

## ASSYRIAN FRAGMENTS.

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TRANSLATED BY  
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THE poetical fragments which are here translated are of unusual interest because they afford authentic information upon different points relating to social life, morality, and eschatological belief of the Assyrio-Babylonians. The first fragment is a medical prescription for cutaneous eruptions. It proves that the Babylonians were in possession of a rational medicine, as well as a magical one, which had fallen into decline at the time of Herodotus, when patients were exposed in public places.

The second fragment, which is a description of a virtuous wife, reveals the manners of Babylonian society in a very advantageous point of view. We find again here the portrait of the virtuous woman of the Bible. It is quite different from the deep demoralization which prevailed at Babylon when Herodotus visited it. It appears that the forced prostitution of women, attested by the Greek writer

was due to the introduction of the Persian worship of Anaitis, under Artaxerxes.

The third fragment offers a new kind of poetry which has not been found at present, except among the Hebrews. It is an elegy on the destruction of the town of Erech, of which Istarit, Astarte, daughter of Annu and Anatu, was the patroness. The tone of the poem, as well as the details of expression, have such a Biblical stamp, that if Jerusalem was inserted instead of Erech, and Jehovah instead of Istarit, it might easily be taken for a psalm lamenting the destruction of the Holy City.

Lastly, the two last fragments belong to a cycle of poetry relative to beatification after death. They paint in brilliant colours the state of the just departed from earth to the realms of bliss. At the same time is learned that the Assyrians believed in the future judgment, and the final bliss of good men. These precious documents cut short the controversy about the belief of the immortality of the soul amongst the Semitic peoples, which has created so much controversy amongst certain theological schools of France and Germany. It is now certain the Semites have not only believed that the soul survived the body but that it received the reward of its work. This is extremely important in the point of view of the philosophy of religions.

BABYLONIAN MEDICAL RECEIPT.<sup>1</sup>

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- 1 FOR the eruptions and tumours which afflict the body :
  - 2 Fill a vase which has held drugs with water from an inexhaustible well ;
  - 3 put in it a shoot of . . . .<sup>2</sup> a . . . .<sup>2</sup> reed, some date-sugar, some wine, some bitter hydromel ;
  - 4 add to it some . . . .<sup>3</sup>
  - 5 saturate it with pure water (and)
  - 6 pour upon it the water of the (sick) man ;
  - 7 cut reeds in an elevated meadow ;
  - 8 beat some pure *date-sugar* with some pure honey ;
  - 9 add some sweet oil which comes from the mountain (and) mix them together ;
  - 10 rub (with this ointment) the body of the (sick) man seven times.

DESCRIPTION OF A VIRTUOUS WIFE.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 (*What is a virtuous woman?*)
  - 2 The woman who, being married, has *caressed* no man ;
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<sup>1</sup> *W. A. I.* IV., 26, No. 7. Translated for the first time. This is the only known specimen of an Assyrio-Babylonian prescription.

<sup>2</sup> Lacunæ.

<sup>3</sup> In the Assyrian *unki xarihu*, an unknown drug or material.

<sup>4</sup> Assyrian fragment (*W. A. I.* II., 35, No. 4.)]

- 3 who, in her husband's absence, does not paint herself ;  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 who, in her husband's absence, takes not off her clothes ;  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 whose veil no free-man, of pure race,<sup>1</sup> has raised ;  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 who has never moistened her teeth with an intoxicating  
 liquor.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 . . . . .<sup>2</sup>

### ELEGY UPON THE DESTRUCTION OF ERECH.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 How long, Lady,<sup>4</sup> (wilt thou remain impassible ?)  
 2 Desolation reigns in Erech, thy magnificent city.  
 3 Blood has flowed like water in *Ulbar*, the seat of thine  
 oracle.  
 4 Fire has made ravage in all thy countries, and has  
 scattered itself abroad like a shower.  
 5 Lady, I suffer immensely from the misfortune.  
 6 Break the powerful enemy like an isolated reed.  
 7 I take no more any resolution ; I feel no more myself.  
 8 I, thy servant, exalt thee.  
 9 Let thy resentment calm, let thine anger be appeased !

<sup>1</sup> Before slaves and men of mean rank women of the East are not obliged to veil the face.

<sup>2</sup> Lacuna.

<sup>3</sup> Assyrian fragment (*W. A. I. IV.*, 19, No. 3).

<sup>4</sup> The goddess *Istarit* or *Astarte* is the tutelar divinity of the city of Erech.

## HYMN UPON THE LOT OF THE JUST AFTER DEATH.<sup>1</sup>

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- 1 Wash thy hands, purify thy hands.
- 2 Let the gods, thine elders, wash their hands, purify their hands.
- 3 Eat sacred foods from sacred plates.
- 4 Drink sacred water from sacred vessels.
- 5 Prepare thyself for the judgment of the King of the son of his god.<sup>2</sup>

## BEATIFICATION OF THE JUST AFTER JUDGMENT.<sup>3</sup>

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1 . . . . .<sup>4</sup>

- 2 They have put there the sacred water.

<sup>1</sup> Assyrian fragment (*W. A. I. IV.*, 13, No. 2). This beautiful piece reveals for the first time the Assyrians' belief in a recompense after death. The just man, having died, departs for the divine regions, accompanied by the guardian deities, his elders. Arrived there, he takes an invigorating repast from sacred utensils, and refreshes himself with celestial water, to prepare himself, without weakness, for the judgment which awaits him, and which is to terminate in his perfect beatification.

<sup>2</sup> That is, "the just man."

<sup>3</sup> Assyrian fragment (*W. A. I. IV.*, 25, col. iv.). This fragment should, evidently, follow the preceding. The just man, having undergone the examination of the gods, and been found without reproach, becomes the cherished charge of Anat, who shelters him from every vexatious accident. Then the god Iau, the sage of the gods, transports him into a place of delight, where he is abundantly provided with the most delicious foods, as butter and honey. Established in this place which he is to quit no more without an express order from the gods, he drinks the vivifying water, that divine drink which gives him eternal life; and, plunged in a sweet repose which nothing troubles, he sings thanksgivings in honour of the gods, his benefactors.

<sup>4</sup> Lacuna.

- 3 The goddess ANAT, the great spouse of ANU,  
4 will cover thee with her sacred hands.  
5 The god IAU will transport thee into a place of delights.  
6 He will transport thee into a place of delights.  
7 He will place thee in the midst of honey and butter.  
8 He will pour into thy mouth reviving water ;  
9 thy mouth will be opened for thanksgivings.  
10 . . . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lacuna.



# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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