then

have past away forever, even into nothingness and oblivion, scarcely was

anticipated by the haughty conquerors who filled those halls with their

despotic presence, and entered those consecrated gates in the pomp of

triumph to render thanks for bloody victories and warlike exploits which

elated their souls in pride till they felt themselves half divine.

Nothing doubting but that those walls, those pillars, those gateways

would stand down to the latest ages, they confided to them that which

was most precious to their ambition, the record of their deeds, the

praises of their names, thus using those stony surfaces as so many

blank pages, which they covered with row after row of wondrous

characters, carefully engraved or chiselled, and even with painted or

sculptured representations of their own persons and of the scenes, in

war or peace, in which they had been leaders and actors.

6. Thus it is that on all the points of the globe where sometime great

and flourishing nations have held their place, then yielded to other

nations or to absolute devastation--in Egypt, in India, in Persia, in

the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, in the sandy, now desert plains

of Syria, in the once more populous haunts of ancient Rome and

Greece--the traveller meets clusters of great ruins, lofty still in

their utter abandonment, with a strange, stern beauty hovering around

their weather-beaten, gigantic shafts and cornices, wrapt in the

pathetic silence of desolation, and yet not dumb--for their pictured

faces eloquently proclaim the tale of buoyant life and action entrusted

to them many thousands of years ago. Sometimes, it is a natural rock,

cut and smoothed down at a height sufficient to protect it from the

wantonly destructive hand of scoffing invaders, on which a king of a

deeper turn of thought, more mindful than others of the law which dooms

all the works of men to decay, has caused a relation of the principal

events of his reign to be engraved in those curious characters which

have for centuries been a puzzle and an enigma. Many tombs also, besides

the remains of the renowned or wealthy dead, for whom they have been

erected at a cost as extravagant and with art as elaborate as the

abodes of the living, contain the full description of their inmate's

lineage, his life, his habits and pursuits, with prayers and invocations

to the divinities of his race and descriptions or portrayed

representations of religious ceremonies. Or, the walls of caves, either

natural, or cut in the rock for purposes of shelter or concealment,

yield to the explorer some more chapters out of the old, old story, in

which our interest never slackens. This story man has himself been

writing, patiently, laboriously, on every surface on which he could

trace words and lines, ever since he has been familiar with the art of

expressing his thoughts in visible signs,--and so each such surviving

memorial may truly be called a stray leaf, half miraculously preserved

to us, out of the great Book of the Past, which it has been the task of

scholars through ages, and especially during the last eighty years, to

decipher and teach others how to read.

[Illustration: 44.--HEAD OF ANCIENT CHALDEAN. FROM TELL-LOH (SIR-GULLA).

SARZEC COLLECTION. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

[Illustration: 45.--SAME, PROFILE VIEW.]

7. Of this venerable book the walls of the Assyrian palaces, with their

endless rows of inscriptions, telling year for year through centuries

the history of the kings who built them, are so many invaluable pages,

while the sculptures which accompany these annals are the illustrations,

lending life and reality to what would otherwise be a string of dry and

unattractive records. But a greater wonder has been brought to light

from amidst the rubbish and dust of twenty-five centuries: a collection

of literary and scientific works, of religious treatises, of private and

public documents, deposited in rooms constructed on purpose to contain

them, arranged in admirable order, in short--a LIBRARY. Truly and

literally a library, in the sense in which we use the word. Not the only

one either, nor the first by many hundred years, although the volumes

are of singular make and little like those we are used to.

8. When Layard was at work for the second time amidst the ruins along

the Tigris, he devoted much of his labor to the great mound of Koyunjik,

in which the remains of two sumptuous palaces were distinctly discerned,

one of them the royal residence of Sennacherib, the other that of his

grandson Asshurbanipal, who lived some 650 years before Christ--two of

the mightiest conquerors and most magnificent sovereigns of the Eastern

world. In the latter palace he came upon two comparatively small

chambers, the floor of which was entirely littered with fragments--some

of considerable size, some very small--of bricks, or rather baked-clay

tablets, covered on both sides with cuneiform writing. It was a layer

more than a foot in height which must have been formed by the falling in

of the upper part of the edifice. The tablets, piled in good order along

the walls, perhaps in an upper story--if, as many think, there was

one--must have been precipitated promiscuously into the apartment and

shattered by the fall. Yet, incredible as it may appear, several were

found entire. Layard filled many cases with the fragments and sent them

off to the British Museum, fully aware of their probable historical

value.

9. There they lay for years, heaped up at random, a mine of treasures

which made the mouths of scholars water, but appalled them by the

amount of labor, nay, actual drudgery, needful only to sift and sort

them, even before any study of their contents could be begun. At length

a young and ambitious archæologist, attached to the British Museum,

George Smith, undertook the long and wearisome task. He was not

originally a scholar, but an engraver, and was employed to engrave on

wood cuneiform texts for the magnificent atlas edited by the British

Museum under the title of "Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia."

Being endowed with a quick and enquiring mind, Smith did not content

himself, like most of his colleagues, with a conscientious and artistic,

but merely technical reproduction; he wished to know \_what\_ he was doing

and he learned the language of the inscriptions. When he took on himself

the sorting of the fragments, it was in the hope of distinguishing

himself in this new field, and of rendering a substantial service to the

science which had fascinated him. Nor was he deceived in this hope. He

succeeded in finding and uniting a large quantity of fragments belonging

together, and thus restoring pages of writing, with here and there a

damaged line, a word effaced, a broken corner, often a larger portion

missing, but still enough left to form continuous and readable texts. In

some cases it was found that there was more than one copy of this or

that work or document, and then sometimes the parts which were

hopelessly injured in one copy, would be found whole or nearly so in

another.

10. The results accomplished by this patient mechanical process were

something astonishing. And when he at length restored in this manner a

series of twelve tablets containing an entire poem of the greatest

antiquity and highest interest, the occasion seemed important enough to

warrant the enterprising owners of the London \_Daily Telegraph\_ in

sending the young student to resume excavations and try to complete some

missing links. For of some of the tablets restored by him only portions

could be found among the fragments of the British Museum. Of course he

made his way straight to the Archive Chambers at Koyunjik, had them

opened again and cleared them of another large instalment of their

valuable contents, among which he had the inconceivable good fortune to

find some of the very pieces which were missing in his collection.

Joyfully he returned to England twice with his treasures, and hopefully

set out on a third expedition of the same kind. He had reason to feel

buoyant; he had already made his name famous by several works which

greatly enriched the science he loved, and had he not half a lifetime

before him to continue the work which few could do as well? Alas, he

little knew that his career was to be cut short suddenly by a loathsome

and brutal foe: he died of the plague in Syria, in 1876--just thirty-six

years old. He was faithful to the end. His diary, in which he made some

entries even within a very few days before his death, shows that at the

last, when he knew his danger and was fast losing hope, his mind was

equally divided between thoughts of his family and of his work. The

following lines, almost the last intelligible ones he wrote, are deeply

touching in their simple, single-minded earnestness:--"Not so well. If

Doctor present, I should recover, but he has not come, very doubtful

case; if fatal farewell to ... \_My work has been entirely for the

science I study....\_ There is a large field of study in my collection. I

intended to work it out, but desire now that my antiquities and notes

may be thrown open to all students. I have done my duty thoroughly. I do

not fear the change but desire to live for my family. Perhaps all may be

well yet."--George Smith's death was a great loss, which his

brother-scholars of all countries have not ceased to deplore. But the

work now proceeds vigorously and skilfully. The precious texts are

sorted, pieced, and classified, and a collection of them, carefully

selected, is reproduced by the aid of the photographer and the engraver,

so that, should the originals ever be lost or destroyed, (not a very

probable event), the Museum indeed would lose one of its most precious

rarities, but science would lose nothing.

11. An eminent French scholar and assyriologist, Joachim Ménant, has the

following picturesque lines in his charming little book "\_La

Bibliothèque du Palais de Ninive\_": "When we reflect that these records

have been traced on a substance which neither fire nor water could

destroy, we can easily comprehend how those who wrote them thus thirty

or forty centuries ago, believed the monuments of their history to be

safe for all future times,--much safer than the frail sheets which

printing scatters with such prodigious fertility.... Of all the nations

who have bequeathed to us written records of their past life, we may

assert that none has left monuments more imperishable than Assyria and

Chaldea. Their number is already considerable; it is daily increased by

new discoveries. It is not possible to foresee what the future has in

store for us in this respect; but we can even now make a valuation of

the entire material which we possess.... The number of the tablets from

the Nineveh Library alone passes ten thousand.... If we compare these

texts with those left us by other nations, we can easily become

convinced that the history of the Assyro-Chaldean civilization will soon

be one of the best known of antiquity. It has a powerful attraction for

us, for we know that the life of the Jewish people is mixed up with the

history of Nineveh and Babylon...."

[Illustration: 46.--CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTION. (ARCHAIC CHARACTERS.) (Perrot

and Chipiez.)]

12. It will be seen from this that throughout the following pages we

shall continually have to refer to the contents of Asshurbanipal's royal

library. We must therefore dispense in this place with any details

concerning the books, more than a general survey of the subjects they

treated. Of these, religion and science were the chief. Under "science"

we must understand principally mathematics and astronomy, two branches

in which the old Chaldeans reached great perfection and left us many of

our own most fundamental notions and practices, as we shall see later

on. Among the scientific works must also be counted those on astrology,

i.e., on the influence which the heavenly bodies were supposed to

exert on the fate of men, according to their positions and combinations,

for astrology was considered a real science, not only by the Chaldeans,

but by much later nations too; also hand-books of geography, really only

lists of the seas, mountains and rivers, nations and cities then known,

lastly lists of plants and animals with a very rude and defective

attempt at some sort of classification. History is but scantily

represented; it appears to have been mostly confined to the great wall

inscriptions and some other objects, of which more hereafter. But--what

we should least expect--grammars, dictionaries, school reading-books,

occupy a prominent place. The reason is that, when this library was

founded, the language in which the venerable books of ancient sages were

written not only was not spoken any longer, but had for centuries been

forgotten by all but the priests and those who made scholarship their

chief pursuit, so that it had to be taught in the same way that the

so-called "dead languages," Latin and Greek, are taught at our colleges.

This was the more necessary as the prayers had to be recited in the old

language called the Accadian, that being considered more holy--just as,

in Catholic countries, the common people are even now made to learn and

say their prayers in Latin, though they understand not a word of the

language. The ancient Accadian texts were mostly copied with a modern

Assyrian translation, either interlinear or facing it, which has been of

immense service to those who now decipher the tablets.

[Illustration: 47.--INSCRIBED CLAY TABLET. (Smith's "Assyria.")]

13. So much for what may be called the classical and reference

department of the library. Important as it is, it is scarcely more so

than the documentary department or Archive proper, where documents and

deeds of all kinds, both public and private, were deposited for safe

keeping. Here by the side of treatises, royal decrees and despatches,

lists of tribute, reports from generals and governors, also those daily

sent in by the superintendents of the royal observatories,--we find

innumerable private documents: deeds of sale duly signed, witnessed and

sealed, for land, houses, slaves--any kind of property,--of money lent,

of mortgages, with the rate of interest, contracts of all sorts. The

most remarkable of private documents is one which has been called the

"will of King Sennacherib," by which he entrusts some valuable personal

property to the priests of the temple of Nebo, to be kept for his

favorite son,--whether to be delivered after his (the king's) death or

at another time is not stated.

[Illustration: 48.--CLAY TABLET IN ITS CASE. (Hommel.)]

14. It requires some effort to bear in mind the nature and looks of the

things which we must represent to ourselves when we talk of Assyrian

"\_books\_." The above (Fig. 47) is the portrait of a "\_volume\_" in

perfect condition. But it is seldom indeed that one such is found.

Layard, in his first description of his startling "find," says: "They

(the tablets) were of different sizes; the largest were flat, and

measured nine inches by six and a half; the smaller were slightly

convex, and some were not more than an inch long, with but one or two

lines of writing. The cuneiform characters on most of them were

singularly sharp and well-defined, but so minute in some instances as to

be illegible without a magnifying glass." Most curiously, glass lenses

have been found among the ruins; which may have been used for the

purpose. Specimens have also been found of the very instruments which

were employed to trace the cuneiform characters, and their form

sufficiently accounts for the peculiar shape of these characters which

was imitated by the engravers on stone. It is a little iron rod--(or

\_style\_, as the ancients used to call such implements)--not sharp, but

\_triangular\_ at the end: [open triangle]. By slightly pressing this end

on the cake of soft moist clay held in the left hand no other shape of

sign could be obtained than a wedge, [closed triangle], the direction

being determined by a turn of the wrist, presenting the instrument in

different positions. When one side of the tablet was full, the other was

to be filled. If it was small, it was sufficient to turn it over,

continuing to hold the edges between the thumb and third finger of the

left hand. But if the tablet was large and had to be laid on a table to

be written on, the face that was finished would be pressed to the hard

surface, and the clay being soft, the writing would be effaced. This was

guarded against by a contrivance as ingenious as it was simple. Empty

places were left here and there in the lines, in which were stuck small

pegs, like matches. On these the tablet was supported when turned over,

and also while baking in the oven. On many of the tablets that have

been preserved are to be seen little holes or dints, where the pegs have

been stuck. Still, it should be mentioned that these holes are not

confined to the large tablets and not found on all large tablets. When

the tablet was full, it was allowed to dry, then generally, but not

always, baked. Within the last few years several thousands unbaked

tablets have been found in Babylonia; they crumbled into dust under the

finders' fingers. It was then proposed to bake such of them as could at

all bear handling. The experiment was successful, and numbers of

valuable documents were thus preserved and transported to the great

repository of the British Museum. The tablets are covered with writing

on both sides and most accurately classed and numbered, when they form

part of a series, in which case they are all of the same shape and size.

The poem discovered by George Smith is written out on twelve tablets,

each of which is a separate book or chapter of the whole. There is an

astronomical work in over seventy tablets. The first of them begins with

the words: "\_When the gods Anu and ...\_" These words are taken as the

title of the entire series. Each tablet bears the notice: First, second,

third tablet of "\_When the gods Anu and ...\_" To guard against all

chance of confusion, the last line of one tablet is repeated as the

first line of the following one--a fashion which we still see in old

books, where the last word or two at the bottom of a page is repeated at

the top of the next.

[Illustration: 49.--ANTIQUE BRONZE SETTING OF CYLINDER. (Perrot and

Chipiez.)]

[Illustration: 50.--CHALDEAN CYLINDER AND IMPRESSION.(Perrot and Chipiez.)]

[Illustration: 51.--ASSYRIAN CYLINDER. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

15. The clay tablets of the ancient Chaldeans are distinguished from the

Assyrian ones by a curious peculiarity: they are sometimes enclosed in a

case of the same material, with exactly the same inscription and seals

as on the inner tablet, even more carefully executed.[U] It is evidently

a sort of duplicate document, made in the prevision that the outer one

might be injured, when the inner record would remain. Rows of figures

across the tablet are impressed on it with seals called from their shape

cylinders, which were rolled over the soft moist clay. These cylinders

were generally of some valuable, hard stone--jasper, amethyst,

cornelian, onyx, agate, etc.,--and were used as signet rings were later

and are still. They are found in great numbers, being from their

hardness well-nigh indestructible. They were generally bored through,

and through the hole was passed either a string to wear them on, or a

metal axis, to roll them more easily.[V] There is a large and most

valuable collection of seal cylinders at the British Museum. Their size

ranges from a quarter of an inch to two inches or a little more. But

cylinders were also made of baked clay and larger size, and then served

a different purpose, that of historical documents. These are found in

the foundations of palaces and temples, mostly in the four corners, in

small niches or chambers, generally produced by leaving out one or more

bricks. These tiny monuments range from a couple of inches to half a

foot in height, seldom more; they are sometimes shaped like a prism with

several faces (mostly six), sometimes like a barrel, and covered with

that compact and minute writing which it often requires a magnifying

glass to make out. Owing to their sheltered position, these singular

records are generally very well preserved. Although their original

destination is only to tell by whom and for what purpose the building

has been erected, they frequently proceed to give a full though

condensed account of the respective kings' reigns, so that, should the

upper structure with its engraved annals be destroyed by the

vicissitudes of war or in the course of natural decay, some memorial of

their deeds should still be preserved--a prevision which, in several

cases, has been literally fulfilled. Sometimes the manner and material

of these records were still more fanciful. At Khorsabad, at the very

interior part of the construction, was found a large stone chest, which

enclosed several inscribed plates in various materials. "... In this only

extant specimen of an Assyrian foundation stone were found one little

golden tablet, one of silver, others of copper, lead and tin; a sixth

text was engraved on alabaster, and the seventh document was written on

the chest itself."[W] Unfortunately the heavier portion of this

remarkable find was sent with a collection which foundered on the Tigris

and was lost. Only the small plates,--gold, silver, copper and tin

(antimonium scholars now think it to be)--survived, and the inscriptions

on them have been read and translated. They all commemorate, in very

nearly the same terms, the foundation and erection of a new city and

palace by a very famous king and conqueror, generally (though not

correctly) called Sargon, and three of them end with a request to the

kings his successors to keep the building in good repair, with a prayer

for their welfare if they do and a heavy curse if they fail in this

duty: "Whoever alters the works of my hand, destroys my constructions,

pulls down the walls which I have raised,--may Asshur, Ninêb, Ramân and

the great gods who dwell there, pluck his name and seed from the land

and let him sit bound at the feet of his foe." Most inscriptions end

with invocations of the same kind, for, in the words of Ménant: "it was

not mere whim which impelled the kings of Assyria to build so

assiduously. Palaces had in those times a destination which they have no

longer in ours. Not only was the palace indeed \_the dwelling of

royalty\_, as the inscriptions have it,--it was also the BOOK, which each

sovereign began at his accession to the throne and in which he was to

record the history of his reign."[X]

[Illustration: 52.--PRISM OF SENNACHERIB. ALSO CALLED "TAYLOR

CYLINDER."]

[Illustration: 53.--INSCRIBED CYLINDER FROM BORSIP.]

And each such book of brick and stone we can with perfect truth call a

chapter--or a volume--of the great Book of the Past whose leaves are

scattered over the face of the earth.

FOOTNOTES:

[U] See Fig. 48, p. 111.

[V] See above, Figs. 49 and 50.

[W] Dr. Julius Oppert, "Records of the Past," Vol. XI., p. 31.

[X] "Les Écritures Cunéiformes," of Joachim Ménant: page 198 (2d

edition, 1864).

[Illustration: CHALDEA AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES]

THE STORY OF CHALDEA.

I.

NOMADS AND SETTLERS.--THE FOUR STAGES OF CULTURE.

1. Men, whatever their pursuit or business, can live only in one of two

ways: they can stay where they are, or they can go from one place to

another. In the present state of the world, we generally do a little of

both. There is some place--city, village, or farm--where we have our

home and our work. But from time to time we go to other places, on

visits or on business, or travel for a certain length of time to great

distances and many places, for instruction and pleasure. Still, there is

usually some place which we think of as home and to which we return.

Wandering or roving is not our natural or permanent condition. But there

are races for whom it is. The Bedouin Arabs are the principal and best

known of such races. Who has not read with delight accounts of their

wild life in the deserts of Arabia and Northern Africa, so full of

adventure and romance,--of their wonderful, priceless horses who are to

them as their own children,--of their noble qualities, bravery,

hospitality, generosity, so strangely blended with love of booty and a

passion for robbing expeditions? They are indeed a noble race, and it is

not their choice, but their country which has made them robbers and

rovers--Nomads, as such wandering races are called in history and

geography. They cannot build cities on the sand of the desert, and the

small patches of pasture and palm groves, kept fresh and green by

solitary springs and called "oases," are too far apart, too distant from

permanently peopled regions to admit of comfortable settlement. In the

south of Arabia and along the sea-shore, where the land is fertile and

inviting, they live much as other nations do, and when, a thousand years

ago, Arabs conquered vast and wealthy countries both in Europe and Asia,

and in Africa too, they not only became model husbandmen, but built some

of the finest cities in the world, had wise and strictly enforced laws

and took the lead in literature and science. Very different are the

scattered nomadic tribes which still roam the steppes of Eastern Russia,

of Siberia and Central Asia. They are not as gifted by far as the Arabs,

yet would probably quickly settle down to farming, were it not that

their wealth consists in flocks of sheep and studs of horses, which

require the pasture yielded so abundantly by the grassy steppes, and

with which they have to move from one place, when it is browsed bare, to

another, and still another, carrying their felt-tents and simple

utensils with them, living on the milk of their mares and the meat of

their sheep. The Red Indian tribes of the far West present still another

aspect of nomadic life--that of the hunter, fierce and entirely untamed,

the simplest and wildest of all.

2. On the whole, however, nomadic life is at the present day the

exception. Most of the nations that are not savages live in houses, not

in portable tents, in cities, not encampments, and form compact, solidly

bound communities, not loose sets of tribes, now friendly, now hostile

to one another. But it has not always been so. There have been times

when settled life was the exception and nomadic life the rule. And the

older the times, the fewer were the permanent communities, the more

numerous the roving tribes. For wandering in search of better places

must have been among the first impulses of intelligent humanity. Even

when men had no shelter but caves, no pursuit but hunting the animals,

whose flesh was their food and in whose skins they clothed themselves,

they must frequently have gone forth, in families or detachments, either

to escape from a neighborhood too much infested with the gigantic wild

beasts which at one time peopled the earth more thickly than men, or

simply because the numbers of the original cave-dwellers had become too

great for the cave to hold them. The latter must have been a very usual

occurrence: families stayed together until they had no longer room

enough, or quarrelled, when they separated. Those who went never saw

again the place and kindred they left, although they carried with them

memories of both, the few simple arts they had learned there and the

customs in which they had been trained. They would stop at some

congenial halting-place, when, after a time, the same process would be

repeated--and so again and again.

3. How was the first horse conquered, the first wild-dog tamed and

conciliated? How were cattle first enticed to give man their milk, to

depend on his care and follow his movements? Who shall tell? However

that may have happened, it is certain that the transition from a

hunter's wild, irregular and almost necessarily lawless existence to the

gentler pursuits of pastoral life must have been attended by a great

change in manners and character. The feeling of ownership too, one of

the principal promoters of a well-regulated state of society, must have

quickly developed with the possession of rapidly increasing wealth in

sheep and horses,--the principal property of nomadic races. But it was

not a kind of property which encouraged to settling, or uniting in close

communities; quite the contrary. Large flocks need vast pasture-grounds.

Besides, it is desirable to keep them apart in order to avoid confusion

and disputes about wells and springs, those rare treasures of the

steppes, which are liable to exhaustion or drying up, and which,

therefore, one flock-owner is not likely to share with another, though

that other were of his own race and kin. The Book of Genesis, which

gives us so faithful and lively a picture of this nomadic pastoral life

of ancient nations, in the account of the wanderings of Abraham and the

other Hebrew patriarchs, has preserved such an incident in the quarrel

between the herdsmen of Abraham and his nephew Lot, which led to their

separation. This is what Abraham said to Lot: "Is not the whole land

before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take

the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the

right hand, then I will go to the left."[Y] So also it is said of Esau

that he "went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob: for

their riches were more than they might dwell together, and the land

wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their

cattle."[Z] This was a facility offered by those immense plains,

unclaimed as yet by any one people in particular, and which must

oft-times have averted strife and bloodshed, but which ceased from the

moment that some one tribe, tired of wandering or tempted by some more

than usually engaging spot, settled down on it, marking that and the

country around it, as far as its power reached, for its own. There is

even now in the East something very similar to this mode of occupation.

In the Turkish Empire, which is, in many places, thinly peopled, there

are large tracts of waste land, sometimes very fertile, accounted as

nobody's property, and acknowledged to belong, legally and forever, to

the first man who takes possession of them, provided he cultivates them.

The government asks no purchase price for the land, but demands taxes

from it as soon as it has found an owner and begins to yield crops.

4. The pastoral nomad's life is, like the hunter's, a singularly free

one,--free both from restraint, and, comparatively, from toil. For

watching and tending flocks is not a laborious occupation, and no

authority can always reach or weigh very heavily on people who are here

to-day and elsewhere to-morrow. Therefore, it is only with the third

stage of human existence, the agricultural one, that civilization, which

cannot subsist without permanent homes and authority, really commences.

The farmer's homestead is the beginning of the State, as the hearth or

fireplace was the beginning of the family. The different labors of the

fields, the house, and the dairy require a great number of hands and a

well-regulated distribution of the work, and so keep several generations

of the settler's family together, on the same farm. Life in common makes

it absolutely necessary to have a set of simple rules for home

government, to prevent disputes, keep up order and harmony, and settle

questions of mutual rights and duties. Who should set down and enforce

these rules but the head of the family, the founder of the race--the

patriarch? And when the family has become too numerous for the original

homestead to hold it, and part of it has to leave it, to found a new

home for itself, it does not, as in the primitive nomadic times, wander

off at random and break all ties, but settles close by on a portion of

the family land, or takes possession of a new piece of ground somewhat

further off, but still within easy reach. In the first case the land

which had been common property gets broken up into lots, which, though

belonging more particularly to the members who separate from the old

stock, are not for that withdrawn from the authority of the patriarch.

There are several homesteads now, which form a village, and, later on,

several villages; but the bond of kindred, of tradition and custom is

religiously preserved, as well as subordination to the common head of

the race, whose power keeps increasing as the community grows in numbers

and extent of land, as the greater complications of relationships,

property, inheritance, demand more laws and a stricter rule,--until he

becomes not so much Father as King. Then naturally come collisions with

neighboring similar settlements, friendly or hostile, which result in

alliances or quarrels, trade or war, and herewith we have the State

complete, with inner organization and foreign policy.

5. This stage of culture, in its higher development, combines with the

fourth and last--city-building, and city-life, when men of the same

race, and conscious of a common origin, but practically strangers to

each other, form settlements on a large scale, which, being enclosed in

walls, become places of refuge and defence, centres of commerce,

industry and government. For, when a community has become very numerous,

with wants multiplied by continual improvements and increasing culture,

each family can no longer make all the things it needs, and a portion of

the population devotes itself to manufacture and arts, occupations best

pursued in cities, while the other goes on cultivating the land and

raising cattle, the two sets of produces--those of nature and those of

the cunning hand and brain--being bartered one for the other, or, when

coin is invented, exchanged through that more convenient medium. In the

same manner, the task of government having become too manifold and

complicated for one man, the former Patriarch, now King, is obliged to

surround himself with assistants--either the elders of the race, or

persons of his own choice,--and send others to different places, to rule

in his name and under his authority. The city in which the King and his

immediate ministers and officers reside, naturally becomes the most

important one--the Capital of the State.

6. It does not follow by any means that a people, once settled, never

stirred from its adopted country. The migratory or wandering instinct

never quite died out--our own love of travelling sufficiently proves

that--and it was no unfrequent occurrence in very ancient times for

large tribes, even portions of nations, to start off again in search of

new homes and to found new cities, compelled thereto either by the

gradual overcrowding of the old country, or by intestine discords, or by

the invasion of new nomadic tribes of a different race who drove the old

settlers before them to take possession of their settlements, massacred

them if they resisted and reduced those who remained to an irksome

subjection. Such invasions, of course, might also be perpetrated with

the same results by regular armies, led by kings and generals from some

other settled and organized country. The alternative between bondage

and emigration must have been frequently offered, and the choice in

favor of the latter was helped not a little by the spirit of adventure

inborn in man, tempted by so many unexplored regions as there were in

those remote ages.

7. Such have been the beginnings of all nations. There can be no other.

And there is one more observation which will scarcely ever prove wrong.

It is that, however far we may go back into the past, the people whom we

find inhabiting any country at the very dawn of tradition, can always be

shown to have come from somewhere else, and not to have been the first

either. Every swarm of nomads or adventurers who either pass through a

country or stop and settle there, always find it occupied already. Now

the older population was hardly ever entirely destroyed or dislodged by

the newcomers. A portion at least remained, as an inferior or subject

race, but in time came to mix with them, mostly in the way of

intermarriage. Then again, if the newcomers were peaceable and there was

room enough--which there generally was in very early times--they would

frequently be suffered to form separate settlements, and dwell in the

land; when they would either remain in a subordinate condition, or, if

they were the finer and better gifted race, they would quickly take the

upper hand, teach the old settlers their own arts and ideas, their

manners and their laws. If the new settlement was effected by conquest,

the arrangement was short and simple: the conquerors, though less

numerous, at once established themselves as masters and formed a ruling

nobility, an aristocracy, while the old owners of the land, those at

least that did not choose to emigrate, became what may be called "the

common people," bound to do service and pay tribute or taxes to their

self-instituted masters. Every country has generally experienced, at

various times, all these modes of invasion, so that each nation may be

said to have been formed gradually, in successive layers, as it were,

and often of very different elements, which either finally amalgamated

or kept apart, according to circumstances.

The early history of Chaldea is a particularly good illustration of all

that has just been said.

FOOTNOTES:

[Y] Genesis, xiii. 7-11.

[Z] Genesis, xxxvi. 6-7.

II.

THE GREAT RACES.--CHAPTER X. OF GENESIS.

1. The Bible says (Genesis xi. 2): "And it came to pass, as they

journeyed in the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar;

and they dwelt there."

Shinar--or, more correctly, Shineâr--is what may be called Babylonia

proper, that part of Mesopotamia where Babylon was, and south of it,

almost to the Gulf. "They" are descendants of Noah, long after the

Flood. They found the plain and dwelt there, but they did not find the

whole land desert; it had been occupied long before them. How long? For

such remote ages an exact valuation of time in years is not to be

thought of.

2. What people were those whom the descendants of Noah found in the land

to which they came from the East? It seems a simple question, yet no

answer could have been given to it even as lately as fifteen or sixteen

years ago, and when the answer was first suggested by unexpected

discoveries made in the Royal Library at Nineveh, it startled the

discoverers extremely. The only indication on the subject then known was

this, from a Chaldean writer of a late period: "There was originally at

Babylon" (i.e., in the land of Babylon, not the city alone) "a multitude

of men of foreign race who had settled in Chaldea." This is told by

Berosus, a learned priest of Babylon, who lived immediately after

Alexander the Great had conquered the country, and when the Greeks ruled

it (somewhat after 300 B.C.). He wrote a history of it from the most

ancient times, in which he gave an account of the oldest traditions

concerning its beginnings. As he wrote his book in Greek, it is probable

that his object was to acquaint the new masters with the history and

religion of the land and people whom they had come to rule.

Unfortunately the work was lost--as so many valuable works have been, as

long as there was no printing, and books existed only in a few

manuscript copies--and we know of it only some short fragments, quoted

by later writers, in whose time Berosus' history was still accessible.

The above lines are contained in one such fragment, and naturally led to

the question: who were these men of foreign race who came from somewhere

else and settled in Chaldea in immemorial times?

3. One thing appears clear: they belonged to none of the races classed

in the Bible as descended from Noah, but probably to one far older,

which had not been included in the Flood.

4. For it begins to be pretty generally understood nowadays that the

Flood may not have been absolutely universal, but have extended over the

countries \_which the Hebrews knew\_, which made \_their\_ world, and that

not literally all living beings except those who are reported to have

been in the Ark may have perished in it. From a negligent habit of

reading Chap. VI.-IX. of Genesis without reference to the texts of other

chapters of the same Book, it has become a general habit to understand

it in this literal manner. Yet the evidence is by no means so positive.

The question was considered an open one by profounder students even in

antiquity, and freely discussed both among the Jews themselves and the

Fathers of the early Christian Church. The following are the statements

given in the Book of Genesis; we have only to take them out of their

several places and connect them.

5. When Cain had killed his brother Abel, God banished him from the

\_earth\_ which had received his brother's blood and laid a curse on him:

"a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the \_earth\_"--using another

word than the first time, one which means earth in general (\_éréç\_), in

opposition to \_the\_ earth (\_adâmâh\_), or fruitful land to the east of

Eden, in which Adam and Eve dwelt after their expulsion. Then Cain went

forth, still further East, and dwelt in a land which was called "the

land of Nod," \_i.e.\_, "of wandering" or "exile." He had a son, Enoch,

after whom he named the city which he built,--the first city,--and

descendants. Of these the fifth, Lamech, a fierce and lawless man, had

three sons, two of whom, Jabal and Jubal, led a pastoral and nomadic

life; but the third, Tubalcain, invented the use of metals: he was "the

forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron." This is what the

Chap. IV. of Genesis tells of Cain, his crime, his exile and immediate

posterity. After that they are heard of no more. Adam, meanwhile, has a

third son, born after he had lost the first two and whom he calls Seth

(more correctly \_Sheth\_). The descendants of this son are enumerated in

Chap. V.; the list ends with Noah. These are the parallel races: the

accursed and the blest, the proscribed of God and the loved of God, the

one that "goes out of the presence of the Lord" and the one that "calls

on the name of the Lord," and "walks with God." Of the latter race the

last-named, Noah, is "a just man, perfect in his generation," and "finds

grace in the eyes of the Lord."

6. Then comes the narrative of the Flood (Chap. VI.-VIII.), the covenant

of God with Noah and re-peopling of the earth by his posterity (Chap.

IX.). Lastly Chap. X. gives us the list of the generations of Noah's

three sons, Shem, Ham and Japhet;--"of these were the nations divided in

the earth after the flood."

7. Now this tenth chapter of Genesis is the oldest and most important

document in existence concerning the origins of races and nations, and

comprises all those with whom the Jews, in the course of their early

history, have had any dealings, at least all those who belonged to the

great white division of mankind. But in order properly to understand it

and appreciate its value and bearing, it must not be forgotten that EACH

NAME IN THE LIST IS THAT OF A RACE, A PEOPLE OR A TRIBE, NOT THAT OF A

MAN. It was a common fashion among the Orientals--a fashion adopted also

by ancient European nations--to express in this manner the kindred

connections of nations among themselves and their differences. Both for

brevity and clearness, such historical genealogies are very convenient.

They must have been suggested by a proceeding most natural in ages of

ignorance, and which consists in a tribe's explaining its own name by

taking it for granted that it was that of its founder. Thus the name of

the Assyrians is really Asshur. Why? Clearly, they would answer, if

asked the question, because their kingdom was founded by one whose name

was Asshur. Another famous nation, the Aramæans, are supposed to be so

called because the name of their founder was Aram; the Hebrews name

themselves from a similarly supposed ancestor, Heber. These three

nations,--and several more, the Arabs among others--spoke languages so

much alike that they could easily understand each other, and had

generally many common features in looks and character. How account for

that? By making their founders, Asshur, and Aram, and Heber, etc., sons

or descendants of one great head or progenitor, Shem, a son of Noah. It

is a kind of parable which is extremely clear once one has the key to

it, when nothing is easier than to translate it into our own sober,

positive forms of speech. The above bit of genealogy would read thus: A

large portion of humanity is distinguished by certain features more or

less peculiar to itself; it is one of several great races, and has been

called for more than a hundred years the Semitic, (better Shemitic)

race, the race of Shem. This race is composed of many different tribes

and nations, who have gone each its own way, have each its own name and

history, speak dialects of the same original language, and have

preserved many common ideas, customs and traits of character,--which all

shows that the race was once united and dwelt together, then, as it

increased in numbers, broke up into fractions, of which some rose to be

great and famous nations and some remained comparatively insignificant

tribes. The same applies to the subdivisions of the great white race

(the whitest of all) to which nearly all the European nations belong,

and which is personified in the Bible under the name of Japhet, third

son of Noah,--and to those of a third great race, also originally white,

which is broken up into very many fractions, both great nations and

scattered tribes, all exhibiting a decided likeness to each other. The

Bible gives the names of all these most carefully, and sums up the whole

of them under the name of the second son of Noah, Ham, whom it calls

their common progenitor.

8. That the genealogies of Chap. X. of Genesis should be understood in

this sense, has long been admitted by scientists and churchmen. St.

Augustine, one of the greatest among the Fathers of the early church,

pointedly says that the names in it represent "nations, not men."[AA] On

the other hand there is also literal truth in them, in this way, that,

if all mankind is descended from one human couple, every fraction of it

must necessarily have had some one particular father or ancestor, only

in so remote a past that his individuality or actual name cannot

possibly have been remembered, when every people, as has been remarked

above, naturally gave him its own name. Of these names many show by

their very nature that they could not have belonged to individuals. Some

are plural, like MIZRAIM, "the Egyptians;" some have the article: "\_the\_

AMORITE, \_the\_ HIVITE;" one even is the name of a city: SIDON is called

"the first-born of Canaan;" now Sidon was long the greatest maritime

city of the Canaanites, who held an undisputed supremacy over the rest,

and therefore "the first-born." The name means "fisheries"--an

appropriate one for a city on the sea, which must of course have been at

first a settlement of fishermen. "CANAAN" really is the name of a vast

region, inhabited by a great many nations and tribes, all differing from

each other in many ways, yet manifestly of one race, wherefore they are

called "the sons of Canaan," Canaan being personified in a common

ancestor, given as one of the four sons of Ham. Modern science has, for

convenience' sake, adopted a special word for such imaginary personages,

invented to account for a nation's, tribe's, or city's name, while

summing up, so to speak, its individuality: they are called EPONYMS. The

word is Greek, and means "one from whom or for whom somebody or

something is named," a "namesake." It is not too much to say that, while

popular tradition always claims that the eponymous ancestor or

city-founder gave his name to his family, race, or city, the contrary is

in reality invariably the case, the name of the race or city being

transferred to him. Or, in other words, the eponym is really only that

name, transformed into a traditional person by a bold and vivid poetical

figure of speech, which, if taken for what it is, makes the beginnings

of political history wonderfully plain and easy to grasp and classify.

9. Yet, complete and correct as is the list of Chap. X., within the

limits which the writer has set to himself, it by no means exhausts the

nations of the earth. The reason of the omissions, however, is easily

seen. Among the posterity of Japhet the Greeks indeed are mentioned,

(under the name of JAVAN, which should be pronounced \_Yawan\_, and some

of his sons), but not a single one of the other ancient peoples of

Europe,--Germans, Italians, Celts, etc.,--who also belonged to that

race, as we, their descendants, do. But then, at the time Chap. X. was

written, these countries, from their remoteness, were outside of the

world in which the Hebrews moved, beyond their horizon, so to speak.

They either did not know them at all, or, having nothing to do with

them, did not take them into consideration. In neither case would they

have been given a place in the great list. The same may be said of

another large portion of the same race, which dwelt to the far East and

South of the Hebrews--the Hindoos, (the white conquerors of India), and

the Persians. There came a time indeed, when the latter not only came

into contact with the Jews, but were their masters; but either that was

after Chap. X. was written or the Persians were identified by the

writers with a kindred nation, the Persians' near neighbor, who had

flourished much earlier and reacted in many ways on the countries

westward of it; this nation was the MEDES, who, under the name of MADAI,

are mentioned as one of the sons of Japhet, with Javan the Greek.

10. More noticeable and more significant than these partial omissions is

the determination with which the authors of Chap. X. consistently ignore

all those divisions of mankind which do not belong to one of the three

great \_white\_ races. Neither the Black nor the Yellow races are

mentioned at all; they are left without the pale of the Hebrew

brotherhood of nations. Yet the Jews, who staid three or four hundred

years in Egypt, surely learned there to know the real negro, for the

Egyptians were continually fighting with pure-blood black tribes in the

south and south-west, and bringing in thousands of black captives, who

were made to work at their great buildings and in their stone-quarries.

But these people were too utterly barbarous and devoid of all culture or

political importance to be taken into account. Besides, the Jews could

not be aware of the vast extent of the earth occupied by the black race,

since the greater part of Africa was then unknown to the world, and so

were the islands to the south of India, also Australia and its

islands--all seats of different sections of that race.

11. The same could not be said of the Yellow Race. True, its principal

representatives, the nations of the far East of Asia--the Chinese, the

Mongols and the Mandchous,--could not be known to the Hebrews at any

time of antiquity, but there were more than enough representatives of

it who could not be \_un\_known to them.[AB] For it was both a very old

and extremely numerous race, which early spread over the greater part of

the earth and at one time probably equalled in numbers the rest of

mankind. It seems always to have been broken up into a great many tribes

and peoples, whom it has been found convenient to gather under the

general designation of TURANIANS, from a very ancient name,--TUR or

TURA--which was given them by the white population of Persia and Central

Asia, and which is still preserved in that of one of their principal

surviving branches, the TURKS. All the different members of this great

family have had very striking features in common,--the most

extraordinary being an incapability of reaching the highest culture, of

progressing indefinitely, improving continually. A strange law of their

being seems to have condemned them to stop short, when they had attained

a certain, not very advanced, stage. Thus their speech has remained

extremely imperfect. They spoke, and such Turanian nations as now exist

still speak, languages, which, however they may differ, all have this

peculiarity, that they are composed either entirely of monosyllables,

(the most rudimentary form of speech), or of monosyllables pieced into

words in the stiffest, most unwieldy manner, stuck together, as it

were, with nothing to join them, wherefore this kind of language has

been called \_agglutinative\_. Chinese belongs to the former class of

languages, the "monosyllabic," Turkish to the latter, the

"agglutinative." Further, the Turanians were probably the first to

invent writing, but never went in that art beyond having one particular

sign for every single word--(such is Chinese writing with its forty

thousand signs or thereabouts, as many as words in the language)--or at

most a sign for every syllable. They had beautiful beginnings of poetry,

but in that also never went beyond beginnings. They were also probably

the first who built cities, but were wanting in the qualities necessary

to organize a society, establish a state on solid and lasting

foundations. At one time they covered the whole of Western Asia, dwelt

there for ages before any other race occupied it,--fifteen hundred

years, according to a very trustworthy tradition,--and were called by

the ancients "the oldest of men;" but they vanish and are not heard of

any more the moment that white invaders come into the land; these drive

the Turanians before them, or bring them into complete subjection, or

mix with them, but, by force of their own superiorly gifted nature,

retain the dominant position, so that the others lose all separate

existence. Thus it was everywhere. For wherever tribes of the three

Biblical races came, they mostly found Turanian populations who had

preceded them. There are now a great number of Turanian tribes, more or

less numerous--Kirghizes, Bashkirs, Ostiaks, Tunguzes, etc.,

etc.--scattered over the vast expanse of Siberia and Eastern Russia,

where they roam at will with their flocks and herds of horses,

occasionally settling down,--fragmentary remnants of a race which, to

this latest time, has preserved its original peculiarities and

imperfections, whose day is done, which has long ceased to improve,

unless it assimilates with the higher white race and adopts their

culture, when all that it lacked is supplied by the nobler element which

mixes with it, as in the case of the Hungarians, one of the most

high-spirited and talented nations of Europe, originally of Turanian

stock. The same may be said, in a lesser degree, of the Finns--the

native inhabitants of the Russian principality of Finland.

12. All this by no means goes to show that the Yellow Race has ever been

devoid of fine faculties and original genius. Quite the contrary; for,

if white races everywhere stepped in, took the work of civilization out

of their hands and carried it on to a perfection of which they were

incapable, still they, the Turanians, had everywhere \_begun\_ that work,

it was their inventions which the others took up and improved: and we

must remember that it is very much easier to improve than to invent.

Only there is that strange limitation to their power of progress and

that want of natural refinement, which are as a wall that encloses them

around. Even the Chinese, who, at first sight, are a brilliant

exception, are not so on a closer inspection. True, they have founded

and organized a great empire which still endures; they have a vast

literature, they have made most important inventions--printing,

manufacturing paper out of rags, the use of the compass,

gunpowder--centuries before European nations made them in their turn.

Yet the latter do all those things far better; they have improved these,

to them, new inventions more in a couple of hundred years than the

Chinese in a thousand. In fact it is a good many centuries since the

Chinese have ceased to improve anything at all. Their language and

writing are childishly imperfect, though the oldest in existence. In

government, in the forms of social life, in their ideas generally, they

follow rules laid down for them three thousand years ago or more and

from which to swerve a hair's breadth were blasphemy. As they have

always stubbornly resisted foreign influences, and gone the length of

trying actually to erect material walls between themselves and the rest

of the world, their empire is a perfectly fair specimen of what the

Yellow Race can do, if left entirely to itself, and quite as much of

what it can\_not\_ do, and now they have for centuries presented that

unique phenomenon--a great nation at a standstill.

13. All this obviously leads us to a very interesting and suggestive

question: what is this great race which we find everywhere at the very

roots of history, so that not only ancient tradition calls them "the

oldest of men," but modern science more and more inclines to the same

opinion? Whence came it? How is it not included in the great family of

nations, of which Chap. X. of Genesis gives so clear and comprehensive a

scheme? Parallel to this question arises another: what became of Cain's

posterity? What, above all, of the descendants of those three sons of

Lamech, whom the writer of Genesis clearly places before us as heads of

nations and thinks of sufficient importance to specify what their

occupations were? (See Genesis iv. 19-22.) Why do we never hear any more

of this entire half of humanity, severed in the very beginning from the

other half--the lineage of the accursed son from that of the blest and

favored son? And may not the answer to this series of questions be the

answer to the first series also?

14. With regard to the second series this answer is plain and decisive.

The descendants of Cain were necessarily out of the pale of the Hebrew

world. The curse of God, in consequence of which their forefather is

said to have gone "out of the presence of the Lord," at once and forever

separated them from the posterity of the pious son, from those who

"walked with God." The writer of Genesis tells us that they lived in the

"Land of Exile" and multiplied, then dismisses them. For what could the

elect, the people of God, or even those other nations who went astray,

who were repeatedly chastised, but whose family bond with the righteous

race was never entirely severed--what could they have in common with the

banished, the castaway, the irretrievably accursed? These did not count,

they were not of humanity. What more probable, therefore, than that,

being excluded from all the other narratives, they should not be

included in that of the Flood? And in that case, who should they be but

that most ancient race, set apart by its color and several striking

peculiarities, which everywhere preceded their white brethren, but were

invariably supplanted by them and not destined to supremacy on the

earth? This supposition has been hazarded by men of great genius, and if

bold, still has much to support it; if confirmed it would solve many

puzzles, throw strong and unexpected light on many obscure points. The

very antiquity of the Yellow Race tallies admirably with the Biblical

narrative, for of the two Biblical brothers Cain was the eldest. And the

doom laid on the race, "a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be on the

earth," has not been revoked through all ages. Wherever pure Turanians

are--they are nomads. And when, fifteen hundred years ago and later,

countless swarms of barbarous people flooded Europe, coming from the

east, and swept all before them, the Turanian hordes could be known

chiefly by this, that they destroyed, burned, laid waste--and passed,

vanished: whereas the others, after treating a country quite as

savagely, usually settled in it and founded states, most of which exist

even now--for, French, German, English, Russian, we are all descended

from some of those barbarous invaders. And this also would fully explain

how it came to pass that, although the Hebrews and their

forefathers--let us say the Semites generally--everywhere found

Turanians on their way, nay, dwelt in the same lands with them, the

sacred historian ignores them completely, as in Gen. xi. 2.

15. For they were Turanians, arrived at a, for them, really high state

of culture, who peopled the land of Shinar, when "\_they\_"--descendants

of Noah,--journeying in the East, found that plain where they dwelt for

many years.

FOOTNOTES:

[AA] "\_Gentes non homines.\_" (\_De Civitate Dei\_, XVII., 3.)

[AB] If, as has been suggested, the "land of Sinim" in Isaiah xlix., 12,

is meant for China, such a solitary, incidental and unspecified mention

of a country the name of which may have been vaguely used to express the

remotest East, cannot invalidate the scheme so evidently and

persistently pursued in the composition of Chap. X.

III.

TURANIAN CHALDEA.--SHUMIR AND ACCAD.--THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGION.

1. It is not Berosus alone who speaks of the "multitudes of men of

foreign race" who colonized Chaldea "in the beginning." It was a

universally admitted fact throughout antiquity that the population of

the country had always been a mixed one, but a fact known vaguely,

without particulars. On this subject, as on so many others, the

discoveries made in the royal library of Nineveh shed an unexpected and

most welcome light. The very first, so to speak preliminary, study of

the tablets showed that there were amongst them documents in two

entirely different languages, of which one evidently was that of an

older population of Chaldea. The other and later language, usually

called Assyrian, because it was spoken also by the Assyrians, being very

like Hebrew, an understanding of it was arrived at with comparative

ease. As to the older language there was absolutely no clue. The only

conjecture which could be made with any certainty was, that it must have

been spoken by a double people, called the people of Shumir and Accad,

because later kings of Babylon, in their inscriptions, always gave

themselves the title of "Kings of Shumir and Accad," a title which the

Assyrian sovereigns, who at times conquered Chaldea, did not fail to

take also. But who and what were these people might never have been

cleared up, but for the most fortunate discovery of dictionaries and

grammars, which, the texts being supplied with Assyrian translations,

served our modern scholars, just as they did Assyrian students 3000

years ago, to decipher and learn to understand the oldest language of

Chaldea. Of course, it was a colossal piece of work, beset with

difficulties which it required an almost fierce determination and

superhuman patience to master. But every step made was so amply repaid

by the results obtained, that the zeal of the laborers was never

suffered to flag, and the effected reconstruction, though far from

complete even now, already enables us to conjure a very suggestive and

life-like picture of those first settlers of the Mesopotamian Lowlands,

their character, religion and pursuits.

2. The language thus strangely brought to light was very soon perceived

to be distinctly of that peculiar and primitive type--partly

monosyllables, partly words rudely pieced together,--which has been

described in a preceding chapter as characteristic of the Turanian race,

and which is known in science by the general name of \_agglutinative\_,

i.e., "glued or stuck together," without change in the words, either by

declension or conjugation. The people of Shumir and Accad, therefore,

were one and the same Turanian nation, the difference in the name being

merely a geographical one. SHUMIR is Southern or Lower Chaldea, the

country towards and around the Persian Gulf,--that very land of Shinar

which is mentioned in Genesis xi. 2. Indeed "Shinar" is only the way in

which the Hebrews pronounced and spelt the ancient name of Lower

Chaldea. ACCAD is Northern or Upper Chaldea. The most correct way, and

the safest from all misunderstanding, is to name the people the

Shumiro-Accads and their language, the Shumiro-Accadian; but for

brevity's sake, the first name is frequently dropped, and many say

simply "the Accads" and "the Accadian language." It is clear, however,

that the royal title must needs unite both names, which together

represented the entire country of Chaldea. Of late it has been

discovered that the Shumiro-Accads spoke two slightly differing dialects

of the same language, that of Shumir being most probably the older of

the two, as culture and conquest seem to have been carried steadily

northward from the Gulf.

3. That the Accads themselves came from somewhere else, is plain from

several circumstances, although there is not the faintest symptom or

trace of any people whom they may have found in the country. They

brought into it the very first and most essential rudiments of

civilization, the art of writing, and that of working metals; it was

probably also they who began to dig those canals without which the land,

notwithstanding its fabulous fertility, must always be a marshy waste,

and who began to make bricks and construct buildings out of them. There

is ground to conclude that they came down from mountains in the fact

that the name "Accad" means "Mountains" or "Highlands," a name which

they could not possibly have taken in the dead flats of Lower Chaldea,

but must have retained as a relic of an older home. It is quite possible

that this home may have been in the neighboring wild and mountainous

land of SHUSHAN (Susiana on the maps), whose first known population was

also Turanian. These guesses take us into a past, where not a speck of

positive fact can be discerned. Yet even that must have been only a

station in this race's migration from a far more northern centre. Their

written language, even after they had lived for centuries in an almost

tropical country, where palms grew in vast groves, almost forests, and

lions were common game, as plentiful as tigers in the jungles of Bengal,

contained no sign to designate either the one or the other, while it was

well stocked with the signs of metals,--of which there is no vestige, of

course, in Chaldea,--and all that belongs to the working thereof. As the

ALTAÏ range, the great Siberian chain, has always been famous for its

rich mines of every possible metal ore, and as the valleys of the Altaï

are known to be the nests from which innumerable Turanian tribes

scattered to the north and south, and in which many dwell to this day

after their own nomadic fashion, there is no extravagance in supposing

that \_there\_ may have been our Accads' original point of departure.

Indeed the Altaï is so indissolubly connected with the origin of most

Turanian nations, that many scientists prefer to call the entire Yellow

Race, with all its gradations of color, "the Altaïc." Their own

traditions point the same way. Several of them have a pretty legend of a

sort of paradise, a secluded valley somewhere in the Altaï, pleasant and

watered by many streams, where their forefathers either dwelt in the

first place or whither they were providentially conducted to be saved

from a general massacre. The valley was entirely enclosed with high

rocks, steep and pathless, so that when, after several hundred years, it

could no longer hold the number of its inhabitants, these began to

search for an issue and found none. Then one among them, who was a

smith, discovered that the rocks were almost entirely of iron. By his

advice, a huge fire was made and a great many mighty bellows were

brought into play, by which means a path was \_melted\_ through the rocks.

A tradition, by the by, which, while confirming the remark that the

invention of metallurgy belongs originally to the Yellow Race in its

earliest stages of development, is strangely in accordance with the name

of the Biblical Tubalcain, "the forger of every cutting instrument of

brass and iron." That the Accads were possessed of this distinctive

accomplishment of their race is moreover made very probable by the

various articles and ornaments in gold, brass and iron which are

continually found in the very oldest tombs.

4. But infinitely the most precious acquisition secured to us by the

unexpected revelation of this stage of remotest antiquity is a

wonderfully extensive collection of prayers, invocations and other

sacred texts, from which we can reconstruct, with much probability, the

most primitive religion in the world--for such undoubtedly was that of

the Accads. As a clear and authentic insight into the first

manifestation of the religious instinct in man was just what was wanting

until now, in order to enable us to follow its development from the

first, crudest attempts at expression to the highest aspirations and

noblest forms of worship, the value of this discovery can never be

overrated. It introduces us moreover into so strange and fantastical a

world as not the most imaginative of fictions can surpass.

5. The instinct of religion--"religiosity," as it has been called--is

inborn to man; like the faculty of speech, it belongs to man, and to man

only, of all living beings. So much so, that modern science is coming to

acknowledge these two faculties as \_the\_ distinctive characteristics

which mark man as a being apart from and above the rest of creation.

Whereas the division of all that exists upon the earth has of old been

into three great classes or realms--the "mineral realm," the "vegetable

realm" and the "animal realm," in which latter man was included--it is

now proposed to erect the human race with all its varieties into a

separate "realm," for this very reason: that man has all that animals

have, and two things more which they have not--speech and religiosity,

which assume a faculty of abstract thinking, observing and drawing

general conclusions, solely and distinctively human. Now the very first

observations of man in the most primitive stage of his existence must

necessarily have awakened in him a twofold consciousness--that of power

and that of helplessness. He could do many things. Small in size, weak

in strength, destitute of natural clothing and weapons, acutely

sensitive to pain and atmospheric changes as all higher natures are, he

could kill and tame the huge and powerful animals which had the

advantage of him in all these things, whose numbers and fierceness

threatened him at every turn with destruction, from which his only

escape would seem to have been constant cowering and hiding. He could

compel the earth to bear for him choicer food than for the other beings

who lived on her gifts. He could command the service of fire, the dread

visitor from heaven. Stepping victoriously from one achievement to

another, ever widening his sphere of action, of invention, man could not

but be filled with legitimate pride. But on the other hand, he saw

himself surrounded with things which he could neither account for nor

subdue, which had the greatest influence on his well-being, either

favorable or hostile, but which were utterly beyond his comprehension or

control. The same sun which ripened his crop sometimes scorched it; the

rain which cooled and fertilized his field, sometimes swamped it; the

hot winds parched him and his cattle; in the marshes lurked disease and

death. All these and many, many more, were evidently POWERS, and could

do him great good or work him great harm, while he was unable to do

either to them. These things existed, he felt their action every day of

his life, consequently they were to him living Beings, alive in the same

way that he was, possessed of will, for good or for evil. In short, to

primitive man everything in nature was alive with an individual life, as

it is to the very young child, who would not beat the chair against

which he has knocked himself, and then kiss it to make friends, did he

not think that it is a living and feeling being like himself. The

feeling of dependence and absolute helplessness thus created must have

more than balanced that of pride and self-reliance. Man felt himself

placed in a world where he was suffered to live and have his share of

what good things he could get, but which was not ruled by him,--in a

spirit-world. Spirits around him, above him, below him,--what could he

do but humble himself, confess his dependence, and pray to be spared?

For surely, if those spirits existed and took enough interest in him to

do him good or evil, they could hear him and might be moved by

supplication. To establish a distinction between such spirits which did

only harm, were evil in themselves, and those whose action was generally

beneficial and only on rare occasions destructive, was the next natural

step, which led as naturally to a perception of divine displeasure as

the cause of such terrible manifestations and a seeking of means to

avert or propitiate it. While fear and loathing were the portion of the

former spirits, the essentially evil ones, love and gratitude, were the

predominant feelings inspired by the latter,--feelings which, together

with the ever present consciousness of dependence, are the very essence

of religion, just as praise and worship are the attempts to express them

in a tangible form.

6. It is this most primitive, material and unquestioning stage in the

growth of religious feeling, which a large portion of the

Shumiro-Accadian documents from the Royal Library at Nineveh brings

before us with a force and completeness which, however much room there

may still be for uncertainty in details, on the whole really amounts to

more than conjecture. Much will, doubtless, be discovered yet, much will

be done, but it will only serve to fill in a sketch, of which the

outlines are already now tolerably fixed and authentic. The materials

for this most important reconstruction are almost entirely contained in

a vast collection of two hundred tablets, forming one consecutive work

in three books, over fifty of which have been sifted out of the heap of

rubbish at the British Museum and first deciphered by Sir Henry

Rawlinson, one of the greatest, as he was the first discoverer in this

field, and George Smith, whose achievements and too early death have

been mentioned in a former chapter. Of the three books into which the

collection is divided, one treats "of evil spirits," another of

diseases, and the third contains hymns and prayers--the latter

collection showing signs of a later and higher development. Out of these

materials the lately deceased French scholar, Mr. François Lenormant,

whose name has for the last fifteen years or so of his life stood in the

very front of this branch of Oriental research, has been the first to

reconstruct an entire picture in a book not very voluminous indeed, but

which must always remain a corner-stone in the history of human culture.

This book shall be our guide in the strange world we now enter.[AC]

7. To the people of Shumir and Accad, then, the universe was peopled

with Spirits, whom they distributed according to its different spheres

and regions. For they had formed a very elaborate and clever, if

peculiar idea of what they supposed the world to be like. According to

the ingenious expression of a Greek writer of the 1st century A.D. they

imagined it to have the shape of an inverted round boat or bowl, the

thickness of which would represent the mixture of land and water

(\_kî-a\_) which we call the crust of the earth, while the hollow beneath

this inhabitable crust was fancied as a bottomless pit or abyss (\_ge\_),

in which dwelt many powers. Above the convex surface of the earth

(\_kî-a\_) spread the sky (\_ana\_), itself divided into two regions:--the

highest heaven or firmament, which, with the fixed stars immovably

attached to it, revolved, as round an axis or pivot, around an immensely

high mountain, which joined it to the earth as a pillar, and was

situated somewhere in the far North-East--some say North--and the lower

heaven, where the planets--a sort of resplendent animals, seven in

number, of beneficent nature--wandered forever on their appointed path.

To these were opposed seven evil demons, sometimes called "the Seven

Fiery Phantoms." But above all these, higher in rank and greater in

power, is the Spirit (\_Zi\_) of heaven (\_ana\_), ZI-ANA, or, as often,

simply ANA--"Heaven." Between the lower heaven and the surface of the

earth is the atmospheric region, the realm of IM or MERMER, the Wind,

where he drives the clouds, rouses the storms, and whence he pours down

the rain, which is stored in the great reservoir of Ana, in the heavenly

Ocean. As to the earthly Ocean, it is fancied as a broad river, or

watery rim, flowing all round the edge of the imaginary inverted bowl;

in its waters dwells ÊA (whose name means "the House of Waters"), the

great Spirit of the Earth and Waters (\_Zi-kî-a\_), either in the form of

a fish, whence he is frequently called "Êa the fish," or "the Exalted

Fish," or on a magnificent ship, with which he travels round the earth,

guarding and protecting it. The minor spirits of earth (\_Anunnaki\_) are

not much spoken of except in a body, as a sort of host or legion. All

the more terrible are the seven spirits of the abyss, the MASKIM, of

whom it is said that, although their seat is in the depths of the earth,

yet their voice resounds on the heights also: they reside at will in the

immensity of space, "not enjoying a good name either in heaven or on

earth." Their greatest delight is to subvert the orderly course of

nature, to cause earthquakes, inundations, ravaging tempests. Although

the Abyss is their birth-place and proper sphere, they are not

submissive to its lord and ruler MUL-GE ("Lord of the Abyss"). In that

they are like their brethren of the lower heaven who do not acknowledge

Ana's supremacy, in fact are called "spirits of rebellion," because,

being originally Ana's messengers, they once "secretly plotted a wicked

deed," rose against the heavenly powers, obscured the Moon, and all but

hurled him from his seat. But the Maskim are ever more feared and

hated, as appears from the following description, which has become

celebrated for its real poetical force:

8. "They are seven! they are seven!--Seven they are in the depths of

Ocean,--seven they are, disturbers of the face of Heaven.--They arise

from the depths of Ocean, from hidden lurking-places.--They spread like

snares.--Male they are not, female they are not.--Wives they have not,

children are not born to them.--Order they know not, nor

beneficence;--prayers and supplication they hear not.--Vermin grown in

the bowels of the mountains--foes of Êa--they are the throne-bearers of

the gods--they sit in the roads and make them unsafe.--The fiends! the

fiends!--They are seven, they are seven, seven they are!

"Spirit of Heaven (\_Zi-ana, Ana\_), be they conjured!

"Spirit of Earth (\_Zi-kî-a, Êa\_), be they conjured!"

9. Besides these regular sets of evil spirits in sevens--seven being a

mysterious and consecrated number--there are the hosts untold of demons

which assail man in every possible form, which are always on the watch

to do him harm, not only bodily, but moral in the way of civil broils

and family dissensions; confusion is their work; it is they who "steal

the child from the father's knee," who "drive the son from his father's

house," who withhold from the wife the blessing of children; they have

stolen days from heaven, which they have made evil days, that bring

nothing but ill-luck and misfortune,--and nothing can keep them out:

"They fall as rain from the sky, they spring from the earth,--they steal

from house to house,--doors do not stop them,--bolts do not shut them

out,--they creep in at the doors like serpents,--they blow in at the

roof like winds." Various are their haunts: the tops of mountains, the

pestilential marshes by the sea, but especially the desert. Diseases are

among the most dreaded of this terrible band, and first among these

NAMTAR or DIBBARA, the demon of Pestilence, IDPA (Fever), and a certain

mysterious disease of the head, which must be insanity, of which it is

said that it oppresses the head and holds it tight like a tiara (a heavy

headdress) or "like a dark prison," and makes it confused, that "it is

like a violent tempest; no one knows whence it comes, nor what is its

object."

10. All these evil beings are very properly classed together under the

general name of "creations of the Abyss," births of the nether world,

the world of the dead. For the unseen world below the habitable earth

was naturally conceived as the dwelling place of the departed spirits

after death. It is very remarkable as characteristic of the low standard

of moral conception which the Shumiro-Accads had attained at this stage

of their development, that, although they never admitted that those who

died ceased to exist altogether, there is very little to show that they

imagined any happy state for them after death, not even as a reward for

a righteous life, nor, on the other hand, looked to a future state for

punishment of wrongs committed in this world, but promiscuously

consigned their dead to the ARALI, a most dismal region which is called

the "support of chaos," or, in phrase no less vague and full of

mysterious awe, "the Great Land" (\_Kî-gal\_), "the Great City"

(\_Urugal\_), "the spacious dwelling," "where they wander in the dark,"--a

region ruled by a female divinity called by different names, but most

frequently "Lady of the Great Land" (\_Nin-kî-gal\_), or "Lady of the

Abyss" (\_Nin-ge\_), who may then rather be understood as Death

personified, that Namtar (Pestilence) is her chief minister. The

Shumiro-Accads seem to have dimly fancied that association with so many

evil beings whose proper home the Arali was, must convert even the human

spirits into beings almost as noxious, for one or two passages appear to

imply that they were afraid of ghosts, at least on one occasion it is

threatened to send the dead back into the upper world, as the direst

calamity that can be inflicted.

11. As if all these terrors were not sufficient to make life a burden,

the Shumiro-Accads believed in sorcerers, wicked men who knew how to

compel the powers of evil to do their bidding and thus could inflict

death, sickness or disasters at their pleasure. This could be done in

many ways--by a look, by uttering certain words, by drinks made of herbs

prepared under certain conditions and ceremonies. Nay, the power of

doing harm sometimes fatally belonged even to innocent persons, who

inflicted it unintentionally by their look--for the effect of "the evil

eye" did not always depend on a person's own will.

12. Existence under such conditions must have been as unendurable as

that of poor children who have been terrified by silly nurses into a

belief in ogres and a fear of dark rooms, had there not existed real or

imaginary defences against this array of horrible beings always ready to

fall on unfortunate humanity in all sorts of inexplicable ways and for

no other reason but their own detestable delight in doing evil. These

defences could not consist in rational measures dictated by a knowledge

of the laws of physical nature, since they had no notion of such laws;

nor in prayers and propitiatory offerings, since one of the demons' most

execrable qualities was, as we have seen, that they "knew not

beneficence" and "heard not prayer and supplication." Then, if they

cannot be coaxed, they must be compelled. This seems a very presumptuous

assumption, but it is strictly in accordance with human instinct. It has

been very truly said[AD] that "man was so conscious of being called to

exercise empire over the powers of nature, that, the moment he entered

into any relations with them, it was to try and subject them to his

will. Only instead of studying the phenomena, in order to grasp their

laws and apply them to his needs, he fancied he could, by means of

peculiar practices and consecrated forms, compel the physical agents of

nature to serve his wishes and purposes.... This pretension had its root

in the notion which antiquity had formed of the natural phenomena. It

did not see in them the consequence of unchangeable and necessary laws,

always active and always to be calculated upon, but fancied them to

depend on the arbitrary and varying will of the spirits and deities it

had put in the place of physical agents." It follows that in a religion

which peoples the universe with spirits of which the greater part are

evil, magic--i.e., conjuring with words and rites, incantations,

spells--must take the place of worship, and the ministers of such a

religion are not priests, but conjurers and enchanters. This is exactly

the state of things revealed by the great collection of texts discovered

by Sir H. Rawlinson and G. Smith. They contain forms for conjuring all

the different kinds of demons, even to evil dreams and nightmares, the

object of most such invocations being to drive them away from the

habitations of men and back to where they properly belong--the depth of

the desert, the inaccessible mountain tops, and all remote, waste and

uninhabited places generally, where they can range at will, and find

nobody to harm.

13. Yet there are also prayers for protection and help addressed to

beings conceived as essentially good and beneficent--a step marking a

great advance in the moral feeling and religious consciousness of the

people. Such beings--gods, in fact--were, above all, Ana and Êa, whom

we saw invoked in the incantation of the Seven Maskim as "Spirit of

Heaven," and "Spirit of Earth." The latter especially is appealed to as

an unfailing refuge to ill-used and terrified mortals. He is imagined as

possessed of all knowledge and wisdom, which he uses only to befriend

and protect. His usual residence is the deep,--(hence his name, \_Ê-a\_,

"the House of Waters")--but he sometimes travels round the earth in a

magnificent ship. His very name is a terror to the evil ones. He knows

the words, the spells that will break their power and compel their

obedience. To him, therefore, the people looked in their need with

infinite trust. Unable to cope with the mysterious dangers and snares

which, as they fancied, beset them on all sides, ignorant of the means

of defeating the wicked beings who, they thought, pursued them with

abominable malice and gratuitous hatred, they turned to Êa. \_He\_ would

know. \_He\_ must be asked, and he would tell.

14. But, as though bethinking themselves that Êa was a being too mighty

and exalted to be lightly addressed and often disturbed, the

Shumiro-Accads imagined a beneficent spirit, MERIDUG (more correctly

MIRRI-DUGGA), called son of Êa and DAMKINA, (a name of Earth). Meridug's

only office is to act as mediator between his father and suffering

mankind. It is he who bears to Êa the suppliant's request, exposes his

need sometimes in very moving words, and requests to know the remedy--if

illness be the trouble--or the counter-spell, if the victim be held in

the toils of witchcraft. Êa tells his son, who is then supposed to

reveal the secret to the chosen instrument of assistance--of course the

conjuring priest, or better, soothsayer. As most incantations are

conceived on this principle, they are very monotonous in form, though

frequently enlivened by the supposed dialogue between the father and

son. Here is one of the more entertaining specimens. It occupies an

entire tablet, but unfortunately many lines have been hopelessly

injured, and have to be omitted. The text begins:

"The Disease of the Head has issued from the Abyss, from the

dwelling of the Lord of the Abyss."

Then follow the symptoms and the description of the sufferer's inability

to help himself. Then "Meridug has looked on his misery. He has entered

the dwelling of his father Êa, and has spoken unto him:

"'My father, the Disease of the Head has issued from the

Abyss.'

"A second time he has spoken unto him:

"'What he must do against it the man knows not. How shall he

find healing?'

"Êa has replied to his son Meridug:

"'My son, how dost thou not know? What should I teach thee?

What I know, thou also knowest. But come hither, my son

Meridug. Take a bucket, fill it with water from the mouth of

the rivers; impart to this water thy exalted magic power;

sprinkle with it the man, son of his god, ... wrap up his head,

... and on the highway pour it out. May insanity be dispelled!

that the disease of his head vanish like a phantom of the

night. May Êa's word drive it out! May Damkina heal him.'"

15. Another dialogue of the same sort, in which Êa is consulted as to

the means of breaking the power of the Maskim, ends by his revealing

that

"The white cedar is the tree which breaks the Maskim's noxious

might."

In fact the white cedar was considered an infallible defence against all

spells and evil powers. Any action or ceremony described in the

conjuration must of course be performed even as the words are spoken.

Then there is a long one, perhaps the best preserved of all, to be

recited by the sufferer, who is supposed to be under the effects of an

evil spell, and from which it is evident that the words are to accompany

actions performed by the conjurer. It is divided into parallel verses,

of which the first runs thus:

"As this onion is being peeled of its skins, thus shall it be

of the spell. The burning fire shall consume it; it shall no

more be planted in a row, ... the ground shall not receive its

root, its head shall contain no seed and the sun shall not take

care of it;--it shall not be offered at the feast of a god or a

king.--The man who has cast the evil spell, his eldest son, his

wife,--the spell, the lamentations, the transgressions, the

written spells, the blasphemies, the sins,--the evil which is

in my body, in my flesh, in my sores,--may they all be

destroyed as this onion, and may the burning fire consume them

this day! May the evil spell go far away, and may I see the

light again!"

Then the destruction of a date is similarly described:

"It shall not return to the bough from which it has been

plucked."

The untying of a knot:

"Its threads shall not return to the stem which has produced

them."

The tearing up of some wool:

"It shall not return to the back of its sheep."

The tearing of some stuff, and after each act the second verse:

"The man who has cast the spell," etc.

is repeated.

16. It is devoutly to be hoped, for the patients' sake, that treatments

like these took effect on the disease, for they got no other. Diseases

being conceived as personal demons who entered a man's body of their own

accord or under compulsion from powerful sorcerers, and illness being

consequently considered as a kind of possession, clearly the only thing

to do was to drive out the demon or break the spell with the aid of the

beneficent Êa and his son. If this intervention was of no avail, nothing

remained for the patient but to get well as he could, or to die. This is

why there never was a science of medicine in the proper sense in

Chaldea, even as late as three or four hundred years B.C., and the Greek

travellers who then visited Babylon must have been not a little shocked

at the custom they found there of bringing desperately sick persons out

of the houses with their beds and exposing them in the streets, when any

passer-by could approach them, inquire into the disease and suggest some

remedy--which was sure to be tried as a last chance. This extraordinary

experiment was of course not resorted to until all known forms of

conjuration had been gone through and had proved inefficient.

17. The belief that certain words and imprecations could break the

power of demons or sorcerers must have naturally led to the notion that

to wear such imprecations, written on some substance or article, always

about one's person must be a continual defence against them; while on

the other hand, words of invocation to the beneficent spirits and images

representing them, worn in the same way, must draw down on the wearer

those spirits' protection and blessing. Hence the passion for talismans.

They were of various kinds: strips of stuff, with the magic words

written on them, to be fastened to the body, or the clothes, or articles

of household furniture, were much used; but small articles of clay or

hard stone were in greater favor on account of their durability. As

houses could be possessed by evil spirits just as well as individuals,

talismans were placed in different parts of them for protection, and

this belief was so enduring that small clay figures of gods were found

in Assyrian palaces under thresholds--as in the palace of Khorsabad, by

Botta--placed there "to keep from it fiends and enemies." It has been

discovered in this manner that many of the sculptures which adorned the

Assyrian palaces and temples were of talismanic nature. Thus the winged

bulls placed at the gateways were nothing but representations of an

Accadian class of guardian spirits,--the \_Kirûbu\_, Hebrew \_Kerubim\_, of

which we have made \_Cherub\_, \_Cherubim\_--who were supposed to keep watch

at entrances, even at that of the Arali, while some sculptures on which

demons, in the shape of hideous monsters, are seen fighting each

other, are, so to speak, imprecations in stone, which, if translated

into words, would mean: "May the evil demons stay outside, may they

assail and fight each other,"--as, in that case, they would clearly have

no leisure to assail the inhabitants of the dwelling. That these

sculptures really were regarded as talismans and expected to guard the

inmates from harm, is abundantly shown by the manner in which they are

mentioned in several inscriptions, down to a very late date. Thus

Esarhaddon, one of the last kings of Assyria (about 700 B.C.), says,

after describing a very sumptuous palace which he had built:--"I placed

in its gates bulls and colossi, who, according to their fixed command,

against the wicked turn themselves; they protect the footsteps, making

peace to be upon the path of the king their creator."

[Illustration: 54.--DEMONS FIGHTING. (From the British Museum.)]

18. The cylinder seals with their inscriptions and engraved figures were

mostly also talismans of like nature; which must be the reason why so

many are found in graves, tied to the dead person's wrist by a

string--evidently as a protection against the fiends which the departed

spirit was expected to meet. The magic power was of course conferred on

all talismans by the words which the conjurer spoke over them with the

necessary ceremonies. One such long incantation is preserved entire. It

is designed to impart to the talisman the power of keeping the demons

from all parts of the dwelling, which are singly enumerated, with the

consequences to the demons who would dare to trespass: those who steal

into gutters, remove bolts or hinges, shall be broken like an earthen

jug, crushed like clay; those who overstep the wooden frame of the house

shall be clipped of their wings; those who stretch their neck in at the

window, the window shall descend and cut their throat. The most original

in this class of superstitions was that which, according to Lenormant,

consisted in the notion that all these demons were of so unutterably

ugly a form and countenance, that they must fly away terrified if they

only beheld their own likeness. As an illustration of this principle he

gives an incantation against "the wicked Namtar." It begins with a

highly graphic description of the terrible demon, who is said to "take

man captive like an enemy," to "burn him like a flame," to "double him

up like a bundle," to "assail man, although having neither hand nor

foot, like a noose." Then follows the usual dialogue between Êa and

Meridug, (in the identical words given above), and Êa at length reveals

the prescription: "Come hither, my son Meridug. Take mud of the Ocean

and knead out of it a likeness of him, (the Namtar.) Lay down the man,

after thou hast purified him; lay the image on his bare abdomen, impart

to it my magic power and turn its face westward, that the wicked Namtar,

who dwells in his body, may take up some other abode. Amen." The idea is

that the Namtar, on beholding his own likeness, will flee from it in

dismay!

[Illustration: 55.--DEMON OF THE SOUTH-WEST WIND. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

19. To this same class belongs a small bronze statuette, which is to be

seen in the Louvre. Mr. Lenormant thus describes it: "It is the image of

a horrible demon, standing, with the body of a dog, the talons of an

eagle, arms ending in a lion's paws, the tail of a scorpion, the head of

a skeleton, but with eyes, and a goat's horns, and with four large wings

at the back, unfolded. A ring placed at the back of the head served to

hang the figure up. Along the back is an inscription in the Accadian

language, informing us that this pretty creature is the Demon of the

South-west Wind, and is to be placed at the door or window. For in

Chaldea the South-west Wind comes from the deserts of Arabia, its

burning breath consumes everything and produces the same ravages as the

Simoon in Africa. Therefore this particular talisman is most frequently

met with. Our museums contain many other figures of demons, used as

talismans to frighten away the evil spirits they were supposed to

represent. One has the head of a goat on a disproportionately long neck;

another shows a hyena's head, with huge open mouth, on a bear's body

with lion's paws." On the principle that possession is best guarded

against by the presence of beneficent spirits, the exorcisms--i.e.,

forms of conjuring designed to drive the evil demons out of a man or

dwelling--are usually accompanied with a request to good spirits to

enter the one or the other, instead of the wicked ones who have been

ejected. The supreme power which breaks that of all incantations,

talismans, conjuring rites whatever, is, it would appear, supposed to

reside in a great, divine name,--possibly a name of Êa himself. At all

events, it is Êa's own secret. For even in his dialogues with Meridug,

when entreated for this supreme aid in desperate cases, he is only

supposed to impart it to his son to use against the obdurate demons and

thereby crush their power, but it is not given, so that the demons are

only threatened with it, but it is not actually uttered in the course of

the incantations.

[Illustration: 56.--HEAD OF DEMON]

20. Not entirely unassisted did Êa pursue his gigantic task of

protection and healing. Along with him invocations are often addressed

to several other spirits conceived as essentially good divine beings,

whose beneficent influence is felt in many ways. Such was Im, the

Storm-Wind, with its accompanying vivifying showers; such are the

purifying and wholesome Waters, the Rivers and Springs which feed the

earth; above all, such were the Sun and Fire, also the Moon, objects of

double reverence and gratitude because they dispel the darkness of

night, which the Shumiro-Accads loathed and feared excessively, as the

time when the wicked demons are strongest and the power of bad men for

weaving deadly spells is greatest. The third Book of the Collection of

Magic Texts is composed almost entirely of hymns to these deities--as

well as to Êa and Meridug--which betray a somewhat later stage in the

nation's religious development, by the poetical beauty of some of the

fragments, and especially by a purer feeling of adoration and a higher

perception of moral goodness, which are absent from the oldest

incantations.

21. At noon, when the sun has reached the highest point in its heavenly

course, the earth lies before it without a shadow; all things, good or

bad, are manifest; its beams, after dispelling the unfriendly gloom,

pierce into every nook and cranny, bringing into light all ugly things

that hide and lurk; the evil-doer cowers and shuns its all-revealing

splendor, and, to perform his accursed deeds, waits the return of his

dark accomplice, night. What wonder then that to the Shumiro-Accads UD,

the Sun in all its midday glory, was a very hero of protection, the

source of truth and justice, the "supreme judge in Heaven and on earth,"

who "knows lie from truth," who knows the truth that is in the soul of

man. The hymns to Ud that have been deciphered are full of beautiful

images. Take for instance the following:--

"O Sun,[AE] I have called unto thee in the bright heavens. In

the shadow of the cedar art thou;" (i.e., it is thou who makest

the cedar to cast its shadow, holy and auspicious as the tree

itself.) "Thy feet are on the summits.... The countries have

wished for thee, they have longed for thy coming, O Lord! Thy

radiant light illumines all countries.... Thou makest lies to

vanish, thou destroyest the noxious influence of portents,

omens, spells, dreams and evil apparitions; thou turnest wicked

plots to a happy issue...."

This is both true and finely expressed. For what most inveterate

believer in ghosts and apparitions ever feared them by daylight? and the

last touch shows much moral sense and observation of the mysterious

workings of a beneficent power which often not merely defeats evil but

even turns it into good. There is splendid poetry in the following

fragment describing the glory of sunrise:--

"O Sun! thou hast stepped forth from the background of heaven,

thou hast pushed back the bolts of the brilliant heaven,--yea,

the gate of heaven. O Sun! above the land thou hast raised thy

head! O Sun! thou hast covered the immeasurable space of heaven

and countries!"

Another hymn describes how, at the Sun's appearance in the brilliant

portals of the heavens, and during his progress to their highest point,

all the great gods turn to his light, all the good spirits of heaven and

earth gaze up to his face, surround him joyfully and reverently, and

escort him in solemn procession. It needs only to put all these

fragments into fine verse to make out of them a poem which will be held

beautiful even in our day, when from our very childhood we learn to know

the difference between good and poor poetry, growing up, as we do, on

the best of all ages and all countries.

22. When the sun disappeared in the West, sinking rapidly, and diving,

as it were, into the very midst of darkness, the Shumiro-Accads did not

fancy him as either asleep or inactive, but on the contrary as still

engaged in his everlasting work. Under the name of NIN-DAR, he travels

through the dreary regions ruled by Mul-ge and, his essence being

\_light\_, he combats the powers of darkness in their own home, till He

comes out of it, a triumphant hero, in the morning. Nin-dar is also the

keeper of the hidden treasures of the earth--its metals and precious

stones, because, according to Mr. Lenormant's ingenious remark, "they

only wait, like him, the moment of emerging out of the earth, to emit a

bright radiancy." This radiancy of precious stones, which is like a

concentration of light in its purest form, was probably the reason why

they were in such general use as talismans, quite as much as their

hardness and durability.

23. But while the Sun accomplishes his nightly underground journey, men

would be left a prey to mortal terrors in the upper world, deprived of

light, their chief defence against the evil brood of darkness, were it

not for his substitute, Fire, who is by nature also a being of light,

and, as such, the friend of men, from whose paths and dwellings he

scares not only wild beasts and foes armed with open violence, but the

far more dangerous hosts of unseen enemies, both demons and spells cast

by wicked sorcerers. It is in this capacity of protector that the god

GIBIL (Fire) is chiefly invoked. In one very complete hymn he is

addressed thus:--

"Thou who drivest away the evil Maskim, who furtherest the

well-being of life, who strikest the breast of the wicked with

terror,--Fire, the destroyer of foes, dread weapon which

drivest away Pestilence."

This last attribute would show that the Shumiro-Accads had noticed the

hygienic properties of fire, which does indeed help to dispel miasmas

on account of the strong ventilation which a great blaze sets going.

Thus at a comparatively late epoch, some 400 years B.C., a terrible

plague broke out at Athens, the Greek city, and Hippocrates, a physician

of great genius and renown, who has been called "the Father of

Medicine," tried to diminish the contagion by keeping huge fires

continually blazing at different points of the city. It is the same very

correct idea which made men invoke Gibil as he who purifies the works of

man. He is also frequently called "the protector of the dwelling, of the

family," and praised for "creating light in the house of darkness," and

for bringing peace to all creation. Over and above these claims to

gratitude, Gibil had a special importance in the life of a people given

to the works of metallurgy, of which fire is the chief agent: "It is

thou," says one hymn, "who mixest tin and copper, it is thou who

purifiest silver and gold." Now the mixture of tin and copper produces

bronze, the first metal which has been used to make weapons and tools

of, in most cases long before iron, which is much more difficult to

work, and as the quality of the metal depends on the proper mixture of

the two ingredients, it is but natural that the aid of the god Fire

should have been specially invoked for the operation. But Fire is not

only a great power on earth, it is also, in the shape of Lightning, one

of the dreadest and most mysterious powers of the skies, and as such

sometimes called son of Ana (Heaven), or, in a more roundabout way, "the

Hero, son of the Ocean"--meaning the celestial Ocean, the great

reservoir of rains, from which the lightning seems to spring, as it

flashes through the heavy showers of a Southern thunder storm. In

whatever shape he appear, and whatever his functions, Gibil is hailed as

an invariably beneficent and friendly being.

24. When the feeling of helplessness forced on man by his position in

the midst of nature takes the form of a reverence for and dependence on

beings whom he conceives of as essentially good, a far nobler religion

and far higher moral tone are the immediate consequence. This conception

of absolute goodness sprang from the observation that certain beings or

spirits--like the Sun, Fire, the Thunderstorm--though possessing the

power of doing both good and harm, used it almost exclusively for the

benefit of men. This position once firmly established, the conclusion

naturally followed, that if these good beings once in awhile sent down a

catastrophe or calamity,--if the Sun scorched the fields or the

Thunderstorm swamped them, if the wholesome North Wind swept away the

huts and broke down the trees--it must be in anger, as a mark of

displeasure--in punishment. By what could man provoke the displeasure of

kind and beneficent beings? Clearly by not being like them, by doing not

good, but evil. And what is evil? That which is contrary to the nature

of the good spirits: doing wrong and harm to men; committing sins and

wicked actions. To avoid, therefore, provoking the anger of those good

but powerful spirits, so terrible in its manifestations, it is

necessary to try to please them, and that can be done only by being

like them,--good, or at least striving to be so, and, when temptation,

ignorance, passion or weakness of will have betrayed man into a

transgression, to confess it, express regret for the offence and an

intention not to offend again, in order to obtain forgiveness and be

spared. A righteous life, then, prayer and repentance are the proper

means of securing divine favor or mercy. It is evident that a religion

from which such lessons naturally spring is a great improvement on a

belief in beings who do good or evil indiscriminately, indeed prefer

doing evil, a belief which cannot teach a distinction between moral

right and wrong, or a rational distribution of rewards or punishment,

nor consequently inculcate the feeling of duty and responsibility,

without which goodness as a matter of principle is impossible and a

reliable state of society unattainable.

25. This higher and therefore later stage of moral and religious

development is very perceptible in the third book of the Magic

Collection. With the appreciation of absolute goodness, conscience has

awakened, and speaks with such insistence and authority that the

Shumiro-Accad, in the simplicity of his mind, has earnestly imagined it

to be the voice of a personal and separate deity, a guardian spirit

belonging to each man, dwelling within him and living his life. It is a

god--sometimes even a divine couple, both "god and goddess, pure

spirits"--who protects him from his birth, yet is not proof against the

spells of sorcerers and the attacks of the demons, and even can be

compelled to work evil in the person committed to its care, and

frequently called therefore "the son of his god," as we saw above, in

the incantation against the Disease of the Head. The conjuration or

exorcism which drives out the demon, of course restores the guardian

spirit to its own beneficent nature, and the patient not only to bodily

well-being, but also to peace of mind. That is what is desired, when a

prayer for the cure of a sick or possessed person ends with the words:

"May he be placed again in the gracious hands of his god!" When

therefore a man is represented as speaking to "his god" and confessing

to him his sin and distress, it is only a way of expressing that silent

self-communing of the soul, in which it reviews its own deficiencies,

forms good resolutions and prays to be released from the intolerable

burden of sin. There are some most beautiful prayers of this sort in the

collection. They have been called "the Penitential Psalms," from their

striking likeness to some of those psalms in which King David confesses

his iniquities and humbles himself before the Lord. The likeness extends

to both spirit and form, almost to words. If the older poet, in his

spiritual groping, addresses "his god and goddess," the higher, better

self which he feels within him and feels to be divine--his Conscience,

instead of the One God and Lord, his feeling is not less earnest, his

appeal not less pure and confiding. He confesses his transgression, but

pleads ignorance and sues for mercy. Here are some of the principal

verses, of which each is repeated twice, once addressed to "my god,"

and the second time to "my goddess." The title of the Psalm is: "The

complaints of the repentant heart. Sixty-five verses in all."

26. "My Lord, may the anger of his heart be allayed! May the

fool attain understanding! The god who knows the unknown, may

he be conciliated! The goddess who knows the unknown, may she

be conciliated!--I eat the food of wrath and drink the waters

of anguish.... O my god, my transgressions are very great, very

great my sins.... I transgress, and know it not. I sin, and

know it not. I feed on transgressions, and know it not. I

wander on wrong paths, and know it not.--The Lord, in the wrath

of his heart, has overwhelmed me with confusion.... I lie on

the ground, and none reaches a hand to me. I am silent and in

tears, and none takes me by the hand. I cry out, and there is

none that hears me. I am exhausted, oppressed, and none

releases me.... My god, who knowest the unknown, be

merciful!... My goddess, who knowest the unknown, be

merciful!... How long, O my god?... How long, O my goddess?...

Lord, thou wilt not repulse thy servant. In the midst of the

stormy waters, come to my assistance, take me by the hand! I

commit sins--turn them into blessedness! I commit

transgressions--let the wind sweep them away! My blasphemies

are very many--rend them like a garment!... God who knowest the

unknown,[AF] my sins are seven times seven,--forgive my

sins!..."

27. The religious feeling once roused to this extent, it is not to be

wondered at that in some invocations the distress or disease which had

formerly been taken as a gratuitous visitation, begins to be considered

in the light of a divine punishment, even though the afflicted person be

the king himself. This is very evident from the concluding passage of a

hymn to the Sun, in which it is the conjurer who speaks on behalf of the

patient, while presenting an offering:--

"O Sun, leave not my uplifted hands unregarded!--Eat his food,

refuse not his sacrifice, bring back his god to him, to be a

support unto his hand!--May his sin, at thy behest, be forgiven

him, his misdeed be forgotten!--May his trouble leave him! May

he recover from his illness!--Give to the king new vital

strength.... Escort the king, who lies at thy feet!--Also me,

the conjurer, thy respectful servant!"

28. There is another hymn of the same kind, not less remarkable for its

artistic and regular construction than for its beauty of feeling and

diction. The penitent speaks five double lines, and the priest adds two

more, as though endorsing the prayer and supporting it with the weight

of his own sacred character. This gives very regular strophes, of which,

unfortunately, only two have been well preserved:--

\_Penitent.\_--"I, thy servant, full of sighs, I call to thee.

Whoever is beset with sin, his ardent supplication thou

acceptest. If thou lookest on a man with pity, that man liveth.

Ruler of all, mistress of mankind! Merciful one, to whom it is

good to turn, who dost receive sighs!" \_Priest.\_--"While his

god and his goddess are wroth with him he calls on thee. Thy

countenance turn on him, take hold of his hand."

\_Penitent.\_--"Besides thee there is no deity to lead in

righteousness. Kindly look on me, accept my sighs. Speak: how

long? and let thine heart be appeased. When, O Lady, will thy

countenance turn on me? Even like doves I moan, I feed on

sighs." \_Priest.\_--"His heart is full of woe and trouble, and

full of sighs. Tears he sheds and breaks out into

lamentation."[AG]

29. Such is a not incomplete outline of this strange and primitive

religion, the religion of a people whose existence was not suspected

twenty-five years ago, yet which claims, with the Egyptians and the

Chinese, the distinction of being one of the oldest on earth, and in all

probability was older than both. This discovery is one of the most

important conquests of modern science, not only from its being highly

interesting in itself, but from the light it throws on innumerable

hitherto obscure points in the history of the ancient world, nay, on

many curious facts which reach down to our own time. Thus, the numerous

Turanian tribes which exist in a wholly or half nomadic condition in the

immense plains of Eastern and South-eastern Russia, in the forests and

wastes of Siberia, on the steppes and highlands of Central Asia, have no

other religion now than this of the old Shumiro-Accads, in its earliest

and most material shape. Everything to them is a spirit or has a spirit

of its own; they have no worship, no moral teaching, but only conjuring,

sorcerers, not priests. These men are called \_Shamans\_ and have great

influence among the tribes. The more advanced and cultivated Turanians,

like the Mongols and Mandchous, accord to one great Spirit the supremacy

over all others and call that Spirit which they conceive as absolutely

good, merciful and just, "Heaven," just as the Shumiro-Accads invoked

"Ana." This has been and still is the oldest national religion of the

Chinese. They say "Heaven" wherever we would say "God," and with the

same idea of loving adoration and reverent dread, which does not prevent

them from invoking the spirit of every hill, river, wind or forest, and

numbering among this host also the souls of the deceased. This clearly

corresponds to the second and higher stage of the Accadian religion, and

marks the utmost limit which the Yellow Race have been able to attain in

spiritual life. True, the greater part of the Chinese now have another

religion; they are Buddhists; while the Turks and the great majority of

the Tatars, Mongols and Mandchous, not to speak of other less important

divisions, are Mussulmans. But both Buddhism and Mahometanism are

foreign religions, which they have borrowed, adopted, not worked out for

themselves. Here then we are also met by that fatal law of limitation,

which through all ages seems to have said to the men of yellow skin and

high cheek-bones, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further." Thus it was

in Chaldea. The work of civilization and spiritual development begun by

the people of Shumir and Accad was soon taken out of their hands and

carried on by newcomers from the east, those descendants of Noah, who

"found a plain in the land of Shinar and dwelt there."

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III.

Professor Louis Dyer, of Harvard University, has attempted a rendering

into English verse of the famous incantation of the Seven Maskim. The

result of the experiment is a translation most faithful in the spirit

and main features, if not always literal; and which, by his kind

permission, we here offer to our readers.

A CHARM.

I.

Seven are they, they are seven;

In the caverns of ocean they dwell,

They are clothed in the lightnings of heaven,

Of their growth the deep waters can tell;

Seven are they, they are seven.

II.

Broad is their way and their course is wide,

Where the seeds of destruction they sow,

O'er the tops of the hills where they stride,

To lay waste the smooth highways below,--

Broad is their way and their course is wide.

III.

Man they are not, nor womankind,

For in fury they sweep from the main,

And have wedded no wife but the wind,

And no child have begotten but pain,--

Man they are not, nor womankind.

IV.

Fear is not in them, not awe;

Supplication they heed not, nor prayer,

For they know no compassion nor law,

And are deaf to the cries of despair,--

Fear is not in them, not awe.

V.

Curséd they are, they are curséd,

They are foes to wise Êa's great name;

By the whirlwind are all things disperséd

On the paths of the flash of their flame,--

Curséd they are, they are curséd.

VI.

Spirit of Heaven, oh, help! Help, oh, Spirit of Earth!

They are seven, thrice said they are seven;

For the gods they are Bearers of Thrones,

But for men they are Breeders of Dearth

And the authors of sorrows and moans.

They are seven, thrice said they are seven.

Spirit of Heaven, oh, help! Help, oh, Spirit of Earth!

FOOTNOTES:

[AC] "La Magie et la Divination chez les Chaldéens," 1874-5. German

translation of it, 1878.

[AD] Alfred Maury, "La Magie et l'Astrologie dans l'Antiquité et au

Moyen-âge." Introduction, p. 1.

[AE] "UD" not being a proper name, but the name of the sun in the

language of Shumir and Accad, it can be rendered in translation by

"Sun," with a capital.

[AF] Another and more recent translator renders this line: "God who

knowest I knew not." Whichever rendering is right, the thought is

beautiful and profound.

[AG] This hymn is given by H. Zimmern, as the text to a dissertation on

the language and grammar.

IV.

CUSHITES AND SEMITES.--EARLY CHALDEAN HISTORY.

1. We have just seen that the hymns and prayers which compose the third

part of the great Magic Collection really mark a later and higher stage

in the religious conceptions of the Turanian settlers of Chaldea, the

people of Shumir and Accad. This improvement was not entirely due to a

process of natural development, but in a great measure to the influence

of that other and nobler race, who came from the East. When the priestly

historian of Babylon, Berosus, calls the older population "men of

foreign race," it is because he belonged himself to that second race,

who remained in the land, introduced their own superior culture, and

asserted their supremacy to the end of Babylon. The national legends

have preserved the memory of this important event, which they represent

as a direct divine revelation. Êa, the all-wise himself, it was

believed, had appeared to men and taught them things human and divine.

Berosus faithfully reports the legend, but seems to have given the God's

name "Êa-Han" ("Êa the Fish") under the corrupted Greek form of OANNES.

This is the narrative, of which we already know the first line:

"There was originally at Babylon a multitude of men of foreign race who

had colonized Chaldea, and they lived without order, like animals. But

in the first year" (meaning the first year of the new order of things,

the new dispensation) "there appeared, from out of the Erythrean Sea

(the ancient Greek name for the Persian Gulf) where it borders upon

Babylonia, an animal endowed with reason, who was called OANNES. The

whole body of the animal was that of a fish, but under the fish's head

he had another head, and also feet below, growing out of his fish's

tail, similar to those of a man; also human speech, and his image is

preserved to this day. This being used to spend the whole day amidst

men, without taking any food, and he gave them an insight into letters,

and sciences, and every kind of art; he taught them how to found cities,

to construct temples, to introduce laws and to measure land; he showed

them how to sow seeds and gather in crops; in short, he instructed them

in everything that softens manners and makes up civilization, so that

from that time no one has invented anything new. Then, when the sun went

down, this monstrous Oannes used to plunge back into the sea and spend

the night in the midst of the boundless waves, for he was amphibious."

2. The question, \_Who\_ were the bringers of this advanced civilization?

has caused much division among the most eminent scholars. Two solutions

are offered. Both being based on many and serious grounds and supported

by illustrious names, and the point being far from settled yet, it is

but fair to state them both. The two greatest of German assyriologists,

Professors Eberhard Schrader and Friedrich Delitzsch, and the German

school which acknowledges them as leaders, hold that the bringers of the

new and more perfect civilization were Semites--descendants of Shem,

i.e., people of the same race as the Hebrews--while the late François

Lenormant and his followers contend that they were Cushites in the first

instance,--i.e., belonged to that important family of nations which we

find grouped, in Chapter X. of Genesis, under the name of Cush, himself

a son of Ham--and that the Semitic immigration came second. As the

latter hypothesis puts forward, among other arguments, the authority of

the Biblical historians, and moreover involves the destinies of a very

numerous and vastly important branch of ancient humanity, we will yield

to it the right of precedence.

[Illustration: 57.--OANNES. (Smith's "Chaldean Genesis.")]

3. The name "HAM" signifies "brown, dark" (not "black"). Therefore, to

speak of certain nations as "sons of Ham," is to say that they belonged

to "the Dark Race." Yet, originally, this great section of Noah's

posterity was as white of color as the other two. It seems to have first

existed as a separate race in a region not very distant from the high

table-land of Central Asia, the probable first cradle of mankind. That

division of this great section which again separated and became the race

of Cush, appears to have been drawn southwards by reasons which it is,

of course, impossible to ascertain. It is easier to guess at the route

they must have taken along the HINDU CUSH,[AH] a range of mountains

which must have been to it a barrier in the west, and which joins the

western end of the Himâlaya, the mightiest mountain-chain in the world.

The break between the Hindu-Cush and the Himâlaya forms a mountain pass,

just at the spot where the river INDUS (most probably the PISCHON of

Gen., Ch. II.) turns abruptly to the south, to water the rich plains of

India. Through this pass, and following the course of the river, further

Cushite detachments must have penetrated into that vast and attractive

peninsula, even to the south of it, where they found a population mostly

belonging to the Black branch of humanity, so persistently ignored by

the writer of Chap. X. Hundreds of years spent under a tropical clime

and intermarriage with the Negro natives altered not only the color of

their skin, but also the shape of their features. So that when Cushite

tribes, with the restless migratory spirit so characteristic of all

early ages, began to work their way back again to the north, then to the

west, along the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, they

were both dark-skinned and thick-lipped, with a decided tendency towards

the Negro type, lesser or greater according to the degree of mixture

with the inferior race. That this type was foreign to them is proved by

the facility with which their features resumed the nobler cast of the

white races wherever they stayed long enough among these, as was the

case in Chaldea, in Arabia, in the countries of Canaan, whither many of

these tribes wandered at various times.

4. Some Cushite detachments, who reached the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb,

crossed over into Africa, and settling there amidst the barbarous native

negro tribes, formed a nation which became known to its northern

neighbors, the Egyptians, to the Hebrews, and throughout the ancient

East under its own proper name of CUSH, and whose outward

characteristics came, in the course of time, so near to the pure Negro

type as to be scarcely recognizable from it. This is the same nation

which, to us moderns, is better known under the name of ETHIOPIANS,

given to it by the Greeks, as well as to the eastern division of the

same race. The Egyptians themselves were another branch of the same

great section of humanity, represented in the genealogy of Chap. X. by

the name of MIZRAIM, second son of Ham. These must have come from the

east along the Persian Gulf, then across Northern Arabia and the Isthmus

of Suez. In the color and features of the Egyptians the mixture with

black races is also noticeable, but not enough to destroy the beauty and

expressiveness of the original type, at all events far less than in

their southern neighbors, the Ethiopians, with whom, moreover, they were

throughout on the worst of terms, whom they loathed and invariably

designated under the name of "vile Cush."

5. A third and very important branch of the Hamite family, the

CANAANITES, after reaching the Persian Gulf, and probably sojourning

there some time, spread, not to the south, but to the west, across the

plains of Syria, across the mountain chain of LEBANON and to the very

edge of the Mediterranean Sea, occupying all the land which later became

Palestine, also to the north-west, as far as the mountain chain of

TAURUS. This group was very numerous, and broken up into a great many

peoples, as we can judge from the list of nations given in Chap. X. (v.

15-18) as "sons of Canaan." In its migrations over this comparatively

northern region, Canaan found and displaced not black natives, but

Turanian nomadic tribes, who roamed at large over grassy wildernesses

and sandy wastes and are possibly to be accounted as the representatives

of that portion of the race which the biblical historian embodies in the

pastoral names of Jabal and Jubal--(Gen. iv., 20-22)--"The father of

such as dwell in tents and have cattle," and "the father of all such as

handle the harp and pipe." In which case the Turanian settlers and

builders of cities would answer to Tubalcain, the smith and artificer.

The Canaanites, therefore, are those among the Hamites who, in point of

color and features, have least differed from their kindred white races,

though still sufficiently bronzed to be entitled to the name of "sons of

Ham," i.e., "belonging to the dark-skinned race."

6. Migrating races do not traverse continents with the same rapidity as

marching armies. The progress is slow, the stations are many. Every

station becomes a settlement, sometimes the beginning of a new

nation--so many landmarks along the way. And the distance between the

starting-point and the furthest point reached by the race is measured

not only by thousands of miles, but also by hundreds and hundreds of

years; only the space can be actually measured; while the time can be

computed merely by conjecture. The route from the south of India, along

the shore of Malabar, the Persian Gulf, across the Arabian deserts, then

down along the Red Sea and across the straits into Africa, is of such

tremendous length that the settlements which the Cushite race left

scattered along it must have been more than usually numerous. According

to the upholders of a Cushite colonization of Chaldea, one important

detachment appears to have taken possession of the small islands along

the eastern shore of the Persian Gulf and to have stayed there for

several centuries, probably choosing these island homes on account of

their seclusion and safety from invasion. There, unmolested and

undisturbed, they could develop a certain spirit of abstract speculation

to which their natural bent inclined them. They were great star-gazers

and calculators--two tastes which go well together, for Astronomy cannot

exist without Mathematics. But star-gazing is also favorable to

dreaming, and the Cushite islanders had time for dreams. Thoughts of

heavenly things occupied them much; they worked out a religion beautiful

in many ways and full of deep sense; their priests dwelt in communities

or colleges, probably one on every island, and spent their time not only

in scientific study and religious contemplation, but also in the more

practical art of government, for there do not appear as yet to have

been any kings among them.

7. But there came a time when the small islands were overcrowded with

the increased population, and detachments began to cross the water and

land at the furthest point of the Gulf, in the land of the great rivers.

Here they found a people not unpractised in several primitive arts, and

possessed of some important fundamental inventions--writing, irrigation

by means of canals--but deplorably deficient in spiritual development,

and positively barbarous in the presence of an altogether higher

culture. The Cushites rapidly spread through the land of Shumir and

Accad, and taught the people with whom they afterwards, as usual,

intermarried, until both formed but one nation--with this difference,

that towards the north of Chaldea the Cushite element became

predominant, while in the south numbers remained on the side of the

Turanians. Whether this result was attained altogether peacefully or was

preceded by a period of resistance and fighting, we have no means of

ascertaining. If there was such a period, it cannot have lasted long,

for intellect was on the side of the newcomers, and that is a power

which soon wins the day. At all events the final fusion must have been

complete and friendly, since the old national legend reported by Berosus

cleverly combines the two elements, by attributing the part of teacher

and revealer to the Shumiro-Accad's own favorite divine being Êa, while

it is not impossible that it alludes to the coming of the Cushites in

making the amphibious Oannes rise out of the Persian Gulf, "where it

borders on Chaldea." The legend goes on to say that Oannes set down his

revelations in books which he consigned into the keeping of men, and

that several more divine animals of the same kind continued to appear at

long intervals. Who knows but the latter strange detail may have been

meant to allude fantastically to the arrival of successive Cushite

colonies? In the long run of time, of course all such meaning would be

forgotten and the legend remain as a miraculous and inexplicable

incident.

8. It would be vain to attempt to fix any dates for events which took

place in such remote antiquity, in the absence of any evidence or

document that might be grasped. Yet, by close study of facts, by

laborious and ingenious comparing of later texts, of every scrap of

evidence furnished by monuments, of information contained in the

fragments of Berosus and of other writers, mostly Greek, it has been

possible, with due caution, to arrive at some approximative dates,

which, after all, are all that is needed to classify things in an order

intelligible and correct in the main. Even should further discoveries

and researches arrive at more exact results, the gain will be

comparatively small. At such a distance, differences of a couple of

centuries do not matter much. When we look down a long line of houses or

trees, the more distant ones appear to run together, and we do not

always see where it ends--yet we can perfectly well pursue its

direction. The same with the so-called double stars in astronomy: they

are stars which, though really separated by thousands of miles, appear

as one on account of the immense distance between them and our eye, and

only the strongest telescope lenses show them to be separate bodies,

though still close together. Yet this is sufficient to assign them their

place so correctly on the map of the heavens, that they do not disturb

the calculations in which they are included. The same kind of

perspective applies to the history of remote antiquity. As the gloom

which has covered it so long slowly rolls back before the light of

scientific research, we begin to discern outlines and landmarks, at

first so dim and wavering as rather to mislead than to instruct; but

soon the searcher's eye, sharpened by practice, fixes them sufficiently

to bring them into connection with the later and more fully illumined

portions of the eternally unrolling picture. Chance, to which all

discoverers are so much indebted, frequently supplies such a landmark,

and now and then one so firm and distinct as to become a trustworthy

centre for a whole group.

9. The annals of the Assyrian king Asshurbanipal (the founder of the

great Library at Nineveh) have established beyond a doubt the first

positive date that has been secured for the History of Chaldea. That

king was for a long time at war with the neighboring kingdom of ELAM,

and ended by conquering and destroying its capital, SHUSHAN (Susa),

after carrying away all the riches from the royal palace and all the

statues from the great temple. This happened in the year 645 B.C. In the

inscriptions in which he records this event, the king informs us that in

that temple he found a statue of the Chaldean goddess NANA, which had

been carried away from her own temple in the city of URUKH (Erech, now

Warka) by a king of Elam of the name of KHUDUR-NANKHUNDI, who invaded

the land of Accad 1635 years before, and that he, Asshurbanipal, by the

goddess's own express command, took her from where she had dwelt in

Elam, "a place not appointed her," and reinstated her in her own

sanctuary "which she had delighted in." 1635 added to 645 make 2280, a

date not to be disputed. Now if a successful Elamite invasion in 2280

found in Chaldea famous sanctuaries to desecrate, the religion to which

these sanctuaries belonged, that of the Cushite, or Semitic colonists,

must have been established in the country already for several, if not

many, centuries. Indeed, quite recent discoveries show that it had been

so considerably over a thousand years, so that we cannot possibly accept

a date later than 4000 B.C. for the foreign immigration. The

Shumiro-Accadian culture was too firmly rooted then and too completely

worked out--as far as it went--to allow less than about 1000 years for

its establishment. This takes us as far back as 5000 B.C.--a pretty

respectable figure, especially when we think of the vista of time which

opens behind it, and for which calculation fairly fails us. For if the

Turanian settlers brought the rudiments of that culture from the

highlands of Elam, how long had they sojourned there before they

descended into the plains? And how long had it taken them to reach that

station on their way from the race's mountain home in the far

Northeast, in the Altaï valleys?

10. However that may be, 5000 B.C. is a moderate and probable date. But

ancient nations were not content with such, when they tried to locate

and classify their own beginnings. These being necessarily obscure and

only vaguely shadowed out in traditions which gained in fancifulness and

lost in probability with every succeeding generation that received them

and handed them down to the next, they loved to magnify them by

enshrouding them in the mystery of innumerable ages. The more appalling

the figures, the greater the glory. Thus we gather from some fragments

of Berosus that, according to the national Chaldean tradition, there was

an interval of over 259,000 years between the first appearance of Oannes

and the first king. Then come ten successive kings, each of whom reigns

a no less extravagant number of years (one 36,000, another 43,000, even

64,000; 10,800 being the most modest figure), till the aggregate of all

these different periods makes up the pretty sum total of 691,200 years,

supposed to have elapsed from the first appearance of Oannes to the

Deluge. It is so impossible to imagine so prodigious a number of years

or couple with it anything at all real, that we might just as well

substitute for such a figure the simpler "very, very long ago," or still

better, the approved fairy tale beginning, "There was once upon a time,

..." It conveys quite as definite a notion, and would, in such a case,

be the more appropriate, that all a nation's most marvellous

traditions, most fabulous legends, are naturally placed in those

stupendously remote ages which no record could reach, no experience

control. Although these traditions and legends generally had a certain

body of actual truth and dimly remembered fact in them, which might

still be apparent to the learned and the cultivated few, the ignorant

masses of the people swallowed the thing whole, as real history, and

found things acknowledged as impossible easy to believe, for the simple

reason that "it was so very long ago!" A Chaldean of Alexander's time

certainly did not expect to meet a divine Man-Fish in his walks along

the sea-shore, but--there was no knowing what might or might not have

happened seven hundred thousand years ago! In the legend of the six

successive apparitions under the first ten long-lived kings, he would

not have descried the simple sense so lucidly set forth by Mr. Maspero,

one of the most distinguished of French Orientalists:--"The times

preceding the Deluge represented an experimental period, during which

mankind, being as yet barbarous, had need of divine assistance to

overcome the difficulties with which it was surrounded. Those times were

filled up with six manifestations of the deity, doubtless answering to

the number of sacred books in which the priests saw the most complete

expression of revealed law."[AI] This presents another and more probable

explanation of the legend than the one suggested above, (end of § 7);

but there is no more actual \_proof\_ of the one than of the other being

the correct one.

11. If Chaldea was in after times a battle-ground of nations, it was in

the beginning a very nursery and hive of peoples. The various races in

their migrations must necessarily have been attracted and arrested by

the exceeding fertility of its soil, which it is said, in the times of

its highest prosperity and under proper conditions of irrigation,

yielded two hundredfold return for the grain it received. Settlement

must have followed settlement in rapid succession. But the nomadic

element was for a long time still very prevalent, and side by side with

the builders of cities and tillers of fields, shepherd tribes roamed

peacefully over the face of the land, tolerated and unmolested by the

permanent population, with which they mixed but warily, occasionally

settling down temporarily, and shifting their settlements as safety or

advantage required it,--or wandering off altogether from that common

halting-place, to the north, and west, and south-west. This makes it

very plain why Chaldea is given as the land where the tongues became

confused and the second separation of races took place.

12. Of those principally nomadic tribes the greatest part did not

belong, like the Cushites or Canaanites, to the descendants of Ham, "the

Dark," but to those of SHEM, whose name, signifying "Glory, Renown,"

stamps him as the eponymous ancestor of that race which has always

firmly believed itself to be the chosen one of God. They were Semites.

When they arrived on the plains of Chaldea, they were inferior in

civilization to the people among whom they came to dwell. They knew

nothing of city arts and had all to learn. They did learn, for superior

culture always asserts its power,--even to the language of the Cushite

settlers, which the latter were rapidly substituting for the rude and

poor Turanian idiom of Shumir and Accad. This language, or rather

various dialects of it, were common to most Hamitic and Semitic tribes,

among whom that from which the Hebrews sprang brought it to its greatest

perfection. The others worked it into different kindred dialects--the

Assyrian, the Aramaic or Syrian, the Arabic--according to their several

peculiarities. The Phoenicians of the sea-shore, and all the Canaanite

nations, also spoke languages belonging to the same family, and

therefore classed among the so-called Semitic tongues. Thus it has come

to pass that philology,--or the Science of Languages,--adopted a wrong

name for that entire group, calling the languages belonging to it,

"Semitic," while, in reality, they are originally "Hamitic." The reason

is that the Hamitic origin of those important languages which have been

called Semitic these hundred years had not been discovered until very

lately, and to change the name now would produce considerable confusion.

13. Most of the Semitic tribes who dwelt in Chaldea adopted not only the

Cushite language, but the Cushite culture and religion. Asshur carried

all three northward, where the Assyrian kingdom arose out of a few

Babylonian colonies, and Aram westward to the land which was afterwards

called Southern Syria, and where the great city of Damascus long

flourished and still exists. But there was one tribe of higher spiritual

gifts than the others. It was not numerous, for through many generations

it consisted of only one great family governed by its own eldest chief

or patriarch. It is true that such a family, with the patriarch's own

children and children's children, its wealth of horses, camels, flocks

of sheep, its host of servants and slaves, male and female, represented

quite a respectable force; Abraham could muster three hundred eighteen

armed and \_trained\_ servants who had been born in his own household.

This particular tribe seems to have wandered for some time on the

outskirts of Chaldea and in the land itself, as indicated by the name

given to its eponym in Chap. X.: ARPHAXAD (more correctly ARPHAKSHAD),

corrupted from AREPH-KASDÎM, which means, "bordering on the Chaldeans,"

or perhaps "boundaries"--in the sense of "land"--of the Chaldeans.

Generation after generation pushed further westward, traversed the land

of Shinar, crossed the Euphrates and reached the city of Ur, in or near

which the tribe dwelt many years.

14. Ur was then the greatest city of Southern Chaldea. The earliest

known kings of Shumir resided in it, and besides that, it was the

principal commercial mart of the country. For, strange as it may appear

when we look on a modern map, Ur, the ruins of which are now 150 miles

from the sea, was then a maritime city, with harbor and ship docks. The

waters of the Gulf reached much further inland than they do now. There

was then a distance of many miles between the mouths of the Tigris and

Euphrates, and Ur lay very near the mouth of the latter river. Like all

commercial and maritime cities, it was the resort not only of all the

different races which dwelt in the land itself, but also of foreign

traders. The active intellectual life of a capital, too, which was at

the same time a great religious centre and the seat of a powerful

priesthood, must of necessity have favored interchange of ideas, and

have exerted an influence on that Semitic tribe of whom the Bible tells

us that it "went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of

Canaan," led by the patriarch Terah and his son Abraham (Genesis xi.

31). The historian of Genesis here, as throughout the narrative, does

not mention any date whatever for the event he relates; nor does he hint

at the cause of this removal. On the first of these points the study of

Chaldean cuneiform monuments throws considerable light, while the latter

does not admit of more than guesses--of which something hereafter.

15. Such is a broad and cursory outline of the theory according to which

Cushite immigrations preceded the arrival of the Semites in the land of

Shumir and Accad. Those who uphold it give several reasons for their

opinion, such as that the Bible several times mentions a Cush located in

the East and evidently different from the Cush which has been identified

as Ethiopia; that, in Chap. X. of Genesis (8-12), Nimrod, the legendary

hero, whose empire at first was in "the land of Shinar," and who is

said to have "gone forth out of that land into Assyria," is called a son

of Cush; that the most ancient Greek poets knew of "Ethiopians" in the

far East as opposed to those of the South--and several more. Those

scholars who oppose this theory dismiss it wholesale. They will not

admit the existence of a Cushite element or migration in the East at

all, and put down the expressions in the Bible as simple mistakes,

either of the writers or copyists. According to them, there was only one

immigration in the land of Shumir and Accad, that of the Semites,

achieved through many ages and in numerous instalments. The language

which superseded the ancient Shumiro-Accadian idiom is to them a Semitic

one in the directest and most exclusive sense; the culture grafted on

that of the earlier population is by them called purely "Semitic;" while

their opponents frequently use the compound designation of

"Cushito-Semitic," to indicate the two distinct elements of which, to

them, it appears composed. It must be owned that the anti-Cushite

opinion is gaining ground. Yet the Cushite theory cannot be considered

as disposed of, only "not proven,"--or not sufficiently so, and

therefore in abeyance and fallen into some disfavor. With this proviso

we shall adopt the word "Semitic," as the simpler and more generally

used.

16. It is only with the rise of Semitic culture in Southern Mesopotamia

that we enter on a period which, however remote, misty, and full of

blanks, may still be called, in a measure, "historical," because there

is a certain number of facts, of which contemporary monuments give

positive evidence. True, the connection between those facts is often not

apparent; their causes and effects are frequently not to be made out

save by more or less daring conjectures; still there are numerous

landmarks of proven fact, and with these real history begins. No matter

if broad gaps have to be left open or temporarily filled with guesses.

New discoveries are almost daily turning up, inscriptions, texts, which

unexpectedly here supply a missing link, there confirm or demolish a

conjecture, establish or correct dates which had long been puzzles or

suggested on insufficient foundations. In short, details may be supplied

as yet brokenly and sparingly, but the general outline of the condition

of Chaldea may be made out as far back as forty centuries before Christ.

17. Of one thing there can be no doubt: that our earliest glimpse of the

political condition of Chaldea shows us the country divided into

numerous small states, each headed by a great city, made famous and

powerful by the sanctuary or temple of some particular deity, and ruled

by a \_patesi\_, a title which is now thought to mean \_priest-king\_, i.e.,

priest and king in one. There can be little doubt that the beginning of

the city was everywhere the temple, with its college of ministering

priests, and that the surrounding settlement was gradually formed by

pilgrims and worshippers. That royalty developed out of the priesthood

is also more than probable, and consequently must have been, in its

first stage, a form of priestly rule, and, in a great measure,

subordinate to priestly influence. There comes a time when for the title

of \_patesi\_ is substituted that of "king" simply--a change which very

possibly indicates the assumption by the kings of a more independent

attitude towards the class from which their power originally sprang. It

is noticeable that the distinction between the Semitic newcomers and the

indigenous Shumiro-Accadians continues long to be traceable in the names

of the royal temple-builders, even after the new Semitic idiom, which we

call the Assyrian, had entirely ousted the old language--a process which

must have taken considerable time, for it appears, and indeed stands to

reason, that the newcomers, in order to secure the wished for influence

and propagate their own culture, at first not only learned to understand

but actually used themselves the language of the people among whom they

came, at least in their public documents. This it is that explains the

fact that so many inscriptions and tablets, while written in the dialect

of Shumir or Accad, are Semitic in spirit and in the grade of culture

they betray. Furthermore, even superficial observation shows that the

old language and the old names survive longest in Shumir,--the South.

From this fact it is to be inferred with little chance of mistake that

the North,--the land of Accad,--was earlier Semitized, that the Semitic

immigrants established their first headquarters in that part of the

country, that their power and influence thence spread to the South.

18. Fully in accordance with these indications, the first grand

historical figure that meets us at the threshold of Chaldean history,

dim with the mists of ages and fabulous traditions, yet unmistakably

real, is that of the Semite SHARRUKIN, king of Accad--or AGADÊ, as the

great Northern city came to be called--more generally known in history

under the corrupt modern reading of SARGON, and called Sargon I., "the

First," to distinguish him from another monarch of the same name who was

found to have reigned many centuries later. As to the city of Agadê, it

is no other than the city of Accad mentioned in Genesis x., 10. It was

situated close to the Euphrates on a wide canal just opposite Sippar, so

that in time the two cities came to be considered as one double city,

and the Hebrews always called it "the two Sippars"--SEPHARVAIM, which is

often spoken of in the Bible. It was there that Sharrukin established

his rule, and a statue was afterwards raised to him there, the

inscription on which, making him speak, as usual, in the first person,

begins with the proud declaration: "Sharrukin, the mighty king, the king

of Agadê, am I." Yet, although his reforms and conquests were of lasting

importance, and himself remained one of the favorite heroes of Chaldean

tradition, he appears to have been an adventurer and usurper. Perhaps he

was, for this very reason, all the dearer to the popular fancy, which,

in the absence of positive facts concerning his birth and origin, wove

around them a halo of romance, and told of him a story which must be

nearly as old as mankind, for it has been told over and over again, in

different countries and ages, of a great many famous kings and heroes.

This of Sharrukin is the oldest known version of it, and the inscription

on his statue puts it into the king's own mouth. It makes him say that

he knew not his father, and that his mother, a princess, gave him birth

in a hiding-place, (or "an inaccessible place"), near the Euphrates, but

that his family were the rulers of the land. "She placed me in a basket

of rushes," the king is further made to say; "with bitumen the door of

my ark she closed. She launched me on the river, which drowned me not.

The river bore me along; to Akki, the water-carrier, it brought me.

Akki, the water-carrier, in the tenderness of his heart lifted me up.

Akki, the water-carrier, as his own child brought me up. Akki, the

water-carrier, made me his gardener. And in my gardenership the goddess

Ishtar loved me...."

19. Whatever his origin and however he came by the royal power, Sargon

was a great monarch. It is said that he undertook successful expeditions

into Syria, and a campaign into Elam; that with captives of the

conquered races he partly peopled his new capital, Agadê, where he built

a palace and a magnificent temple; that on one occasion he was absent

three years, during which time he advanced to the very shores of the

Mediterranean, which he calls "the sea of the setting sun," and where he

left memorial records of his deeds, and returned home in triumph,

bringing with him immense spoils. The inscription contains only the

following very moderate mention of his military career: "For forty-five

years the kingdom I have ruled. And the black-head race (Accadian) I

have governed. In multitudes of bronze chariots I rode over rugged

lands. I governed the upper countries. Three times to the coast of the

(Persian) sea I advanced...."[AJ]

[Illustration: 58.--CYLINDER OF SARGON, FROM AGADÊ. (Hommel, "Gesch.

Babyloniens u. Assyriens.")]

20. This Sharrukin must not be confounded with another king of the same

name, who reigned also in Agadê, some 1800 years later (about 2000

B.C.), and in whose time was completed and brought into definite shape a

vast religious reform which had been slowly working itself out ever

since the Semitic and Accadian elements began to mix in matters of

spiritual speculation and worship. What was the result of the

amalgamation will form the subject of the next chapter. Suffice it here

to say that the religion of Chaldea in the form which it assumed under

the second Sharrukin remained fixed forever, and when Babylonian

religion is spoken of, it is that which is understood by that name. The

great theological work demanded a literary undertaking no less great.

The incantations and magic forms of the first, purely Turanian, period

had to be collected and put in order, as well as the hymns and prayers

of the second period, composed under the influence of a higher and more

spiritual religious feeling. But all this literature was in the language

of the older population, while the ruling class--the royal houses and

the priesthood--were becoming almost exclusively Semitic. It was

necessary, therefore, that they should study the old language and learn

it so thoroughly as not only to understand and read it, but to be able

to use it, in speaking and writing. For that purpose Sargon not only

ordered the ancient texts, when collected and sorted, to be copied on

clay tablets with the translation--either between the lines, or on

opposite columns--into the now generally used modern Semitic language,

which we may as well begin to call by its usual name, Assyrian, but gave

directions for the compilation of grammars and vocabularies,--the very

works which have enabled the scholars of the present day to arrive at

the understanding of that prodigiously ancient tongue which, without

such assistance, must have remained a sealed book forever.

21. Such is the origin of the great collection in three books and two

hundred tablets, the contents of which made the subject of the preceding

chapter. To this must be added another great work, in seventy tablets,

in Assyrian, on astrology, i.e., the supposed influence of the heavenly

bodies, according to their positions and conjunctions, on the fate of

nations and individuals and on the course of things on earth

generally--an influence which was firmly believed in; and probably yet a

third work, on omens, prodigies and divination. To carry out these

extensive literary labors, to treasure the results worthily and safely,

Sargon II. either founded or greatly enlarged the library of the

priestly college at Urukh (Erech), so that this city came to be called

"the City of Books." This repository became the most important one in

all Chaldea, and when, fourteen centuries later, the Assyrian

Asshurbanipal sent his scribes all over the country, to collect copies

of the ancient, sacred and scientific texts for his own royal library at

Nineveh, it was at Erech that they gathered their most abundant harvest,

being specially favored there by the priests, who were on excellent

terms with the king after he had brought back from Shushan and restored

to them the statue of their goddess Nana. Agadê thus became the

headquarters, as it were, of the Semitic influence and reform, which

spread thence towards the South, forming a counter-current to the

culture of Shumir, which had steadily progressed from the Gulf

northward.

22. It is just possible that Sargon's collection may have also comprised

literature of a lighter nature than those ponderous works on magic and

astrology. At least, a work on agriculture has been found, which is

thought to have been compiled for the same king's library,[AK] and which

contains bits of popular poetry (maxims, riddles, short peasant songs)

of the kind that is now called "folk-lore." Of the correctness of the

supposition there is, as yet, no absolute proof, but as some of these

fragments, of which unfortunately but few could be recovered, are very

interesting and pretty in their way, this is perhaps the best place to

insert them. The following four may be called "Maxims," and the first is

singularly pithy and powerfully expressed.

1. Like an oven that is old

Against thy foes be hard and strong.

2. May he suffer vengeance,

May it be returned to him,

Who gives the provocation.

3. If evil thou doest,

To the everlasting sea

Thou shalt surely go.

4. Thou wentest, thou spoiledst

The land of the foe,

For the foe came and spoiled

Thy land, even thine.

23. It will be noticed that No. 3 alone expresses moral feeling of a

high standard, and is distinctively Semitic in spirit, the same spirit

which is expressed in a loftier and purely religious vein, and a more

poetical form in one of the "Penitential Psalms," where it says:

Whoso fears not his god--will be cut off even like a reed.

Whoso honors not the goddess--his bodily strength shall waste away;

Like a star of heaven, his light shall wane; like waters of the night

he shall disappear.

Some fragments can be well imagined as being sung by the peasant at work

to his ploughing team, in whose person he sometimes speaks:

5. A heifer am I,--to the cow I am yoked;

The plough handle is strong--lift it up! lift it up!

6. My knees are marching--my feet are not resting;

With no wealth of thy own--grain thou makest for me.[AL]

24. A great deal of additional interest in the elder Sargon of Agadê has

lately been excited by an extraordinary discovery connected with him,

which produced a startling revolution in the hitherto accepted Chaldean

chronology. This question of dates is always a most intricate and

puzzling one in dealing with ancient Oriental nations, because they did

not date their years from some particular event, as we do, and as did

the Mohammedans, the Greeks and the Romans. In the inscriptions things

are said to have happened in the year so-and-so of such a king's reign.

Where to place that king is the next question--unanswerable, unless, as

fortunately is mostly the case, some clue is supplied, to borrow a legal

term, by circumstantial evidence. Thus, if an eclipse is mentioned, the

time can easily be determined by the help of astronomy, which can

calculate backward as well as forward. Or else, an event or a person

belonging to another country is alluded to, and if they are known to us

from other sources, that is a great help. Such a coincidence (which is

called a SYNCHRONISM) is most valuable, and dates established by

synchronisms are generally reliable. Then, luckily for us, Assyrian and

Babylonian kings of a late period, whose dates are fixed and proved

beyond a doubt, were much in the habit, in their historical

inscriptions, of mentioning events that had taken place before their

time and specifying the number of years elapsed, often also the king

under whose reign the event, whatever it was, had taken place. This is

the most precious clue of all, as it is infallible, and besides

ascertaining one point, gives a firm foothold, whereby to arrive at many

others. The famous memorandum of Asshurbanipal, already so often

referred to, about the carrying away of the goddess Nana, (i.e., her

statue) from her temple at Erech is evidence of this kind. Any dates

suggested without any of these clues as basis are of necessity

untrustworthy, and no true scholar dreams of offering any such date,

except as a temporary suggestion, awaiting confirmation or abolition

from subsequent researches. So it was with Sargon I. of Agadê. There was

no positive indication of the time at which he lived, except that he

could not possibly have lived later than 2000 B.C. Scholars therefore

agreed to assign that date to him, approximatively--a little more or

less--thinking they could not go very far wrong in so doing. Great

therefore was the commotion produced by the discovery of a cylinder of

Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon (whose date is 550 B.C.), wherein he

speaks of repairs he made in the great Sun-temple at Sippar, and

declares having dug deep in its foundations for the cylinders of the

founder, thus describing his success: "Shamash (the Sun-god), the great

lord ... suffered me to behold the foundation-cylinder of NARAM-SIN, the

son of Sharrukin, which for thrice thousand and twice hundred years none

of the kings that lived before me had seen." The simple addition 3200 +

550 gives 3750 B.C. as the date of Naram-Sin, and 3800 as that of his

father Sargon, allowing for the latter's long reign! A scene-shifting of

1800 years at one slide seemed something so startling that there was

much hesitation in accepting the evidence, unanswerable as it seemed,

and the possibility of an error of the engraver was seriously

considered. Some other documents, however, were found independently of

each other and in different places, corroborating the statement on

Nabonidus' cylinder, and the tremendously ancient date of 3800 B.C. is

now generally accepted the elder Sargon of Agadê--perhaps the remotest

\_authentic\_ date yet arrived at in history.

25. When we survey and attempt to grasp and classify the materials we

have for an early "History of Chaldea," it appears almost presumptuous

to grace so necessarily lame an attempt with so ambitious a name. The

landmarks are so few and far between, so unconnected as yet, and there

is so much uncertainty about them, especially about placing them. The

experience with Sargon of Agadê has not been encouraging to conjectural

chronology; yet with such we must in many cases be content until more

lucky finds turn up to set us right. What, for instance, is the proper

place of GUDÊA, the \_patesi\_ of SIR-BURLA (also read SIR-GULLA or

SIRTILLA, and, lately, ZIRLABA), whose magnificent statues Mr. de Sarzec

found in the principal hall of the temple of which the bricks bear his

stamp? (See p. 217.) The title of \_patesi\_, (not "king"), points to

great antiquity, and he is pretty generally understood to have lived

somewhere between 4000 and 3000 B.C. That he was not a Semite, but an

Accadian prince, is to be concluded not only from the language of his

inscriptions and the writing, which is of the most archaic--i.e.,

ancient and old-fashioned--character, but from the fact that the head,

which was found with the statues, is strikingly Turanian in form and

features, shaved, too, and turbaned after a fashion still used in

Central Asia. Altogether it might easily be taken for that of a modern

Mongolian or Tatar.[AM] The discovery of this builder and patron of art

has greatly eclipsed the glory of a somewhat later ruler, UR-ÊA, King

of Ur,[AN] who had long enjoyed the reputation of being the earliest

known temple-builder. He remains at all events the first powerful

monarch we read of in Southern Chaldea, of which Ur appears to have been

in some measure the capital, at least in so far as to have a certain

supremacy over the other great cities of Shumir.

26. Of these Shumir had many, even more venerable for their age and

holiness than those of Accad. For the South was the home of the old race

and most ancient culture, and thence both had advanced northward. Hence

it was that the old stock was hardier there and endured longer in its

language, religion and nationality, and was slower in yielding to the

Semitic counter-current of race and culture, which, as a natural

consequence, obtained an earlier and stronger hold in the North, and

from there radiated over the whole of Mesopotamia. There was ERIDHU, by

the sea "at the mouth of the Rivers," the immemorial sanctuary of Êa;

there was SIR-GULLA, so lately unknown, now the most promising mine for

research; there was LARSAM, famous with the glories of its "House of the

Sun" (\_Ê-Babbara\_ in the old language), the rival of Ur, the city of the

Moon-god, whose kings UR-ÊA and his son DUNGI were, it appears, the

first to take the ambitious title of "Kings of Shumir and Accad" and

"Kings of the Four Regions." As for Babylon, proud Babylon, which we

have so long been accustomed to think of as the very beginning of state

life and political rule in Chaldea, it was perhaps not yet built at all,

or only modestly beginning its existence under its Accadian name of

TIN-TIR-KI ("the Place of Life"), or, somewhat later, KA-DIMIRRA ("Gate

of God"), when already the above named cities, and several more, had

each its famous temple with ministering college of priests, and,

probably, library, and each its king. But political power was for a long

time centred at Ur. The first kings of Ur authentically known to us are

Ur-êa and his son Dungi, who have left abundant traces of their

existence in the numerous temples they built, not in Ur alone, but in

most other cities too. Their bricks have been identified at Larsam

(Senkereh), and, it appears, at Sir-burla (Tel-Loh), at Nipur (Niffer)

and at Urukh (Erech, Warka), and as the two latter cities belonged to

Accad, they seem to have ruled at least part of that country and thus to

have been justified in assuming their high-sounding title.

[Illustration: 59.--STATUE OF GUDÊA, WITH INSCRIPTION; FROM TELL-LOH,

(SIR-BURLA OR SIR-GULLA). SARZEC COLLECTION. (Hommel).]

27. It has been noticed that the bricks bearing the name of Ur-êa "are

found in a lower position than any others, at the very foundation of

buildings;" that "they are of a rude and coarse make, of many sizes and

ill-fitted together;" that baked bricks are rare among them; that they

are held together by the oldest substitutes for mortar--mud and

bitumen--and that the writing upon them is curiously rude and

imperfect.[AO] But whatever King Ur-êa's architectural efforts may lack

in perfection, they certainly make up in size and number. Those that he

did not complete, his son Dungi continued after him. It is remarkable

that these great builders seem to have devoted their energies

exclusively to religious purposes; also that, while their names are

Shumiro-Accadian, and their inscriptions are often in that language, the

temples they constructed were dedicated to various deities of the new,

or rather reformed religion. When we see the princes of the South,

according to an ingenious remark of Mr. Lenormant, thus begin a sort of

practical preaching of the Semitized religion, we may take it as a sign

of the times, as an unmistakable proof of the influence of the North,

political as well as religious. A very curious relic of King Ur-êa was

found--his own signet cylinder--which was lost by an accident, then

turned up again and is now in the British Museum. It represents the

Moon-god seated on a throne,--as is but meet for the king of the

Moon-god's special city--with priests presenting worshippers. No

definite date is of course assignable to Ur-êa and the important epoch

of Chaldean history which he represents. But a very probable

approximative one can be arrived at, thanks to a clue supplied by the

same Nabonidus, last King of Babylon, who settled the Sargon question

for us so unexpectedly. That monarch was as zealous a repairer of

temples as his predecessors had been zealous builders. He had reasons of

his own to court popularity, and could think of nothing better than to

restore the time-honored sanctuaries of the land. Among others he

repaired the Sun-temple (Ê-Babbara) at Larsam, whereof we are duly

informed by a special cylinder. In it he tells posterity that he found a

cylinder of King Hammurabi intact in its chamber under the

corner-stone, which cylinder states that the temple was founded 700

years before Hammurabi's time; as Ur-êa was the founder, it only remains

to determine the latter king's date in order to know that of the earlier

one.[AP] Here unfortunately scholars differ, not having as yet any

decisive authority to build upon. Some place Hammurabi \_before\_ 2000

B.C., others a little later. It is perhaps safest, therefore, to assume

that Ur-êa can scarcely have lived much earlier than 2800 or much later

than 2500 B.C. At all events, he must necessarily have lived somewhat

before 2300 B.C., for about this latter year took place the Elamite

invasion recorded by Asshurbanipal, an invasion which, as this King

expressly mentions, laid waste the land of Accad and desecrated its

temples--evidently the same ones which Ur-êa and Dungi so piously

constructed. Nor was this a passing inroad or raid of booty-seeking

mountaineers. It was a real conquest. Khudur-Nankhundi and his

successors remained in Southern Chaldea, called themselves kings of the

country, and reigned, several of them in succession, so that this series

of foreign rulers has become known in history as "the Elamite dynasty."

There was no room then for a powerful and temple-building national

dynasty like that of the kings of Ur.

28. This is the first time we meet authentic monumental records of a

country which was destined through the next sixteen centuries to be in

continual contact, mostly hostile, with both Babylonia and her northern

rival Assyria, until its final annihilation by the latter. Its capital

was SHUSHAN, (afterwards pronounced by foreigners "Susa"), and its own

original name SHUSHINAK. Its people were of Turanian stock, its language

was nearly akin to that of Shumir and Accad. But at some time or other

Semites came and settled in Shushinak. Though too few in number to

change the country's language or customs, the superiority of their race

asserted itself. They became the nobility of the land, the ruling

aristocracy from which the kings were taken, the generals and the high

functionaries. That the Turanian mass of the population was kept in

subjection and looked down upon, and that the Semitic nobility avoided

intermarrying with them is highly probable; and it would be difficult

otherwise to explain the difference of type between the two classes, as

shown in the representations of captives and warriors belonging to both

on the Assyrian sculptures. The common herd of prisoners employed on

public labor and driven by overseers brandishing sticks have an

unmistakably Turanian type of features--high cheek-bones, broad,

flattened face, etc., while the generals, ministers and nobles have all

the dignity and beauty of the handsomest Jewish type. "Elam," the name

under which the country is best known both from the Bible and later

monuments, is a Turanian word, which means, like "Accad," "Highlands."

It is the only name under which the historian of Chap. X. of Genesis

admits it into his list of nations, and, consistently following out his

system of ignoring all members of the great yellow race, he takes into

consideration only the Semitic aristocracy, and makes of Elam a son of

Shem, a brother of Asshur and Arphakhshad. (Gen. x. 22.)

29. One of Khudur-Nankhundi's next successors, KHUDUR-LAGAMAR, was not

content with the addition of Chaldea to his kingdom of Elam. He had the

ambition of a born conqueror and the generalship of one. The Chap. XIV.

of Genesis--which calls him Chedorlaomer--is the only document we have

descriptive of this king's warlike career, and a very striking picture

it gives of it, sufficient to show us that we have to do with a very

remarkable character. Supported by three allied and probably tributary

kings, that of Shumir (Shineâr), of Larsam, (Ellassar) and of the GOÏM,

(in the unrevised translation of the Bible "king of nations") i.e., the

nomadic tribes which roamed on the outskirts and in the yet unsettled,

more distant portions of Chaldea, Khudur-Lagamar marched an army 1200

miles across the desert into the fertile, wealthy and populous valleys

of the Jordan and the lake or sea of Siddim, afterwards called the Dead

Sea, where five great cities--Sodom, Gomorrah, and three others--were

governed by as many kings. Not only did he subdue these kings and impose

his rule on them, but contrived, even after he returned to the Persian

Gulf, to keep on them so firm a hand, that for twelve years they

"served" him, i.e., paid him tribute regularly, and only in the

thirteenth year, encouraged by his prolonged absence, ventured to

rebel. But they had underrated Khudur-Lagamar's vigilance and activity.

The very next year he was among them again, together with his three

faithful allies, encountered them in the vale of Siddim and beat them,

so that they all fled. This was the battle of the "four kings with

five." As to the treatment to which the victor subjected the conquered

country it is very briefly but clearly described: "And they took all the

goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their

way."

30. Now there dwelt in Sodom a man of foreign race and great wealth,

Lot, the nephew of Abraham. For Abraham and his tribe no longer lived at

Chaldean Ur. The change of masters, and very probably the harsher rule,

if not positive oppression, consequent on the Elamite conquest, had

driven them thence. It was then they went forth into the land of Canaan,

led by Terah and his son Abraham, and when Terah died, Abraham became

the patriarch and chief of the tribe, which from this time begins to be

called in the Bible "Hebrews," from an eponymous ancestor, Heber or

Eber, whose name alludes to the passing of the Euphrates, or, perhaps,

in a wider sense, to the passage of the tribe through the land of

Chaldea.[AQ] For years the tribe travelled without dividing, from

pasture to pasture, over the vast land where dwelt the Canaanites, well

seen and even favored of them, into Egypt and out of it again, until the

quarrel occurred between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's, (see Genesis,

Chap. XIII.), and the separation, when Lot chose the plain of the Jordan

and pitched his tent toward Sodom, while Abraham dwelt in the land of

Canaan as heretofore, with his family, servants and cattle, in the plain

of Mamre. It was while dwelling there, in friendship and close alliance

with the princes of the land, that one who had escaped from the battle

in the vale of Siddim, came to Abraham and told him how that among the

captives whom Khudur-Lagamar had taken from Sodom, was Lot, his

brother's son, with all his goods. Then Abraham armed his trained

servants, born in his own household, three hundred and eighteen, took

with him his friends, Mamre and his brothers, with their young men, and

starting in hot pursuit of the victorious army, which was now carelessly

marching home towards the desert with its long train of captives and

booty, overtook it near Damascus in the night, when his own small

numbers could not be detected, and produced such a panic by a sudden and

vigorous onslaught that he put it to flight, and not only rescued his

nephew Lot with his goods and women, but brought back all the captured

goods and the people too. And the King of Sodom came out to meet him on

his return, and thanked him, and wanted him to keep all the goods for

himself, only restoring the persons. Abraham consented that a proper

share of the rescued goods should be given to his friends and their

young men, but refused all presents offered to himself, with the haughty

words: "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the

possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread, even to a

shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou

shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich."

31. Khudur-Lagamar, of whom the spirited Biblical narrative gives us so

life-like a sketch, lived, according to the most probable calculations,

about 2200 B.C. Among the few vague forms whose blurred outlines loom

out of the twilight of those dim and doubtful ages, he is the second

with any flesh-and-blood reality about him, probably the first conqueror

of whom the world has any authentic record. For Egypt, the only country

which rivals in antiquity the primitive states of Mesopotamia, although

it had at this time already reached the height of its culture and

prosperity, was as yet confined by its rulers strictly to the valley of

the Nile, and had not entered on that career of foreign wars and

conquests which, some thousand years later, made it a terror from the

Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.

32. The Elamitic invasion was not a passing raid. It was a real

conquest, and established a heavy foreign rule in a highly prosperous

and flourishing land--a rule which endured, it would appear, about three

hundred years. That the people chafed under it, and were either gloomily

despondent or angrily rebellious as long as it lasted, there is plenty

of evidence in their later literature. It is even thought, and with

great moral probability, that the special branch of religious poetry

which has been called "Penitential Psalms" has arisen out of the

sufferings of this long period of national bondage and humiliation, and

if, as seems to be proved by some lately discovered interesting

fragments of texts, these psalms were sung centuries later in Assyrian

temples on mournful or very solemn public occasions, they must have

perpetuated the memory of the great national calamity that fell on the

mother-country as indelibly as the Hebrew psalms, of which they were the

models, have perpetuated that of King David's wanderings and Israel's

tribulations.

33. But there seems to have been one Semitic royal house which preserved

a certain independence and quietly gathered power against better days.

To do this they must have dissembled and done as much homage to the

victorious barbarians as would ensure their safety and serve as a blind

while they strengthened their home rule. This dynasty, destined to the

glorious task of restoring the country's independence and founding a new

national monarchy, was that of Tin-tir-ki, or Ka-dimirra--a name now

already translated into the Semitic BAB-ILU, ("the Gate of God"); they

reigned over the large and important district of KARDUNYASH, important

from its central position, and from the fact that it seems to have

belonged neither to Accad, nor to Shumir, but to have been politically

independent, since it is always mentioned by itself. Still, to the

Hebrews, Babylon lay in the land of Shinar, and it is strongly supposed

that the "Amraphel king of Shinar" who marched with Khudur-Lagamar, as

his ally, against the five kings of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, was no

other than a king of Babylon, one of whose names has been read AMARPAL,

while "Ariokh of Ellassar" was an Elamite, ERI-AKU, brother or cousin of

Khudur-Lagamar, and King of Larsam, where the conquerors had established

a powerful dynasty, closely allied by blood to the principal one, which

had made the venerable Ur its headquarters. This Amarpal, more

frequently mentioned under his other name of SIN-MUBALLIT, is thought to

have been the father of HAMMURABI, the deliverer of Chaldea and the

founder of the new empire.

34. The inscriptions which Hammurabi left are numerous, and afford us

ample means of judging of his greatness as warrior, statesman and

administrator. In his long reign of fifty-five years he had, indeed,

time to achieve much, but what he did achieve \_was\_ much even for so

long a reign. In what manner he drove out the foreigners we are not

told, but so much is clear that the decisive victory was that which he

gained over the Elamite king of Larsam. It was probably by expelling the

hated race by turns from every district they occupied, that Hammurabi

gathered the entire land into his own hands and was enabled to keep it

together and weld it into one united empire, including both Accad and

Shumir, with all their time-honored cities and sanctuaries, making his

own ancestral city, Babylon, the head and capital of them all. This king

was in every respect a great and wise ruler, for, after freeing and

uniting the country, he was very careful of its good and watchful of its

agricultural interests. Like all the other kings, he restored many

temples and built several new ones. But he also devoted much energy to

public works of a more generally useful kind. During the first part of

his reign inundations seem to have been frequent and disastrous,

possibly in consequence of the canals and waterworks having been

neglected under the oppressive foreign rule. The inscriptions speak of a

city having been destroyed "by a great flood," and mention "a great wall

along the Tigris"--probably an embankment, as having been built by

Hammurabi for protection against the river. But probably finding the

remedy inadequate, he undertook and completed one of the greatest public

works that have ever been carried out in any country: the excavation of

a gigantic canal, which he called by his own name, but which was

afterwards famous under that of "Royal Canal of Babylon." From this

canal innumerable branches carried the fertilizing waters through the

country. It was and remained the greatest work of the kind, and was,

fifteen centuries later, the wonder of the foreigners who visited

Babylon. Its constructor did not overrate the benefit he had conferred

when he wrote in an inscription which can scarcely be called boastful:

"I have caused to be dug the Nahr-Hammurabi, a benediction for the

people of Shumir and Accad. I have directed the waters of its branches

over the desert plains; I have caused them to run in the dry channels

and thus given unfailing waters to the people.... I have changed desert

plains into well-watered lands. I have given them fertility and plenty,

and made them the abode of happiness."

35. There are inscriptions of Hammurabi's son. But after him a new

catastrophe seems to have overtaken Chaldea. He is succeeded by a line

of foreign kings, who must have obtained possession of the country by

conquest. They were princes of a fierce and warlike mountain race, the

KASSHI, who lived in the highlands that occupy the whole north-western

portion of Elam, where they probably began to feel cramped for room.

This same people has been called by the later Greek geographers COSSÆANS

or CISSIANS, and is better known under either of these names. Their

language, of which very few specimens have survived, is not yet

understood; but so much is plain, that it is very different both from

the Semitic language of Babylon and that of Shumir and Accad, so that

the names of the Kasshi princes are easily distinguishable from all

others. No dismemberment of the empire followed this conquest, however,

if conquest there was. The kings of the new dynasty seem to have

succeeded each other peacefully enough in Babylon. But the conquering

days of Chaldea were over. We read no more of expeditions into the

plains of Syria and to the "Sea of the Setting Sun." For a power was

rising in the North-West, which quickly grew into a formidable rival:

through many centuries Assyria kept the rulers of the Southern kingdom

too busy guarding their frontiers and repelling inroads to allow them to

think of foreign conquests.

FOOTNOTES:

[AH] Names are often deceptive. That of the Hindu-Cush is now thought to

mean "Killers of Hindus," probably in allusion to robber tribes of the

mountains, and to have nothing to do with the Cushite race.

[AI] "Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient," 1878, p. 160.

[AJ] Translation of Professor A. H. Sayce.

[AK] A. H. Sayce.

[AL] Translated by A. H. Sayce, in his paper "Babylonian Folk-lore" in

the "Folk-lore Journal," Vol. I., Jan., 1883.

[AM] See Figs. 44 and 45, p. 101.

[AN] This name was at first read Urukh, then Likbabi, then Likbagash,

then Urbagash, then Urba'u, and now Professor Friedr. Delitzsch

announces that the final and correct reading is in all probability

either Ur-ea or Arad-ea.

[AO] Geo. Rawlinson, "Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern

World" (1862), Vol. I., pp. 198 and ff.

[AP] Geo. Smith, in "Records of the Past," Vol. V., p. 75. Fritz Hommel,

"Die Semiten," p. 210 and note 101.

[AQ] It should be mentioned, however, that scholars have of late been

inclined to see in this name an allusion to the passage of the Jordan at

the time of the conquest of Canaan by Israel, after the Egyptian

bondage.

V.

BABYLONIAN RELIGION.

1. In relating the legend of the Divine Man-Fish, who came out of the

Gulf, and was followed, at intervals, by several more similar beings,

Berosus assures us, that he "taught the people all the things that make

up civilization," so that "nothing new was invented after that any

more." But if, as is suggested, "this monstrous Oannes" is really a

personification of the strangers who came into the land, and, being

possessed of a higher culture, began to teach the Turanian population,

the first part of this statement is as manifestly an exaggeration as the

second. A people who had invented writing, who knew how to build, to

make canals, to work metals, and who had passed out of the first and

grossest stage of religious conceptions, might have much to learn, but

certainly not \_everything\_. What the newcomers--whether Cushites or

Semites--did teach them, was a more orderly way of organizing society

and ruling it by means of laws and an established government, and, above

all, astronomy and mathematics--sciences in which the Shumiro-Accads

were little proficient, while the later and mixed nation, the Chaldeans,

attained in them a very high perfection, so that many of their

discoveries and the first principles laid down by them have come down to

us as finally adopted facts, confirmed by later science. Thus, the

division of the year into twelve months corresponding to as many

constellations, known as "the twelve signs of the Zodiac," was familiar

to them. They had also found out the division of the year into twelve

months, only all their months had thirty days. So they were obliged to

add an extra month--an intercalary month, as the scientific term

is--every six years, to start even with the sun again, for they knew

where the error in their reckoning lay. These things the strangers

probably taught the Shumiro-Accads, but at the same time borrowed from

them their way of counting. The Turanian races to this day have this

peculiarity, that they do not care for the decimal system in arithmetic,

but count by dozens and sixties, preferring numbers that can be divided

by twelve and sixty. The Chinese even now do not measure time by

centuries or periods of a hundred years, but by a cycle or period of

sixty years. This was probably the origin of the division, adopted in

Babylonia, of the sun's course into 360 equal parts or degrees, and of

the day into twelve "\_kasbus\_" or double hours, since the kasbu answered

to two of our hours, and was divided into sixty parts, which we might

thus call "double minutes," while these again were composed of sixty

"double seconds." The natural division of the year into twelve months

made this so-called "docenal" and "sexagesimal" system of calculation

particularly convenient, and it was applied to everything--measures of

weight, distance, capacity and size as well as time.

2. Astronomy is a strangely fascinating science, with two widely

different and seemingly contradictory aspects, equally apt to develop

habits of hard thinking and of dreamy speculation. For, if on one hand

the study of mathematics, without which astronomy cannot subsist,

disciplines the mind and trains it to exact and complicated operations,

on the other hand, star-gazing, in the solitude and silence of a

southern night, irresistibly draws it into a higher world, where

poetical aspirations, guesses and dreams take the place of figures with

their demonstrations and proofs. It is probably to these habitual

contemplations that the later Chaldeans owed the higher tone of

religious thought which distinguished them from their Turanian

predecessors. They looked for the deity in heaven, not on earth. They

did not cower and tremble before a host of wicked goblins, the creation

of a terrified fancy. The spirits whom they worshipped inhabited and

ruled those beautiful bright worlds, whose harmonious, concerted

movements they watched admiringly, reverently, and could calculate

correctly, but without understanding them. The stars generally became to

them the visible manifestations and agents of divine power, especially

the seven most conspicuous heavenly bodies: the Moon, whom they

particularly honored, as the ruler of night and the measurer of time,

the Sun and the five planets then known, those which we call Saturn,

Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury. It is but just to the Shumiro-Accads

to say that the perception of the divine in the beauty of the stars was

not foreign to them. This is amply proved by the fact that in their

oldest writing the sign of a star is used to express the idea not of any

particular god or goddess, but of the divine principle, the deity

generally. The name of every divinity is preceded by the star, meaning

"the god so-and-so." When used in this manner, the sign was read in the

old language "Dingir"--"god, deity." The Semitic language of Babylonia

which we call "Assyrian," while adapting the ancient writing to its own

needs, retained this use of the sign "star," and read it \_îlu\_, "god."

This word--ILU or EL--we find in all Semitic languages, either ancient

or modern, in the names they give to God, in the Arabic ALLAH as well as

in the Hebrew ELOHIM.

3. This religion, based and centred on the worship of the heavenly

bodies, has been called \_Sabeism\_, and was common to most Semitic races,

whose primitive nomadic life in the desert and wide, flat

pasture-tracts, with the nightly watches required by the tending of vast

flocks, inclined them to contemplation and star-gazing. It is to be

noticed that the Semites gave the first place to the Sun, and not, like

the Shumiro-Accads, to the Moon, possibly from a feeling akin to terror,

experiencing as they did his destructive power, in the frequent droughts

and consuming heat of the desert.[AR]

4. A very prominent feature of the new order of things was the great

power and importance of the priesthood. A successful pursuit of science

requires two things: intellectual superiority and leisure to study,

i.e., freedom from the daily care how to procure the necessaries of

life. In very ancient times people in general were quite willing to

acknowledge the superiority of those men who knew more than they did,

who could teach them and help them with wise advice; they were willing

also to support such men by voluntary contributions, in order to give

them the necessary leisure. That a race with whom science and religion

were one should honor the men thus set apart and learned in heavenly

things and allow them great influence in private and public affairs,

believing them, as they did, to stand in direct communion with the

divine powers, was but natural; and from this to letting them take to

themselves the entire government of the country as the established

rulers thereof, was but one step. There was another circumstance which

helped to bring about this result. The Chaldeans were devout believers

in astrology, a form of superstition into which an astronomical religion

like Sabeism is very apt to degenerate. For once it is taken for granted

that the stars are divine beings, possessed of intelligence, and will,

and power, what more natural than to imagine that they can rule and

shape the destinies of men by a mysterious influence? This influence was

supposed to depend on their movements, their position in the sky, their

ever changing combinations and relations to each other; under this

supposition every movement of a star--its rising, its setting, or

crossing the path of another--every slightest change in the aspect of

the heavens, every unusual phenomenon--an eclipse, for instance--must be

possessed of some weighty sense, boding good or evil to men, whose

destiny must constantly be as clearly written in the blue sky as in a

book. If only one could learn the language, read the characters! Such

knowledge was thought to be within the reach of men, but only to be

acquired by the exceptionally gifted and learned few, and those whom

they might think worthy of having it imparted to them. That these few

must be priests was self-evident. They were themselves fervent believers

in astrology, which they considered quite as much a real science as

astronomy, and to which they devoted themselves as assiduously. They

thus became the acknowledged interpreters of the divine will, partakers,

so to speak, of the secret councils of heaven. Of course such a position

added greatly to their power, and that they should never abuse it to

strengthen their hold on the public mind and to favor their own

ambitious views, was not in human nature. Moreover, being the clever and

learned ones of the nation, they really were at the time the fittest to

rule it--and rule it they did. When the Semitic culture spread over

Shumir, whither it gradually extended from the North, i.e., the land

of Accad, there arose in each great city--Ur, Eridhu, Larsam, Erech,--a

mighty temple, with its priests, its library, its \_Ziggurat\_ or

observatory. The cities and the tracts of country belonging to them

were governed by their respective colleges. And when in progress of

time, the power became centred in the hands of single men, they still

were priest-kings, \_patesis\_, whose royalty must have been greatly

hampered and limited by the authority of their priestly colleagues. Such

a form of government is known under the name of \_theocracy\_, composed of

two Greek words and meaning "divine government."

5. This religious reform represents a complete though probably peaceable

revolution in the condition of the "Land between the Rivers." The new

and higher culture had thoroughly asserted itself as predominant in both

its great provinces, and in nothing as much as in the national religion,

which, coming in contact with the conceptions of the Semites, was

affected by a certain nobler spiritual strain, a purer moral feeling,

which seems to have been more peculiarly Semitic, though destined to be

carried to its highest perfection only in the Hebrew branch of the race.

Moral tone is a subtle influence, and will work its way into men's

hearts and thoughts far more surely and irresistibly than any amount of

preaching and commanding, for men are naturally drawn to what is good

and beautiful when it is placed before them. Thus the old settlers of

the land, the Shumiro-Accads, to whom their gross and dismal goblin

creed could not be of much comfort, were not slow in feeling this

ennobling and beneficent influence, and it is assuredly to that we owe

the beautiful prayers and hymns which mark the higher stage of their

religion. The consciousness of sin, the feeling of contrition, of

dependence on an offended yet merciful divine power, so strikingly

conspicuous in the so-called "Penitential Psalms" (see p. 178), the fine

poetry in some of the later hymns, for instance those to the Sun (see p.

171), are features so distinctively Semitic, that they startle us by

their resemblance to certain portions of the Bible. On the other hand, a

nation never forgets or quite gives up its own native creed and

religious practices. The wise priestly rulers of Shumir and Accad did

not attempt to compel the people to do so, but even while introducing

and propagating the new religion, suffered them to go on believing in

their hosts of evil spirits and their few beneficent ones, in their

conjuring, soothsaying, casting and breaking of spells and charms. Nay,

more. As time went on and the learned priests studied more closely the

older creed and ideas, they were struck with the beauty of some few of

their conceptions--especially that of the ever benevolent, ever watchful

Spirit of Earth, Êa, and his son Meridug, the mediator, the friend of

men. These conceptions, these and some other favorite national

divinities, they thought worthy of being adopted by them and worked into

their own religious system, which was growing more complicated, more

elaborate every day, while the large bulk of spirits and demons they

also allowed a place in it, in the rank of inferior "Spirits of heaven"

and "Spirits of earth," which were lightly classed together and counted

by hundreds. By the time a thousand years had passed, the fusion had

become so complete that there really was both a new religion and a new

nation, the result of a long work of amalgamation. The Shumiro-Accads of

pure yet low race were no longer, nor did the Semites preserve a

separate existence; they had become merged into one nation of mixed

races, which at a later period became known under the general name of

Chaldeans, whose religion, regarded with awe for its prodigious

antiquity, yet was comparatively recent, being the outcome of the

combination of two infinitely older creeds, as we have just seen. When

Hammurabi established his residence at Babel, a city which had but

lately risen to importance, he made it the capital of the empire first

completely united under his rule (see p. 226), hence the name of

Babylonia is given by ancient writers to the old land of Shumir and

Accad, even more frequently than that of Chaldea, and the state religion

is called indifferently the Babylonian or Chaldean, and not unfrequently

Chaldeo-Babylonian.

6. This religion, as it was definitely established and handed down

unchanged through a succession of twenty centuries and more, had a

twofold character, which must be well grasped in order to understand its

general drift and sense. On the one hand, as it admitted the existence

of many divine powers, who shared between them the government of the

world, it was decidedly POLYTHEISTIC--"a religion of many gods." On the

other hand, a dim perception had already been arrived at, perhaps

through observation of the strictly regulated movements of the stars, of

the presence of One supreme ruling and directing Power. For a class of

men given to the study of astronomy could not but perceive that all

those bright Beings which they thought so divine and powerful, were not

absolutely independent; that their movements and combinations were too

regular, too strictly timed, too identical in their ever recurring

repetition, to be entirely voluntary; that, consequently, they

\_obeyed\_--obeyed a Law, a Power above and beyond them, beyond heaven

itself, invisible, unfathomable, unattainable by human thought or eyes.

Such a perception was, of course, a step in the right direction, towards

MONOTHEISM, i.e., the belief in only one God. But the perception was too

vague and remote to be fully realized and consistently carried out. The

priests who, from long training in abstract thought and contemplation,

probably could look deeper and come nearer the truth than other people,

strove to express their meaning in language and images which, in the

end, obscured the original idea and almost hid it out of sight, instead

of making it clearer. Besides, they did not imagine the world as

\_created\_ by God, made by an act of his will, but as being a form of

him, a manifestation, part of himself, of his own substance. Therefore,

in the great all of the universe, and in each of its portions, in the

mysterious forces at work in it--light and heat and life and

growth--they admired and adored not the power of God, but his very

presence; one of the innumerable and infinitely varied forms in which he

makes himself known and visible to men, manifests himself to them--in

short, \_an emanation of God\_. The word "emanation" has been adopted as

the only one which to a certain extent conveys this very subtle and

complicated idea. An emanation is not quite a thing itself, but it is a

portion of it, which comes out of it and separates itself from it, yet

cannot exist without it. So the fragrance of a flower is not the flower,

nor is it a growth or development of it, yet the flower gives it forth

and it cannot exist by itself without the flower--it is an emanation of

the flower. The same can be said of the mist which visibly rises from

the warm earth in low and moist places on a summer evening--it is an

emanation of the earth.

7. The Chaldeo-Babylonian priests knew of many such divine emanations,

which, by giving them names and attributing to them definite functions,

they made into so many separate divine persons. Of these some ranked

higher and some lower, a relation which was sometimes expressed by the

human one of "father and son." They were ordered in groups, very

scientifically arranged. Above the rest were placed two TRIADS or

"groups of three." The first triad comprised ANU, ÊA and BEL, the

supreme gods of all--all three retained from the old Shumiro-Accadian

list of divinities. ANU is ANA, "Heaven," and the surnames or epithets,

which are given him in different texts, sufficiently show what

conception had been formed of him: he is called "the Lord of the starry

heavens," "the Lord of Darkness," "the first-born, the oldest, the

Father of the Gods." ÊA, retaining his ancient attributions as "Lord of

the Deep," the pre-eminently wise and beneficent spirit, represents the

Divine Intelligence, the founder and maintainer of order and harmony,

while the actual task of separating the elements of chaos and shaping

them into the forms which make up the world as we know it, as well as

that of ordering the heavenly bodies, appointing them their path and

directing them thereon, was devolved on the third person of the triad,

BEL, the son of ÊA. Bel is a Semitic name, which means simply "the

lord."

8. From its nature and attributions, it is clear that to this triad must

have attached a certain vagueness and remoteness. Not so the second

triad, in which the Deity manifested itself as standing in the nearest

and most direct relation to man as most immediately influencing him in

his daily life. The persons of this triad were the Moon, the Sun, and

the Power of the Atmosphere,--SIN, SHAMASH, and RAMÂN, the Semitic names

for the Shumiro-Accadian URU-KI or NANNAR, UD or BABBAR, and IM or

MERMER. Very characteristically, Sin is frequently called "the god

Thirty," in allusion to his functions as the measurer of time presiding

over the month. Of the feelings with which the Sun was regarded and the

beneficent and splendid qualities attributed to him, we know enough from

the beautiful hymns quoted in Chap. III. (see p. 172). As to the god

RAMÂN, frequently represented on tablets and cylinders by his

characteristic sign, the double or triple-forked lightning-bolt--his

importance as the dispenser of rain, the lord of the whirlwind and

tempest, made him very popular, an object as much of dread as of

gratitude; and as the crops depended on the supply of water from the

canals, and these again could not be full without abundant rains, it is

not astonishing that he should have been particularly entitled

"protector or lord of canals," giver of abundance and "lord of

fruitfulness." In his more terrible capacity, he is thus described: "His

standard titles are the minister of heaven and earth," "the lord of the

air," "he who makes the tempest to rage." He is regarded as the

destroyer of crops, the rooter-up of trees, the scatterer of the

harvest. Famine, scarcity, and even their consequence, pestilence, are

assigned to him. He is said to have in his hand a "flaming sword" with

which he effects his works of destruction, and this "flaming sword,

which probably represents lightning, becomes his emblem upon the tablets

and cylinders."[AS]

9. The astronomical tendencies of the new religion fully assert

themselves in the third group of divinities. They are simply the five

planets then known and identified with various deities of the old creed,

to whom they are, so to speak, assigned as their own particular

provinces. Thus NIN-DAR (also called NINIP or NINÊB), originally another

name or form of the Sun (see p. 172), becomes the ruler of the most

distant planet, the one we now call Saturn; the old favorite, Meridug,

under the Semitized name of MARDUK, rules the planet Jupiter. It is he

whom later Hebrew writers have called MERODACH, the name we find in the

Bible. The planet Mars belongs to NERGAL, the warrior-god, and Mercury

to NEBO, more properly NABU, the "messenger of the gods" and the special

patron of astronomy, while the planet Venus is under the sway of a

feminine deity, the goddess ISHTAR, one of the most important and

popular on the list. But of her more anon. She leads us to the

consideration of a very essential and characteristic feature of the

Chaldeo-Babylonian religion, common, moreover, to all Oriental heathen

religions, especially the Semitic ones.

10. There is a distinction--the distinction of sex--which runs through

the whole of animated nature, dividing all things that have life into

two separate halves--male and female--halves most different in their

qualities, often opposite, almost hostile, yet eternally dependent on

each other, neither being complete or perfect, or indeed able to exist

without the other. Separated by contrast, yet drawn together by an

irresistible sympathy which results in the closest union, that of love

and affection, the two sexes still go through life together, together do

the work of the world. What the one has not or has in an insufficient

degree it finds in its counterpart, and it is only their union which

makes of the world a whole thing, full, rounded, harmonious. The

masculine nature, active, strong, and somewhat stern, even when merciful

and bounteous, inclined to boisterousness and violence and often to

cruelty, is well set off, or rather completed and moderated, by the

feminine nature, not less active, but more quietly so, dispensing

gentle influences, open to milder moods, more uniformly soft in feeling

and manner.

[Illustration: 60.--A BUST INSCRIBED WITH THE NAME OF NEBO. (British

Museum.)]

11. In no relation of life is the difference, yet harmony, of masculine

and feminine action so plain as in that between husband and wife, father

and mother. It requires no very great effort of imagination to carry the

distinction beyond the bounds of animated nature, into the world at

large. To men for whom every portion or force of the universe was

endowed with a particle of the divine nature and power, many were the

things which seemed to be paired in a contrasting, yet joint action

similar to that of the sexes. If the great and distant Heaven appeared

to them as the universal ruler and lord, the source of all things--the

Father of the Gods, as they put it--surely the beautiful Earth, kind

nurse, nourisher and preserver of all things that have life, could be

called the universal Mother. If the fierce summer and noonday sun could

be looked on as the resistless conqueror, the dread King of the world,

holding death and disease in his hand, was not the quiet, lovely moon,

of mild and soothing light, bringing the rest of coolness and healing

dews, its gentle Queen? In short, there is not a power or a phenomenon

of nature which does not present to a poetical imagination a twofold

aspect, answering to the standard masculine and feminine qualities and

peculiarities. The ancient thinkers--priests--who framed the vague

guesses of the groping, dreaming mind into schemes and systems of

profound meaning, expressed this sense of the twofold nature of things

by worshipping a double divine being or principle, masculine and

feminine. Thus every god was supplied with a wife, through the entire

series of divine emanations and manifestations. And as all the gods were

in reality only different names and forms of the Supreme and

Unfathomable ONE, so all the goddesses represent only BELIT, the great

feminine principle of nature--productiveness, maternity,

tenderness--also contained, like everything else, in that ONE, and

emanating from it in endless succession. Hence it comes that the

goddesses of the Chaldeo-Babylonian religion, though different in name

and apparently in attributions, become wonderfully alike when looked at

closer. They are all more or less repetitions of BELIT, the wife of BEL.

Her name--which is only the feminine form of the god's, meaning "the

Lady," as Bel means "the Lord,"--sufficiently shows that the two are

really one. Of the other goddesses the most conspicuous are ANAT or NANA

(Earth), the wife of Anu (Heaven), ANUNIT (the Moon), wife of Shamash

(the Sun), and lastly ISHTAR, the ruler of the planet Venus in her own

right, and by far the most attractive and interesting of the list. She

was a great favorite, worshipped as the Queen of Love and Beauty, and

also as the Warrior-Queen, who rouses men to deeds of bravery, inspirits

and protects them in battle--perhaps because men have often fought and

made war for the love of women, and also probably because the planet

Venus, her own star, appears not only in the evening, close after

sunset, but also immediately before daybreak, and so seems to summon the

human race to renewed efforts and activity. Ishtar could not be an

exception to the general principle and remain unmated. But her husband,

DUMUZ (a name for the Sun), stands to her in an entirely subordinate

position, and, indeed, would be but little known were it not for a

beautiful story that was told of them in a very old poem, and which will

find its place among many more in one of the next chapters.

12. It would be tedious and unnecessary to recite here more names of gods

and goddesses, though there are quite a number, and more come to light

all the time as new tablets are discovered and read. Most of them are in

reality only different names for the same conceptions, and the

Chaldeo-Babylonian pantheon--or assembly of divine persons--is very

sufficiently represented by the so-called "twelve great gods," who were

universally acknowledged to be at its head, and of whom we will here

repeat the names: ANU, ÊA and BEL, SIN, SHAMASH and RAMÂN, NIN-DAR,

MARUDUK, NERGAL, NEBO, BELIT and ISHTAR. Each had numerous temples all

over the country. But every great city had its favorite whose temple was

the oldest, largest and most sumptuous, to whose worship it was

especially devoted from immemorial times. Êa, the most beloved god of old

Shumir, had his chief sanctuary, which he shared with his son Meridug, at

ERIDHU (now Abu-Shahrein), the most southern and almost the most ancient

city of Shumir, situated near the mouth of the Euphrates, since the

Persian Gulf reached quite as far inland in the year 4000 B.C., and this

was assuredly an appropriate station for the great "lord of the deep,"

the Fish-god Oannes, who emerged from the waters to instruct mankind. UR,

as we have seen, was the time-honored seat of the Moon-god. At ERECH Anu

and Anat or Nana--Heaven and Earth--were specially honored from the

remotest antiquity, being jointly worshipped in the temple called "the

House of Heaven." This may have been the reason of the particular

sacredness attributed to the ground all around Erech, as witnessed by the

exceeding persistency with which people strove for ages to bury their

dead in it, as though under the immediate protection of the goddess of

Earth[AT] (see Ch. III. of Introduction). Larsam paid especial homage to

Shamash and was famous for its very ancient "House of the Sun." The Sun

and Moon--Shamash and Anunit--had their rival sanctuaries at SIPPAR on

the "Royal Canal," which ran nearly parallel to the Euphrates, and AGADÊ,

the city of Sargon, situated just opposite on the other bank of the

canal. The name of Agadê was lost in the lapse of time, and both cities

became one, the two portions being distinguished only by the addition

"Sippar of the Sun" and "Sippar of Anunit." The Hebrews called the united

city "The two Sippars"--SEPHARVAIM, the name we find in the Bible.

13. The site of this important city was long doubtful; but in 1881 one

of the most skilful and indefatigable searchers, Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, a

gentleman who began his career as assistant to Layard, made a discovery

which set the question at rest. He was digging in a mound known to the

Arabs by the name of Abu-Habba, and had made his way into the apartments

of a vast structure which he knew to be a temple. From room to room he

passed until he came to a smaller chamber, paved with asphalt, which he

at once surmised to be the archive-room of the temple. "Heretofore,"

says Mr. Rassam in his report, "all Assyrian and Babylonian structures

were found to be paved generally either with stone or brick,

consequently this novel discovery led me to have the asphalt broken into

and examined. On doing so we found, buried in a corner of the chamber,

about three feet below the surface, an inscribed earthenware coffer,

inside which was deposited a stone tablet...." Rassam had indeed

stumbled on the archive of the famous Sun-temple, as was proved not only

by the tablet, but by the numerous documents which accompanied it, and

which gave the names of the builders and restorers of the temple. As to

the tablet, it is the finest and best preserved work of art of the kind

which has yet been found. It was deposited about the year 880 B.C. on

occasion of a restoration and represents the god himself, seated on a

throne, receiving the homage of worshippers, while above him the

sun-disc is held suspended from heaven on two strong cords, like a

gigantic lamp, by two ministering beings, who may very probably belong

to the host of Igigi or spirits of heaven. The inscription, in

beautifully clear and perfectly preserved characters, informs us that

this is "The image of Shamash, the great lord, who dwells in the 'House

of the Sun,' (\_Ê-Babbara\_) which is within the city of Sippar."[AU] (See

Frontispiece.) This was a truly magnificent find, and who knows but

something as unexpected and as conclusive may turn up to fix for us the

exact place of the temple of Anunit, and consequently of the venerable

city of Agadê. As to BABYLON, it was originally placed under divine

protection generally, as shown by its proper Semitic name, BAB-ILU,

which means, as we have already seen, "the Gate of God," and exactly

answers to the Shumiro-Accadian name of the city (KA-DINGIRRA, or

KA-DIMIRRA); but later on it elected a special protector in the person

of MARUDUK, the old favorite, Meridug. When Babylon became the capital

of the united monarchy of Shumir and Accad, its patron divinity, under

the name of BEL-MARUDUK, ("the Lord Maruduk") rose to a higher rank than

he had before occupied; his temple outshone all others and became a

wonder of the world for its wealth and splendor. He had another,

scarcely less splendid, and founded by Hammurabi himself in Borsip. In

this way religion was closely allied to politics. For in the days before

the reunion of the great cities under the rule of Hammurabi, whichever

of them was the most powerful at the time, its priests naturally claimed

the pre-eminence for their local deity even beyond their own boundaries.

So that the fact of the old Kings of Ur, Ur-êa and his descendants, not

limiting themselves to the worship of their national Moon-god, but

building temples in many places and to many gods, was perhaps a sign of

a conciliating general policy as much as of liberal religious feeling.

14. One would think that so very perfect a system of religion, based too

on so high and noble an order of ideas, should have entirely superseded

the coarse materialism and conjuring practices of the goblin-creed of

the primitive Turanian settlers. Such, however, was far from being the

case. We saw that the new religion made room, somewhat contemptuously

perhaps, for the spirits of the old creed, carelessly massing them

wholesale into a sort of regiment, composed of the three hundred IGIGI,

or spirits of heaven, and the six hundred ANUNNAKI, or spirits of earth.

The conjurers and sorcerers of old were even admitted into the

priesthood in an inferior capacity, as a sort of lower order, probably

more tolerated than encouraged--tolerated from necessity, because the

people clung to their ancient beliefs and practices. But if their

official position as a priestly class were subordinate, their real power

was not the less great, for the public favor and credulity were on their

side, and they were assuredly more generally popular than the learned

and solemn priests, the counsellors and almost the equals of the kings,

whose thoughts dwelt among the stars, who reverently searched the

heavens for revelations of the divine will and wisdom, and who, by

pursuing accurate observation and mathematical calculation together with

the wildest dreams, made astronomy and astrology the inextricable tangle

of scientific truth and fantastic speculation that we see it in the

great work (in seventy tablets) prepared for the library of Sargon II.

at Agadê. That the ancient system of conjuring and incantations remained

in full force and general use, is sufficiently proved by the contents of

the first two parts of the great collection in two hundred tablets

compiled in the reign of the same king, and from the care with which

the work was copied and recopied, commented on and translated in later

ages, as we see from the copy made for the Royal Library at Nineveh, the

one which has reached us.

15. There was still a third branch of so-called "science," which greatly

occupied the minds of the Chaldeo-Babylonians from their earliest times

down to the latest days of their existence: it was the art of

Divination, i.e., of divining and foretelling future events from signs

and omens, a superstition born of the old belief in every object of

inanimate nature being possessed or inhabited by a spirit, and the later

belief in a higher power ruling the world and human affairs to the

smallest detail, and constantly manifesting itself through all things in

nature as through secondary agents, so that nothing whatever could occur

without some deeper significance, which might be discovered and

expounded by specially trained and favored individuals. In the case of

atmospheric prophecies concerning weather and crops, as connected with

the appearance of clouds, sky and moon, the force and direction of

winds, etc., there may have been some real observation to found them on.

But it is very clear that such a conception, if carried out consistently

to extreme lengths and applied indiscriminately to \_everything\_, must

result in arrant folly. Such was assuredly the case with the

Chaldeo-Babylonians, who not only carefully noted and explained dreams,

drew lots in doubtful cases by means of inscribed arrows, interpreted

the rustle of trees, the plashing of fountains and murmur of streams,

the direction and form of lightnings, not only fancied that they could

see things in bowls of water and in the shifting forms assumed by the

flame which consumed sacrifices, and the smoke which rose therefrom, and

that they could raise and question the spirits of the dead, but drew

presages and omens, for good or evil, from the flight of birds, the

appearance of the liver, lungs, heart and bowels of the animals offered

in sacrifice and opened for inspection, from the natural defects or

monstrosities of babies or the young of animals--in short, from any and

everything that they could possibly subject to observation.

16. This idlest of all kinds of speculation was reduced to a most minute

and apparently scientific system quite as early as astrology and

incantation, and forms the subject of a third collection, in about one

hundred tablets, and probably compiled by those same indefatigable

priests of Agadê for Sargon, who was evidently of a most methodical turn

of mind, and determined to have all the traditions and the results of

centuries of observation and practical experiences connected with any

branch of religious science fixed forever in the shape of thoroughly

classified rules, for the guidance of priests for all coming ages. This

collection has come to us in an even more incomplete and mutilated

condition than the others; but enough has been preserved to show us that

a right-thinking and religiously-given Chaldeo-Babylonian must have

spent his life taking notes of the absurdest trifles, and questioning

the diviners and priests about them, in order not to get into scrapes by

misinterpreting the signs and taking that to be a favorable omen which

boded dire calamity--or the other way, and thus doing things or leaving

them undone at the wrong moment and in the wrong way. What excites,

perhaps, even greater wonder, is the utter absurdity of some of the

incidents gravely set down as affecting the welfare, not only of

individuals, but of the whole country. What shall we say, for instance,

of the importance attached to the proceedings of stray dogs? Here are

some of the items as given by Mr. Fr. Lenormant in his most valuable and

entertaining book on Chaldean Divination:--

"If a gray dog enter the palace, the latter will be consumed by

flames.--If a yellow dog enter the palace, the latter will perish in a

violent catastrophe.--If a tawny dog enter the palace, peace will be

concluded with the enemies.--If a dog enter the palace and be not

killed, the peace of the palace will be disturbed.--If a dog enter the

temple, the gods will have no mercy on the land.--If a white dog enter

the temple, its foundations will subsist.--If a black dog enter the

temple, its foundations will be shaken.--If a gray dog enter the temple,

the latter will lose its possessions.... If dogs assemble in troops and

enter the temple, no one will remain in authority.... If a dog vomits in

a house, the master of that house will die."

17. The chapter on monstrous births is extensive. Not only is every

possible anomaly registered, from an extra finger or toe to an ear

smaller than the other, with its corresponding presage of good or evil

to the country, the king, the army, but the most impossible

monstrosities are seriously enumerated, with the political conditions of

which they are supposed to be the signs. For instance:--"If a woman give

birth to a child with lion's ears, a mighty king will rule the land ...

with a bird's beak, there will be peace in the land.... If a queen give

birth to a child with a lion's face, the king will have no rival ... if

to a snake, the king will be mighty.... If a mare give birth to a foal

with a lion's mane, the lord of the land will annihilate his enemies ...

with a dog's paws, the land will be diminished ... with a lion's paws,

the land will be increased.... If a sheep give birth to a lion, there

will be war, the king will have no rival.... If a mare give birth to a

dog, there will be disaster and famine."

18. The three great branches of religious science--astrology,

incantation and divination--were represented by three corresponding

classes of "wise men," all belonging, in different degrees, to the

priesthood: the star-gazers or astrologers, the magicians or sorcerers,

and the soothsayers or fortune-tellers. The latter, again, were divided

into many smaller classes according to the particular kind of divination

which they practised. Some specially devoted themselves to the

interpretation of dreams, others to that of the flight of birds, or of

the signs of the atmosphere, or of casual signs and omens generally. All

were in continual demand, consulted alike by kings and private persons,

and all proceeded in strict accordance with the rules and principles

laid down in the three great works of King Sargon's time. When the

Babylonian empire ceased to exist and the Chaldeans were no longer a

nation, these secret arts continued to be practised by them, and the

name "Chaldean" became a by-word, a synonym for "a wise man of the

East,"--astrologer, magician or soothsayer. They dispersed all over the

world, carrying their delusive science with them, practising and

teaching it, welcomed everywhere by the credulous and superstitious,

often highly honored and always richly paid. Thus it is from the

Chaldeans and their predecessors the Shumiro-Accads that the belief in

astrology, witchcraft and every kind of fortune-telling has been handed

down to the nations of Europe, together with the practices belonging

thereto, many of which we find lingering even to our day among the less

educated classes. The very words "magic" and "magician" are probably an

inheritance of that remotest of antiquities. One of the words for

"priest" in the old Turanian tongue of Shumir was \_imga\_, which, in the

later Semitic language, became \_mag\_. The \_Rab-mag\_--"great priest," or

perhaps "chief conjurer," was a high functionary at the court of the

Assyrian kings. Hence "magus," "magic," "magician," in all the European

languages, from Latin downward.

19. There can be no doubt that we have little reason to be grateful for

such an heirloom as this mass of superstitions, which have produced so

much evil in the world and still occasionally do mischief enough. But we

must not forget to set off against it the many excellent things, most

important discoveries in the province of astronomy and mathematics

which have come to us from the same distant source. To the ancient

Chaldeo-Babylonians we owe not only our division of time, but the

invention of the sun-dial, and the week of seven days, dedicated in

succession to the Sun, the Moon, and the five planets--an arrangement

which is still maintained, the names of our days being merely

translations of the Chaldean ones. And more than that; there were days

set apart and kept holy, as days of rest, as far back as the time of

Sargon of Agadê; it was from the Semites of Babylonia--perhaps the

Chaldeans of Ur--that both the name and the observance passed to the

Hebrew branch of the race, the tribe of Abraham. George Smith found an

Assyrian calendar where the day called \_Sabattu\_ or \_Sabattuv\_ is

explained to mean "completion of work, a day of rest for the soul." On

this day, it appears it was not lawful to cook food, to change one's

dress, to offer a sacrifice; the king was forbidden to speak in public,

to ride in a chariot, to perform any kind of military or civil duty,

even to take medicine.[AV] This, surely, is a keeping of the Sabbath as

strict as the most orthodox Jew could well desire. There are, however,

essential differences between the two. In the first place, the

Babylonians kept \_five\_ Sabbath days every month, which made more than

one a week; in the second place, they came round on certain dates of

each month, independently of the day of the week: on the 7th, 14th,

19th, 21st and 28th. The custom appears to have passed to the Assyrians,

and there are indications which encourage the supposition that it was

shared by other nations connected with the Jews, the Babylonians and

Assyrians, for instance, by the Phoenicians.

FOOTNOTES:

[AR] See A. H. Sayce, "The Ancient Empires of the East" (1883), p. 389.

[AS] Rawlinson's "Five Monarchies," Vol. I., p. 164.

[AT] It was the statue of this very goddess Nana which was carried away

by the Elamite conqueror, Khudur-Nankhundi in 2280 B.C. and restored to

its place by Asshurbanipal in 645 B.C.

[AU] The three circles above the god represent the Moon-god, the

Sun-god, and Ishtar. So we are informed by the two lines of writing

which ran above the roof.

[AV] Friedrich Delitzsch, "Beigaben" to the German translat. of Smith's

"Chaldean Genesis" (1876), p. 300. A. H. Sayce, "The Ancient Empires of

the East" (1883), p. 402. W. Lotz, "Quæstiones de Historia Sabbati."

VI.

LEGENDS AND STORIES.

1. In every child's life there comes a moment when it ceases to take the

world and all it holds as a matter of course, when it begins to wonder

and to question. The first, the great question naturally is--"Who made

it all? The sun, the stars, the sea, the rivers, the flowers, and the

trees--whence come they? who made them?" And to this question we are

very ready with our answer:--"God made it all. The One, the Almighty God

created the world, and all that is in it, by His own sovereign will."

When the child further asks: "\_How\_ did He do it?" we read to it the

story of the Creation which is the beginning of the Bible, our Sacred

Book, either without any remarks upon it, or with the warning, that, for

a full and proper understanding of it, years are needed and knowledge of

many kinds. Now, these same questions have been asked, by children and

men, in all ages. Ever since man has existed upon the earth, ever since

he began, in the intervals of rest, in the hard labor and struggle for

life and limb, for food and warmth, to raise his head and look abroad,

and take in the wonders that surrounded him, he has thus pondered and

questioned. And to this questioning, each nation, after its own lights,

has framed very much the same answer; the same in substance and spirit

(because the only possible one), acknowledging the agency of a Divine

Power, in filling the world with life, and ordaining the laws of

nature,--but often very different in form, since, almost every creed

having stopped short of the higher religious conception, that of One

Deity, indivisible and all-powerful, the great act was attributed to

many gods--"the gods,"--not to God. This of course opened the way to

innumerable, more or less ingenious, fancies and vagaries as to the part

played in it by this or that particular divinity. Thus all races,

nations, even tribes have worked out for themselves their own COSMOGONY,

i.e., their own ideas on the Origin of the World. The greatest number,

not having reached a very high stage of culture or attained literary

skill, preserved the teachings of their priests in their memory, and

transmitted them orally from father to son; such is the case even now

with many more peoples than we think of--with all the native tribes of

Africa, the islanders of Australia and the Pacific, and several others.

But the nations who advanced intellectually to the front of mankind and

influenced the long series of coming races by their thoughts and

teachings, recorded in books the conclusions they had arrived at on the

great questions which have always stirred the heart and mind of man;

these were carefully preserved and recopied from time to time, for the

instruction of each rising generation. Thus many great nations of olden

times have possessed Sacred Books, which, having been written in remote

antiquity by their best and wisest men, were reverenced as something not

only holy, but, beyond the unassisted powers of the human intellect,

something imparted, revealed directly by the deity itself, and therefore

to be accepted, undisputed, as absolute truth. It is clear that it was

in the interest of the priests, the keepers and teachers of all

religious knowledge, to encourage and maintain in the people at large

this unquestioning belief.

2. Of all such books that have become known to us, there are none of

greater interest and importance than the sacred books of Ancient

Babylonia. Not merely because they are the oldest known, having been

treasured in the priestly libraries of Agadê, Sippar, Cutha, etc., at an

incredibly early date, but principally because the ancestors of the

Hebrews, during their long station in the land of Shinar, learned the

legends and stories they contained, and working them over after their

own superior religious lights, remodelled them into the narrative which

was written down many centuries later as part of the Book of Genesis.

3. The original sacred books were attributed to the god Êa himself, the

impersonation of the Divine Intelligence, and the teacher of mankind in

the shape of the first Man-Fish, Oannes--(the name being only a Greek

corruption of the Accadian ÊA-HAN, "Êa the Fish")[AW] So Berosus informs

us. After describing Oannes and his proceedings (see p. 185), he adds

that "he wrote a Book on the Origin of things and the beginnings of

civilization, and gave it to men." The "origin of things" is the history

of the Creation of the world, Cosmogony. Accordingly, this is what

Berosus proceeds to expound, quoting directly from the Book, for he

begins:--"There was a time, \_says he\_, (meaning Oannes) when all was

darkness and water." Then follows a very valuable fragment, but

unfortunately only a fragment, one of the few preserved by later Greek

writers who quoted the old priest of Babylon for their own purposes,

while the work itself was, in some way, destroyed and lost. True, these

fragments contain short sketches of several of the most important

legends; still, precious as they are, they convey only second-hand

information, compiled, indeed, from original sources by a learned and

conscientious writer, but for the use of a foreign race, extremely

compressed, and, besides, with the names all altered to suit that race's

language. So long as the "original sources" were missing, there was a

gap in the study both of the Bible and the religion of Babylon, which no

ingenuity could fill. Great, therefore, were the delight and excitement,

both of Assyriologists and Bible scholars, when George Smith, while

sorting the thousands of tablet-fragments which for years had littered

the floor of certain remote chambers of the British Museum, accidentally

stumbled on some which were evidently portions of the original sacred

legends partly rendered by Berosus. To search for all available

fragments of the precious documents and piece them together became the

task of Smith's life. And as nearly all that he found belonged to copies

from the Royal Library at Nineveh, it was chiefly in order to enlarge

the collection that he undertook his first expedition to the Assyrian

mounds, from which he had the good fortune to bring back many missing

fragments, belonging also to different copies, so that one frequently

completes the other. Thus the oldest Chaldean legends were in a great

measure restored to us, though unfortunately very few tablets are in a

sufficiently well preserved condition to allow of making out an entirely

intelligible and uninterrupted narrative. Not only are many parts still

missing altogether, but of those which have been found, pieced and

collected, there is not one of which one or more columns have not been

injured in such a way that either the beginning or the end of all the

lines are gone, or whole lines broken out or erased, with only a few

words left here and there. How hopeless the task must sometimes have

seemed to the patient workers may be judged from the foregoing specimen

pieced together of sixteen bits, which Geo. Smith gives in his book.

This is one of the so-called "Deluge-tablets," i.e., of those which

contain the Chaldean version of the story of the Deluge. Luckily more

copies have been found of this story than of any of the others, or we

should have had to be content still with the short sketch of it given by

Berosus.

[Illustration: 61.--BACK OF TABLET WITH ACCOUNT OF FLOOD. (Smith's

"Chaldean Genesis.")]

4. If, therefore, the ancient Babylonian legends of the beginnings of

the world will be given here in a connected form, for the sake of

convenience and plainness, it must be clearly understood that they were

not preserved for us in such a form, but are the result of a long and

patient work of research and restoration, a work which still continues;

and every year, almost every month, brings to light some new materials,

some addition, some correction to the old ones. Yet even as the work now

stands, it justifies us in asserting that our knowledge of this

marvellous antiquity is fuller and more authentic than that we have of

many a period and people not half so remote from us in point of place

and distance.

5. The cosmogonic narrative which forms the first part of what Geo.

Smith has very aptly called "the Chaldean Genesis" is contained in a

number of tablets. As it begins by the words "\_When above\_," they are

all numbered as No. 1, or 3, or 5 "of the series WHEN ABOVE. \_The

property of Asshurbanipal, king of nations, king of Assyria.\_" The first

lines are intact:--"When the heaven above and the earth below were as

yet unnamed,"--(i.e., according to Semitic ideas, \_did not exist\_)--APSU

(the "Abyss") and MUMMU-TIAMAT (the "billowy Sea") were the beginning of

all things; their waters mingled and flowed together; that was the

Primeval Chaos; it contained the germs of life but "the darkness was not

lifted" from the waters, and therefore nothing sprouted or grew--(for no

growth or life is possible without light). The gods also were not; "they

were as yet unnamed and did not rule the destinies." Then the great gods

came into being, and the divine hosts of heaven and earth (the Spirits

of Heaven and Earth). "And the days stretched themselves out, and the

god Anu (Heaven.) ..." Here the text breaks off abruptly; it is

probable, however, that it told how, after a long lapse of time, the

gods Anu, Êa and Bel, the first and supreme triad, came into being. The

next fragment, which is sufficiently well preserved to allow of a

connected translation, tells of the establishment of the heavenly

bodies: "He" (Anu, whose particular dominion the highest heavens were,

hence frequently called "the heaven of Anu") "he appointed the mansions

of the great gods" (signs of the Zodiac), established the stars, ordered

the months and the year, and limited the beginning and end thereof;

established the planets, so that none should swerve from its allotted

track; "he appointed the mansions of Bel and Êa with his own; he also

opened the great gates of heaven, fastening their bolts firmly to the

right and to the left" (east and west); he made Nannar (the Moon) to

shine and allotted the night to him, determining the time of his

quarters which measure the days, and saying to him "rise and set, and be

subject to this law." Another tablet, of which only the beginning is

intelligible, tells how the gods (in the plural this time) created the

living beings which people the earth, the cattle of the field and the

city, and the wild beasts of the field, and the things that creep in the

field and in the city, in short all the living creatures.

[Illustration: 62.--BABYLONIAN CYLINDER, SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT THE

TEMPTATION AND FALL.]

6. There are some tablets which have been supposed to treat of the

creation of man and perhaps to give a story of his disobedience and

fall, answering to that in Genesis; but unfortunately they are in too

mutilated a condition to admit of certainty, and no other copies have as

yet come to light. However, the probability that such was really the

case is very great, and is much enhanced by a cylinder of very ancient

Babylonian workmanship, now in the British Museum, and too important not

to be reproduced here. The tree in the middle, the human couple

stretching out their hands for the fruit, the serpent standing \_behind

the woman\_ in--one might almost say--a whispering attitude, all this

tells its own tale. And the authority of this artistic presentation,

which so strangely fits in to fill the blank in the written narrative,

is doubled by the fact that the engravings on the cylinders are

invariably taken from subjects connected with religion, or at least

religious beliefs and traditions. As to the creation of man, we may

partly eke out the missing details from the fragment of Berosus already

quoted. He there tells us--and so well-informed a writer must have

spoken on good authority--that Bel gave his own blood to be kneaded with

the clay out of which men were formed, and that is why they are endowed

with reason and have a share of the divine nature in them--certainly a

most ingenious way of expressing the blending of the earthly and the

divine elements which has made human nature so deep and puzzling a

problem to the profounder thinkers of all ages.

7. For the rest of the creation, Berosus' account (quoted from the book

said to have been given men by the fabulous Oannes), agrees with what we

find in the original texts, even imperfect as we have them. He says that

in the midst of Chaos--at the time when all was darkness and water--the

principle of life which it contained, restlessly working, but without

order, took shape in numberless monstrous formations: there were beings

like men, some winged, with two heads, some with the legs and horns of

goats, others with the hind part of horses; also bulls with human heads,

dogs with four bodies and a fish's tail, horses with the heads of dogs,

in short, every hideous and fantastical combination of animal forms,

before the Divine Will had separated them, and sorted them into harmony

and order. All these monstrous beings perished the moment Bel separated

the heavens from the earth creating light,--for they were births of

darkness and lawlessness and could not stand the new reign of light and

law and divine reason. In memory of this destruction of the old chaotic

world and production of the new, harmonious and beautiful one, the walls

of the famous temple of Bel-Mardouk at Babylon were covered with

paintings representing the infinite variety of monstrous and mixed

shapes with which an exuberant fancy had peopled the primeval chaos;

Berosus was a priest of this temple and he speaks of those paintings as

still existing. Though nothing has remained of them in the ruins of the

temple, we have representations of the same kind on many of the

cylinders which, used as seals, did duty both as personal badges--(one

is almost tempted to say "coats of arms")--and as talismans, as proved

by the fact of such cylinders being so frequently found on the wrists of

the dead in the sepulchres.

[Illustration: 63.--FEMALE WINGED FIGURES BEFORE THE SACRED TREE. (From

a photograph in the British Museum.)]

8. The remarkable cylinder with the human couple and the serpent leads

us to the consideration of a most important object in the ancient

Babylonian or Chaldean religion--the Sacred Tree, the Tree of Life. That

it was a very holy symbol is clear from its being so continually

reproduced on cylinders and on sculptures. In this particular cylinder,

rude as the design is, it bears an unmistakable likeness to a real

tree--of some coniferous species, cypress or fir. But art soon took hold

of it and began to load it with symmetrical embellishments, until it

produced a tree of entirely conventional design, as shown by the

following specimens, of which the first leans more to the palm, while

the second seems rather of the coniferous type. (Figs. No. 63 and 65.)

It is probable that such artificial trees, made up of boughs--perhaps of

the palm and cypress--tied together and intertwined with ribbons

(something like our Maypoles of old), were set up in the temples as

reminders of the sacred symbol, and thus gave rise to the fixed type

which remains invariable both in such Babylonian works of art as we

possess and on the Assyrian sculptures, where the tree, or a portion of

it, appears not only in the running ornaments on the walls but on seal

cylinders and even in the embroidery on the robes of kings. In the

latter case indeed, it is almost certain, from the belief in talismans

which the Assyrians had inherited, along with the whole of their

religion from the Chaldean mother country, that this ornament was

selected not only as appropriate to the sacredness of the royal person,

but as a consecration and protection. The holiness of the symbol is

further evidenced by the kneeling posture of the animals which sometimes

accompany it (see Fig. 22, page 67), and the attitude of adoration of

the human figures, or winged spirits attending it, by the prevalence of

the sacred number seven in its component parts, and by the fact that it

is reproduced on a great many of those glazed earthenware coffins which

are so plentiful at Warka (ancient Erech). This latter fact clearly

shows that the tree-symbol not only meant life in general, life on

earth, but a hope of life eternal, beyond the grave, or why should it

have been given to the dead? These coffins at Warka belong, it is true,

to a late period, some as late as a couple of hundred years after

Christ, but the ancient traditions and their meaning had, beyond a

doubt, been preserved. Another significant detail is that the cone is

frequently seen in the hands of men or spirits, and always in a way

connected with worship or auspicious protection; sometimes it is held to

the king's nostrils by his attendant protecting spirits, (known by their

wings); a gesture of unmistakable significancy, since in ancient

languages "the breath of the nostrils" is synonymous with "the breath of

life."

[Illustration: 64.--WINGED SPIRITS BEFORE THE SACRED TREE. (Smith's

"Chaldea.")]

[Illustration: 65.--SARGON OF ASSYRIA BEFORE THE SACRED TREE. (Perrot

and Chipiez.)]

9. There can be no association of ideas more natural than that of

vegetation, as represented by a tree, with life. By its perpetual growth

and development, its wealth of branches and foliage, its blossoming and

fruit-bearing, it is a noble and striking illustration of the world in

the widest sense--the Universe, the Cosmos, while the sap which courses

equally through the trunk and through the veins of the smallest leaflet,

drawn by an incomprehensible process through invisible roots from the

nourishing earth, still more forcibly suggests that mysterious

principle, Life, which we \_think\_ we understand because we see its

effects and feel it in ourselves, but the sources of which will never be

reached, as the problem of it will never be solved, either by the prying

of experimental science or the musings of contemplative speculation;

life eternal, also,--for the workings of nature \_are\_ eternal,--and the

tree that is black and lifeless to-day, we know from long experience is

not dead, but will revive in the fulness of time, and bud, and grow and

bear again. All these things \_we\_ know are the effects of laws; but the

ancients attributed them to living Powers,--the CHTHONIC POWERS (from

the Greek word CHTHON, "earth, soil"), which have by some later and

dreamy thinkers been called weirdly but not unaptly, "the Mothers,"

mysteriously at work in the depths of silence and darkness, unseen,

unreachable, and inexhaustibly productive. Of these powers again, what

more perfect symbol or representative than the Tree, as standing for

vegetation, one for all, the part for the whole? It lies so near that,

in later times, it was enlarged, so as to embrace the whole universe, in

the majestic conception of the Cosmic Tree which has its roots on earth

and heaven for its crown, while its fruit are the golden apples--the

stars, and Fire,--the red lightning.

[Illustration: 66.--EAGLE-HEADED FIGURE BEFORE THE SACRED TREE. (Smith's

"Chaldea.")]

[Illustration: 67.--FOUR-WINGED HUMAN FIGURE BEFORE THE SACRED TREE.

(Perrot and Chipiez.)]

10. All these suggestive and poetical fancies would in themselves

suffice to make the tree-symbol a favorite one among so thoughtful and

profound a people as the old Chaldeans. But there is something more. It

is intimately connected with another tradition, common, in some form or

other, to all nations who have attained a sufficiently high grade of

culture to make their mark in the world--that of an original ancestral

abode, beautiful, happy, and remote, a Paradise. It is usually imagined

as a great mountain, watered by springs which become great rivers,

bearing one or more trees of wonderful properties and sacred character,

and is considered as the principal residence of the gods. Each nation

locates it according to its own knowledge of geography and vague,

half-obliterated memories. Many texts, both in the old Accadian and the

Assyrian languages, abundantly prove that the Chaldean religion

preserved a distinct and reverent conception of such a mountain, and

placed it in the far north or north-east, calling it the "Father of

Countries," plainly an allusion to the original abode of man--the

"Mountain of Countries," (i.e., "Chief Mountain of the World") and also

ARALLU, because there, where the gods dwelt, they also imagined the

entrance to the Arali to be the Land of the Dead. There, too, the heroes

and great men were to dwell forever after their death. There is the land

with a sky of silver, a soil which produces crops without being

cultivated, where blessings are for food and rejoicing, which it is

hoped the king will obtain as a reward for his piety after having

enjoyed all earthly goods during his life.[AX] In an old Accadian hymn,

the sacred mount, which is identical with that imagined as the pillar

joining heaven and earth, the pillar around which the heavenly spheres

revolve, (see page 153)--is called "the mountain of Bel, in the east,

whose double head reaches unto the skies; which is like to a mighty

buffalo at rest, whose double horn sparkles as a sunbeam, as a star." So

vivid was the conception in the popular mind, and so great the reverence

entertained for it, that it was attempted to reproduce the type of the

holy mountain in the palaces of their kings and the temples of their

gods. That is one of the reasons why they built both on artificial

hills. There is in the British Museum a sculpture from Koyunjik,

representing such a temple, or perhaps palace, on the summit of a mound,

converted into a garden and watered by a stream which issues from the

"hanging garden" on the right, the latter being laid out on a platform

of masonry raised on arches; the water was brought up by machinery. It

is a perfect specimen of a "Paradise," as these artificial parks were

called by the Greeks, who took the word (meaning "park" or "garden")

from the Persians, who, in their turn, had borrowed the thing from the

Assyrians and Babylonians, when they conquered the latter's empire. The

\_Ziggurat\_, or pyramidal construction in stages, with the temple or

shrine on the top, also owed its peculiar shape to the same original

conception: as the gods dwelt on the summit of the Mountain of the

World, so their shrines should occupy a position as much like their

residence as the feeble means of man would permit. That this is no idle

fancy is proved by the very name of "Ziggurat," which means "\_mountain

peak\_," and also by the names of some of these temples: one of the

oldest and most famous indeed, in the city of Asshur, was named "the

House of the Mountain of Countries." An excellent representation of a

Ziggurat, as it must have looked with its surrounding palm grove by a

river, is given us on a sculptured slab, also from Koyunjik. The

original is evidently a small one, of probably five stages besides the

platform on which it is built, with its two symmetrical paths up the

ascent. Some, like the great temple at Ur, had only three stages, others

again seven--always one of the three sacred numbers: three,

corresponding to the divine Triad; five, to the five planets; seven, to

the planets, sun and moon. The famous Temple of the Seven Spheres at

Borsip (the Birs-Nimrud), often mentioned already, and rebuilt by

Nebuchadnezzar about 600 B.C. from a far older structure, as he explains

in his inscription (see p. 72), was probably the most gorgeous, as it

was the largest; besides, it is the only one of which we have detailed

and reliable descriptions and measurements, which may best be given in

this place, almost entirely in the words of George Rawlinson:[AY]

[Illustration: 68.--TEMPLE AND HANGING GARDENS AT KOYUNJIK. (British

Museum.)]

[Illustration: 69.--PLAN OF A ZIGGURAT. (Perrot and Chipiez.)]

11. The temple is raised on a platform exceptionally low--only a few

feet above the level of the plain; the entire height, including the

platform, was 156 feet in a perpendicular line. The stages--of which the

four upper were lower than the first three--receded equally on three

sides, but doubly as much on the fourth, probably in order to present a

more imposing front from the plain, and an easier ascent. "The

ornamentation of the edifice was chiefly by means of color. The seven

Stages represented the Seven Spheres, in which moved, according to

ancient Chaldean astronomy, the seven planets. To each planet fancy,

partly grounding itself upon fact, had from of old assigned a peculiar

tint or hue. The Sun (Shamash) was golden; the Moon (Sin or Nannar),

silver; the distant Saturn (Adar), almost beyond the region of light,

was black; Jupiter (Marduk) was orange; the fiery Mars (Nergal) was red;

Venus (Ishtar) was a pale yellow; Mercury (Nebo or Nabu, whose shrine

stood on the top stage), a deep blue. The seven stages of the tower gave

a visible embodiment to these fancies. The basement stage, assigned to

Saturn, was blackened by means of a coating of bitumen spread over the

face of the masonry; the second stage, assigned to Jupiter, obtained the

appropriate orange color by means of a facing of burnt bricks of that

hue; the third stage, that of Mars, was made blood-red by the use of

half-burnt bricks formed of a bright-red clay; the fourth stage,

assigned to the Sun, appears to have been actually covered with thin

plates of gold; the fifth, the stage of Venus, received a pale yellow

tint from the employment of bricks of that hue; the sixth, the sphere of

Mercury, was given an azure tint by vitrifaction, the whole stage having

been subjected to an intense heat after it was erected, whereby the

bricks composing it were converted into a mass of blue slag; the seventh

stage, that of the moon, was probably, like the fourth, coated with

actual plates of metal. Thus the building rose up in stripes of varied

color, arranged almost as nature's cunning hand arranges hues in the

rainbow, tones of red coming first, succeeded by a broad stripe of

yellow, the yellow being followed by blue. Above this the glowing

silvery summit melted into the bright sheen of the sky.... The Tower is

to be regarded as fronting the north-east, the coolest side, and that

least exposed to the sun's rays from the time that they become

oppressive in Babylonia. On this side was the ascent, which consisted

probably of a broad staircase extending along the whole front of the

building. The side platforms, at any rate of the first and second

stages, probably of all, were occupied by a series of chambers.... In

these were doubtless lodged the priests and other attendants upon the

temple service...."

[Illustration: 70.--"ZIGGURAT" RESTORED. ACCORDING TO PROBABILITIES.

(Perrot and Chipiez.)]

12. The interest attaching to this temple, wonderful as it is in itself,

is greatly enhanced by the circumstance that its ruins have through many

centuries been considered as those of the identical Tower of Babel of

the Bible. Jewish literary men who travelled over the country in the

Middle Ages started this idea, which quickly spread to the West. It is

conjectured that it was suggested by the vitrified fragments of the

outer coating of the sixth, blue, stage, (that of Mercury or Nebo), the

condition of which was attributed to lightning having struck the

building.

[Illustration: 71.--BIRS-NIMRUD. (ANCIENT BORSIP.) (Perrot and

Chipiez.)]

13. That the Ziggurats of Chaldea should have been used not only as

pedestals to uphold shrines, but as observatories by the priestly

astronomers and astrologers, was quite in accordance with the strong

mixture of star-worship grafted on the older religion, and with the

power ascribed to the heavenly bodies over the acts and destinies of

men. These constructions, therefore, were fitted for astronomical uses

by being very carefully placed with their corners pointing exactly to

the four cardinal points--North, South, East and West. Only two

exceptions have been found to this rule, one in Babylon, and the

Assyrian Ziggurat at Kalah, (Nimrud) explored by Layard, of which the

sides, not the corners, face the cardinal points. For the Assyrians, who

carried their entire culture and religion northward from their ancient

home, also retained this consecrated form of architecture, with the

difference that with them the Ziggurats were not temple and observatory

in one, but only observatories attached to the temples, which were built

on more independent principles and a larger scale, often covering as

much ground as a palace.

14. The singular orientation of the Chaldean Ziggurats (subsequently

retained by the Assyrians),--i.e., the manner in which they are placed,

turned to the cardinal points with their angles, and not with their

faces, as are the Egyptian pyramids, with only one exception,--has long

been a puzzle which no astronomical considerations were sufficient to

solve. But quite lately, in 1883, Mr. Pinches, Geo. Smith's successor in

the British Museum, found a small tablet, giving lists of signs,

eclipses, etc., affecting the various countries, and containing the

following short geographical notice, in illustration of the position

assigned to the cardinal points: "The South is Elam, the North is Accad,

the East is Suedin and Gutium, the West is Phoenicia. On the right is

Accad, on the left is Elam, in front is Phoenicia, behind are Suedin

and Gutium." In order to appreciate the bearing of this bit of

topography on the question in hand, we must examine an ancient map, when

we shall at once perceive that the direction given by the tablet to the

\_South\_ (Elam) answers to our \_South-East;\_ that given to the \_North\_

(Accad) answers to our \_North-West;\_ while \_West\_ (Phoenicia, i.e.,

the coast-land of the Mediterranean, down almost to Egypt) stands for

our \_South-West\_, and \_East\_ (Gutium, the highlands where the Armenian

mountains join the Zagros, now Kurdish Mountains,) for our \_North-East\_.

If we turn the map so that the Persian Gulf shall come in a

perpendicular line under Babylon, we shall produce the desired effect,

and then it will strike us that the Ziggurats \_did\_ face the cardinal

points, according to Chaldean geography, \_with their sides\_, and that

the discovery of the small tablet, as was remarked on the production of

it, "settles the difficult question of the difference in orientation

between the Assyrian and Egyptian monuments." It was further suggested

that "the two systems of cardinal points originated no doubt from two

different races, and their determination was due probably \_to the

geographical position of the primitive home of each race.\_" Now the

South-West is called "the front," "and the migrations of the people

\_therefore\_ must have been from North-East to South-West."[AZ] This

beautifully tallies with the hypothesis, or conjecture, concerning the

direction from which the Shumiro-Accads descended into the lowlands by

the Gulf (see pp. 146-8), and, moreover, leads us to the question

whether the fact of the great Ziggurat of the Seven Spheres at Borsip

facing the North-East with its front may not have some connection with

the holiness ascribed to that region as the original home of the race

and the seat of that sacred mountain so often mentioned as "the Great

Mountain of Countries" (see p. 280), doubly sacred, as the meeting-place

of the gods and the place of entrance to the "Arallu" or Lower

World.[BA]

15. It is to be noted that the conception of the divine grove or garden

with its sacred tree of life was sometimes separated from that of the

holy primeval mountain and transferred by tradition to a more immediate

and accessible neighborhood. That the city and district of Babylon may

have been the centre of such a tradition is possibly shown by the most

ancient Accadian name of the former--TIN-TIR-KI meaning "the Place of

Life," while the latter was called GAN-DUNYASH or KAR-DUNYASH--"the

garden of the god Dunyash," (probably one of the names of the god

Êa)--an appellation which this district, although situated in the land

of Accad or Upper Chaldea, preserved to the latest times as

distinctively its own. Another sacred grove is spoken of as situated in

Eridhu. This city, altogether the most ancient we have any mention of,

was situated at the then mouth of the Euphrates, in the deepest and

flattest of lowlands, a sort of borderland between earth and sea, and

therefore very appropriately consecrated to the great spirit of both,

the god Êa, the amphibious Oannes. It was so much identified with him,

that in the Shumirian hymns and conjurings his son Meridug is often

simply invoked as "Son of Eridhu." It must have been the oldest seat of

that spirit-worship and sorcerer-priesthood which we find crystallized

in the earliest Shumiro-Accadian sacred books. This prodigious antiquity

carries us to something like 5000 years B.C., which explains the fact

that the ruins of the place, near the modern Arab village of

Abu-Shahrein, are now so far removed from the sea, being a considerable

distance even from the junction of the two rivers where they form the

Shat-el-arab. The sacred grove of Eridhu is frequently referred to, and

that it was connected with the tradition of the tree of life we see from

a fragment of a most ancient hymn, which tells of "a black pine, growing

at Eridhu, sprung up in a pure place, with roots of lustrous crystal

extending downwards, even into the deep, marking the centre of the

earth, in the dark forest into the heart whereof man hath not

penetrated." Might not this be the reason why the wood of the pine was

so much used in charms and conjuring, as the surest safeguard against

evil influences, and its very shadow was held wholesome and sacred? But

we return to the legends of the Creation and primeval world.

[Illustration: 72.--BEL FIGHTS THE DRAGON--TIAMAT (ASSYRIAN CYLINDER.)

(Perrot and Chipiez.)]

16. Mummu-Tiamat, the impersonation of chaos, the power of darkness and

lawlessness, does not vanish from the scene when Bel puts an end to her

reign, destroys, by the sheer force of light and order, her hideous

progeny of monsters and frees from her confusion the germs and

rudimental forms of life, which, under the new and divine dispensation,

are to expand and combine into the beautifully varied, yet harmonious

world we live in. Tiamat becomes the sworn enemy of the gods and their

creation, the great principle of opposition and destruction. When the

missing texts come to light,--if ever they do--it will probably be found

that the serpent who tempts the woman in the famous cylinder, is none

other than a form of the rebellious and vindictive Tiamat, who is called

now a "Dragon," now "the Great Serpent." At last the hostility cannot be

ignored, and things come to a deadly issue. It is determined in the

council of the gods that one of them must fight the wicked dragon; a

complete suit of armor is made and exhibited by Anu himself, of which

the sickle-shaped sword and the beautifully bent bow are the principal

features. It is Bel who dares the venture and goes forth on a matchless

war chariot, armed with the sword, and the bow, and his great weapon,

the thunderbolt, sending the lightning before him and scattering arrows

around. Tiamat, the Dragon of the Sea, came out to meet him, stretching

her immense body along, bearing death and destruction, and attended by

her followers. The god rushed on the monster with such violence that he

threw her down and was already fastening fetters on her limbs, when she

uttered a great shout and started up and attacked the righteous leader

of the gods, while banners were raised on both sides as at a pitched

battle. Meridug drew his sword and wounded her; at the same time a

violent wind struck against her face. She opened her jaws to swallow up

Meridug, but before she could close them he bade the wind to enter into

her body. It entered and filled her with its violence, shook her heart

and tore her entrails and subdued her courage. Then the god bound her,

and put an end to her works, while her followers stood amazed, then

broke their lines and fled, full of fear, seeing that Tiamat, their

leader, was conquered. There she lay, her weapons broken, herself like a

sword thrown down on the ground, in the dark and bound, conscious of her

bondage and in great grief, her might suddenly broken by fear.

[Illustration: 73.--BEL FIGHTS THE DRAGON--TIAMAT (BABYLONIAN

CYLINDER).]

17. The battle of Bel-Marduk and the Dragon was a favorite incident in

the cycle of Chaldean tradition, if we judge from the number of

representations we have of it on Babylonian cylinders, and even on

Assyrian wall-sculptures. The texts which relate to it are, however, in

a frightful state of mutilation, and only the last fragment, describing

the final combat, can be read and translated with anything like

completeness. With it ends the series treating of the Cosmogony or

Beginnings of the World. But it may be completed by a few more legends

of the same primitive character and preserved on detached tablets, in

double text, as usual--Accadian and Assyrian. To these belongs a poem

narrating the rebellion, already alluded to, (see p. 182,) of the seven

evil spirits, originally the messengers and throne-bearers of the gods,

and their war against the moon, the whole being evidently a fanciful

rendering of an eclipse. "Those wicked gods, the rebel spirits," of

whom one is likened to a leopard, and one to a serpent, and the rest to

other animals--suggesting the fanciful shapes of storm-clouds--while one

is said to be the raging south wind, began the attack "with evil

tempest, baleful wind," and "from the foundations of the heavens like

the lightning they darted." The lower region of the sky was reduced to

its primeval chaos, and the gods sat in anxious council. The moon-god

(Sin), the sun-god (Shamash), and the goddess Ishtar had been appointed

to sway in close harmony the lower sky and to command the hosts of

heaven; but when the moon-god was attacked by the seven spirits of evil,

his companions basely forsook him, the sun-god retreating to his place

and Ishtar taking refuge in the highest heaven (the heaven of Anu). Nebo

is despatched to Êa, who sends his son Meridug with this

instruction:--"Go, my son Meridug! The light of the sky, my son, even

the moon-god, is grievously darkened in heaven, and in eclipse from

heaven is vanishing. Those seven wicked gods, the serpents of death who

fear not, are waging unequal war with the laboring moon." Meridug obeys

his father's bidding, and overthrows the seven powers of darkness.[BB]

[Illustration: 74.--BATTLE BETWEEN BEL AND THE DRAGON (TIAMAT). (Smith's

"Chaldea.")]

18. There is one more detached legend known from the surviving fragments

of Berosus, also supposed to be derived from ancient Accadian texts: it

is that of the great tower and the confusion of tongues. One such text

has indeed been found by the indefatigable George Smith, but there is

just enough left of it to be very tantalizing and very unsatisfactory.

The narrative in Berosus amounts to this: that men having grown beyond

measure proud and arrogant, so as to deem themselves superior even to

the gods, undertook to build an immense tower, to scale the sky; that

the gods, offended with this presumption, sent violent winds to

overthrow the construction when it had already reached a great height,

and at the same time caused men to speak different languages,--probably

to sow dissension among them, and prevent their ever again uniting in a

common enterprise so daring and impious. The site was identified with

that of Babylon itself, and so strong was the belief attaching to the

legend that the Jews later on adopted it unchanged, and centuries

afterwards, as we saw above, fixed on the ruins of the hugest of all

Ziggurats, that of Borsip, as those of the great Tower of the Confusion

of Tongues. Certain it is, that the tradition, under all its fanciful

apparel, contains a very evident vein of historical fact, since it was

indeed from the plains of Chaldea that many of the principal nations of

the ancient East, various in race and speech, dispersed to the north,

the west, and the south, after having dwelt there for centuries as in a

common cradle, side by side, and indeed to a great extent as one

people.

FOOTNOTES:

[AW] See Fr. Lenormant, "Die Magie und Wahrsagekunst der Chaldäer," p.

377.

[AX] François Lenormant, "Origines de l'Histoire," Vol. II., p. 130.

[AY] "Five Monarchies," Vol. III., pp. 380-387.

[AZ] See "Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology," Feb.,

1883, pp. 74-76, and "Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society," Vol. XVI.,

1884, p. 302.

[BA] The one exception to the above rule of orientation among the

Ziggurats of Chaldea is that of the temple of Bel, in Babylon,

(E-SAGGILA in the old language,) which is oriented in the usual way--its

sides facing the \_real\_ North, South, East and West.

[BB] See A. H. Sayce, "Babylonian Literature," p. 35.

VII.

MYTHS.--HEROES AND THE MYTHICAL EPOS.

1. The stories by which a nation attempts to account for the mysteries

of creation, to explain the Origin of the World, are called, in

scientific language, COSMOGONIC MYTHS. The word Myth is constantly used

in conversation, but so loosely and incorrectly, that it is most

important once for all to define its proper meaning. It means simply \_a

phenomenon of nature presented not as the result of a law but as the act

of divine or at least superhuman persons, good or evil powers\_--(for

instance, the eclipse of the Moon described as the war against the gods

of the seven rebellious spirits). Further reading and practice will show

that there are many kinds of myths, of various origins; but there is

none, which, if properly taken to pieces, thoroughly traced and

cornered, will not be covered by this definition. A Myth has also been

defined as a legend connected more or less closely with some religious

belief, and, in its main outlines, handed down from prehistoric times.

There are only two things which can prevent the contemplation of nature

and speculation on its mysteries from running into mythology: a

knowledge of the physical laws of nature, as supplied by modern

experimental science, and a strict, unswerving belief in the unity of

God, absolute and undivided, as affirmed and defined by the Hebrews in

so many places of their sacred books: "The Lord he is God, there is none

else beside him." "The Lord he is God, in Heaven above and upon the

earth beneath there is none else." "I am the Lord, and there is none

else, there is no God beside me." "I am God and there is none else." But

experimental science is a very modern thing indeed, scarcely a few

hundred years old, and Monotheism, until the propagation of

Christianity, was professed by only one small nation, the Jews, though

the chosen thinkers of other nations have risen to the same conception

in many lands and many ages. The great mass of mankind has always

believed in the personal individuality of all the forces of nature,

i.e., in many gods; everything that went on in the world was to them the

manifestation of the feelings, the will, the acts of these gods--hence

the myths. The earlier the times, the more unquestioning the belief and,

as a necessary consequence, the more exuberant the creation of myths.

2. But gods and spirits are not the only actors in myths. Side by side

with its sacred traditions on the Origin of things, every nation

treasures fond but vague memories of its own beginnings--vague, both

from their remoteness and from their not being fixed in writing, and

being therefore liable to the alterations and enlargements which a story

invariably undergoes when told many times to and by different people,

i.e., when it is transmitted from generation to generation by oral

tradition. These memories generally centre around a few great names, the

names of the oldest national heroes, of the first rulers, lawgivers and

conquerors of the nation, the men who by their genius \_made\_ it a nation

out of a loose collection of tribes or large families, who gave it

social order and useful arts, and safety from its neighbors, or,

perhaps, freed it from foreign oppressors. In their grateful admiration

for these heroes, whose doings naturally became more and more marvellous

with each generation that told of them, men could not believe that they

should have been mere imperfect mortals like themselves, but insisted on

considering them as directly inspired by the deity in some one of the

thousand shapes they invested it with, or as half-divine of their own

nature. The consciousness of the imperfection inherent to ordinary

humanity, and the limited powers awarded to it, has always prompted this

explanation of the achievements of extraordinarily gifted individuals,

in whatever line of action their exceptional gifts displayed themselves.

Besides, if there is something repugnant to human vanity in having to

submit to the dictates of superior reason and the rule of superior power

as embodied in mere men of flesh and blood, there is on the contrary

something very flattering and soothing to that same vanity in the idea

of having been specially singled out as the object of the protection and

solicitude of the divine powers; this idea at all events takes the

galling sting from the constraint of obedience. Hence every nation has

very jealously insisted on and devoutly believed in the divine origin of

its rulers and the divine institution of its laws and customs. Once it

was implicitly admitted that the world teemed with spirits and gods,

who, not content with attending to their particular spheres and

departments, came and went at their pleasure, had walked the earth and

directly interfered with human affairs, there was no reason to

disbelieve \_any\_ occurrence, however marvellous--provided it had

happened very, very long ago. (See p. 197.)

3. Thus, in the traditions of every ancient nation, there is a vast and

misty tract of time, expressed, if at all, in figures of appalling

magnitude--hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of years--between the

unpierceable gloom of an eternal past and the broad daylight of

remembered, recorded history. There, all is shadowy, gigantic,

superhuman. There, gods move, dim yet visible, shrouded in a golden

cloud of mystery and awe; there, by their side, loom other shapes, as

dim but more familiar, human yet more than human--the Heroes, Fathers of

races, founders of nations, the companions, the beloved of gods and

goddesses, nay, their own children, mortal themselves, yet doing deeds

of daring and might such as only the immortals could inspire and favor,

the connecting link between these and ordinary humanity--as that

gloaming, uncertain, shifting, but not altogether unreal streak of time

is the borderland between Heaven and Earth, the very hot-bed of myth,

fiction and romance. For of their favorite heroes, people began to tell

the same stories as of their gods, in modified forms, transferred to

their own surroundings and familiar scenes. To take one of the most

common transformations: if the Sun-god waged war against the demons of

darkness and destroyed them in heaven (see p. 171), the hero hunted wild

beasts and monsters on earth, of course always victoriously. This one

theme could be varied by the national poets in a thousand ways and woven

into a thousand different stories, which come with full right under the

head of "myths." Thus arose a number of so-called HEROIC MYTHS, which,

by dint of being repeated, settled into a certain defined traditional

shape, like the well-known fairy-tales of our nurseries, which are the

same everywhere and told in every country with scarcely any changes. As

soon as the art of writing came into general use, these favorite and

time-honored stories, which the mass of the people probably still

received as literal truth, were taken down, and, as the work naturally

devolved on priests and clerks, i.e., men of education and more or less

literary skill, often themselves poets, they were worked over in the

process, connected, and remodelled into a continuous whole. The separate

myths, or adventures of one or more particular heroes, formerly recited

severally, somewhat after the manner of the old songs and ballads,

frequently became so many chapters or books in a long, well-ordered

poem, in which they were introduced and distributed, often with

consummate art, and told with great poetical beauty. Such poems, of

which several have come down to us, are called EPIC POEMS, or simply

EPICS. The entire mass of fragmentary materials out of which they are

composed in the course of time, blending almost inextricably historical

reality with mythical fiction, is the NATIONAL EPOS of a race, its

greatest intellectual treasure, from which all its late poetry and much

of its political and religious feeling draws its food ever after. A race

that has no national epos is one devoid of great memories, incapable of

high culture and political development, and no such has taken a place

among the leading races of the world. All those that have occupied such

a place at any period of the world's history, have had their Mythic and

Heroic Ages, brimful of wonders and fanciful creations.

4. From these remarks it will be clear that the preceding two or three

chapters have been treating of what may properly be called the Religious

and Cosmogonic Myths of the Shumiro-Accads and the Babylonians. The

present chapter will be devoted to their Heroic Myths or Mythic Epos, as

embodied in an Epic which has been in great part preserved, and which is

the oldest known in the world, dating certainly from 2000 years B.C.,

and probably more.

5. Of this poem the few fragments we have of Berosus contain no

indication. They only tell of a great deluge which took place under the

last of that fabulous line of ten kings which is said to have begun

259,000 years after the apparition of the divine Man-Fish, Oannes, and

to have reigned in the aggregate a period of 432,000 years. The

description has always excited great interest from its extraordinary

resemblance to that given by the Bible. Berosus tells how XISUTHROS, the

last of the ten fabulous kings, had a dream in which the deity announced

to him that on a certain day all men should perish in a deluge of

waters, and ordered him to take all the sacred writings and bury them at

Sippar, the City of the Sun, then to build a ship, provide it with ample

stores of food and drink and enter it with his family and his dearest

friends, also animals, both birds and quadrupeds of every kind.

Xisuthros did as he had been bidden. When the flood began to abate, on

the third day after the rain had ceased to fall, he sent out some birds,

to see whether they would find any land, but the birds, having found

neither food nor place to rest upon, returned to the ship. A few days

later, Xisuthros once more sent the birds out; but they again came back

to him, this time with muddy feet. On being sent out a third time, they

did not return at all. Xisuthros then knew that the land was uncovered;

made an opening in the roof of the ship and saw that it was stranded on

the top of a mountain. He came out of the ship with his wife, daughter

and pilot, built an altar and sacrificed to the gods, after which he

disappeared together with these. When his companions came out to seek

him they did not see him, but a voice from heaven informed them that he

had been translated among the gods to live forever, as a reward for his

piety and righteousness. The voice went on to command the survivors to

return to Babylonia, unearth the sacred writings and make them known to

men. They obeyed and, moreover, built many cities and restored Babylon.

6. However interesting this account, it was received at second-hand and

therefore felt to need confirmation and ampler development. Besides which,

as it stood, it lacked all indication that could throw light on the

important question which of the two traditions--that reproduced by Berosus

or the Biblical one--was to be considered as the oldest. Here again it was

George Smith who had the good fortune to discover the original narrative

(in 1872), while engaged in sifting and sorting the tablet-fragments at

the British Museum. This is how it happened:[BC]--"Smith found one-half of

a whitish-yellow clay tablet, which, to all appearance, had been divided

on each face into three columns. In the third column of the obverse or

front side he read the words: 'On the mount Nizir the ship stood still.

Then I took a dove and let her fly. The dove flew hither and thither, but

finding no resting-place, returned to the ship.' Smith at once knew that

he had discovered a fragment of the cuneiform narrative of the Deluge.

With indefatigable perseverance he set to work to search the thousands of

Assyrian tablet-fragments heaped up in the British Museum, for more

pieces. His efforts were crowned with success. He did not indeed find a

piece completing the half of the tablet first discovered, but he found

instead fragments of two more copies of the narrative, which completed the

text in the most felicitous manner and supplied several very important

variations of it. One of these duplicates, which has been pieced out of

sixteen little bits (see illustration on p. 262), bore the usual

inscription at the bottom: 'The property of Asshurbanipal, King of hosts,

King of the land of Asshur,' and contained the information that the

Deluge-narrative was the eleventh tablet of a series, several fragments of

which, Smith had already come across. With infinite pains he put all these

fragments together and found that the story of the Deluge was only an

incident in a great Heroic Epic, a poem written in twelve books, making in

all about three thousand lines, which celebrated the deeds of an ancient

king of Erech."

7. Each book or chapter naturally occupied a separate tablet. All are by

no means equally well preserved. Some parts, indeed, are missing, while

several are so mutilated as to cause serious gaps and breaks in the

narrative, and the first tablet has not yet been found at all. Yet, with

all these drawbacks it is quite possible to build up a very intelligible

outline of the whole story, while the eleventh tablet, owing to various

fortunate additions that came to light from time to time, has been

restored almost completely.

8. The epic carries us back to the time when Erech was the capital of

Shumir, and when the land was under the dominion of the Elamite

conquerors, not passive or content, but striving manfully for

deliverance. We may imagine the struggle to have been shared and headed

by the native kings, whose memory would be gratefully treasured by later

generations, and whose exploits would naturally become the theme of

household tradition and poets' recitations. So much for the bare

historical groundwork of the poem. It is easily to be distinguished from

the rich by-play of fiction and wonderful adventure gradually woven into

it from the ample fund of national myths and legends, which have

gathered around the name of one hero-king, GISDHUBAR or IZDUBAR,[BD]

said to be a native of the ancient city of MARAD and a direct descendant

of the last antediluvian king HÂSISADRA, the same whom Berosus calls

Xisuthros.

9. It is unfortunate that the first tablet and the top part of the

second are missing, for thus we lose the opening of the poem, which

would probably give us valuable historical indications. What there is of

the second tablet shows the city of Erech groaning under the tyranny of

the Elamite conquerors. Erech had been governed by the divine Dumuzi,

the husband of the goddess Ishtar. He had met an untimely and tragic

death, and been succeeded by Ishtar, who had not been able, however, to

make a stand against the foreign invaders, or, as the text picturesquely

expresses it, "to hold up her head against the foe." Izdubar, as yet

known to fame only as a powerful and indefatigable huntsman, then dwelt

at Erech, where he had a singular dream. It seemed to him that the stars

of heaven fell down and struck him on the back in their fall, while over

him stood a terrible being, with fierce, threatening countenance and

claws like a lion's, the sight of whom paralyzed him with fear.

10. Deeply impressed with this dream, which appeared to him to portend

strange things, Izdubar sent forth to all the most famous seers and wise

men, promising the most princely rewards to whoever would interpret it

for him: he should be ennobled with his family; he should take the high

seat of honor at the royal feasts; he should be clothed in jewels and

gold; he should have seven beautiful wives and enjoy every kind of

distinction. But there was none found of wisdom equal to the task of

reading the vision. At length he heard of a wonderful sage, named

ÊABÂNI, far-famed for "his wisdom in all things and his knowledge of all

that is either visible or concealed," but who dwelt apart from mankind,

in a distant wilderness, in a cave, amidst the beasts of the forest.

"With the gazelles he ate his food at night, with the beasts of

the field he associated in the daytime, with the living things

of the waters his heart rejoiced."

This strange being is always represented on the Babylonian cylinders as

a Man-Bull, with horns on his head and a bull's feet and tail. He was

not easily accessible, nor to be persuaded to come to Erech, even

though the Sun-god, Shamash, himself "opened his lips and spoke to him

from heaven," making great promises on Izdubar's behalf:--

"They shall clothe thee in royal robes, they shall make thee

great; and Izdubar shall become thy friend, and he shall place

thee in a luxurious seat at his left hand; the kings of the

earth shall kiss thy feet; he shall enrich thee and make the

men of Erech keep silence before thee."

The hermit was proof against ambition and refused to leave his

wilderness. Then a follower of Izdubar, ZAIDU, the huntsman, was sent to

bring him; but he returned alone and reported that, when he had

approached the seer's cave, he had been seized with fear and had not

entered it, but had crawled back, climbing the steep bank on his hands

and feet.

[Illustration: 75.--IZDUBAR AND THE LION (BAS-RELIEF FROM KHORSABAD).

(Smith's "Chaldea.")]

11. At last Izdubar bethought him to send out Ishtar's handmaidens,

SHAMHATU ("Grace") and HARIMTU ("Persuasion"), and they started for the

wilderness under the escort of Zaidu. Shamhatu was the first to approach

the hermit, but he heeded her little; he turned to her companion, and

sat down at her feet; and when Harimtu ("Persuasion") spoke, bending her

face towards him, he listened and was attentive. And she said to him:

"Famous art thou, Êabâni, even like a god; why then associate

with the wild things of the desert? Thy place is in the midst

of Erech, the great city, in the temple, the seat of Anu and

Ishtar, in the palace of Izdubar, the man of might, who towers

amidst the leaders as a bull." "She spoke to him, and before

her words the wisdom of his heart fled and vanished."

He answered:

"I will go to Erech, to the temple, the seat of Anu and Ishtar,

to the palace of Izdubar, the man of might, who towers amidst

the leaders as a bull. I will meet him and see his might. But I

shall bring to Erech a lion--let Izdubar destroy him if he can.

He is bred in the wilderness and of great strength."

[Illustration: 76.--IZDUBAR AND THE LION. (British Museum.)]

So Zaidu and the two women went back to Erech, and Êabâni went with

them, leading his lion. The chiefs of the city received him with great

honors and gave a splendid entertainment in sign of rejoicing.

12. It is evidently on this occasion that Izdubar conquers the seer's

esteem by fighting and killing the lion, after which the hero and the

sage enter into a solemn covenant of friendship. But the third tablet,

which contains this part of the story, is so much mutilated as to leave

much of the substance to conjecture, while all the details, and the

interpretation of the dream which is probably given, are lost. The same

is unfortunately the case with the fourth and fifth tablets, from which

we can only gather that Izdubar and Êabâni, who have become inseparable,

start on an expedition against the Elamite tyrant, KHUMBABA, who holds

his court in a gloomy forest of cedars and cypresses, enter his palace,

fall upon him unawares and kill him, leaving his body to be torn and

devoured by the birds of prey, after which exploit Izdubar, as his

friend had predicted to him, is proclaimed king in Erech. The sixth

tablet is far better preserved, and gives us one of the most interesting

incidents almost complete.

13. After Izdubar's victory, his glory and power were great, and the

goddess Ishtar looked on him with favor and wished for his love.

"Izdubar," she said, "be my husband and I will be thy wife:

pledge thy troth to me. Thou shalt drive a chariot of gold and

precious stones, thy days shall be marked with conquests;

kings, princes and lords shall be subject to thee and kiss thy

feet; they shall bring thee tribute from mountain and valley,

thy herds and flocks shall multiply doubly, thy mules shall be

fleet, and thy oxen strong under the yoke. Thou shalt have no

rival."

But Izdubar, in his pride, rejected the love of the goddess; he insulted

her and taunted her with having loved Dumuzi and others before him.

Great was the wrath of Ishtar; she ascended to heaven and stood before

her father Anu:

"My father, Izdubar has insulted me. Izdubar scorns my beauty

and spurns my love."

[Illustration: 77.--IZDUBAR AND ÊABÂNI FIGHT THE BULL OF

ISHTAR.--IZDUBAR FIGHTS ÊABÂNI'S LION (BABYLONIAN CYLINDER). (Smith's

"Chaldea.")]

She demanded satisfaction, and Anu, at her request, created a monstrous

bull, which he sent against the city of Erech. But Izdubar and his

friend went out to fight the bull, and killed him. Êabâni took hold of

his tail and horns, and Izdubar gave him his deathblow. They drew the

heart out of his body and offered it to Shamash. Then Ishtar ascended

the wall of the city, and standing there cursed Izdubar. She gathered

her handmaidens around her and they raised loud lamentations over the

death of the divine bull. But Izdubar called together his people and

bade them lift up the body and carry it to the altar of Shamash and lay

it before the god. Then they washed their hands in the Euphrates and

returned to the city, where they made a feast of rejoicing and revelled

deep into the night, while in the streets a proclamation to the people

of Erech was called out, which began with the triumphant words:

"Who is skilled among leaders? Who is great among men? Izdubar

is skilled among leaders; Izdubar is great among men."

[Illustration: 78.--IZDUBAR AND ÊABÂNI (BABYLONIAN CYLINDER). (Perrot

and Chipiez.)]

14. But the vengeance of the offended goddess was not to be so easily

defeated. It now fell on the hero in a more direct and personal way.

Ishtar's mother, the goddess Anatu, smote Êabâni with sudden death and

Izdubar with a dire disease, a sort of leprosy, it would appear.

Mourning for his friend, deprived of strength and tortured with

intolerable pains, he saw visions and dreams which oppressed and

terrified him, and there was now no wise, familiar voice to soothe and

counsel him. At length he decided to consult his ancestor, Hâsisadra,

who dwelt far away, "at the mouth of the rivers," and was immortal, and

to ask of him how he might find healing and strength. He started on his

way alone and came to a strange country, where he met gigantic,

monstrous beings, half men, half scorpions: their feet were below the

earth, while their heads touched the gates of heaven; they were the

warders of the sun and kept their watch over its rising and setting.

They said one to another: "Who is this that comes to us with the mark of

the divine wrath on his body?" Izdubar made his person and errand known

to them; then they gave him directions how to reach the land of the

blessed at the mouth of the rivers, but warned him that the way was long

and full of hardships. He set out again and crossed a vast tract of

country, where there was nothing but sand, not one cultivated field; and

he walked on and on, never looking behind him, until he came to a

beautiful grove by the seaside, where the trees bore fruits of emerald

and other precious stones; this grove was guarded by two beautiful

maidens, SIDURI and SABITU, but they looked with mistrust on the

stranger with the mark of the gods on his body, and closed their

dwelling against him.

[Illustration: 79.--SCORPION-MEN. (Smith's "Chaldea.")]

15. And now Izdubar stood by the shore of the Waters of Death, which are

wide and deep, and separate the land of the living from that of the

blessed and immortal dead. Here he encountered the ferryman URUBÊL; to

him he opened his heart and spoke of the friend whom he had loved and

lost, and Urubêl took him into his ship. For one month and fifteen days

they sailed on the Waters of Death, until they reached that distant land

by the mouth of the rivers, where Izdubar at length met his renowned

ancestor face to face, and, even while he prayed for his advice and

assistance, a very natural feeling of curiosity prompted him to ask "how

he came to be translated alive into the assembly of the gods."

Hâsisadra, with great complaisance, answered his descendant's question

and gave him a full account of the Deluge and his own share in that

event, after which he informed him in what way he could be freed from

the curse laid on him by the gods. Then turning to the ferryman:

"Urubêl, the man whom thou hast brought hither, behold, disease

has covered his body, sickness has destroyed the strength of

his limbs. Take him with thee, Urubêl, and purify him in the

waters, that his disease may be changed into beauty, that he

may throw off his sickness and the waters carry it away, that

health may cover his skin, and the hair of his head be restored

and descend in flowing locks down to his garment, that he may

go his way and return to his own country."

[Illustration: 80.--STONE OBJECT FOUND AT ABU-HABBA (SIPPAR) BY MR. H.

RASSAM, SHOWING, AMONG OTHER MYTHICAL DESIGNS, SHAMASH AND HIS WARDER,

THE SCORPION-MAN.]

16. When all had been done according to Hâsisadra's instruction,

Izdubar, restored to health and vigor, took leave of his ancestor, and

entering the ship once more was carried back to the shore of the living

by the friendly Urubêl, who accompanied him all the way to Erech. But as

they approached the city tears flowed down the hero's face and his heart

was heavy within him for his lost friend, and he once more raised his

voice in lamentation for him:

"Thou takest no part in the noble feast; to the assembly they

call thee not; thou liftest not the bow from the ground; what

is hit by the bow is not for thee; thy hand grasps not the

club and strikes not the prey, nor stretches thy foeman dead on

the earth. The wife thou lovest thou kissest not; the wife thou

hatest thou strikest not. The child thou lovest thou kissest

not; the child thou hatest thou strikest not. The might of the

earth has swallowed thee. O Darkness, Darkness, Mother

Darkness! thou enfoldest him like a mantle; like a deep well

thou enclosest him!"

Thus Izdubar mourned for his friend, and went into the temple of Bel,

and ceased not from lamenting and crying to the gods, till Êa mercifully

inclined to his prayer and sent his son Meridug to bring Êabâni's spirit

out of the dark world of shades into the land of the blessed, there to

live forever among the heroes of old, reclining on luxurious couches and

drinking the pure water of eternal springs. The poem ends with a vivid

description of a warrior's funeral:

"I see him who has been slain in battle. His father and mother

hold his head; his wife weeps over him; his friends stand

around; his prey lies on the ground uncovered and unheeded. The

vanquished captives follow; the food provided in the tents is

consumed."

17. The incident of the Deluge, which has been merely mentioned above,

not to interrupt the narrative by its disproportionate length, (the

eleventh tablet being the best preserved of all), is too important not

to be given in full.[BE]

"I will tell thee, Izdubar, how I was saved from the flood,"

begins Hâsisadra, in answer to his descendant's question, "also

will I impart to thee the decree of the great gods. Thou

knowest Surippak, the city that is by the Euphrates. This city

was already very ancient when the gods were moved in their

hearts to ordain a great deluge, all of them, their father

Anu, their councillor the warlike Bel, their throne-bearer

Ninîb, their leader Ennugi. The lord of inscrutable wisdom, the

god Êa, was with them and imparted to me their decision.

'Listen,' he said, 'and attend! Man of Surippak, son of

Ubaratutu,[BF] go out of thy house and build thee a ship. They

are willed to destroy the seed of life; but thou preserve it

and bring into the ship seed of every kind of life. The ship

which thou shalt build let it be ... in length, and ... in

width and height,[BG] and cover it also with a deck.' When I

heard this I spoke to Êa, my lord: 'If I construct the ship as

thou biddest me, O lord, the people and their elders will laugh

at me.' But Êa opened his lips once more and spoke to me his

servant: 'Men have rebelled against me, and I will do judgment

on them, high and low. But do thou close the door of the ship

when the time comes and I tell thee of it. Then enter the ship

and bring into it thy store of grain, all thy property, thy

family, thy men-servants and thy women-servants, and also thy

next of kin. The cattle of the fields, the wild beasts of the

fields, I shall send to thee myself, that they may be safe

behind thy door.'--Then I built the ship and provided it with

stores of food and drink; I divided the interior into ...

compartments.[BG] I saw to the chinks and filled them; I poured

bitumen over its outer side and over its inner side. All that I

possessed I brought together and stowed it in the ship; all

that I had of gold, of silver, of the seed of life of every

kind; all my men-servants and my women-servants, the cattle of

the field, the wild beasts of the field, and also my nearest

friends. Then, when Shamash brought round the appointed time, a

voice spoke to me:--'This evening the heavens will rain

destruction, wherefore go thou into the ship and close thy

door. The appointed time has come,' spoke the voice, 'this

evening the heavens will rain destruction.' And greatly I

feared the sunset of that day, the day on which I was to begin

my voyage. I was sore afraid. Yet I entered into the ship and

closed the door behind me, to shut off the ship. And I confided

the great ship to the pilot, with all its freight.--Then a

great black cloud rises from the depths of the heavens, and

Ramân thunders in the midst of it, while Nebo and Nergal

encounter each other, and the Throne-bearers walk over

mountains and vales. The mighty god of Pestilence lets loose

the whirlwinds; Ninîb unceasingly makes the canals to

overflow; the Anunnaki bring up floods from the depths of the

earth, which quakes at their violence. Ramân's mass of waters

rises even to heaven; light is changed into darkness. Confusion

and devastation fills the earth. Brother looks not after

brother, men have no thought for one another. In the heavens

the very gods are afraid; they seek a refuge in the highest

heaven of Anu; as a dog in its lair, the gods crouch by the

railing of heaven. Ishtar cries aloud with sorrow: 'Behold, all

is turned into mud, as I foretold to the gods! I prophesied

this disaster and the extermination of my creatures--men. But I

do not give them birth that they may fill the sea like the

brood of fishes.' Then the gods wept with her and sat lamenting

on one spot. For six days and seven nights wind, flood and

storm reigned supreme; but at dawn of the seventh day the

tempest decreased, the waters, which had battled like a mighty

host, abated their violence; the sea retired, and storm and

flood both ceased. I steered about the sea, lamenting that the

homesteads of men were changed into mud. The corpses drifted

about like logs. I opened a port-hole, and when the light of

day fell on my face I shivered and sat down and wept. I steered

over the countries which now were a terrible sea. Then a piece

of land rose out of the waters. The ship steered towards the

land Nizir. The mountain of the land Nizir held fast the ship

and did not let it go. Thus it was on the first and on the

second day, on the third and the fourth, also on the fifth and

sixth days. At dawn of the seventh day I took out a dove and

sent it forth. The dove went forth to and fro, but found no

resting-place and returned. Then I took out a swallow and sent

it forth. The swallow went forth, to and fro, but found no

resting-place and returned. Then I took out a raven and sent it

forth. The raven went forth, and when it saw that the waters

had abated, it came near again, cautiously wading through the

water, but did not return. Then I let out all the animals, to

the four winds of heaven, and offered a sacrifice. I raised an

altar on the highest summit of the mountain, placed the sacred

vessels on it seven by seven, and spread reeds, cedar-wood and

sweet herbs under them. The gods smelled a savor; the gods

smelled a sweet savor; like flies they swarmed around the

sacrifice. And when the goddess Ishtar came, she spread out on

high the great bows of her father Anu:--'By the necklace of my

neck,' she said, 'I shall be mindful of these days, never shall

I lose the memory of them! May all the gods come to the altar;

Bel alone shall not come, for that he controlled not his wrath,

and brought on the deluge, and gave up my men to destruction.'

When after that Bel came nigh and saw the ship, he was

perplexed, and his heart was filled with anger against the gods

and against the spirits of Heaven:--'Not a soul shall escape,'

he cried; 'not one man shall come alive out of destruction!'

Then the god Ninîb opened his lips and spoke, addressing the

warlike Bel:--'Who but Êa can have done this? Êa knew, and

informed him of everything.' Then Êa opened his lips and spoke,

addressing the warlike Bel:--'Thou art the mighty leader of the

gods: but why hast thou acted thus recklessly and brought on

this deluge? Let the sinner suffer for his sin and the

evil-doer for his misdeeds; but to this man be gracious that he

may not be destroyed, and incline towards him favorably, that

he may be preserved. And instead of bringing on another deluge,

let lions and hyenas come and take from the number of men; send

a famine to unpeople the earth; let the god of Pestilence lay

men low. I have not imparted to Hâsisadra the decision of the

great gods: I only sent him a dream, and he understood the

warning.'--Then Bel came to his senses. He entered the ship,

took hold of my hand and lifted me up; he also lifted up my

wife and laid her hand in mine. Then he turned towards us,

stood between us and spoke this blessing on us:--'Until now

Hâsisadra was only human: but now he shall be raised to be

equal with the gods, together with his wife. He shall dwell in

the distant land, by the mouth of the rivers.' Then they took

me and translated me to the distant land by the mouth of the

rivers."

18. Such is the great Chaldean Epic, the discovery of which produced so

profound a sensation, not to say excitement, not only among special

scholars, but in the reading world generally, while the full importance

of it in the history of human culture cannot yet be realized at this

early stage of our historical studies, but will appear more and more

clearly as their course takes us to later nations and other lands. We

will here linger over the poem only long enough to justify and explain

the name given to it in the title of this chapter, of "Mythical Epos."

19. Were the hero Izdubar a purely human person, it would be a matter of

much wonder how the small nucleus of historical fact which the story of

his adventures contains should have become entwined and overgrown with

such a disproportionate quantity of the most extravagant fiction,

oftentimes downright monstrous in its fancifulness. But the story is one

far older than that of any mere human hero and relates to one far

mightier: it is the story of the Sun in his progress through the year,

retracing his career of increasing splendor as the spring advances to

midsummer, the height of his power when he reaches the month represented

in the Zodiac by the sign of the Lion, then the decay of his strength as

he pales and sickens in the autumn, and at last his restoration to youth

and vigor after he has passed the Waters of Death--Winter, the death of

the year, the season of nature's deathlike torpor, out of which the sun

has not strength sufficient to rouse her, until spring comes back and

the circle begins again. An examination of the Accadian calendar,

adopted by the more scientifically inclined Semites, shows that the

names of most of the months and the signs by which they were represented

on the maps of the corresponding constellations of the Zodiac, directly

answer to various incidents of the poem, following, too, in the same

order, which is that of the respective seasons of the year,--which, be

it noted, began with the spring, in the middle of our month of March. If

we compare the calendar months with the tablets of the poem we will find

that they, in almost every case, correspond. As the first tablet is

unfortunately still missing, we cannot judge how far it may have

answered to the name of the first month--"the Altar of Bel." But the

second month, called that of "the Propitious Bull," or the "Friendly

Bull," very well corresponds to the second tablet which ends with

Izdubar's sending for the seer Êabâni, half bull half man, while the

name and sign of the third, "the Twins," clearly alludes to the bond of

friendship concluded between the two heroes, who became inseparable.

Their victory over the tyrant Khumbaba in the fifth tablet is symbolized

by the sign representing the victory of the Lion over the Bull, often

abbreviated into that of the Lion alone, a sign plainly enough

interpreted by the name "Month of Fire," so appropriate to the hottest

and driest of seasons even in moderate climes--July-August. What makes

this interpretation absolutely conclusive is the fact that in the

symbolical imagery of all the poetry of the East, the Lion represents

the principle of heat, of fire. The seventh tablet, containing the

wooing of the hero by the goddess Ishtar, is too plainly reproduced in

the name of the corresponding month, "the Month of the Message of

Ishtar," to need explanation. The sign, too, is that of a woman with a

bow, the usual mode of representing the goddess. The sign of the eighth

month, "the Scorpion," commemorates the gigantic Warders of the Sun,

half men half scorpions, whom Izdubar encounters when he starts on his

journey to the land of the dead. The ninth month is called "the Cloudy,"

surely a meet name for November-December, and in no way inconsistent

with the contents of the ninth tablet, which shows Izdubar navigating

the "Waters of Death." In the tenth month (December-January), the sun

reaches his very lowest point, that of the winter solstice with its

shortest days, whence the name "Month of the Cavern of the Setting Sun,"

and the tenth tablet tells how Izdubar reached the goal of his journey,

the land of the illustrious dead, to which his great ancestor has been

translated. To the eleventh month, "the Month of the Curse of Rain,"

with the sign of the Waterman,--(January-February being in the low lands

of the two rivers the time of the most violent and continuous

rains)--answers the eleventh tablet with the account of the Deluge. The

"Fishes of Êa" accompany the sun in the twelfth month, the last of the

dark season, as he emerges, purified and invigorated, to resume his

triumphant career with the beginning of the new year. From the context

and sequence of the myth, it would appear that the name of the first

month, "the Altar of Bel," must have had something to do with the

reconciliation of the god after the Deluge, from which humanity may be

said to take a new beginning, which would make the name a most

auspicious one for the new year, while the sign--a Ram--might allude to

the animal sacrificed on the altar. Each month being placed under the

protection of some particular deity it is worthy of notice that Anu and

Bel are the patrons of the first month, Êa of the second, (in connection

with the wisdom of Êabâni, who is called "the creature of Êa,") while

Ishtar presides over the sixth, ("Message of Ishtar,") and Ramân, the

god of the atmosphere, of rain and storm and thunder, over the eleventh,

("the Curse of Rain").

20. The solar nature of the adventurous career attributed to the

favorite national hero of Chaldea, now universally admitted, was first

pointed out by Sir Henry Rawlinson: but it was François Lenormant who

followed it out and established it in its details. His conclusions on

the subject are given in such clear and forcible language, that it is a

pleasure to reproduce them:[BH]--"1st. The Chaldeans and Babylonians

had, concerning the twelve months of the year, myths for the most part

belonging to the series of traditions anterior to the separation of the

great races of mankind which descended from the highlands of Pamir,

since we find analogous myths among the pure Semites and other nations.

As early as the time when they dwelt on the plains of the Tigris and

Euphrates, they connected these myths with the different epochs of the

year, not with a view to agricultural occupations, but in connection

with the great periodical phenomena of the atmosphere and the different

stations in the sun's yearly course, as they occurred in that particular

region; hence the signs characterizing the twelve solar mansions in the

Zodiac and the symbolical names given to the months by the Accads.--2d.

It was those myths, strung together in their successive order, which

served as foundation to the epic story of Izdubar, the fiery and solar

hero, and in the poem which was copied at Erech by Asshurbanipal's order

each of them formed the subject of one of the twelve tablets, making up

the number of twelve separate books or chapters answering the twelve

months of the year."--Even though the evidence is apparently so complete

as not to need further confirmation, it is curious to note that the

signs which compose the name of Izdubar convey the meaning "mass of

fire," while Hâsisadra's Accadian name means "the sun of life," "the

morning sun," and his father's name, Ubaratutu, is translated "the glow

of sunset."

21. George Smith indignantly repudiated this mythic interpretation of

the hero's exploits, and claimed for them a strictly historical

character. But we have seen that the two are by no means incompatible,

since history, when handed down through centuries by mere oral

tradition, is liable to many vicissitudes in the telling and retelling,

and people are sure to arrange their favorite and most familiar stories,

the mythical signification of which has long been forgotten, around the

central figure of the heroes they love best, around the most important

but vaguely recollected events in their national life. Hence it came to

pass that identically the same stories, with but slight local

variations, were told of heroes in different nations and countries; for

the stock of original, or, as one may say, primary myths is

comparatively small and the same for all, dating back to a time when

mankind was not yet divided. In the course of ages and migrations it

has been altered, like a rich hereditary robe, to fit and adorn many and

very different persons.

22. One of the prettiest, oldest, and most universally favorite solar

myths is the one which represents the Sun as a divine being, youthful

and of surpassing beauty, beloved by or wedded to an equally powerful

goddess, but meeting a premature death by accident and descending into

the dark land of shades, from which, however, after a time he returns as

glorious and beautiful as before. In this poetical fancy, the land of

shades symbolizes the numb and lifeless period of winter as aptly as the

Waters of Death in the Izdubar Epic, while the seeming death of the

young god answers to the sickening of the hero at that declining season

of the year when the sun's rays lose their vigor and are overcome by the

powers of darkness and cold. The goddess who loves the fair young god,

and mourns him with passionate grief, until her wailings and prayers

recall him from his deathlike trance, is Nature herself, loving,

bountiful, ever productive, but pale, and bare, and powerless in her

widowhood, while the sun-god, the spring of life whence she draws her

very being, lies captive in the bonds of their common foe, grim Winter,

which is but a form of Death itself. Their reunion at the god's

resurrection in spring is the great wedding-feast, the revel and

holiday-time of the world.

23. This simple and perfectly transparent myth has been worked out more

or less elaborately in all the countries of the East, and has found its

way in some form or other into all the nations of the three great white

races--of Japhet, Shem, and Ham--yet here again the precedence in point

of time seems due to the older and more primitive--the Yellow or

Turanian race; for the most ancient, and probably original form of it is

the one which was inherited by the Semitic settlers of Chaldea from

their Shumiro-Accadian predecessors, as shown by the Accadian name of

the young solar god, DUMUZI, "the unfortunate husband of the goddess

Ishtar," as he is called in the sixth tablet of the Izdubar epic. The

name has been translated "Divine Offspring," but in later times lost all

signification, being corrupted into TAMMUZ. In some Accadian hymns he is

invoked as "the Shepherd, the lord Dumuzi, the lover of Ishtar." Well

could a nomadic and pastoral people poetically liken the sun to a

shepherd, whose flocks were the fleecy clouds as they speed across the

vast plains of heaven or the bright, innumerable stars. This comparison,

as pretty as it is natural, kept its hold in all ages and nations on the

popular fancy, which played on it an infinite variety of ingenious

changes, but it is only cuneiform science which has proved that it could

be traced back to the very earliest race whose culture has left its mark

on the world.

24. Of Dumuzi's tragic death no text deciphered until now unfortunately

gives the details. Only the remarkable fragment about the black pine of

Eridhu, "marking the centre of the earth, in the dark forest, into the

heart whereof man hath not penetrated," (see p. 287) tantalizingly ends

with these suggestive words: "Within it Dumuzi...." Scholars have found

reason for conjecturing that this fragment was the beginning of a

mythical narrative recounting Dumuzi's death, which must have been

represented as taking place in that dark and sacred forest of

Eridhu,--probably through the agency of a wild beast sent against him by

a jealous and hostile power, just as the bull created by Anu was sent

against Izdubar.[BI] One thing, however, is sure, that both in the

earlier (Turanian) and in the later (Semitic) calendary of Chaldea,

there was a month set apart in honor and for the festival of Dumuzi. It

was the month of June-July, beginning at the summer solstice, when the

days begin to shorten, and the sun to decline towards its lower winter

point--a retrograde movement, ingeniously indicated by the Zodiacal sign

of that month, the Cancer or Crab. The festival of Dumuzi lasted during

the six first days of the month, with processions and ceremonies bearing

two distinct characters. The worshippers at first assembled in the guise

of mourners, with lamentations and loud wailings, tearing of clothes and

of hair, as though celebrating the young god's funeral, while on the

sixth day his resurrection and reunion to Ishtar was commemorated with

the noisiest, most extravagant demonstrations of rejoicing. This custom

is alluded to in Izdubar's scornful answer to Ishtar's love-message,

when he says to her: "Thou lovedst Dumuzi, \_for whom they mourn year

after year\_," and was witnessed by the Jews when they were carried

prisoners to Babylon as late as 600 B.C., as expressly mentioned by

Ezekiel, the prophet of the Captivity:--"Then he brought me to the door

of the Lord's house which was towards the north; \_and behold, there sat

the women weeping for Tammuz\_." (Ezekiel, iii. 14.)

25. A favorite version of Dumuzi's resurrection was that which told how

Ishtar herself followed him into the Lower World, to claim him from

their common foe, and thus yielded herself for a time into the power of

her rival, the dread Queen of the Dead, who held her captive, and would

not have released her but for the direct interference of the great gods.

This was a rich mine of epic material, from which songs and stories must

have flowed plentifully. We are lucky enough to possess a short epic on

the subject, in one tablet, one of the chief gems of the indefatigable

George Smith's discoveries,--a poem of great literary beauty, and nearly

complete to within a few lines of the end, which are badly injured and

scarcely legible. It is known under the name of "THE DESCENT OF ISHTAR,"

as it relates only this one incident of the myth. The opening lines are

unsurpassed for splendid poetry and sombre grandeur in any, even the

most advanced literature.

26. "Towards the land whence there is no return, towards the

house of corruption, Ishtar, the daughter of Sin, has turned

her mind ... towards the dwelling that has an entrance but no

exit, towards the road that may be travelled but not retraced,

towards the hall from which the light of day is shut out,

where hunger feeds on dust and mud, where light is never seen,

where the shades of the dead dwell in the dark, clothed with

wings like birds. On the lintel of the gate and in the lock

dust lies accumulated.--Ishtar, when she reached the land

whence there is no return, to the keeper of the gate signified

her command: 'Keeper, open thy gate that I may pass. If thou

openest not and I may not enter, I will smite the gate, and

break the lock, I will demolish the threshold and enter by

force; then will I let loose the dead to return to the earth,

that they may live and eat again; I will make the risen dead

more numerous than the living.' The gate-keeper opened his lips

and spoke:--'Be appeased, O Lady, and let me go and report thy

name to Allat the Queen.'"

Here follow a few much injured lines, the sense of which could not be

restored in its entirety. The substance is that the gate-keeper

announces to Allat that her sister Ishtar has come for the Water of

Life, which is kept concealed in a distant nook of her dominions, and

Allat is greatly disturbed at the news. But Ishtar announces that she

comes in sorrow, not enmity:--

"I wish to weep over the heroes who have left their wives. I

wish to weep over the wives who have been taken from their

husbands' arms. I wish to weep over the Only Son--(a name of

Dumuzi)--who has been taken away before his time."

Then Allat commands the keeper to open the gates and take Ishtar through

the sevenfold enclosure, dealing by her as by all who come to those

gates, that is, stripping her of her garments according to ancient

custom.

"The keeper went and opened the gate: 'Enter, O Lady, and may

the halls of the Land whence there is no return be gladdened by

thy presence.' At the first gate he bade her enter and laid his

hand on her; he took the high headdress from her head: 'Why, O

keeper, takest thou the high headdress from my head?'--'Enter,

O Lady; such is Allat's command.'"

The same scene is repeated at each of the seven gates; the keeper at

each strips Ishtar of some article of her attire--her earrings, her

necklace, her jewelled girdle, the bracelets on her arms and the bangles

at her ankles, and lastly her long flowing garment. On each occasion the

same words are repeated by both. When Ishtar entered the presence of

Allat, the queen looked at her and taunted her to her face: then Ishtar

could not control her anger and cursed her. Allat turned to her chief

minister Namtar, the god of Pestilence--meet servant of the queen of the

dead!--who is also the god of Fate, and ordered him to lead Ishtar away

and afflict her with sixty dire diseases,--to strike her head and her

heart, and her eyes, her hands and her feet, and all her limbs. So the

goddess was led away and kept in durance and in misery. Meanwhile her

absence was attended with most disastrous consequences to the upper

world. With her, life and love had gone out of it; there were no

marriages any more, no births, either among men or animals; nature was

at a standstill. Great was the commotion among the gods. They sent a

messenger to Êa to expose the state of affairs to him, and, as usual, to

invoke his advice and assistance. Êa, in his fathomless wisdom, revolved

a scheme. He created a phantom, Uddusunamir.

"'Go,' he said to him; 'towards the Land whence there is no

return direct thy face; the seven gates of the Arallu will open

before thee. Allat shall see thee and rejoice at thy coming,

her heart shall grow calm and her wrath shall vanish. Conjure

her with the name of the great gods, stiffen thy neck and keep

thy mind on the Spring of Life. Let the Lady (Ishtar) gain

access to the Spring of Life and drink of its waters.'--Allat,

when she heard these things, beat her breast and bit her

fingers with rage. Consenting, sore against her will, she

spoke:--'Go, Uddusunamir! May the great jailer place thee in

durance! May the foulness of the city ditches be thy food, the

waters of the city sewers thy drink! A dark dungeon be thy

dwelling, a sharp pole thy seat!'"

Then she ordered Namtar to let Ishtar drink of the Spring of Life and to

bear her from her sight. Namtar fulfilled her command and took the

goddess through the seven enclosures, at each gate restoring to her the

article of her attire that had been taken at her entrance. At the last

gate he said to her:

"Thou hast paid no ransom to Allat for thy deliverance; so now

return to Dumuzi, the lover of thy youth; sprinkle over him the

sacred waters, clothe him in splendid garments, adorn him with

gems."

26. The last lines are so badly mutilated that no efforts have as yet

availed to make their sense anything but obscure, and so it must remain,

unless new copies come to light. Yet so much is, at all events, evident,

that they bore on the reunion of Ishtar and her young lover. The poem is

thus complete in itself; but some think that it was introduced into the

Izdubar epic as an independent episode, after the fashion of the Deluge

narrative, and, if so, it is supposed to have been part of the seventh

tablet. Whether such were really the case or no, matters little in

comparison with the great importance these two poems possess as being

the most ancient presentations, in a finished literary form, of the two

most significant and universal nature-myths--the Solar and the Chthonic

(see p. 272), the poetical fancies in which primitive mankind clothed

the wonders of the heavens and the mystery of the earth, being content

to admire and imagine where it could not comprehend and explain. We

shall be led back continually to these, in very truth, \_primary\_ myths,

for they not only served as groundwork to much of the most beautiful

poetry of the world but suggested some of its loftiest and most

cherished religious conceptions.

[For a metrical version by Prof. Dyer of the story of

"Ishtar's Descent," see Appendix, p. 367.]

FOOTNOTES:

[BC] Paul Haupt, "Der Keilinschriftliche Sündfluthbericht," 1881.

[BD] There are difficulties in the way of reading this name, and

scholars are not sure that this is the right pronunciation of it; but

they retain it, until some new discovery helps to settle the question.

[BE] Translated from the German version of Paul Haupt, "Der

Keilinschriftliche Sündfluthbericht."

[BF] The ninth king in the fabulous list of ten.

[BG] The figures unfortunately obliterated.

[BH] "Les Premières Civilisations," Vol. II., pp. 78 ff.

[BI] A. H. Sayce, "Babylonian Literature," p. 39; Fr. Lenormant, "Il

Mito di Adone-Tammuz," pp. 12-13.

VIII.

RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY.--IDOLATRY AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM.--THE CHALDEAN

LEGENDS AND THE BOOK OF GENESIS.--RETROSPECT.

1. In speaking of ancient nations, the words "Religion" and "Mythology"

are generally used indiscriminately and convertibly. Yet the conceptions

they express are essentially and radically different. The broadest

difference, and the one from which all others flow, is that the

one--Religion--is a thing of the feelings, while the other--Mythology--is

a thing of the imagination. In other words, Religion comes from

WITHIN--from that consciousness of limited power, that inborn need of

superior help and guidance, forbearance and forgiveness, from that

longing for absolute goodness and perfection, which make up the

distinctively human attribute of "religiosity," that attribute which,

together with the faculty of articulate speech, sets Man apart from and

above all the rest of animated creation. (See p. 149.) Mythology, on the

other hand, comes wholly from WITHOUT. It embodies impressions received

by the senses from the outer world and transformed by the poetical

faculty into images and stories. (See definition of "Myth" on p. 294.)

Professor Max Müller of Oxford has been the first, in his standard work

"The Science of Language," clearly to define this radical difference

between the two conceptions, which he has never since ceased to sound as

a keynote through the long series of his works devoted to the study of

the religions and mythologies of various nations. A few illustrations

from the one nation with which we have as yet become familiar will help

once for all to establish a thorough understanding on this point, most

essential as it is to the comprehension of the workings of the human mind

and soul throughout the long roll of struggles, errors and triumphs,

achievements and failures which we call the history of mankind.

2. There is no need to repeat here instances of the Shumiro-Accadian and

Chaldean myths; the last three or four chapters have been filled with

them. But the instances of religious feeling, though scattered in the

same field, have to be carefully gleaned out and exhibited, for they

belong to that undercurrent of the soul which pursues its way

unobtrusively and is often apparently lost beneath the brilliant play of

poetical fancies. But it is there nevertheless, and every now and then

forces its way to the surface shining forth with a startling purity and

beauty. When the Accadian poet invokes the Lord "who knows lie from

truth," "who knows the truth that is in the soul of man," who "maketh

lies to vanish," who "turneth wicked plots to a happy issue"--this is

religion, not mythology, for this is not \_a story\_, it is the expression

of \_a feeling\_. That "the Lord" whose divine omniscience and goodness

is thus glorified is really the Sun, makes no difference; \_that\_ is an

error of judgment, a want of knowledge, but the religious feeling is

splendidly manifest in the invocation. But when, in the same hymn, the

Sun is described as "stepping forth from the background of the skies,

pushing back the bolts and opening the gate of the brilliant heaven, and

raising his head above the land," etc., (see p. 172) that is only a very

beautiful, imaginative description of a glorious natural

phenomenon--sunrise; it is magnificent poetry, religious in so far as

the sun is considered as a Being, a Divine Person, the object of an

intensely devout and grateful feeling; still this is not religion, it is

mythology, for it presents a material image to the mind, and one that

can be easily turned into narrative, into \_a story\_,--which, in fact,

\_suggests\_ a hero, a king, and a story. Take, again, the so-called

"Penitential Psalms." To the specimen given on p. 178, let us add, for

greater completeness, the following three remarkable fragments:

I. "God, my creator, take hold of my arms! Direct the breath of

my mouth, my hands direct, O lord of light."

II. "Lord, let not thy servant sink! Amidst the tumultuous

waters take hold of his hand!"

III. "He who fears not his God, will be cut off even like a

reed. He who honors not his goddess, his bodily strength will

waste away; like to a star of heaven, his splendor will pale;

he will vanish like to the waters of the night."

3. All this is religion, of the purest, loftiest kind; fruitful, too, of

good, the only real test of true religion. The deep humility, the

trustful appeal, the feeling of dependence, the consciousness of

weakness, of sin, and the longing for deliverance from them--these are

all very different from the pompous phrases of empty praise and sterile

admiration; they are things which flow from the heart, not the fancy,

which lighten its weight of sorrow and self-reproach, brighten it with

hope and good resolutions, in short, make it happier and better--what no

mere imaginative poetry, however fine, can do.

4. The radical distinction, then, between religious feeling and the

poetical faculty of mythical creation, is easy to establish and follow

out. On the other hand, the two are so constantly blended, so almost

inextricably interwoven in the sacred poetry of the ancients, in their

views of life and the world, and in their worship, that it is no wonder

they should be so generally confused. The most correct way of putting

the case would be, perhaps, to say that the ancient Religions--meaning

by the word the whole body of sacred poetry and legends as well as the

national forms of worship--were made up originally in about equal parts

of religious feeling and of mythology. In many cases the exuberance of

the imagination gained the upper hand, and there was such a riotous

growth of mythical imagery and stories that the religious feeling was

almost stifled under them. In others, again, the myths themselves

suggested religious ideas of the deepest import and loftiest sublimity.

Such was particularly the case with the solar and Chthonic Myths--the

poetical presentation of the career of the Sun and the Earth--as

connected with the doctrine of the soul's immortality.

5. A curious and significant observation has been made in excavating the

most ancient graves in the world, those of the so-called Mound-builders.

This name is not that of any particular race or nation, but is given

indiscriminately to all those peoples who lived, on any part of the

globe, long before the earliest beginnings of even the remotest times

which have been made historical by preserved monuments or inscriptions

of any kind. All we know of those peoples is that they used to bury

their dead--at least those of special renown or high rank--in deep and

spacious stone-lined chambers dug in the ground, with a similar gallery

leading to them, and covered by a mound of earth, sometimes of gigantic

dimensions--a very hill. Hence the name. Of their life, their degree of

civilization, what they thought and believed, we have no idea except in

so far as the contents of the graves give us some indications. For, like

the later, historical races, of which we find the graves in Chaldea and

every other country of the ancient world, they used to bury along with

the dead a multitude of things: vessels, containing food and drink;

weapons, ornaments, household implements. The greater the power or

renown of the dead man, the fuller and more luxurious his funeral

outfit. It is indeed by no means rare to find the skeleton of a great

chief surrounded by those of several women, and, at a respectful

distance, more skeletons--evidently those of slaves--whose fractured

skulls more than suggest the ghastly custom of killing wives and

servants to do honor to an illustrious dead and to keep him company in

his narrow underground mansion. Nothing but a belief in the continuation

of existence after death could have prompted these practices. For what

was the sense of giving him wives and slaves, and domestic articles of

all kinds, food and weapons, unless it were for his service and use on

his journey to the unknown land where he was to enter on a new stage of

existence, which the survivors could not but imagine to be a

reproduction, in its simple conditions and needs, of the one he was

leaving? There is no race of men, however primitive, however untutored,

in which this belief in immortality is not found deeply rooted,

positive, unquestioning. The \_belief\_ is implanted in man by the \_wish\_;

it answers one of the most imperative, unsilenceable longings of human

nature. For, in proportion as life is pleasant and precious, death is

hideous and repellent. The idea of utter destruction, of ceasing to be,

is intolerable to the mind; indeed, the senses revolt against it, the

mind refuses to grasp and admit it. Yet death is very real, and it is

inevitable; and all human beings that come into the world have to learn

to face the thought of it, and the reality too, in others, before they

lie down and accept it for themselves. But what if death be \_not\_

destruction? If it be but a passage from this into another

world,--distant, unknown and perforce mysterious, but certain

nevertheless, a world on the threshold of which the earthly body is

dropped as an unnecessary garment? Then were death shorn of half its

terrors. Indeed, the only unpleasantness about it would be, for him who

goes, the momentary pang and the uncertainty as to what he is going to;

and, for those who remain, the separation and the loathsome details--the

disfigurement, the corruption. But these are soon gotten over, while the

separation is only for a time; for all must go the same way, and the

late-comers will find, will join their lost ones gone before. Surely it

must be so! It were too horrible if it were not; it \_must be\_--it \_is\_!

The process of feeling which arrived at this conclusion and hardened it

into absolute faith, is very plain, and we can easily, each of us,

reproduce it in our own souls, independently of the teachings we receive

from childhood. But the mind is naturally inquiring, and involuntarily

the question presents itself: this solution, so beautiful, so

acceptable, so universal,--but so abstract--what suggested it? What

analogy first led up to it from the material world of the senses? To

this question we find no reply in so many words, for it is one of those

that go to the very roots of our being, and such generally remain

unanswered. But the graves dug by those old Mound-Builders present a

singular feature, which almost seems to point to the answer. The tenant

of the funereal chamber is most frequently found deposited in a

crouching attitude, his back leaning against the stone-lined wall, and

\_with his face turned towards the West, in the direction of the setting

sun\_.... Here, then, is the suggestion, the analogy! The career of the

sun is very like that of man. His rising in the east is like the birth

of man. During the hours of his power, which we call the Day, he does

his allotted work, of giving light and warmth to the world, now riding

radiant and triumphant across an azure sky, now obscured by clouds,

struggling through mists, or overwhelmed by tempests. How like the

vicissitudes that checker the somewhat greater number of hours--or

days--of which the sum makes up a human life! Then when his appointed

time expires, he sinks down,--lower, lower--and disappears into

darkness,--dies. So does man. What is this night, death? Is it

destruction, or only a rest, or an absence? It is at all events \_not\_

destruction. For as surely as we see the sun vanish in the west this

evening, feeble and beamless, so surely shall we behold him to-morrow

morning rise again in the east, glorious, vigorous and young. What

happens to him in the interval? Who knows? Perhaps he sleeps, perhaps he

travels through countries we know not of and does other work there; but

one thing is sure: that he is not dead, for he will be up again

to-morrow. Why should not man, whose career so much resembles the sun's

in other respects, resemble him in this? Let the dead, then, be placed

with their faces to the west, in token that theirs is but a setting like

the sun's, to be followed by another rising, a renewed existence, though

in another and unknown world.

6. All this is sheer poetry and mythology. But how great its beauty, how

obvious its hopeful suggestiveness, if it could appeal to the groping

minds of those primitive men, the old Mound-Builders, and there lay the

seed of a faith which has been more and more clung to, as mankind

progressed in spiritual culture! For all the noblest races have

cherished and worked out the myth of the setting sun in the most

manifold ways, as the symbol of the soul's immortality. The poets of

ancient India, some three thousand years ago, made the Sun the leader

and king of the dead, who, as they said, followed where he had gone

first, "showing the way to many." The Egyptians, perhaps the wisest and

most spiritual of all ancient nations, came to make this myth the

keystone of their entire religion, and placed all their burying-places

in the west, amidst or beyond the Libyan ridge of hills behind which the

sun vanished from the eyes of those who dwelt in the valley of the Nile.

The Greeks imagined a happy residence for their bravest and wisest,

which they called the Islands of the Blest, and placed in the furthest

West, amidst the waters of the ocean into which the sun descends for his

nightly rest.

7. But the sun's course is twofold. If it is complete--beginning and

ending--within the given number of hours which makes the day, it is

repeated on a larger scale through the cycle of months which makes the

year. The alternations of youth and age, triumph and decline, power and

feebleness, are there represented and are regularly brought around by

the different seasons. But the moral, the symbol, is still the same as

regards final immortality. For if summer answers to the heyday of noon,

autumn to the milder glow and the extinction of evening, and winter to

the joyless dreariness of night, spring, like the morning, ever brings

back the god, the hero, in the perfect splendor of a glorious

resurrection. It was the solar-year myth with its magnificent

accompaniment of astronomical pageantry, which took the greater hold on

the fancy of the scientifically inclined Chaldeans, and which we find

embodied with such admirable completeness in their great epic. We shall

see, later on, more exclusively imaginative and poetical races showing a

marked preference for the career of the sun as the hero of a day, and

making the several incidents of the solar-day myth the subject of an

infinite variety of stories, brilliant or pathetic, tender or heroic.

But there is in nature another order of phenomena, intimately connected

with and dependent on the phases of the sun, that is, the seasons, yet

very different in their individual character, though pointing the same

way as regards the suggestion of resurrection and immortality--the

phenomena of the Earth and the Seed. These may in a more general way be

described as Nature's productive power paralyzed during the numbed

trance of winter, which is as the sleep of death, when the seed lies in

the ground hid from sight and cold, even as a dead thing, but awaking to

new life in the good time of spring, when the seed, in which life was

never extinct but only dormant, bursts its bonds and breaks into verdant

loveliness and bountiful crops. This is the essence and meaning of the

Chthonic or Earth-myth, as universal as the Sun-myth, but of which

different features have also been unequally developed by different

races according to their individual tendencies. In the Chaldean version,

the "Descent of Ishtar," the particular incident of the seed is quite

wanting, unless the name of Dumuzi's month, "The Boon of the Seed" ("\_Le

Bienfait de la Semence.\_" Lenormant), may be considered as alluding to

it. It is her fair young bridegroom, the beautiful Sun-god, whom the

widowed goddess of Nature mourns and descends to seek among the dead.

This aspect of the myth is almost exclusively developed in the religions

of most Canaanitic and Semitic nations of the East, where we shall meet

with it often and often. And here it may be remarked, without digressing

or anticipating too far, that throughout the ancient world, the Solar

and Chthonic cycles of myths have been the most universal and important,

the very centre and groundwork of many of the ancient mythic religions,

and used as vehicles for more or less sublime religious conceptions,

according to the higher or lower spiritual level of the worshipping

nations.

8. It must be confessed that, amidst the nations of Western Asia, this

level was, on the whole, not a very lofty one. Both the Hamitic and

Semitic races were, as a rule, of a naturally sensuous disposition; the

former being, moreover, distinguished by a very decidedly material turn

of mind. The Kushites, of whom a branch perhaps formed an important

portion of the mixed population of Lower Mesopotamia, and especially the

Canaanites, who spread themselves over all the country between the

great rivers and the Western Sea--the Mediterranean--were no exception

to this rule. If their priests--their professed thinkers, the men

trained through generations for intellectual pursuits--had groped their

way to the perception of One Divine Power ruling the world, they kept it

to themselves, or, at least, out of sight, behind a complicated array of

cosmogonic myths, nature-myths, symbols and parables, resulting in

Chaldea in the highly artificial system which has been sketched

above--(see Chapters V. and VI.)--a system singularly beautiful and

deeply significant, but of which the mass of the people did not care to

unravel the subtle intricacies, being quite content to accept it entire,

in the most literal spirit, elementary nature-gods, astronomical

abstractions, cosmogonical fables and all--questioning nothing, at peace

in their mind and righteously self-conscious if they sacrificed at the

various time-honored local shrines, and conformed to the prescribed

forms and ceremonies. To these they privately added those innumerable

practices of conjuring and rites of witchcraft, the heirloom of the

older lords of the soil, which we saw the colleges of learned priests

compelled, as strangers and comparative newcomers, to tolerate and even

sanction by giving them a place, though an inferior one, in their own

nobler system (see p. 250). Thus it was that, if a glimmer of Truth did

feebly illumine the sanctuary and its immediate ministers, the people at

large dwelt in the outer darkness of hopeless polytheism and, worse

still, of idolatry. For, in bowing before the altars of their temples

and the images in wood, stone or metal in which art strove to express

what the sacred writings taught, the unlearned worshippers did not stop

to consider that these were but pieces of human workmanship, deriving

their sacredness solely from the subjects they treated and the place

they adorned, nor did they strive to keep their thoughts intent on the

invisible Beings represented by the images. It was so much simpler,

easier and more comfortable to address their adoration to what was

visible and near, to the shapes that were so closely within reach of

their senses, that seemed so directly to receive their offerings and

prayers, that became so dearly familiar from long associations. The bulk

of the Chaldean nation for a long time remained Turanian, and the

materialistic grossness of the original Shumiro-Accadian religion

greatly fostered its idolatrous tendencies. The old belief in the

talismanic virtues of all images (see p. 162) continued to assert

itself, and was easily transferred to those representing the divinities

of the later and more elaborate worship. Some portion of the divine

substance or spirit was supposed somehow to pass into the material

representation and reside therein. This is very clear from the way in

which the inscriptions speak of the statues of gods, as though they were

persons. Thus the famous cylinder of the Assyrian conqueror

Asshurbanipal tells how he brought back "the goddess Nana," (i.e., her

statue) who at the time of the great Elamite invasion, "had gone and

dwelt in Elam, a place not appointed for her," and now spoke to him the

king, saying: "From the midst of Elam bring me out and cause me to

enter into Bitanna"--her own old sanctuary at Erech, "which she had

delighted in." Then again the Assyrian conquerors take especial pride in

carrying off with them the statues of the gods of the nations they

subdue, and never fail to record the fact in these words: "I carried

away \_their gods\_," beyond a doubt with the idea that, in so doing, they

put it out of their enemies' power to procure the assistance of their

divine protectors.

9. In the population of Chaldea the Semitic element was strongly

represented. It is probable that tribes of Semites came into the country

at intervals, in successive bands, and for a long time wandered

unhindered with their flocks, then gradually amalgamated with the

settlers they found in possession, and whose culture they adopted, or

else formed separate settlements of their own, not even then, however,

quite losing their pastoral habits. Thus the Hebrew tribe, when it left

Ur under Terah and Abraham (see page 121), seems to have resumed its

nomadic life with the greatest willingness and ease, after dwelling a

long time in or near that popular city, the principal capital of Shumir,

the then dominant South. Whether this tribe were driven out of Ur, as

some will have it,[BJ] or left of their own accord, it is perhaps not

too bold to conjecture that the causes of their departure were partly

connected with religious motives. For, alone among the Chaldeans and all

the surrounding nations, this handful of Semites had disentangled the

conception of monotheism from the obscuring wealth of Chaldean

mythology, and had grasped it firmly. At least their leaders and elders,

the patriarchs, had arrived at the conviction that the One living God

was He whom they called "the Lord," and they strove to inspire their

people with the same faith, and to detach them from the mythical

beliefs, the idolatrous practices which they had adopted from those

among whom they lived, and to which they clung with the tenacity of

spiritual blindness and long habit. The later Hebrews themselves kept a

clear remembrance of their ancestors having been heathen polytheists,

and their own historians, writing more than a thousand years after

Abraham's times, distinctly state the fact. In a long exhortation to the

assembled tribes of Israel, which they put in the mouth of Joshua, the

successor of Moses, they make him say:--"Your fathers dwelt on the other

side of the flood" (i.e., the Euphrates, or perhaps the Jordan) "in old

time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor, \_and

they served other gods\_." And further on: "... Put away \_the gods which

your fathers served on the other side of the flood\_ and in Egypt, and

serve ye the Lord.... Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether

the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the

flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; as for me

and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua, xxiv. 2, 14, 15.) What

more probable than that the patriarchs, Terah and Abraham, should have

led their people out of the midst of the Chaldeans, away from their

great capital Ur, which held some of the oldest and most renowned

Chaldean sanctuaries, and forth into the wilderness, partly with the

object of removing them from corrupting associations. At all events that

branch of the Hebrew tribe which remained in Mesopotamia with Nahor,

Abraham's brother (see Gen. xxiv. xxix. and ff.), continued heathen and

idolatrous, as we see from the detailed narrative in Genesis xxxi., of

how Rachel "had stolen \_the images that were her father's\_" (xxxi. 19),

when Jacob fled from Laban's house with his family, his cattle and all

his goods. No doubt as to the value and meaning attached to these

"images" is left when we see Laban, after having overtaken the

fugitives, reprove Jacob in these words:--"And now, though thou wouldst

needs be gone, because thou sore longedst for thy father's house, yet

wherefore hast thou stolen \_my gods\_?" (xxxi. 30), to which Jacob, who

knows nothing of Rachel's theft, replies:--"With whomsoever \_thou

findest thy gods\_, let him not live" (xxxi. 32). But "Rachel had taken

the images and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And

Laban searched all the tent, but found them not" (xxxi. 34). Now what

could have induced Rachel to commit so dishonorable and, moreover,

dangerous an action, but the idea that, in carrying away these images,

her family's household "gods," she would insure a blessing and

prosperity to herself and her house? That by so doing, she would,

according to the heathens' notion, rob her father and old home of what

she wished to secure herself (see page 344), does not seem to have

disturbed her. It is clear from this that, even after she was wedded to

Jacob the monotheist, she remained a heathen and idolater, though she

concealed the fact from him.

10. On the other hand, wholesale emigration was not sufficient to remove

the evil. Had it indeed been a wilderness, unsettled in all its extent,

into which the patriarchs led forth their people, they might have

succeeded in weaning them completely from the old influences. But,

scattered over it and already in possession, were numerous Canaanite

tribes, wealthy and powerful under their chiefs--Amorites, and Hivites,

and Hittites, and many more. In the pithy and picturesque Biblical

language, "the Canaanite was in the land" (Genesis, xii. 6), and the

Hebrews constantly came into contact with them, indeed were dependent on

their tolerance and large hospitality for the freedom with which they

were suffered to enjoy the pastures of "the land wherein they were

strangers," as the vast region over which they ranged is frequently and

pointedly called. Being but a handful of men, they had to be cautious in

their dealings and to keep on good terms with the people among whom they

were brought. "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you," admits

Abraham, "bowing himself down before the people of the land," (a tribe

of Hittites near Hebron, west of the Dead Sea), when he offers to buy of

them a field, there to institute a family burying-place for himself and

his race; for he had no legal right to any of the land, not so much as

would yield a sepulchre to his dead, even though the "children of Heth"

treat him with high honor, and, in speaking to him, say, "My lord," and

"thou art a mighty prince among us" (Genesis, xxiii.). This transaction,

conducted on both sides in a spirit of great courtesy and liberality, is

not the only instance of the friendliness with which the Canaanite

owners of the soil regarded the strangers, both in Abraham's lifetime

and long after his death. His grandson, the patriarch Jacob, and his

sons find the same tolerance among the Hivites of Shalem, who thus

commune among themselves concerning them:--"These men are peaceable with

us; therefore let them dwell in the land and trade therein; for the

land, behold it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters

for wives, and let us give them our daughters." And the Hivite prince

speaks in this sense to the Hebrew chief:--"The soul of my son longeth

for your daughter: I pray you, give her him to wife. And make ye

marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us and take our

daughters unto you. And ye shall dwell with us, and the land shall be

before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions

therein."

11. But this question of intermarriage was always a most grievous one;

the question of all others at which the Hebrew leaders strictly drew the

line of intercourse and good-fellowship; the more stubbornly that their

people were naturally much inclined to such unions, since they came and

went freely among their hosts, and their daughters went out, unhindered,

"to see the daughters of the land." Now all the race of Canaan followed

religions very similar to that of Chaldea, only grosser still in their

details and forms of worship. Therefore, that the old idolatrous habits

might not return strongly upon them under the influence of a heathen

household, the patriarchs forbade marriage with the women of the

countries through which they passed and repassed with their tents and

flocks, and themselves abstained from it. Thus we see Abraham sending

his steward all the way back to Mesopotamia to seek a wife for his son

Isaac from among his own kinsfolk who had stayed there with his brother

Nahor, and makes the old servant solemnly swear "by the Lord, the God of

heaven and the God of earth": "Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of

the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell." And when Esau,

Isaac's son, took two wives from among the Hittite women, it is

expressly said that they were "a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah;"

and Isaac's most solemn charge to his other son, Jacob, as he sends him

from him with his blessing, is: "Thou shalt not take a wife of the

daughters of Canaan." Whithersoever the Hebrews came in the course of

their long wanderings, which lasted many centuries, the same twofold

prohibition was laid on them: of marrying with native women--"for

surely," they are told, "they will turn away your heart after their

gods," and of following idolatrous religions, a prohibition enforced by

the severest penalties, even to that of death. But nothing could keep

them long from breaking the law in both respects. The very frequency

and emphasis with which the command is repeated, the violence of the

denunciations against offenders, the terrible punishments threatened and

often actually inflicted, sufficiently show how imperfectly and

unwillingly it was obeyed. Indeed the entire Old Testament is one

continuous illustration of the unslackening zeal with which the wise and

enlightened men of Israel--its lawgivers, leaders, priests and

prophets--pursued their arduous and often almost hopeless task, of

keeping their people pure from worships and practices which to them, who

had realized the fallacy of a belief in many gods, were the most

pernicious abominations. In this spirit and to this end they preached,

they fought, they promised, threatened, punished, and in this spirit, in

later ages, they wrote.

12. It is not until a nation is well established and enjoys a certain

measure of prosperity, security and the leisure which accompanies them,

that it begins to collect its own traditions and memories and set them

down in order, into a continuous narrative. So it was with the Hebrews.

The small tribe became a nation, which ceased from its wanderings and

conquered for itself a permanent place on the face of the earth. But to

do this took many hundred years, years of memorable adventures and

vicissitudes, so that the materials which accumulated for the future

historians, in stories, traditions, songs, were ample and varied. Much,

too, must have been written down at a comparatively early period. \_How\_

early must remain uncertain, since there is unfortunately nothing to

show at what time the Hebrews learned the art of writing and their

characters thought, like other alphabets, to be borrowed from those of

the Phoenicians. However that may be, one thing is sure: that the

different books which compose the body of the Hebrew Sacred Scriptures,

which we call "the Old Testament," were collected from several and

different sources, and put into the shape in which they have descended

to us at a very late period, some almost as late as the birth of Christ.

The first book of all, that of Genesis, describing the beginnings of the

Jewish people,--("\_Genesis\_" is a Greek word, which means

"Origin")--belongs at all events to a somewhat earlier date. It is put

together mainly of two narratives, distinct and often different in point

of spirit and even fact. The later compiler who had both sources before

him to work into a final form, looked on both with too much respect to

alter either, and generally contented himself with giving them side by

side, (as in the story of Hagar, which is told twice and differently, in

Chap. XVI. and Chap. XXI.), or intermixing them throughout, so that it

takes much attention and pains to separate them, (as in the story of the

Flood, Chap. VI.-VIII.). This latter story is almost identical with the

Chaldean Deluge-legend included in the great Izdubar epic, of which it

forms the eleventh tablet. (See Chap. VII.) Indeed, every child can see,

by comparing the Chaldean cosmogonic and mythical legends with the first

chapters of the Book of Genesis, those which relate to the beginnings

not so much of the Hebrew people as of the human race and the world in

general, that both must originally have flowed from one and the same

spring of tradition and priestly lore. The resemblances are too staring,

close, continuous, not to exclude all rational surmises as to casual

coincidences. The differences are such as most strikingly illustrate the

transformation which the same material can undergo when treated by two

races of different moral standards and spiritual tendencies. Let us

briefly examine both, side by side.

13. To begin with the Creation. The description of the primeval chaos--a

waste of waters, from which "the darkness was not lifted," (see p.

261)--answers very well to that in Genesis, i. 2: "And the earth was

without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The

establishment of the heavenly bodies and the creation of the animals

also correspond remarkably in both accounts, and even come in the same

order (see p. 264, and Genesis, i. 14-22). The famous cylinder of the

British Museum (see No. 62, p. 266) is strong presumption in favor of

the identity of the Chaldean version of the first couple's disobedience

with the Biblical one. We have seen the important position occupied in

the Chaldean religion by the symbol of the Sacred Tree, which surely

corresponds to the Tree of Life in Eden (see p. 268), and probably also

to that of Knowledge, and the different passages and names ingeniously

collected and confronted by scholars leave no doubt as to the Chaldeans

having had the legend of an Eden, a garden of God (see p. 274). A better

preserved copy of the Creation tablets with the now missing passages may

be recovered any day, and there is no reason to doubt that they will be

found as closely parallel to the Biblical narrative as those that have

been recovered until now. But even as we have them at present it is very

evident that the groundwork, the material, is the same in both. It is

the manner, the spirit, which differs. In the Chaldean account,

polytheism runs riot. Every element, every power of nature--Heaven,

Earth, the Abyss, Atmosphere, etc.--has been personified into an

individual divine being actively and severely engaged in the great work.

The Hebrew narrative is severely monotheistic. In it GOD does all that

"the gods" between them do in the other. Every poetical or allegorical

turn of phrase is carefully avoided, lest it lead into the evil errors

of the sister-nation. The symbolical myths--such as that of Bel's mixing

his own blood with the clay out of which he fashions man,(see p.

266)--are sternly discarded, for the same reason. One only is retained:

the temptation by the Serpent. But the Serpent being manifestly the

personification of the Evil Principle which is forever busy in the soul

of man, there was no danger of its being deified and worshipped; and as,

moreover, the tale told in this manner very picturesquely and strikingly

points a great moral lesson, the Oriental love of parable and allegory

could in this instance be allowed free scope. Besides, the Hebrew

writers of the sacred books were not beyond or above the superstitions

of their country and age; indeed they retained all of these that did not

appear to them incompatible with monotheism. Thus throughout the Books

of the Old Testament the Chaldean belief in witchcraft, divination from

dreams and other signs is retained and openly professed, and astrology

itself is not condemned, since among the destinations of the stars is

mentioned that of serving to men "for signs": "And God said, let there

be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the

night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and

years" (Genesis, i. 14). Even more explicit is the passage in the

triumphal song of Deborah the prophetess, where celebrating the victory

of Israel over Sisera, she says: "They fought from heaven: the stars in

their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges, v. 20). But a belief in

astrology by no means implies the admission of several gods. In one or

two passages, indeed, we do find an expression which seems to have

slipped in unawares, as an involuntary reminiscence of an original

polytheism; it is where God, communing with himself on Adam's trespass,

says: "Behold, the man is become \_as one of us\_, to know good and evil"

(Gen. iii. 22). An even clearer trace confronts us in one of the two

names that are given to God. These names are "Jehovah," (more correctly

"Yahveh") and "Elohim." Now the latter name is the plural of \_El\_,

"god," and so really means "the gods." If the sacred writers retained

it, it was certainly not from carelessness or inadvertence. As they use

it, it becomes in itself almost a profession of faith. It seems to

proclaim the God of their religion as "the One God who is all the

gods," in whom all the forces of the universe are contained and merged.

14. There is one feature in the Biblical narrative, which, at first

sight, wears the appearance of mythical treatment: it is the familiar

way in which God is represented as coming and going, speaking and

acting, after the manner of men, especially in such passages as these:

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God \_walking in the garden in the

cool of the day\_" (Gen. iii. 8); or, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did

the Lord God \_make coats of skins and he clothed them\_" (Gen. iii. 21).

But such a judgment would be a serious error. There is nothing mythical

in this; only the tendency, common to all mankind, of endowing the Deity

with human attributes of form, speech and action, whenever the attempt

was made to bring it very closely within the reach of their imagination.

This tendency is so universal, that it has been classed, under a special

name, among the distinctive features of the human mind. It has been

called ANTHROPOMORPHISM, (from two Greek words \_Anthropos\_, "man," and

\_morphê\_, "form,") and can never be got rid of, because it is part and

parcel of our very nature. Man's spiritual longings are infinite, his

perceptive faculties are limited. His spirit has wings of flame that

would lift him up and bear him even beyond the endlessness of space into

pure abstraction; his senses have soles of lead that ever weigh him

down, back to the earth, of which he is and to which he must needs

cling, to exist at all. He can \_conceive\_, by a great effort, an

abstract idea, eluding the grasp of senses, unclothed in matter; but he

can \_realize\_, \_imagine\_, only by using such appliances as the senses

supply him with. Therefore, the more fervently he grasps an idea, the

more closely he assimilates it, the more it becomes materialized in his

grasp, and when he attempts to reproduce it out of himself--behold! it

has assumed the likeness of himself or something he has seen, heard,

touched--the spirituality of it has become weighted with flesh, even as

it is in himself. It is as it were a reproduction, in the intellectual

world, of the eternal strife, in physical nature, between the two

opposed forces of attraction and repulsion, the centrifugal and

centripetal, of which the final result is to keep each body in its

place, with a well-defined and limited range of motion allotted to it.

Thus, however pure and spiritual the conception of the Deity may be,

man, in making it real to himself, in bringing it down within his reach

and ken, within the shrine of his heart, \_will\_, and \_must\_ perforce

make of it a Being, human not only in shape, but also in thought and

feeling. How otherwise could he grasp it at all? And the accessories

with which he will surround it will necessarily be suggested by his own

experience, copied from those among which he moves habitually himself.

"Walking in the garden in the cool of the day" is an essentially

Oriental and Southern recreation, and came quite naturally to the mind

of a writer living in a land steeped in sunshine and sultriness. Had the

writer been a Northerner, a denizen of snow-clad plains and ice-bound

rivers, the Lord might probably have been represented as coming in a

swift, fur-lined sleigh. Anthropomorphism, then, is in itself neither

mythology nor idolatry; but it is very clear that it can with the utmost

ease glide into either or both, with just a little help from poetry and,

especially, from art, in its innocent endeavor to fix in tangible form

the vague imaginings and gropings, of which words often are but a

fleeting and feeble rendering. Hence the banishment of all material

symbols, the absolute prohibition of any images whatever as an accessory

of religious worship, which, next to the recognition of One only God, is

the keystone of the Hebrew law:--"Thou shalt have no other gods before

me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of

anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or

that is in the water under the earth.--Thou shalt not bow down thyself

to them, nor serve them" (Exodus, xx. 3-5).

But, to continue our parallel.

15. The ten antediluvian kings of Berosus, who succeed the apparition of

the divine Man-Fish, Êa-Oannes (see p. 196), have their exact

counterpart in the ten antediluvian patriarchs of Genesis, v. Like the

Chaldean kings, the patriarchs live an unnatural number of years. Only

the extravagant figures of the Chaldean tradition are considerably

reduced in the Hebrew version. While the former allots to its kings

reigns of tens of thousands of years (see p. 196); the latter cuts them

down to hundreds, and the utmost that it allows to any of its

patriarchs is nine hundred and sixty-nine years of life (Methuselah).

16. The resemblances between the two Deluge narratives are so obvious

and continuous, that it is not these, but the differences that need

pointing out. Here again the sober, severely monotheistic character of

the Hebrew narrative contrasts most strikingly with the exuberant

polytheism of the Chaldean one, in which Heaven, Sun, Storm, Sea, even

Rain are personified, deified, and consistently act their several

appropriate and most dramatic parts in the great cataclysm, while Nature

herself, as the Great Mother of beings and fosterer of life, is

represented, in the person of Ishtar, lamenting the slaughter of men

(see p. 327). Apart from this fundamental difference in spirit, the

identity in all the essential points of fact is amazing, and variations

occur only in lesser details. The most characteristic one is that, while

the Chaldean version describes the building and furnishing of a \_ship\_,

with all the accuracy of much seafaring knowledge, and does not forget

even to name the pilot, the Hebrew writer, with the clumsiness and

ignorance of nautical matters natural to an inland people unfamiliar

with the sea or the appearance of ships, speaks only of an \_ark\_ or

\_chest\_. The greatest discrepancy is in the duration of the flood, which

is much shorter in the Chaldean text than in the Hebrew. On the seventh

day already, Hâsisadra sends out the dove (see p. 316). But then in the

Biblical narrative itself, made up, as was remarked above, of two

parallel texts joined together, this same point is given differently in

different places. According to Genesis, vii. 12, "the rain was upon the

earth forty days and forty nights," while verse 24 of the same chapter

tells us that "the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty

days." Again, the number of the saved is far larger in the Chaldean

account: Hâsisadra takes with him into the ship all his men-servants,

his women-servants, and even his "nearest friends," while Noah is

allowed to save only his own immediate family, "his sons, and his wife,

and his sons' wives" (Genesis, vi. 18). Then, the incident of the birds

is differently told: Hâsisadra sends out three birds, the dove, the

swallow, and the raven; Noah only two--first the raven, then three times

in succession the dove. But it is startling to find both narratives more

than once using the same words. Thus the Hebrew writer tells how Noah

"sent forth a raven, which went to and fro," and how "the dove found no

rest for the sole of her foot and returned." Hâsisadra relates: "I took

out a dove and sent it forth. The dove went forth, to and fro, but found

no resting-place and returned." And further, when Hâsisadra describes

the sacrifice he offered on the top of Mount Nizir, after he came forth

from the ship, he says: "The gods smelled a savor; the gods smelled a

sweet savor." "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor," says Genesis,--viii.

21--of Noah's burnt-offering. These few hints must suffice to show how

instructive and entertaining is a parallel study of the two narratives;

it can be best done by attentively reading both alternately, and

comparing them together, paragraph by paragraph.

17. The legend of the Tower of Languages (see above, p. 293, and

Genesis, xi. 3-9), is the last in the series of parallel Chaldean and

Hebrew traditions. In the Bible it is immediately followed by the

detailed genealogy of the Hebrews from Shem to Abraham. Therewith

evidently ends the connection between the two people, who are severed

for all time from the moment that Abraham goes forth with his tribe from

Ur of the Chaldees, probably in the reign of Amarpal (father of

Hammurabi), whom the Bible calls Amraphel, king of Shineâr. The reign of

Hammurabi was, as we have already seen (see p. 219), a prosperous and

brilliant one. He was originally king of Tintir (the oldest name of

Babylon), and when he united all the cities and local rulers of Chaldea

under his supremacy, he assorted the pre-eminence among them for his own

city, which he began to call by its new name, KA-DIMIRRA (Accadian for

"Gate of God," which was translated into the Semitic BAB-IL). This king

in every respect opens a new chapter in the history of Chaldea.

Moreover, a great movement was taking place in all the region between

the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf; nations were forming and

growing, and Chaldea's most formidable rival and future conqueror,

Assyria, was gradually gathering strength in the north, a fierce young

lion-cub. By this newcomer among nations our attention will henceforth

mainly be claimed. Let us, therefore, pause on the high place to which

we have now arrived, and, casting a glance backward, take a rapid survey

of the ground we have covered.

18. Looking with strained eyes into a past dim and gray with the

scarce-lifting mists of unnumbered ages, we behold our starting-point,

the low land by the Gulf, Shumir, taking shape and color under the rule

of Turanian settlers, the oldest known nation in the world. They drain

and till the land, they make bricks and build cities, and prosper

materially. But the spirit in them is dark and lives in cowering terror

of self-created demons and evil things, which they yet believe they can

control and compel. So their religion is one, not of worship and

thanksgiving, but of dire conjuring and incantation, inconceivable

superstition and witchcraft, an unutterable dreariness hardly lightened

by the glimmering of a nobler faith, in the conception of the wise and

beneficent Êa and his ever benevolently busy son, Meridug. But gradually

there comes a change. Shumir lifts its gaze upward, and as it takes in

more the beauty and the goodness of the world--in Sun and Moon and

Stars, in the wholesome Waters and the purifying serviceable Fire, the

good and divine Powers--the Gods multiply and the host of elementary

spirits, mostly evil, becomes secondary. This change is greatly helped

by the arrival of the meditative, star-gazing strangers, who take hold

of the nature-worship and the nature-myths they find among the people to

which they have come--a higher and more advanced race--and weave these,

with their own star-worship and astrological lore, into a new faith, a

religious system most ingeniously combined, elaborately harmonized, and

full of profoundest meaning. The new religion is preached not only in

words, but in brick and stone: temples arise all over the land, erected

by the \_patesis\_--the priest-kings of the different cities--and

libraries in which the priestly colleges reverently treasure both their

own works and the older religious lore of the country. The ancient

Turanian names of the gods are gradually translated into the new

Cushito-Semitic language; yet the prayers and hymns, as well as the

incantations, are still preserved in the original tongue, for the people

of Turanian Shumir are the more numerous, and must be ruled and

conciliated, not alienated. The more northern region, Accad, is, indeed,

more thinly peopled; there the tribes of Semites, who now arrive in

frequent instalments, spread rapidly and unhindered. The cities of Accad

with their temples soon rival those of Shumir and strive to eclipse

them, and their \_patesis\_ labor to predominate politically over those of

the South. And it is with the North that the victory at first remains;

its pre-eminence is asserted in the time of Sharrukin of Agadê, about

3800 B.C., but is resumed by the South some thousand years later, when a

powerful dynasty (that to which belong Ur-êa and his son Dungi)

establishes itself in Ur, while Tintir, the future head and centre of

the united land of Chaldea, the great Babylon, if existing at all, is

not yet heard of. It is these kings of Ur who first take the

significant title "kings of Shumir and Accad." Meanwhile new and higher

moral influences have been at work; the Semitic immigration has

quickened the half mythical, half astronomical religion with a more

spiritual element--of fervent adoration, of prayerful trust, of

passionate contrition and self-humiliation in the bitter consciousness

of sin, hitherto foreign to it, and has produced a new and beautiful

religious literature, which marks its third and last stage. To this

stage belong the often mentioned "Penitential Psalms," Semitic, nay,

rather Hebrew in spirit, although still written in the old Turanian

language (but in the northern dialect of Accad, a fact that in itself

bears witness to their comparative lateness and the locality in which

they sprang up), and too strikingly identical with similar songs of the

golden age of Hebrew poetry in substance and form, not to have been the

models from which the latter, by a sort of unconscious heredity, drew

its inspirations. Then comes the great Elamitic invasion, with its

plundering of cities, desecration of temples and sanctuaries, followed

probably by several more through a period of at least three hundred

years. The last, that of Khudur Lagamar, since it brings prominently

forward the founder of the Hebrew nation, deserves to be particularly

mentioned by that nation's historians, and, inasmuch as it coincides

with the reign of Amarpal, king of Tintir and father of Hammurabi,

serves to establish an important landmark in the history both of the

Jews and of Chaldea. When we reach this comparatively recent date the

mists have in great part rolled aside, and as we turn from the ages we

have just surveyed to those that still lie before us, history guides us

with a bolder step and shows us the landscape in a twilight which,

though still dim and sometimes misleading, is yet that of breaking day,

not of descending night.

19. When we attempt to realize the prodigious vastness and remoteness of

the horizon thus opened before us, a feeling akin to awe overcomes us.

Until within a very few years, Egypt gloried in the undisputed boast of

being the oldest country in the world, i.e., of reaching back, by its

annals and monuments, to an earlier date than any other. But the

discoveries that are continually being made in the valley of the two

great rivers have forever silenced that boast. Chaldea points to a

monumentally recorded date nearly 4000 B.C. This is more than Egypt can

do. Her oldest authentic monuments,--her great Pyramids, are

considerably later. Mr. F. Hommel, one of the leaders of Assyriology,

forcibly expresses this feeling of wonder in a recent publication:[BK]

"If," he says, "the Semites were already settled in Northern Babylonia

(Accad) in the beginning of the fourth thousand B.C., in possession of

the fully developed Shumiro-Accadian culture adopted by them,--a

culture, moreover, which appears to have sprouted in Accad as a cutting

from Shumir--then the latter must naturally be far, far older still,

and have existed in its completed form IN THE FIFTH THOUSAND B.C.--an

age to which I now unhesitatingly ascribe the South-Babylonian

incantations." This would give our mental vision a sweep of full six

thousand years, a pretty respectable figure! But when we remember that

these first known settlers of Shumir came from somewhere else, and that

they brought with them more than the rudiments of civilization, we are

at once thrown back at least a couple of thousands of years more. For it

must have taken all of that and more for men to pass from a life spent

in caves and hunting the wild beasts to a stage of culture comprising

the invention of a complete system of writing, the knowledge and working

of metals, even to the mixing of copper and tin into bronze, and an

expertness in agriculture equal not only to tilling, but to draining

land. If we further pursue humanity--losing at last all count of time in

years or even centuries--back to its original separation, to its first

appearance on the earth,--if we go further still and try to think of the

ages upon ages during which man existed not at all, yet the earth did,

and was beautiful to look upon--(\_had\_ there been any to look on it),

and good for the creatures who had it all to themselves--a dizziness

comes over our senses, before the infinity of time, and we draw back,

faint and awed, as we do when astronomy launches us, on a slender thread

of figures, into the infinity of space. The six ages of a thousand years

each which are all that our mind can firmly grasp then come to seem to

us a very poor and puny fraction of eternity, to which we are tempted

to apply almost scornfully the words spoken by the poet of as many

years: "Six ages! six little ages! six drops of time!"[BL]

FOOTNOTES:

[BJ] Maspero, "Histoire Ancienne," p. 173.

[BK] Ztschr. für Keilschriftforschung, "Zur altbabylonischen

Chronologie," Heft I.

[BL] Matthew Arnold, in "Mycerinus":

"Six years! six little years! six drops of time!"

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VII.

Professor Louis Dyer has devoted some time to preparing a free metrical

translation of "Ishtar's Descent." Unfortunately, owing to his many

occupations, only the first part of the poem is as yet finished. This he

most kindly has placed at our disposal, authorizing us to present it to

our readers.

ISHTAR IN URUGAL.

Along the gloomy avenue of death

To seek the dread abysm of Urugal,

In everlasting Dark whence none returns,

Ishtar, the Moon-god's daughter, made resolve,

And that way, sick with sorrow, turned her face.

A road leads downward, but no road leads back

From Darkness' realm. There is Irkalla queen,

Named also Ninkigal, mother of pains.

Her portals close forever on her guests

And exit there is none, but all who enter,

To daylight strangers, and of joy unknown,

Within her sunless gates restrained must stay.

And there the only food vouchsafed is dust,

For slime they live on, who on earth have died.

Day's golden beam greets none and darkness reigns

Where hurtling bat-like forms of feathered men

Or human-fashioned birds imprisoned flit.

Close and with dust o'erstrewn, the dungeon doors

Are held by bolts with gathering mould o'ersealed.

By love distracted, though the queen of love,

Pale Ishtar downward flashed toward death's domain,

And swift approached these gates of Urugal,

Then paused impatient at its portals grim;

For love, whose strength no earthly bars restrain,

Gives not the key to open Darkness' Doors.

By service from all living men made proud,

Ishtar brooked not resistance from the dead.

She called the jailer, then to anger changed

The love that sped her on her breathless way,

And from her parted lips incontinent

Swept speech that made the unyielding warder quail.

"Quick, turnkey of the pit! swing wide these doors,

And fling them swiftly open. Tarry not!

For I will pass, even I will enter in.

Dare no denial, thou, bar not my way,

Else will I burst thy bolts and rend thy gates,

This lintel shatter else and wreck these doors.

The pent-up dead I else will loose, and lead

Back the departed to the lands they left,

Else bid the famished dwellers in the pit

Rise up to live and eat their fill once more.

Dead myriads then shall burden groaning earth,

Sore tasked without them by her living throngs."

Love's mistress, mastered by strong hate,

The warder heard, and wondered first, then feared

The angered goddess Ishtar what she spake,

Then answering said to Ishtar's wrathful might:

"O princess, stay thy hand; rend not the door,

But tarry here, while unto Ninkigal

I go, and tell thy glorious name to her."

ISHTAR'S LAMENT.

"All love from earthly life with me departed,

With me to tarry in the gates of death;

In heaven's sun no warmth is longer hearted,

And chilled shall cheerless men now draw slow breath.

"I left in sadness life which I had given,

I turned from gladness and I walked with woe,

Toward living death by grief untimely driven,

I search for Thammuz whom harsh fate laid low

"The darkling pathway o'er the restless waters

Of seven seas that circle Death's domain

I trod, and followed after earth's sad daughters

Torn from their loved ones and ne'er seen again.

"Here must I enter in, here make my dwelling

With Thammuz in the mansion of the dead,

Driven to Famine's house by love compelling

And hunger for the sight of that dear head.

"O'er husbands will I weep, whom death has taken,

Whom fate in manhood's strength from life has swept,

Leaving on earth their living wives forsaken,--

O'er them with groans shall bitter tears be wept.

"And I will weep o'er wives, whose short day ended

Ere in glad offspring joyed their husbands' eyes;

Snatched from loved arms they left their lords untended,--

O'er them shall tearful lamentations rise.

"And I will weep o'er babes who left no brothers,

Young lives to the ills of age by hope opposed,

The sons of saddened sires and tearful mothers,

One moment's life by death eternal closed."

NINKIGAL'S COMMAND TO THE WARDER.

"Leave thou this presence, slave, open the gate;

Since power is hers to force an entrance here,

Let her come in as come from life the dead,

Submissive to the laws of Death's domain.

Do unto her what unto all thou doest."

Want of space bids us limit ourselves to these few fragments--surely

sufficient to make our readers wish that Professor Dyer might spare some

time to the completion of his task.

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Page vii Introduction Chapter 4: Corrected to start at page 94

Pages ix, 92, 93, 214, 215, Illustrations 44, 59:

Sirgulla standardised to Sir-gulla

Page xi: Contents Chapter VIII: Added § marker for section 12

Page xiii: Full-stop (period) added after sittliche Weltordnung

Pages xiii-xv Principal works: Normalised small caps in author names

Page xiv: Menant standardised to Ménant

Page 36: Throughly corrected to thoroughly

Illustration 9: Chippiez standardised to Chipiez

Page 60: head-dress standardised to headdress

Page 64: gate-ways standardised to gateways

Page 68: Sufficent corrected to sufficient

Illustration 33: Full stop (period) added to caption after louvre

Page 104: life-time standardised to lifetime

Page 105: Bibliothéque standardised to Bibliothèque

Page 116: Double-quote added before ... In this

Page 126: new-comers standardised to newcomers

Pages 131, 375: Japheth standardised to Japhet

Pages 147, 196, 371: Altai standardised as Altaï

Pages 154, 397, 404: Zi-ki-a standardised as Zi-kî-a

Page 154: Anunna-ki standardised to Anunnaki

Page 157: Uru-gal standardised as Urugal

Page 157: 'who may the rather' rendered as 'who may then rather'

Page 160: Meri-dug standardised to Meridug

Page 163: Apostrophe added to patients

Page 172: Mulge standardised to Mul-ge

Page 210: Hyphen added to countercurrent

Pages 214, 215, 375 Illustration 59: Sirburla standardised as Sir-burla

Page 218: Dovoted corrected to devoted

Pages 221, 360, 379: Shinear standardised to Shineâr

Page 225: Kadimirra standardised to Ka-dimirra

Page 228: Cossaeans standardised to Cossæans

Footnote AN: Ur-ea as in original (not standardised to Ur-êa)

Page 234: Full-stop (period) removed after "from the North"

Page 234: Italics removed from i.e. to conform with other usages

Pages 241, 246: Nindar standardised to Nin-dar

Page 249: Babilu standardised to Bab-ilu

Page 254: Double quote added after For instance:--

Footnote AT: Asshurbanipal standardised to Assurbanipal

Illustration 70: Illustration number added to illustration.

Page 297: border-land standardised to borderland

Page 302: Double quote added at the end of paragraph 6

Illustration 77: EABANI'S replaced with ÊABÂNI'S.

Page 323: death-like standardised to deathlike

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the correct modern form is Der keilinschriftliche Sintfluthbericht

Page 372: Asshurnazirpal standardised to Asshur-nazir-pal

Page 372: Bab-el-Mander standardised to Bab-el-Mandeb

Page 374: Arioch standardised to Ariokh

Page 374: Abu-Shahreiin standardised to Abu-Shahrein

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Page 379: Page number 131 added for index entry Seth

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