

RECORDS OF THE PAST

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BEING ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

OF THE

ANCIENT MONUMENTS OF EGYPT AND
WESTERN ASIA

NEW SERIES

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Multæ terricolis linguæ, coelestibus una

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PREFACE

IN presenting a new volume of the *Records of the Past* to the public, I feel it my duty to remind the reader of certain words which I wrote in the Preface to the first volume. I there said that "the writer who wishes to make use of a translation from an Egyptian or Assyrian text for historical or controversial purposes ought to know where it is certain, and where it is only possible, or at most probable." I therefore promised that "in the present series of volumes doubtful words and expressions should be followed by a note of interrogation, the preceding word being put into italics where necessary"; that is to say, that the reader should be forewarned whenever the translator was himself in doubt as to the correctness of his rendering.

So far as lies within the power of an editor, this promise has been fulfilled. But it must be remembered that in many cases a translator may consider that the version he proposes admits of no question, whereas another scholar may take a different view, and hold the version to be incorrect. Such cases occur even in translations from Latin and Greek

authors, still more so in the translation of the Old Testament. It is impossible for all men to think alike even in matters of philology. Gradually, no doubt, with the progress of knowledge, approach is made to unanimity of opinion; but after all it is only approach. It is only young scholars who think themselves qualified to set all the world right.

In the decipherment and translation of what may be termed the monumental languages of the past—Egyptian, Assyrian, Phœnician, and the like—much depends upon the nature of the text. Historical texts are fortunately the simplest, and are naturally the first to attract the notice of the decipherer. Consequently the historical texts of Egypt or of Assyria can now be read with almost as much ease and certainty as the historical books of the Hebrew Scriptures. The case is different when we come to deal with texts of a more complicated character, and when we recollect how uncertain is the translation of much of the language in the non-historical books of the Old Testament, we need not wonder that the Egyptian or Assyrian translator should intersperse his renderings of religious and mythological texts with notes and queries, or should improve upon them from time to time as his materials increase. In one respect, however, he possesses an advantage over the Old Testament student; he generally has to deal with texts which are fairly free from the corruptions of copyists. The Assyrian translator, moreover, has

at his disposal an enormous mass of literature, much exceeding that contained in the Old Testament, though it is true that but a comparatively small part of it has as yet been examined.

Like all other branches of inductive science, the science of decipherment is one of probabilities. Absolute certainty is unattainable, whether we are translating an inscription of Sennacherib or the book of Genesis. But for all practical purposes a high probability amounts to absolute certainty, and it is this high probability that the decipherment of the ancient monuments of Egypt and Assyria or Babylonia has now attained. Scholars may dispute about the exact meaning of certain words or phrases, as they do in the case of the Hebrew Bible, but it is seldom that anything of importance turns upon the dispute, at all events so far as regards the historical inscriptions. And in the present series of volumes due notice is given to the reader of the occurrence of such disputed words and phrases.

When once we have settled the philological signification of a historical text there begins the equally important work of critically examining it. We have first to ask whether it is contemporaneous with the event or events which it professes to record, and if not, whether its authorities or its interpretation of its authorities are trustworthy.

This is more especially the case as regards chronology—the skeleton and framework of history. I do not think, therefore, that it will be out of place

even in a preface, to examine some of the data we possess at present for determining the chronology of Babylonia and Assyria. Translations of the documents upon which it rests have been given in the two previous volumes of this series.

Nothing can be more satisfactory than the chronology of Assyria so far as it extends. The Assyrians were a people of business, and they carried their business habits into their mode of reckoning time. Each year was distinguished by the name of a particular officer, the *limmu* or "eponym," after whom it was called, and as the names of the eponyms were recorded on the accession of each to office and registers of them were kept, there was no difficulty in determining the exact year in which an event occurred or a new king ascended the throne.¹

In Babylonia, however, the custom of counting the years by eponyms does not seem to have existed, at all events in early times. From the era of Nabonassar (B.C. 747) downwards Babylonian chronology was fixed by means of astronomy; before that period it appears to have been determined by the reigns of the kings and the duration of dynasties. In legal documents of the time of Khammuragas (or Khammurabi) deeds are not even dated by the regnal years of the sovereign, but by such occurrences as a war, the construction of a canal, or the capture of a

¹ The etymology of the word *limmu* is doubtful. In the bilingual (Assyrian and Aramaic) tablets it is written לִּמְּ and לִּמְּ in the Aramaic text. In the Kappadokian cuneiform tablets the "limmu" is frequently named.

city. Under such circumstances it is plain that the historian who endeavoured to restore the early chronology of Babylonia had an extremely difficult task before him.

Our materials for reconstructing the chronology of Babylonia are given at the beginning of the present series of *Records of the Past*. I have already noted the suspicious character of the ciphers attached to the first dynasty of Babylon, in what may be termed the dynastic tablet, and the discrepancy in two of our documents between the length of reign assigned to the kings of the dynasties of the Sea and of Bit-Bazi. Other facts go to show that the tablet of dynasties was drawn up by a compiler who lived at a comparatively late date and extracted a system of chronology from older materials. Contemporaneous documents lately discovered at Niffer prove that the true name of Ebisum, who is made the eighth king of the first dynasty, was really Abesukh. A seal in the possession of Mr. R. P. Greg, belonged to a librarian who calls himself "the servant of the king Abé-sukh" or "Abi-esukh," and contract-tablets make it clear that the name is really compounded with the word *abi*, "father," and has nothing to do with *ebisum*, "an actor." It is questionable, moreover, whether Khammu-ragas or Khammu-rabi—the exact reading of the last syllable is still doubtful—was the son of Sin-muballidh, as is stated by the author of the Dynastic List. At all events the name he gives to his father in one of his inscriptions seems to have

been different,¹ and the compiler of the document which contains Assyrian translations of the names of early Babylonian kings evidently regarded him as of foreign origin. In this document, accordingly, he is classed, like Ammi-sadugga,² with Kur-galzu, Simmas-sipak, and other Kassite princes.

From a strictly philological point of view the classification is incorrect. The Kassite language was non-Semitic, whereas the names of Ammi-sadugga and Khammu-rabi are Semitic, though not Assyro-Babylonian. Along with those of Samsu-satana, and probably also Samsu-iluna and Abi-esukh, they belong to the Semitic dialects spoken by tribes of Arabian descent on the western and eastern frontiers of Babylonia. It is only geographically, therefore, and not philologically, that the names of Khammu-rabi and Ammi-sadugga can be grouped with those of the Kassite kings.

The Babylonians had some difficulty in pronouncing and writing the second element in the name of Ammi-sadugga, and in contemporaneous inscriptions it appears under various forms, the most correct of which is *zaduga*.³ It represents, in fact, the Hebrew *tsadoq*, and belongs to a root which is not found in Assyrian. We now have evidence, however, that it was known at an early date to the Minæan language, which extended from the southern

¹ Ummu-banit, though Hommel would read Sin-mubanit.

² My reading Ammi-didugga (*Records of the Past*, New Ser., i, p. 32) must be thus corrected, as well as the translation of the Assyrian interpretation in which *kittu* means "justice" and not "established."

³ In a contract-tablet from Niffer we even find Ammi-ziduga.

coast of Arabia to the borders of Palestine and Chaldæa. Among the inscriptions discovered by M. Halévy in the south of Arabia is one in which mention is made of 'Ammi-tsadiqa, who was appointed by the Minæan king, Abi-yada', governor of the fortress of Zar on the Egyptian frontier, as well as of the neighbouring district of Ashur (see Gen. xxv. 3). Prof. Hommel, to whom the discovery of these facts is due, points out that the inscription must belong to a very early epoch indeed, probably to that of the Hyksos in Egypt. However this may be, the name 'Ammi-tsadiqa is identical with that of the Babylonian king Ammi-zadugga.¹ The author of the explanatory list of Babylonian royal names renders both *ammi* and *khammu* by the Assyrian *kimtu*, "family." It is more probable that in both instances it is really the name of a god. Ben-Ammi was the "father of the children of Ammon," according to Gen. xix. 38, and the Old Testament presents us with names like Ammiel, Amminadab, Balaam, and Jeroboam, while Assur-bani-pal tells us of Ammu-ladin, king of the Kedarites. The more correct rendering of Numb. xxii. 5 would be "Pethor, which is by the river (Euphrates) of the land of the children of 'Ammo," and it is stated in a cuneiform text (*W. A. I.*, ii. 54. 65) that Emu—the exact equivalent of the Hebrew *'ammo*—was the name given to the god Nergal by the Shuhites on the western banks of

¹ In other Minæan inscriptions occur the names of 'Ammi-tsaduq and his son 'Ammi-karib, as well as of the king Waqah-il-tsaduq.

the Euphrates. The fact that in Khammu-rabi the initial *ayin* of *'ammo* is represented by *kh*, pointing to a pronunciation with *ghain*, is indicative of dialectal differences, and implies that the dialects to which the names of Khammu-rabi and Ammi-zadugga belonged were not the same.

We may conclude, therefore, that "the first dynasty of Babylon" had been formed out of the reigns of kings who did not belong to the same nationality, much less to the same family, and that consequently the relationship assumed by the compiler of the dynastic tablet to have existed between them was imaginary. The first four or five kings of the dynasty were probably local rulers of Babylon; Khammu-rabi, as we know, conquered the other states of Babylonia and made it a united kingdom, with Babylon as its centre; it is with him, therefore, that the first dynasty of Babylon ought properly to commence. The earlier kings of the dynasty owe their inclusion in it to local vanity. It is possible, however, that they claimed precedence over the other Semitic princes of Babylonia, since we know that the power of one of them, Zabû, extended as far as Sippara, and he may accordingly have claimed to have been the representative of the ancient Semitic empire of Sargon which had its seat in the close neighbourhood of Sippara.

The relation of the Babylonian dynasties given by the native compiler to those which have been excerpted by George the Synkellos from the Chal-

dean history of Berossos cannot be determined at present. It is difficult to find any agreement between them before the time of Nabonassar. On the other hand, the statements of Berossos have been verified by the monuments in several important particulars. His account of the deluge was taken from native documents, and his history and chronology of the period which begins with the era of Nabonassar show a close acquaintance with the actual facts. It is of course possible that the numbers, whether of reigns or of years, given by the Synkellos, are corrupt and erroneous. But even so, the scheme of dynasties proposed by Berossos does not agree with the scheme found on the cuneiform tablets. It is clear that more than one system of chronology and dynastic arrangement must have been current in Babylonia.

In one point, however, I think I can show that Berossos had good authority at his back. This is the statement that, almost at the beginning of assured Babylonian history, Babylon was captured by "Medes," who ruled the country for eight generations. Now the inscriptions of Nabonidos and Kyros have proved that the subjects of Istuvegu or Astyages, who were called "Medes" by the Greeks, were called "Manda" by the Babylonians. The Greeks in fact confounded the two words Madâ, "Medes," and Manda, led thereto by the fact that both Madâ and Manda alike came from the mountains on the north-east of Babylonia. Manda, however, was not a

proper name in the same sense as Madâ. It is usually preceded by *tsab*, "soldier," and though not Assyrian, I believe it to have had its origin among the Semitic tribes on the eastern side of Chaldæa, and to be related to the Hebrew *nâd*, "to wander." *Tsab manda* will therefore be the equivalent of the Biblical *erets nôd* or "nomad-land" (Gen. iv. 16). The title is applied by Esarhaddon to Teuspa the Kimmerian, the Gimirrâ or Kimmerians, the Gomer of the Old Testament, being further distinguished from the Madâ or "Medes."

The title, however, was much older than the age of Esarhaddon. It occurs several times in the astrological tablets. The most important example of its use is in *W. A. I.*, iii. 61. 21, 22, where we read: "The *tsab manda* comes and governs the land. The altars of the great gods are taken away. Bel goes to the land of Elam. It is prophesied that after thirty years the smitten shall be restored (and that) the great gods shall return with them." The same catastrophe is referred to in another passage of the great work on astrology (*W. A. I.*, iii. 64. 7, 8). "The *tsab manda* invades the land and rules over the country." The prophecy is interesting on account of its analogy to the prophecy of the restoration of the Jews after seventy years of exile (Jer. xxv. 11). But what is equally interesting is that while Bel, the national god of Babylon, flies for refuge to Elam, his country is handed over to the rule of the Manda and its altars

are broken down. I cannot but think that in these Manda we ought to see the "Medes" of Berossos who captured Babylon and founded there the first historical dynasty. They will represent Khammu-rabi, Ammi-sadugga, and the other kings whose names betray their origin among the nomad Semites on the frontiers of Chaldæa. Berossos was right rather than the compiler of the dynastic tablet in making Khammu-rabi the founder of the dynasty under which Babylon became for the first time the capital of a united Babylonia.

If the Synkellos can be trusted Berossos reckoned eight kings to his Median dynasty. The compiler gives Khammu-rabi only five successors. But it is questionable whether he has collected the names of all the kings who followed him. At all events I possess a contract-tablet from Niffer, which belongs to the age of Khammu-rabi and Ammi-sadugga, but is dated in the reign of a king whose name does not occur in the compiler's list. It reads Am(?)[?]-mu-'SI-DI-DU-an, perhaps Ammu-e'sir-yukan. It is possible, moreover, that classical mythology has preserved the name of another prince of the same period. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, iv. 212, mention is made of the Babylonian monarch Orchamus, of whom it is said that he was seventh in descent from Belus. Orchamus is not an Assyro-Babylonian name. It actually occurs, however, under the form of Yarkhamu on contract-tablets which are dated in the

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