

BABYLONIAN EXORCISMS.

TRANSLATED BY

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THE charms translated below will illustrate the superstition of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Like the Jews of the Talmud they believed that the world was swarming with noxious spirits who produced the various diseases to which man is liable, and might be swallowed with the food and the drink that support life. They counted no less than 300 spirits of heaven and 600 spirits of earth. All this, with the rest of their mythology, was borrowed by the Assyrians from the primitive population of Babylonia, who spoke an agglutinative language akin to the dialects of the Finnic or Tatar tribes. The charms are written in this ancient language, but Assyrian translations are appended in a column to the right of the

tablet. The legends are lithographed in the "*Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*," vol. ii, plates 17 and 18. They have been translated by M. Oppert in the *Journal Asiatique* of January 1873, and an analytical rendering of them is given by M. Fr. Lenormant in his *Études Accadiennes* II. 1. (1874).



TRANSLATION OF THE EXORCISMS.

TABLET I.

The noxious god, the noxious spirit of the neck, the neck-spirit of the desert, the neck-spirit of the mountains, the neck-spirit of the sea, the neck-spirit of the morass, the noxious cherub of the city, this noxious wind which seizes the body (and) the health of the body. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

TABLET II.

The burning spirit of the neck which seizes the man, the burning spirit of the neck which seizes the man, the spirit of the neck which works evil, the creation of an evil spirit. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

TABLET III.

Wasting, want of health, the evil spirit of the ulcer, spreading quinsey of the gullet, the violent ulcer, the noxious ulcer. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

TABLET IV.

Sickness of the entrails, sickness of the heart, the palpitation of a sick heart, sickness of bile, sickness of the head, noxious colic, the *agitation* of terror, flatulency¹ of the entrails, noxious illness, lingering sickness, nightmare. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

¹ Literally "opposition."

TABLET V.

He who makes an image (which) injures the man,¹ an evil face, an evil eye, an evil mouth, an evil tongue, evil lips, an evil poison. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

TABLET VI.

The cruel spirit, the strong spirit of the head, the head-spirit that departs not, the head-spirit that goes not forth, the head-spirit that will not go, the noxious head-spirit. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

TABLET VII.

The poisonous spittle of the mouth² which is noxious to the voice, the phlegm which is destructive to the, the pustules of the *lungs*, the pustule of the body, the loss of the nails, the removal (and) dissolving of old *excrement*, the *skin* which is *stripped off*, the recurrent ague of the body, the food which hardens in a man's body, the food which returns after being eaten, the drink which distends after drinking, death by poison, from the swallowing of the mouth which distends, the unreturning wind from the desert. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

¹ Here we have a reference to a custom well known in the Middle Ages. A waxen figure was made, and as it melted before the fire the person represented by it by supposed similarity to waste away. It will be remembered that Horace (*Sat.* 1. 8, 30 *sq.*) speaks of the waxen figure made by the witch Canidia in order that the lover might consume away in the fires of love. Roman and Mediæval sorcery had its origin in that of ancient Accad.

² That would be consumption.

TABLET VIII.

May NIN-CIGAL,¹ the wife of NIN-A'SU, turn her face towards another place; may the noxious spirit go forth and seize another; may the propitious cherub and the propitious genie settle upon his body. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

TABLET IX.

May NEBO, the great steward, the recliner (or *incubus*) supreme among the gods, like the god who has begotten him, seize upon his head; against his life may he not break forth. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

TABLET X.

(On) the sick man by the sacrifice of mercy may perfect health shine like bronze; may the Sun-god give this man life; may MERODACH, the eldest son of the deep (give him) strength, prosperity, (and) health. Spirit of heaven remember, spirit of earth remember.

¹ Nin-cigal, "The Lady of the Mighty Earth," was Queen of Hades and a form of Allat or Istar. She is also identified with Gula or Bahu (the *Bohu* or "Chaos" of Gen. i. 2), "The Lady of the House of Death," and wife of Hea or Nin-a'su.



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