

ASSYRIAN

INCANTATIONS TO FIRE AND WATER.

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TRANSLATED BY  
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THE original text of these incantations is found in the *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. IV., pl. 14, and on tablet K 4902 of the British Museum collection. They are written in Accadian and Assyrian. M. Lenormant has divided the great magical work copied for King Assur-bani-pal into three classes: (1) that containing formulæ of conjuration against evil spirits; (2) that containing formulæ for curing divers maladies; (3) hymns to certain gods, as fire, water, etc. These incantations belong to the last of these divisions. Many such are to be found in the fourth volume of the *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, and many more are among the treasures of the British Museum collection. These bilingual inscriptions are the more valuable, since they enable us to compare one language with another.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While these pages were in the press I had ascertained that parts of these inscriptions have been translated by M. Lenormant, and the late Mr. Fox Talbot. My translations will appear in the shape of a paper with grammatical analysis, etc., in the *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, but on comparison many differences will be found. See *Records of the Past*, Vol. III., p. 137; and Lenormant, *La Magie*, p. 168.

Among the Chaldeans magic and sorcery attained to almost the rank of a science ; and one has only to see the number of magical texts and incantations that remain (in many cases only fragments), to understand to how great an extent this pseudo-science was practised. The primitive population of Accad was superstitious, and although these incantations were a part of a pure religion, at one time, they at last degenerated to mere magical formulæ. The formulæ are very numerous. A very fine fragment of a tablet is lithographed in *W. A. I.*, II., 17 and 18, containing incantations against demons which take possession of various parts of the earth, the members of man, various diseases, etc. ; and each incantation finishes with the mysterious invocation : " O Spirit of heaven remember, O Spirit of earth remember." To the Accadian mind there existed a world of evil spirits. They saw a "spirit" in every object or force of nature, and believed that their priests, or rather sorcerers, could work good or evil by the use of magical charms,<sup>1</sup> but gradually these numerous spirits were merged together among the 600 spirits of earth and 300 of heaven. The tablets containing incantations were classified in the libraries of Assur-bani-pal, and numbered thus : "Tablet No. 5 of Evil Spirits." (*W. A. I.*, IV., 2, col. 6, l. 35).

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Sayce, *Babylonian Literature* p. 42.

## INCANTATION TO WATER.

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- 1 AN incantation<sup>1</sup> to the waters pure . . . .<sup>2</sup>  
 2 The waters of the Euphrates which in the place . . . .<sup>3</sup>  
 3 The water which in the abyss firmly is established,  
 4 the noble mouth of HEA,<sup>3</sup> shines on them.  
 5 The sons of the abyss (there are) seven of them.<sup>4</sup>  
 6 Waters they are shining (clear), waters they are bright,  
 waters they are bright.  
 7 In the presence of your father HEA,  
 8 in the presence of your mother DAVCINA,<sup>5</sup>  
 9 may (it) shine, may (it) be brilliant, may (it) be bright.  
 10 Conclusion :<sup>6</sup> three times a prayer.

<sup>1</sup> This occurs in the Accadian only.

<sup>2</sup> Lacunæ.

<sup>3</sup> God of the earth's surface, brightness, etc, and chief protector of men. His son was called Marduk (the brilliancy of the sun), his daughter, Nina. The month of Iyyar (April) was dedicated to Hea. Marduk is called "the eldest son of the abyss." *W. A. I.*, IV., 3, l. 26.

<sup>4</sup> "There were seven inhabiting the earth." *W. A. I.*, IV., 15, 67.

"The seven of the abyss were wicked." *W. A. I.*, IV., 2, col. 5, l. 50; and

"They are seven; in the mountain of the setting sun were they born.

They are seven; in the mountains of the rising sun was their growth." *W. A. I.*, IV., 15, 22, 24

They are called:

"The seven gods of the vast heaven." *W. A. I.*, IV., 1, col. 3, l. 14.

"The seven gods of the vast earth." *W. A. I.*, IV., 1, col. 3, l. 16.

"The seven wicked gods." *W. A. I.*, IV., col. 3, 20.

"In the heaven (are they) seven." Line 26.

"In the earth (are they) seven."

<sup>5</sup> The wife of Hea.

<sup>6</sup> The original CACAMA is Accadian, and is explained in Assyrian by *amanu*, Heb. אָמָן. See *W. A. I.*, II., 62a.

FRESH PARAGRAPH.<sup>1</sup>

- 11 The god of the river (like a charioteer<sup>1</sup>) put him to flight.  
12 (This) enchantment before him, its onset like a demon  
13 all the world blackens ; like the zenith lofty  
14 the Sun-god in his going forth his darkness he removed,  
in the house of AI (he devours<sup>2</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> This occurs in the Accadian text only.

<sup>2</sup> This restoration is offered by Prof. Sayce.

## INCANTATION TO FIRE.

With the Accadians, as with later eastern nations, fire was very favourably regarded, and various noble epithets were given to it. It is called the "warrior," "hero," in *W. A. I.*, 17 obv., l. 4; and in *W. A. I.*, IV., 26, No. 4, l. 36, it is called, "the lofty fire," "the male warrior," "illuminator of darkness," and many others may be found. It is curious to note that the name of the solar hero in the great Babylonian epic means "mass of fire" (Gis-dhu-bar).<sup>1</sup> The name of the fifth month of the year, Ab (July), meant in Accadian the "month that makes fire."

- 1 INCANTATION to the desert places holy; may it go forth  
 2 (this) enchantment, O spirit of heaven mayest thou  
 remember, O spirit of earth mayest thou remember.<sup>2</sup>

## FRESH PARAGRAPH.

- 3 The Fire-god the Prince which in the lofty country,  
 4 the warrior, son of the abyss, which in the lofty country,  
 5 the god of fire, with thy holy fires,  
 6 in the house of darkness light thou art establishing.  
 7 All that is his also proclaimed; <sup>3</sup> his destiny thou art  
 establishing.  
 8 Of bronze and lead the mixer of them thou (art).  
 9 Of silver (and) gold the blesser of them thou (art).  
 10 Of the goddess NINCASI<sup>3</sup> her offspring thou (art).

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. Sayce, *Assyrian Lectures*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence is of frequent occurrence in these incantations.

<sup>3</sup> I follow exactly the idiom of the original.

<sup>4</sup> Accadian, meaning "the Lady of the horned face."

- 11 Of the wicked (man<sup>1</sup>) in the night changing his breast  
thou (art).<sup>2</sup>
- 12 Of the man the son of his god<sup>3</sup> his limbs mayest thou  
make brilliant.
- 13 Like the heaven may it shine.<sup>4</sup>
- 14 Like the earth may it be bright.
- 28 Like the interior of heaven may it shine.

<sup>1</sup> This occurs in the Accadian text only.

<sup>2</sup> See *W. A. I.*, IV., 21, 61.

<sup>3</sup> A good man.

<sup>4</sup> Heaven is called the seat of Anu (*W. A. I.*, IV., 5, col. 1, l. 50).



# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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