

## TABLET OF ANCIENT ACCADIAN LAWS.

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TRANSLATED BY  
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THE Accadians were the inventors of the cuneiform system of writing and the earliest population of Babylonia of whom we know. They spoke an agglutinative language allied to Finnic or Tatar, and had originally come from the mountainous country to the south-west of the Caspian. The name *Accada* signifies "highlander," and the name of Accad is met with in the 10th chapter of Genesis. The laws, of which a translation is given below, go back to a very remote period; and the patriarchal character of society implied by them will be noticed, as well as the superior importance possessed by the mother, denial of whom by the son involved banishment in contrast with the milder penalty enjoined for renunciation of the father. This importance of the mother in family-life is still a distinguishing feature of the Finnic-Tatar race. The slave, it will be seen, was already placed to some extent under the protection of the state, and the first step on the road towards the amelioration of his condition had been made.

A considerable portion of the tablet which contains these laws is given in the Vol. II. pl. 10, *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*. Other fragments, since discovered, have been lithographed by M. François Lenormant in his *Choix de Textes Cunéiformes* Part I. No. 15. The original Accadian text runs down the left-hand column, an Assyrian translation being annexed on the right. The several laws are divided by lines, and come at the end of a bilingual collection of ancient documents of different kinds but chiefly relating to law. They are introduced by a list of Accadian legal terms with their Assyrian equivalents. The whole was compiled for Assur-bani-pal's Library. Mr. Fox Talbot was the first to point out the nature of the inscription; and I gave a translation of the published portions of it in the *Athenæum* for May 1869, which was supplemented by Mr. G. Smith in a later number of the same periodical. Translations of the most important part of it have been recently given by M. Oppert in the *Journal Asiatique*, 7ième série, I. and M. F. Lenormant in *La Magie chez le Chaldéens* pp. 310, 311.

The first and second columns, on the obverse of the tablet, are unfortunately too mutilated for translation. It is therefore only the two last columns, on the reverse, of which a rendering is appended.

TABLET OF ANCIENT ACCADIAN LAWS.

- 1 A certain man's<sup>1</sup> brother-in-law hired (workmen) and on his foundation built an enclosure. From the house (the judge) expelled him.
- 2 In every case let a married man put his child in possession of property, provided that he does make him inhabit it.
- 3 For the future (the Judge may) cause a sanctuary to be erected in a private demesne.
- 4 (A man) has full possession of his sanctuary in his own high place.
- 5 The sanctuary (a man) has raised is confirmed to the son who inherits.
- 6 *Effaced.*
- 7 His father and his mother (a man) shall not (deny).
- 8 A town (a man) has named; its foundation-stone he has not *laid*; (yet) he (can) change it.
- 9 This imperial rescript must be learnt.
- 10 Everything which a married woman encloses, she (shall) possess.
- 11 In all cases for the future (these rules shall hold good).
- 12 A decision. A son says to his father: Thou art not

<sup>1</sup> Literally "his brother-in-law." These legal precedents ought to have a special interest for the Englishman.

my father, (and) confirms it by (his) nail-mark (on the deed); he gives him a pledge,<sup>1</sup> and silver he gives him.

13 A decision. A son says to his mother: Thou art not my mother; his hair is cut off, (in) the city they exclude him from earth (and) water<sup>2</sup> and in the house imprison him.<sup>3</sup>

14 A decision. A father says to his son: Thou art not my son; in house and brick building they imprison him.

15 A decision. A mother says to her son: Thou art not my son; in house and property they imprison her.

16 A decision. A woman is unfaithful to her husband and says to him: Thou art not my husband; into the river they throw her.

17 A decision. A husband says to his wife: Thou art not my wife; half a maneh of silver he weighs out (in payment).

18 A decision. A master kills<sup>4</sup> (his) slaves,<sup>5</sup> cuts them to pieces, injures their offspring,<sup>6</sup> drives them from the land and makes them small;<sup>7</sup> his hand every day a half-measure of corn measures out (in requital).

The writing (of this tablet is) as above, (beginning;) "every dawn, an oath." Seventh tablet (of the series which begins:) "to be with him."

(Copy) belonging to Assyria, like its old (text is) it written and engraved. The country of ASSUR-BANI-PAL (SARDANAPALUS), the mighty King, King of Assyria.

<sup>1</sup> In the Assyrian version "he recognises his pledge to him."

<sup>2</sup> In the Assyrian version "they humble him."

<sup>3</sup> In the Assyrian version "they expel him."

<sup>4</sup> In the Assyrian version "saws asunder and kills."

<sup>5</sup> In the Assyrian version "a slave."

<sup>6</sup> In the Assyrian version "beats."

<sup>7</sup> In the Assyrian version "makes ill."

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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