

THE DEFENCE OF A MAGISTRATE  
FALSELY ACCUSED.

(FROM A TABLET IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.)

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TRANSLATED BY THE LATE  
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THIS tablet, marked K 31, is preserved in the British Museum, and has been published in the *Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. IV., plate 53. It is very different both in style and subject from anything that has been hitherto translated. It is a letter to the King from a magistrate named Nebo-balatzu-ikbi protesting his entire innocence of the charges brought against him. He seems in great trouble, the letter passes from one subject to another almost without warning; the diction is rapid and passionate, and there can be no doubt, I think, that we have here

the original letter and not a copy made from it afterwards.

The chief charges against him appear to have been two. First, disloyalty to the King (perhaps treason) ; and secondly, complicity in the carrying off a young lady of noble birth ; which crime he utterly denies all knowledge of, and professes his readiness, if the King is not satisfied, to submit to any judicial investigation that the King may desire.

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## THE DEFENCE OF A MAGISTRATE.

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- 1 To the King my Lord  
 2 thy servant NEBO-BALATZU-IKBI (sends greeting).  
 3 May NEBO and MARDUK to the King my Lord be propitious !  
 4 and may the god . . . . who is the head of heaven and earth  
 5 prolong thy life ! Have I not once and twice  
 6 besought the King my Lord ? yet no one has sent to me  
 7 news from Babylonia.<sup>1</sup> Is the countenance of the King  
 turned away from me ?  
 8 and have I committed some crime against the King my Lord.  
 9 No ! I have not committed any crime against the King my Lord.  
 10 When trustworthy witnesses had assembled together,  
 11 and I had declared my fidelity to the King before a Public Notary,  
 12 a certain man, my accuser, entered the Palace  
 13 boldly ; a criminal charge against me he raised : fetters  
 14 on my hands he placed, and said :  
 15 In the presence of all these people who are here assembled,

<sup>1</sup> It is very uncertain whether Babylonia be intended here, but rather Akkad, a district of Babylonia of which the exact limits are not known. It was so called from its inhabitants, the Akkadi or "Highlanders."

- 16 as prisoner of my lord the King, I arrest you !<sup>1</sup> All that  
 day  
 17 I lay flat on my face upon my bed.  
 18 The soldiers who passed by my bed  
 19 out of ill-will no one gave me food for my mouth ;  
 20 hunger and emptiness fell upon me.  
 21 When evening came, I rose up, and I muffled my fetters,  
 22 and I passed by in front of the guard  
 23 whom the King my Lord had set in that place to guard it.  
 24 How I was liberated I will now tell the King.  
 25 Some soldiers, strangers to me, came in thither,  
 26 who broke off from me the King's fetters,  
 27 and with idle words against the King  
 28 spoke (the King will understand me)  
 29 For two days, for money, to sustain my life  
 30 they brought me of their food, for my portion, and for  
 my nourishment,  
 31 and they spoke words of disrespect  
 32 against the King my Lord, that are not decorous that the  
 King my Lord should know them ;  
 33 their full speech I conceal, for it were not meet for the  
 eyes of the King.  
 34 (SARLUDARU will tell me the will of the King).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is a very interesting account of the arrest of an accused, and of the subsequent severe treatment under confinement of which he complains. The irregular manner in which justice was administered in ancient times, as now, in the East, may be seen by comparing this account with that given by another tablet (a translation of which will be found in this volume, see "Assyrian Report Tablets," p. 76), in which three men, two of them holding posts which were considered to be of great importance, kept back four out of seven talents of the gold which was to have been used for the images of some former kings, and an image of the mother of the then reigning monarch. No punishment is mentioned, the writer only asking the king to command that the gold should be returned as pay to the army.

<sup>2</sup> That is, if the king wish to know what those words of disrespect were, would he communicate with me through Sarludaru.

35 Moreover, a certain villain of the land of Sumir,<sup>1</sup> who  
 never  
 36 broke my bread,<sup>2</sup> this man seduced the daughter of  
 BABILAI,<sup>3</sup>  
 37 who is the son of one of the Priests of the Sun.  
 38 To the King my Lord I wrote word of the crime, and,  
 one at a time,  
 39 the *Sukkal*<sup>4</sup> and the *Martinu*<sup>5</sup> took it by turns to  
 adjudicate,  
 40 for the King on purpose had mingled them so, to judge  
 my household :  
 41 they sent writings in multitudes, letter after letter.  
 42 When SARLUDARU to the office of High Treasurer  
 43 had been appointed, the *Martinu* demanded judgment,  
 44 and having thrown the men of my household into prison  
 45 he gave them to SARLUDARU. When he came  
 46 to judge, he said : Fear not, my man !  
 47 In vain thou fearest. And I till the time of the evening  
 meal  
 48 continued talking with him. Meanwhile, the girl  
 49 had been carried off ; but how she left the house  
 50 I saw not ; I heard not ; and I knew not who

<sup>1</sup> Rather, "Akkad." T.G.P.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, was my guest or friend.

<sup>3</sup> *Babilai*, "the Babylonian." Many names of this kind occur in the inscriptions, such as : *Assurai*, "the Assurite;" *Ninai*, "the Ninevite;" *Arba'ilai*, "he of Arbela;" *Khaltsuai*, "the inhabitant of the fortress." These names do not seem to have been used because the writers did not know the real names of the persons spoken of, as there is a number of them in a list of proper names printed in the second volume of the *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*. They seem to have been given by parents to their children from motives of civic pride, for we find such names as : *Mannu-ki-Arba'ili*, "What is like Arbela?" *Mannu-ki-Nina*, "What is like Nineveh?"

<sup>4</sup> Or, expert.

<sup>5</sup> Or, law-officer.

- 51 carried her off, not in the least ! for in the crowd of  
servants  
52 of the King my Lord, with whom she had been talking,  
she had remained behind.  
53 O MARDUK ! whoever has concealed her flight, I have as  
yet obtained no news of him,  
54 but, O Lord of Kings ! I will urge with haste the search  
for her present dwelling-place.  
55 The *Martinu*<sup>1</sup> has annulled the criminal accusation,  
56 but that the King (himself) should judge all my family  
57 from my heart I desire !

<sup>1</sup> Or law officer.



# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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