

TABLES OF OMENS
FURNISHED BY DOGS AND BIRTHS.

TRANSLATED BY
REV. A. H. SAYCE, M.A.

THE Babylonians believed that every event which followed another had been caused by the preceding one, and accordingly formed a pseudo-science in which every possible phenomenon was assigned some consequence supposed to result from it. Omens were thus drawn from all conceivable occurrences, and lists were compiled of the results that might be expected to succeed particular events. Thus there are tables of omens derived from dreams, from births, from the inspection of the hand or the entrails of animals, and from the objects a traveller meets

with on the road. The following table of omens furnished by dogs will give an idea of the nature of this Babylonian system of augury. The beginning of the tablet as well as the reverse has been destroyed; all that is left of it is translated below for the first time. The original terra cotta tablet is numbered K 217 in the British Museum Collection, and a copy of the text will be found in M. François Lenormant's *Choix de Textes Cunéiformes*, Vol. iii., p. 234.



TABLE OF OMENS FURNISHED BY DOGS.

- 1 (If a blue dog enters into a palace, that palace) is burned.
- 2 (If) a yellow dog enters into the palace, exit from that palace will be baleful.¹
- 3 (If) a spotted dog enters into the palace, that palace its peace to the enemy gives.
- 4 (If) a dog to the palace goes and no one kills, that palace its peace fails.
- 5 (If) a dog to the palace goes and on a bed lies down, that palace none with his hand takes.
- 6 (If) a dog to the palace goes and on a throne lies down, that palace is burned.
- 7 (If) a dog to the palace goes and on the royal parasol lies down, that palace its peace to the enemy gives.
- 8 (If) a dog into a temple enters, the gods to the country grant no favour.
- 9 (If) a white dog into a temple enters, the foundation of that temple (is) not stable.
- 10 (If) a black dog into a temple enters, the foundation of that temple (is) not stable.
- 11 (If) a blue dog into a temple enters, that temple sees plenty.
- 12 (If) a yellow dog into a temple enters, that temple sees plenty.
- 13 (If) a spotted dog into a temple enters, that temple do its gods love.

¹ Literally, "that palace, harm (is) exit from it."

14 (If) dogs crouch and into a temple enter, none this
(temple) with his hand takes.

15 Seventeen statements altogether concerning the know-
ledge of omens.¹

16 (If) female dogs in the gates howl, the handmaids²
conceive female seed.

17 (If) female dogs one litter bear, destruction to the city.

18 (If) female dogs bear a man,³ that city makes many
fortresses

19 (If female dogs) eat , that city sees famine.

¹ This is a subscription by the scribe, and a short summary of the contents of the paragraphs copied. See also line 5, page 175, and the last paragraph or colophon of the tablet.

² Literally, "handmaidenhood."

³ Literally, "humanity."

TABLE OF BIRTH-PORTENTS.

A tablet of the same kind, which has already been translated by M. Oppert in the *Journal Asiatique*, may be added here. The original text is lithographed in the *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. iii., pl. 65.

OBERSE

- 1 When a woman bears a child and it has the ears of a lion, a strong King is in the country.
- 2 When a woman bears a child and its right ear is wanting, the days of the Prince are long.
- 3 When a woman bears a child and both its ears are wanting, a (hostile) fortress is in the country and the country is made small.
- 4 When a woman bears a child and its right ear is small, the man's house is destroyed.
- 5 When a woman bears a child and its ears are small, the man's house is made of bricks.
- 6 When a woman bears a child and its right ear *hangs down*, an *androgyné*¹ in the man's house is born.
- 7 When a woman bears a child and its ears *hang down*, its country is destroyed ; the prosperity of the enemy is seen.
- 8 When a woman bears a child and its right ear is round, an *androgyné*¹ in the man's house is born.
- 9 When a woman bears a child and its right ear is formed in the lower part of its face,² the man's son (and) the man's house are destroyed.

¹ Hermaphrodite.

² Rather, perhaps, the back of the neck. The word is used in the *Annals of Assur-nasir-pal* (ii. 53, and iii. 69.) in the sense of "behind."

- 10 When a woman bears a child and both its ears are on the right side and there is none on the left, the gods restore prosperity to the country and the champaign country abides at rest.
- 11 When a woman bears a child and both its ears are closed, *a sacrifice is made.*
-
- 12 When a woman bears a child and it has a bird's beak, that country is oppressed.
- 13 When a woman bears a child and it has no mouth, the mistress of the house dies.
- 14 When a woman bears a child and its right nostril is wanting, increase of the multitude.
- 15 When a woman bears a child and its nostrils are wanting, the country a (hostile) fortress seizes; the man's house is destroyed.
- 16 When a woman bears a child and its jaws are wanting, the days of the Prince are long; that house is destroyed.
- 17 When a woman bears a child and its lower jaw is wanting, the produce of the country for a year is not brought down.
- 18 When a woman bears a child and its knee is wanting, the man's house is destroyed.
- 19 When a woman bears a child and its knee is *stiff*, prosperity to the multitude.
- 20 When a woman bears a child and its is wanting, the country a (hostile) fortress seizes (and) the master of the house dies.
- 21 When a woman bears a child and its and its member are wanting, the army of the King is powerful; peace possesses that country, and the men *obedience* possess; Lilith¹ before them is not.

¹ Lilith plays a considerable part in Jewish tradition, which represents her as the demon-wife of Adam and a feminine night-spirit that wanders about in deserts. In Is. x cxiv. 14, Lilith is mentioned as taking up her abode in desolated Edom.

- 22 When a woman bears a child and the upper lip overhangs the lower, prosperity to the multitude.
- 23 When a woman bears a child and its lips are wanting, the country a (hostile) fortress seizes (and) the man's house is destroyed.
-
- 24 When a woman bears a child and its knee is *stiff*, that man is spared.
- 25 When a woman bears a child and its right hand is wanting, that country goes to destruction.
- 26 When a woman bears a child and its hands are wanting, the city (has) no births, the country is solitary and destroyed.
- 27 When a woman bears a child and the fingers of its right hand are wanting, the Prince makes no parleyings with his enemy.
- 28 When a woman bears a child and (it has) 6 fingers on the right hand, a persistent seizure seizes the house of the man.
- 29 When a woman bears a child and it has 6 toes on each foot,¹ the children go not to *school*.
- 30 When a woman bears a child and it has 6 toes on its right foot, increase of the multitude.
-
- 31 When a woman bears a child and its heart is open and it has no skin, the country sees privation.
- 32 When a woman bears a child and its member is wanting, the master of the house *enriches* himself by the crop of the field.
- 33 When a woman bears a child and its member and *navel* are wanting, the whole country sees misfortune; the women of it see hardship; its men (in) the palace are destroyed.

¹ Literally, "six toes apiece on its two feet."

- 34 When a woman bears a child and it has no sex, privation and invasion seize the country ; the master of the house is unprosperous.
- 35 When a woman bears a child and its anus is closed, the country sees privation.
- 36 When a woman bears a child and its right fundament is wanting, the country of the Prince is devastated.
-
- 37 When a woman bears a child and its right foot is wanting, that house goes to destruction ; the man's house falls.
- 38 When a woman bears a child and its feet are wanting, the roads of the country are cut ; that house is destroyed.
- 39 When a woman bears a child and its right foot is like the tail of a fish, the booty of the country
- 40 When a woman bears a child and its feet and hands are like the tail of a fish, the Prince eats the produce of his country.
- 41 When a woman bears a child and its feet move themselves through his overpowering hunger, that house . . . is destroyed.

REVERSE

- 1 When a woman bears a child and its foot is attached to the tendons of its body, there is pestilence in the country.
- 2 When a woman bears a child and it has three feet, two attached to the body (and) one to the two others,¹ there is pestilence in the country.
- 3 When a woman bears a child and its legs are male and female, the whole country sees misfortune ; the master

¹ Literally, "two descending into the body, the other into the midst of the other."

- 4 When a woman bears a child and its right heel is wanting, the country of the Prince is devastated.
-
- 5 Forty-six statements,¹ from "When a woman bears a child and it has a lion's ear": copied.²
- 6 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth³ its head is full of white-hairs, the days of the Prince are long.
- 7 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it is full of . . . , the master of the house dies and that house is destroyed.
- 8 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it is full of pieces of fat, (as for) that house prosperity goes before it.
- 9 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it is full of *spots*, misfortune over it ensues; the King of its city dies.
- 10 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it is full of *unclean swellings*, the King estranges his Princes.
- 11 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it is full of hanging pieces of flesh, the forces of the whole country see misfortune.
- 12 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it is full of flakes of flesh,⁴ the forces of the whole country see misfortune; that house is destroyed.
- 13 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth fingers are formed, the days of the Prince are long (and) extended (his) reign.
- [A blank line is left here in the original text.]
- 14 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it is *perfect*, its King is in the country.

¹ This is a subscription by the scribe, and a short summary of the contents of the paragraphs copied. See also line 15, page 170, and the last paragraph or colophon of the tablet.

² Literally, "transferred from its (former) place."

³ Literally, "at that very time."

⁴ Literally, "tablets."

- 15 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth *its body is full-grown*, the master of the house is not prosperous.
- 16 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth its teeth are cut, the days of the Prince are long, a strong country is seen; against the country (there are) campaigns; that house is destroyed.
- 17 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth its beard is grown, *floods* are in the country.
- 18 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth it has a *hare-lip*, a strong country is conquered.
- 19 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth its mouth is open and speaks, there is pestilence in the country; the Air-god inundates the crops of the country; injury in the country is caused.
- 20 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth its right ear (is) *thick*, the father *shaves* the head; *the sons of the army* for a year are numerous.
- 21 When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth its ears are long and *thick*, the troops of a mighty *squadron* exist.
-
- 22 When a woman bears a child and its mouth is horned, an ambassador
-
- 23 When a sheep bears a lion, the forces march multitudinously: the King has not a rival.
-
- 24 Seventeen statements, from "When a woman bears a child and at the time of birth its head is covered with white hair," copied.¹

¹ This is a subscription by the scribe, and a short summary of the contents of the paragraphs copied. See also line 15, p. 170, and line 5, p. 175.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our Website :

www.Brainfly.net

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :

Brainfly Inc.

5100 Garfield Ave. #46

Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net