

## ASSYRIAN REPORT TABLETS.

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TRANSLATED BYTHEOPHILUS GOLDRIDGE PINCHES.

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THE following interesting inscriptions bring us into contact, as it were, with the common people of ancient Assyria. There are several hundreds of tablets containing inscriptions of this class in the British Museum, showing a very perfect system of communication between Nineveh, the capital, and the remotest parts of the empire. From those which do not treat of the political affairs of the empire we obtain much interesting information concerning the manners and customs of the Assyrians in Biblical times. From the other class, which may be called despatches, we get long accounts of the progress made by the different generals and commanders of the Assyrian armies in subduing some small state, quelling some revolt in a distant part of the empire, or bringing rebels to justice. They also abound in uncommon words and phrases which are most interesting to the student of philology.

It is very probable that many of these tablets were first written upon papyrus, and after having been sent

to the king, were copied by the royal scribes, and placed in the Royal Library at Nineveh for future reference. In support of this we find, among other proofs, a sort of postscript attached to one of them, which may be translated as follows :—

Insomuch as this (is) the fourth shaft-of-a-reed,<sup>1</sup> anybody [who] neither into the presence of BEL, nor into the presence of the King (my) Lord [shall bring it, let the gods curse].

The above is an interesting and conclusive proof that clay and stone were not the only writing materials used by the Assyrians.

The number of dated tablets is very small in comparison with those without dates, so that, for the most part, we can only arrive at an idea of the time when they were written by internal evidence, and that only approximately. There are some, however, which refer to historical events mentioned in the royal annals, the dates of these can therefore be determined accurately.

These tablets vary in length from one to about six inches, and in width from three-quarters to two inches and a half. Of the following inscriptions, the text of the first four is unpublished, that of V. is published in *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. IV., pl. 54, No. 1.

<sup>1</sup> The character used here is one that represents the Akkadian *alal*, rendered by the Assyrian *duppu-sadhru*, "written tablet," and *natsabu-sa-qani*, "shaft of a reed;" this last is shown to be the proper rendering by the phonetic complement.

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## I.

This inscription evidently refers to the preparations for one of those lion-hunts in which Assuru-bani-abla delighted so much, scenes from which occur so frequently upon the slabs which once adorned his palace. These mural carvings show us the lions and lionesses coming out of their cages, set at liberty only to afford amusement to the great king, who, in his chariot, draws the bow against them—a truly kingly sport!

To the King my Lord thy servant . . . 'iddina; may there be peace (to the) King my Lord; for ever (and) ever may NABU (and) MARDUK to the King my Lord be propitious.

Twenty-five lionesses which are caged, with three males, from Calah, from Nineveh, (and) from Dur-Sargina, have set out. I detected not a pregnant one. At sunrise they counted (them), of which they will tell the King my Lord.

## II.

Letter referring to the stealing of some gold belonging to the king.

To the King my Lord thy servant ARAD-NABI: may there be peace to the King my Lord; may, ASSUR, SAMAS, BEL, ZIR-PANITUV, NABU, TASMITU, ISTAR of Nineveh, (and) ISTAR of Arbela, these great divinities loving thy kingdom (for) a hundred years to the King my Lord give life; old age and offspring may they give in plenty to the King my Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Lacuna.

The gold about which, in the month Tasrit, the Astrologer,<sup>1</sup> the Palace Astronomer, and TUKLAT-IŠŠI-SUNU, transgressed: 3 talents of the best gold, 4 talents not the best, the hand of the Chief-of-the-defiled has placed in (his) house, he sealed up the gold (which was) for a statue of the King, and for a statue of the King's mother, (and) gave it not (up). May the King my Lord to the Astrologer (and) to the Palace Astronomer by a command fix (that) they may discover the gold. Up to the month Dhabūni<sup>2</sup> to the army let them give, let them make *payment*.

## III.

Inscription referring to the dedication of horses to the Temple of Bit-ili at Erech.

To the King of nations my Lord, thy servant NABU-IBASSI, may Erech and Bit-Anna<sup>3</sup> to the King of nations my Lord be propitious; a day of health the divinity of Bit-Erech<sup>4</sup> and NANA for the preservation of the life of the King my Lord are granting.

Sheep from Bit-ili and from the city Pekod in the city Tahua they eat; their two shepherds, the one from Bit-ili and the other from Pekod, (with) white horses, their [harness] and saddles of silver [inscribed] and copper ornamented, [also harness] and saddles inscribed [and ornamented for] young ones one has sent.

The King of Elam to ISTAR of Erech has dedicated horses, at the same time he has caused some to be given to the King my Lord. With [all] reverence, the sum<sup>5</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> Lit., "the man of omens."

<sup>2</sup> Dhabūni is another form of Dhabitu, "the month of benefits," Heb. יַבְיָתָה.

<sup>3</sup> It is common in these salutations to use, instead of the name of the deity, that of the city or temple over which the deity presided; thus Erech stands for Istar, Bit-Anna for the goddess Nana.

<sup>4</sup> Istar.

<sup>5</sup> That is, the full number of the horses.

Bit-ili<sup>1</sup> I gave not. At the same time the keepers of the horses he has dedicated to the King my Lord I send, and copper, ornamented and inscribed, in addition; when I had seen to the King my Lord I caused them to be brought.

May the King my Lord do according as he has laboured.

## IV.

The following exceedingly interesting inscription is a despatch from an Assyrian officer to the king, in which the writer, by repeating the king's message to him, expresses his gratitude for the favours he had received. It contains also the account of a revolt of the people of Carchemish, and other interesting matters.

To the King my Lord thy servant ISID-NABI, may there be peace to the King my Lord; may BEL, NABU, ISTAR of Nineveh (and) ISTAR of Bit-Kidimuri,<sup>2</sup> to the King my Lord for ever (and) ever be propitious; soundness of heart, soundness of flesh to the King my Lord may they give. Peace to the attendants of the King my Lord.

NADIN-SUM-ILI, son of ARAMIS-'SAR-ILANI, the Librarian, the will of the King in my presence made known thus to me: "The assembly of the enemy was abroad, so fifty soldiers from his band twelve horses with their hands took, they went by command of the Lords of Nineveh. The treasure also I have divided, the portion that (is) mine has been distributed (also). (To be) an attendant of the King thou, (even) thou, wast raised. I have made to go from me thus this (command)." (As for) the price, into the presence of the King my Lord I cause it to be brought.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The house of *the* divinity," Istar of Erech.

<sup>2</sup> Istar of Arbela, called in Assurbanipal's annals, "the divine queen of Kidmuri."

<sup>3</sup> From this it would appear the king required a gratuity for the honours which he bestowed.

Let the King my Lord ask him<sup>1</sup> concerning the destructions, (and) to the King my Lord may he reply: "(As for) the Viceroy<sup>2</sup> of the Carchemishians, his servants killed him, One among them he<sup>3</sup> has not left. We took the ordinances<sup>4</sup> of BELTIS, who (is) the Divine Lady of Kidimuri, (and) who the mothers whom she loves establishes. To the King my Lord he causes (them) to be brought."

May (a statue of) the Lady of Sipara by the King my Lord be carved.

We have passed on. Peace to the King my Lord. (In) the *city* of Assib the people one has numbered.

V.

News of a revolt in some part of Arabia, supposed to have happened late in the reign of Assuru-bani-abla.

To the King of nations my Lord thy servant NABU-SUM-ESIR. May NABU and MARUDUK healthy days, extended years, a sceptre of justice, a lasting throne, to the King of nations my Lord give.

Insomuch as the King my Lord the command fixed for me thus: "The news of the Arabians, all thou wilt hear, *stop* its course; from the Nabateans then thou wilt go forth." AIHAMARU, the son of AMMIHTAH, (of) the Masahians over to them then<sup>5</sup> came, the soldiers he killed and he devastated. One among them that they left to the midst of the city of the King descends; at the same time to the King my Lord I send him. May the King from his mouth hear.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the messenger who carried the despatch.

<sup>2</sup> The word in the original is *Damgarsū*, which, from the context, evidently means viceroy.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the sender of the despatch, Isid-Nabi, had avenged the death of the *Damgarsū* of the Carchemishians, by not leaving one of the servants, his murderers, alive.

<sup>4</sup> It was the custom of the Assyrians to set up in a conquered city "the ordinances of Assur," here, however, the ordinances which are set up are those of Istar of Arbela, mentioned under the name of Beltis.

<sup>5</sup> That is, after the command had been obeyed.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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