

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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P R E F A C E

WITH the present volume the New Series of the *Records of the Past* comes to an end. The public seems to prefer books about the ancient inscriptions of the Oriental world rather than translations of the inscriptions themselves, and it would therefore be undesirable to continue to publish them. The curiosity excited by the first attempts at the decipherment of the Egyptian and Assyrian texts appears now to be satisfied, and even students of the Old Testament are contented to allow questions which bear directly on Biblical history and interpretation to be settled by the small but enthusiastic body of workers in the fields of Egyptian and Assyrian research.

And yet an interest in the old monuments of the civilised East is no longer confined to the nations of the west. Egyptians, as is fitting, have begun to examine for themselves the past records of their own country, and the last volume of the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* contains a learned and valuable article by a Japanese Assyriologist (Mr. Le Gac) on one of the oldest Sumerian texts which the soil of Babylonia has bequeathed to us.

But whether the public remains interested or indifferent the work of discovery goes on. It is upon the students of the cuneiform texts more especially that new facts are crowding year by year. In the present volume will be found translations of a new series of cuneiform documents which reveal the existence of an Assyrian dialect in the highlands of eastern Asia Minor in the age of the Hebrew exodus. It is only ten years ago that the sagacity of Mr. Pinches discovered that such documents existed at all, and it is only now that their decipherment has become possible.

In my Address to the Assyriological Section of the Oriental Congress of 1892 I drew attention to the light which Assyrian research is beginning to throw even upon later Greek history. Among the astronomical tablets of the Seleukid period which have been copied and published by Dr. Strassmaier is one which is dated in "the 37th year of Antiochus and Seleucus the kings," that is to say, in 275 B.C. In the previous year it is stated that the king collected his troops and marched to the country of 'Sapardu, the Sepharad of Obadiah 20, which a comparison of the account with what we learn from Greek writers would show to have corresponded with the Bithynia and Galatia of classical geography. It seems that Antiochus left a garrison there, in order to face the Egyptian army at the ford of the river Rûdu. The Egyptian army, however, crossed the stream. A few days later the *mumahir*, or "governor,"

of Babylonia forwarded silver, furniture, and girls from Babylonia and Seleukia, "the royal city," as well as "20 elephants which the governor of Baktria (*Bakhtar*) had sent to the king," to meet the king "at the ford of the river." The royal body-guard was left in Babylonia "from the beginning to the end of the month." During the same year taxes were raised in Babylon and the other cities of the kingdom for the payment of "the Greek loan,"¹ and there was much sickness in the country.

The first event which marked the beginning of the new year was the return of "the governor of Babylonia and the royal body-guard, which had gone to 'Sapardu to meet the king the previous year, to Seleukia, the royal city, which lies upon the Tigris." On the twelfth day of the month the inhabitants of Babylon were transported to the new city of Seleukia, and the people of Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha provided oxen, sheep, and other things, while a royal palace was built at Seleukia. Bricks were also made above and below Babylon in order to build a temple, apparently in the same city. The temple was called Ê-Saggil, like the ancient temple of Bel-Merodach at Babylon, which had been destroyed by the Persian kings. Mention is further made of "Lumusu the brother of King Seleucus."

All these facts are new, and are welcome additions to our knowledge of the history of Macedonian Syria. Even the date of the foundation of Seleukia

¹ *Ana pi zipi sa mat Yavannu.* *Zipi* is the Talmudic *zaph*.

has not hitherto been known with certainty, much less the fact that its population was brought from Babylon. It is clear that a determined effort was made by the new dynasty to destroy the memory of the ancient glory and supremacy of Babylon, and to replace it by a new capital.

Equally unknown were the details of the war which Antiochus carried on in Asia Minor. All we knew was that he was engaged in a struggle, first of all with Nikomédês of Bithynia and then with the Gauls in the early part of his reign (276, 275 B.C.). It was the defeat of the Gauls in Galatia in 275 B.C. which procured for the Syrian king the title of Sôtêr. Nor was the position of the Sepharad of Obadiah accurately determined. Certain reasons existed for placing it in the neighbourhood of the Black Sea, but it is only now that we know it must have corresponded to the Bithynia and Galatia of the Greeks. We need, therefore, no longer hesitate about identifying it with the Persian satrapy of Sparda mentioned in the Akhæmenian inscriptions. At Behistun the name of Sparda immediately precedes that of Yaunâ or Ionia, and it is described as situated "by the sea," while at Naksh-i-Rustem it is enumerated between Kappadokia and Ionia. It will thus have represented central Asia Minor, more especially the district on the western bank of the Halys.

It will be remembered that in the texts relating to the last days of the Assyrian empire, which I have described and partially translated in the preface to the

fourth volume of this Series, reference is made to the 'Sapardâ, or people of 'Sapardu. They seem to have united with the Medes, the Minni, and the Kimmerians in attacking the tottering power of Nineveh, which was accordingly assailed by a league of all the nations of the north. We are irresistibly reminded of the description given by Ezekiel (xxxviii., xxxix.) of the army of Gog, as well as of the northern confederacy which is called upon to punish Babylon in the fifty-first chapter of Jeremiah. Though the prophecies in question may belong to a later date than that of the fall of the Assyrian empire the political situation they presuppose is the same as that which witnessed the overthrow of Nineveh.

A discovery made this summer by Mr. Strong goes to show that the movement of the northern and eastern nations which brought about the destruction of the Assyrian power had begun while Assur-banipal was still on the throne. In an inscription which appears to belong to the latter part of his reign he alludes to the successes of his army against the Manda chieftain Tuktamme, whom he calls "the offspring of Tiamat." So strong an expression—of which the nearest English equivalent would be "a limb of Satan"—proves better than any description how formidable the predecessor of Istuvegu or Astyages must have been. It is possible that in Tuktamme we have the original of the Hellenised Teutamios, who, according to Ktêsias, sent Memnon from Susa to the help of Priam of Troy.

Greek history, however, has not been the only gainer by the Assyriological discoveries of the present year. A discovery has been made which rivals in interest any that have ever taken place at any time in the history of Oriental archæology. Guided by the Assyriologist the excavator has put his spade into the soil of Palestine and found the first-fruits of a Canaanitish library which existed before Moses was born.

The name of Kirjath-Sepher, or "Book-town," coupled with certain other considerations, long ago led me to believe that libraries of cuneiform tablets, similar to those of Assyria and Babylonia, were to be discovered in Palestine. The discovery of the tablets of Tel el-Amarna raised this belief almost to a certainty. Immediately after my first visit to southern Palestine in 1880 I urged the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund to excavate some of the *tels* which I had examined there, and which clearly contained the ruins of pre-Israelitish towns. But it was not until 1890 that the Fund was able to obtain the necessary firman, and to engage the services of Dr. Flinders Petrie in the work of exploration. Excavations were accordingly commenced at a *tel* or mound known as Tell el-Hesy, and during the short space of time Dr. Petrie was able to devote to the work results of wide-reaching importance were obtained. In the first place, he was able to show that Tell el-Hesy occupies the site of the Jewish fortress of Lachish, and in the second place, to found

what may be termed the science of Palestinian chronology. With the help of the dated pottery he had discovered in Egypt he succeeded in arranging the ancient pottery of Palestine in a chronological sequence, so that we can now tell at a glance whether it belongs to the period of the Judges or of the Kings, to the pre-Israelitish period or to the age after the Exile. Furnished with this clue, Dr. Petrie pointed out that the lowermost portion of Tell el-Hesy represents the ruins of a city which was destroyed by the invading Israelites.

Here then we had found the remains of the Amorite city of Lachish, and though these remains were covered to a great height with the *débris* of the subsequent cities which rose one above the other upon the site, all that was needed for their systematic excavation were an excavator and the necessary funds. Mr. Bliss offered to continue Dr. Petrie's work, and after two seasons of unremitting labour his efforts have been crowned with success.

Admitting, as I did, the truth of Dr. Petrie's conclusions, I felt convinced that sooner or later we should find a collection of clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform characters similar to those which have been found at Tel el-Amarna. Clay does not perish, except by the hand of man, and the Tel el-Amarna tablets had shown that an Egyptian governor resided in the Amorite city of Lachish who wrote, and therefore must have received, cuneiform despatches on clay. His name was Zimridi or Zimrida; and among

the Tel el-Amarna tablets now in Berlin¹ is a letter addressed by him to the Egyptian Pharaoh. The letters runs as follows :

“To the king my lord, my gods, my Sun-god, the Sun-god who is from heaven, thus (writes) Zimridi, the governor of the city of Lachish. Thy servant, the dust of thy feet, at the feet of the king my lord, the Sun-god from heaven, bows himself seven times seven. I have very diligently listened to the words of the messenger whom the king my lord has sent to me, and now I have despatched (a mission) according to his message.”

In one of the letters of Ebed-tob, King of Jerusalem, which I have translated in the last volume of the *Records of the Past* (p. 70, lines 43, 44), allusion is made to this Zimrida. It is there said that he had been murdered by the servants of the Egyptian king.

It was while Mr. Bliss was closing his work for the season, towards the beginning of last June, that his first discoveries were made in the Amorite stratum in the mound of Lachish. Egyptian beads and scarabs were brought to light which belonged to the age of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and on one of the beads is the name and title of Queen Teie, the wife of Amenôphis III. and the mother of Amenôphis IV., to whom the correspondence of Tel el-Amarna was addressed. At the same time there was also discovered a number of seal-cylinders, one of them

¹ *Mittheilungen aus dem orientalischen Sammlungen*, Pt. iii. No. 123.

of Egyptian porcelain and manufacture, others importations from Babylonia, where they would have been made between 2000 and 1500 B.C., while others again are rude imitations of Babylonian models which resemble similar rude imitations found in the prehistoric tombs of Cyprus as well as in Syria. The date of the latter has now been fixed by Mr. Bliss's discovery.

The interest, however, attaching to the beads and cylinders is far exceeded by the last discovery of the season. A clay tablet was disinterred, similar in form and size to those found at Tel el-Amarna which had been sent to Egypt from southern Palestine. As the tablet itself was claimed by the Turkish commissioner, impressions and squeezes of it only were sent to me. These, however, have enabled me to make a fairly complete copy of the text. It turns out to be one of the letters which were received at Lachish and stored up in the archive-chamber of the city about the very time that Zimrida's letter to the Pharaoh was being written. The cuneiform characters used in it have the peculiar forms to which the tablets from southern Palestine discovered at Tel el-Amarna have now accustomed us; the formulæ and curious grammatical forms which it employs are the same as those of the letters from the south of Canaan, and above all, the name of the Egyptian governor of Lachish, Zimrida, is twice mentioned in it.

Nothing more extraordinary has ever happened in the annals of archaeology. The discovery had

hardly been made that a governor of Lachish named Zimrida wrote letters in the Babylonian language and syllabary to his suzerain the Pharaoh of Egypt when the site of Lachish was identified by Dr. Petrie, and a letter similar to those of Zimrida was found by Mr. Bliss in which the name of Zimrida twice occurs. For more than 4000 years the broken halves of a correspondence that was carried on before the days of the Exodus had thus been lying under the soil, the one half on the banks of the Nile, the other half in Canaan ; and the recovery of the one from its long-continued oblivion was followed almost immediately by the recovery of the other.

Until the original text of the Lachish tablet can be examined it will be impossible to determine with certainty some of the characters on it that are either partly obliterated or else written on the edges of the tablet. Moreover, there are certain words in the text which appear for the first time, and of which, therefore, the interpretation is at present doubtful. In the following translation, therefore, which I offer of the inscription there are necessarily several lacunæ and notes of interrogation :—¹

¹ The following is a transliteration of the text so far as I can make it out :—

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. [a-na ami]]la raba ki-be-ma | 8. ik-ta-bi-mi |
| Ba-al (?) | 9. D.P. DI-TAR-AN-IM a-na |
| 2. a-bi | D.P. Zi-im-ri-da |
| 3. a-na sepâ-ka am-ku-ut | 10. [a-]bi alu Ya-ra-mi |
| 4. lu-u ti-i-di i-nu-ma | 11. [is-]ta-par-mi a-na ya-a-si |
| 5. tu-sa-tu-na D.P. Ba-du (?) | 12. [û id-]na-ni-mi |
| 6. û D.P. Zi-im-ri-da | 13. III (?) GIS KHIR û III se-du |
| 7. bu-wa-ri ali û | 14. û III nam-za-ru-ta |

“To the officer say: I, Bal (?) . . . , [the son of Zimrida?] my father, prostrate myself at thy feet. Verily thou knowest that Badu (?) and Zimrida the chiefs (?) of the city have gone forth (?), and Dan-Hadad says to Zimrida my father: The city of Yarami has sent to me [and] has given me 3 (?) pieces of wood and 3 slings and 3 falchions. If I remain over the country of the king and it acts against me and there is slaughter so that I die (*literally* until my death), in regard to thy . . . which I have . . . from the enemy . . . , and I have despatched Bel(?)—banila, and . . . rabi-ilu-yuma[khir] has sent his brother to this country to [strengthen it?].”

The importance of this text lies rather in what it implies than in the statements it actually contains. It is clear that Mr. Bliss is at the entrance of the archive-chamber of the Amorite city of Lachish, and in a few months hence we may expect to have in our hands a Canaanitish library which existed before the Promised Land had been invaded by the tribes of Israel. Doubtless the contents of the library will consist mainly of letters and despatches, but the tablets found at Tel el-Amarna have taught us that they will also probably include mythological and

15. sum-ma mi a-na-ku
 16. uts-ba-te-na eli mati
 17. sa sarri û a-na ya-a-si
 18. en-ni-ip-sa-at
 19. û a-di mi-u-ti RU-mi
 20. su-ut mu-ul(?)—ka
 21. sa u-sa-at is-tu KUR

22. . . a bu (?) û us-si-ir
 23. Bilu(?)—bani-la û
 24. . . ra-bi-ilu-u-ma-[khir]
 25. [is-ta-] par akha-su
Edge: 1. a-na mata an-ni-tam
 2. a-na [da-na-ni-sa?]

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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