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ARTICLE IX.

SEMITIC LITERARY NOTES.

NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ORIENTALISTS.

THE transactions of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists have just come to hand, in two huge, bulky volumes, literally packed with information from all departments of Oriental study and research. The Semitic section devoted to Assyriology is particularly interesting and valuable, as may be seen from the list of papers presented.

Among these was a "New Version of the Creation Story," by Theo. G. Pinches; one on "Die Indentität der Ältesten Babylonischen und Ægyptischen Göttergenealogie und der Babylonische Ursprung der Ægyptischen Kultur," from the pen of Dr. Fritz Hommel; and one of especial interest on "The Origin of Primary Civilizations," by Mr. J. S. Stuart-Glennie. Professor Sayce was the presiding officer, and his inaugural address was an exhaustive review of the rise and development of Assyriological science, together with suggestions as to the weaknesses of the present methods, and some important modifications needed in the current methods of study for the largest and most successful prosecution of Assyriological research. It was an address of great interest and was characteristic of its author.

Dr. Sayce points out what is a very important fact, that the primary work of the Assyriologist is still that of the decipherer. He deprecates discussions about Assyrian sounds while there are so many texts undeciphered, and so much room for inquiry and scientific conjecture as to the more fundamental questions of text. Pure questions of phonology and philology, he suggests, may well be laid aside while there is so much and so manifest ignorance about the Assyrian syntax and idiom. ' In sustaining this position, Professor Sayce makes the assertion, and one which we think more or less borne out by the facts, that the Assyrian translations of twenty years ago are not very far behind those of to-day, and that the textual work of the newer scholars, who have come into the study with so many advantages which did not lie at hand for the earlier generation of scholars, does not show the advance and superiority which, from the great increase of interest and material, we should be warranted in expecting. George Smith's renderings of the Creation and Deluge texts, for example, present no more or greater difficulties than those of the latest translators.

All this is the result, so the president of the conference goes on to say, of the "attempt to create a philology of Assyrian before the work of decipherment is concluded." We cannot but think that this complaint is a just one,

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though why there should not be efforts in the direction of an Assyrian philology even now is not clear. There is already a literature of Assyrian which is sufficiently voluminous to warrant at least some induction as to a philology, even if the results are, as they must of necessity be, somewhat tentative. What Dr. Sayce himself is so persistently doing in the matter of historical conjecture, and in the matter of adaptation and collaboration of Assyrian with biblical ideas, is only what the Germans are doing in the matter of phonology and philology. It seems to be a matter of taste as to which line the conjecturing shall take. But this aside, the suggestion is a good one that less time and strength be wasted on minor questions, and that all hands set about translating, until we have so large a body of textual examples and illustrations, that a more reasonable opportunity shall be given for testing some of the theories regarding the language which we must now simply accept or reject on *a priori* grounds.

The account which Dr. Sayce gives of the excavations of Dr. Flinders Petrie at Tell-el-Hesy is of most absorbing interest. The finding of a text and handwriting contemporary with that of the Tell-el-Amarna tablets, together with the very name of Zimrida, who is mentioned in the latter, is an event of first interest. The Egyptian scarabs and the bead with the name of the mother of Amenophis IV. (to whom the Tell-el-Amarna correspondence was addressed) may really, as he says, lay the foundation of Palestinian archæology. "And so we have the first written record of pre-Israelitish times ever found in the soil of Palestine." It is impossible, in the light of this important discovery, not to hope, and confidently believe, that there is a vast light still waiting to break upon biblical study and philology from these sources, and it again reveals how needful it is to be careful about alleging in too positive terms any given theory respecting the early civilization and institutions of the Israelites and their predecessors in the land of Canaan. The closing words of the inaugural address are worthy of the theme and the occasion: "But the subject-matter of Assyrian research is so vast, and the new points of view which it opens up are so many, and the fresh facts which it is accumulating are so numerous and startling, that it is difficult to compress into a small space even an outline of the work done during the past few months. Indeed it is not always easy to overtake the latest discovery or to rearrange our previous knowledge in accordance with the fresh facts that are brought to light. Assyriology is a progressive study in the fullest and truest sense of the word. Much has been accomplished, but much more remains still to be done. The successes of the past are but an encouragement and an earnest of the successes which yet lie before us. If there is any branch of knowledge whose students are called upon to press onwards regardless of old prejudices and prepossessions and desirous only to discover the truth, it is the science of Assyriology. Our motto is, and must be, 'Forward.'"

Mr. Rassam wrote a very impressive letter concerning the necessity of invoking the aid of the respective governments of the interested scholars toward the preservation of Eastern monuments and other valuable material for Orien-

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tal research. Indeed, it is only by the intelligent aid and co-operation of government officials who have appreciated the value of such work in the past, that many of the best results now in our possession have been secured. The American government might very easily give great assistance to the cause, if some special instructions on the point were given to our consuls and other representatives in the East. Such assistance it ought not to be difficult to secure.

The paper presented by Dr. Fritz Hommel was one of the most important apparently of all that were offered. A *resumé* cannot be given here until after further investigation of the numerous points which the paper suggests; but it can be seen at once, that, if the argument is sound that the oldest genealogies of the Egyptian deities are identical with those of the Assyrian pantheon, and that the Egyptian civilization really had its birth in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, there will have to be a tremendous revolution in our historical ideas In fact, the full significance of such a conception followed out to its logical end cannot in a moment be comprehended. There are and have been many indications, of the secondary order, that this was the case. Dr. Hommel presents others from the philological point of view. This gives an added force to Dr. Sayce's request for more and better translations. Semitic culture and Semitic civilization take on an importance in the world-life that they never have before, great as has been their importance even with our past conceptions.

Just what the effect of such a thesis, if established, would have on our biblical ideas cannot be at once explained. Egypt has always been more or less of a mystery in the matter of the Israelitish cultural development. It has furnished more difficulties, and has required more scholarly ingenuity, than almost any problem, except perhaps the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. But the latter becomes simplicity itself when we try to understand how the evidences of the Egyptian sojourn and the later history of Israel are to be harmonized as we find them in our present records. We shall doubtless have light from this direction sometime. The discoveries at Tell-el-Amarna and Tell-el-Hesy would seem to preclude many of the accepted ideas about the Egyptian sojourn, especially if Egyptian ideas were so widely current in Palestine as now seems probable.

Just how true all we have been saying is, may be in some measure understood when we come to Mr. Stuart-Glennie's paper on the "Origin of Primary Civilizations." The author, after various distinctions, says, that practically the only primary civilizations now known are the Egyptian and the Chaldean; the Semitic being derived from the Chaldean, and, according to Professor Lacouperie, also the Chinese. Now if Dr. Hommel's arguments be properly sustained, it may possibly develop that the only primary civilization is the Chaldean, it only remaining to be shown that the Aryan represented by Persia and India in the East, and Greece and Italy in the West, are similarly derived from Chaldea. This would leave only the Peruvian and Mexican, and our author points out that even here it is not unlikely that traditions of Egypt and Chaldea are found.

Nothing is more striking in this connection than the persistency with which

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the most thoroughly developed sciences of philology and cultural origins have pointed to the East, and especially to the civilization which flourished in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, long before the dawn of known history. When to the origin of mythology and folk tales we have some more data on the origin of the arts, and to this add further material upon the prehistoric race struggles, it is possible that the unity of the race will be demonstrated in a way which will astound by the varied, as it will convince by the indubitable, character of the evidences offered. And it would not be in the least surprising if the cap-sheaf of this research should be one of the best fruits of Assyriological study.

THE ACCADIAN AFFINITIES OF CHINESE.

As early as 1871, Dr. Edkins, writing on "China's Place in Philology," suggested a possible connection of the Chinese and the ancient Babylonians, and that a back door to the understanding of the latter's civilization might be opened, so to speak, if it were approached from the eastern side. That conjecture, sustained even then by not a few facts, has since been developed until now the connection may be said to be a demonstrated fact. At the Congress already referred to, a singularly interesting paper with the above title was presented by Mr. C. J. Ball, with whom readers of the Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology are already acquainted.

Accadian is the oldest of known languages. And although the oldest Assyrian inscription, that of Sargon I. (3800 B. C.), is very much older than the oldest Accadian, that is Semitic and not properly Accadian. The probable date of the latter, which are those of Gudea discovered at Tell-Loh by de Sarzec, is about 2800 B. C. Mr. Ball points out the curiously coincident fact that this is also about the date of *Fuh-hi*, one of the traditional founders of Chinese civilization, and the reputed inventor of the arts of writing numbers and divination. Now Mr. Ball undertakes to show, and apparently succeeds, that the cuneiform characters of Assyria and Babylonia were originally disposed in vertical columns exactly like those of the Chinese; and that if the symbols that have been laid down on their sides in the derived script are raised again to their former position, their original form and significance will best be seen, and the resemblance referred to will be established beyond doubt.

Mr. Ball has shown, in other recent papers, that the vocabularies of Chinese and Accadian are in many respects identical, and that the main features of Chinese grammar are the same as those of the oldest Accadian; and, besides this, he has otherwise established a strong case. The paper is a very full exposition of these main propositions and is abundantly illustrated throughout.

This is a matter of most stirring interest, not only in the possibility held out that we shall perhaps find ourselves sometime in possession of a transition language between the Assyrian and the Chinese, but, what is more important, that we are to find a new field to be worked in the tracing out and development of biblical ideas under the forms of Chinese civilization. In fact, it is another of the literally bewildering sources of information which require only

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the needful industry and patience, to bring to light a multitude of facts which may as completely revolutionize our ideas in certain other directions, as they have already been revolutionized by the discoveries at Tell-el-Amarna, or by the finding of the new Gospel of Peter, which rendered at least a half-century of biblical study useless.

Taken in connection with what we have already said with reference to the ultimate origin of all civilizations from the Chaldean source, it tends to give us a new method of induction for the science of comparative religion, by placing us upon a firmer foundation than we could otherwise occupy. How ridiculous Professor Robertson Smith's starting-point, with his modern Arabian nomads, seems, in the light of these investigations, does not yet fully appear; but every fresh step toward the East brings it more clearly into relief.

The Accadian connection with the Assyrian is well established. It has been held, and is still maintained, that the Accadian is not a pure Semitic language, and this is probably true. But to connect the Chinese and the Assyrian will bring into being reasons for historical conjecture that cannot help changing all our conceptions as to the origin of a multitude of ideas, and these same ideas, taking on the clothing and affecting the direction of Chinese thought, will give an abundant collection of material for a myriad of fresh comparisons. What this will bring forth with reference to the biblical records cannot even be conjectured, unless it tends to bring the Pentateuch even farther away than it now is from many of the events it records, and creates another wide gulf, which must in all probability be filled with Chinese sources.

Incidentally it has often been noted how nearly the style and tone of the ethical teaching of the Chinese approximates to that of the Hebrews in some stages of the latter's development. Much of the didactic writing of the Chinese sages has a flavor which, if it does not remind of the Wisdom literature, at least makes us feel that there is an affinity of thought between the two which is very suggestive. A critical comparison of ideas and their sources might reveal some strange things. This is equally true when we examine some of the main features of the Chinese institutional life. There is here too a field of exploration which would well repay careful investigation. That the earliest ideas of life and religion from the Chaldean territory should move exclusively westward has long seemed to us curious enough. That they did not is now finally settled.

SOCIOLOGY OF THE HEBREWS.

The wide-spread and still increasing interest in questions of sociology has an important field for their comparative development in the study of the sociology of the Hebrews, as indeed of all the Semitic peoples. The work of McLennen, Spencer, Lubbock, and others in this direction is already well known. It is of highest importance that the results of this study be gathered, and brought to the attention of all who desire to be kept in touch with the newest effects upon comparative biblical study in the same directions.

The Assyrian records are particularly instructive in many points respecting, for example, the laws of trade, the ethics of legal procedure, the structure

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of the social fabric, and especially the determination of the status of woman. There is distinct proof that woman in Assyria occupied a high place. She is a land owner, is mistress of the household, is condemned to pay fines imposed upon a son, is empowered to purchase slaves for her son, and otherwise to exercise a high function in the social life. Her place in the family is also well illustrated by the tracing of the descent in the maternal line, rather than the paternal, among the Hebrews and also Assyrians at one stage of their development.

But not only in the social relations as illustrated by the family, but in the more purely communal duties, the social life of the Hebrews is very instructive. Such matters as the care of cattle strayed from its owner, fruit-trees, the preservation of birds, the refreshment of travellers, are all matters that touch by analogy many of our current and pressing social questions. So the early provision for the restoration of lands, the limitation of service, arrangements for the liquidation of debts, and the laws governing the community, and the redistribution and the definition of the rights as also the limitations of the manorial lords, are among the numberless examples of custom and practice as to social order and the structure of the social body.

The Village Community as shown by Ezekiel forms one of the choicest bits of sociological study imaginable. Of course we are always more or less in doubt about many of the facts which are only partially revealed, but here there is a great mine of information and suggestion for students of social questions. The solutions at which the Hebrews arrived in their attempts at erecting a durable social fabric are particularly interesting because there is so much of the moral and religious element mixed up in them. Social questions and religious questions were largely the same thing, just as the government of the state and the religious ritual were supposed to emanate from the same authority. Again, the development from the House Community to the Village Community, with the clearing definition of the reciprocal rights of the villagers and their reciprocal duties as well, forms an interesting chapter in social study.

The tribal life of the Hebrews, and the germs of the growing need for strong and central government, is a similarly interesting theme. How the Shofetim became a sort of feudal lords, and how their power affected the Hebrews, not only socially, but likewise religiously, is a question of considerable importance. When we see that even the strong military prowess of David, with the strong standing army which he constantly maintained, and added to this the splendor of Solomon's extravagance and his brilliant foreign policy, were not able to crush the independent spirit of the northern tribes, and culminated in the revolt and destruction of the empire, we have an exhibition of the tenacity of primitive social ideas which is no less astounding historically, than it was powerful practically. But the growth of these ideas, not yet made into law, and not as yet crystallized into statutes and ordinances, is a social question, and is doubtless related to the other forces which make the social body what it is, beside the moral-spiritual influence, which was always strong in all the Hebrew life.

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All this, and a great deal more, is suggested and sketched in a little book by John Fenton entitled "Early Hebrew Life," though the standpoint of the author is not always consistent or scientific. It is, however, a healthful attempt in a direction which cannot but be fruitful, and which if pursued will yield some important results. The modern science of sociology, if so intangible a study can be as yet called a science, seems to be merely an attempt to study political economy with reference to the ethical implications of the governing laws. How far the mere natural laws governing the social relations of men can be made subject to ethical laws, or brought within the sphere of ethics at all, is an open question. But if moral and social economy can be connected and made to move in parallel lines, the experiments of the Hebrews are of great interest.

THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS.

"The Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religion of the Hebrews" is the title of the volume of Hibbert Lectures (the thirteenth) by C. G. Montefiore. Mr. Montefiore presents the somewhat unusual spectacle of an educated Israelite who has discarded almost every traditional Israelitish opinion, and gives an exposition of the Hebrew religion from the most modern critical standpoint, only with such of Israelitish feeling and national interest as remains in himself. The view, in general, assigns the Law to a late period, and gives to the Babylonian Exile the honor of being the great restorative and spiritual awaking of the Hebrew people.

A very important point in Mr. Montefiore's treatment of the subject is that he shows a decided leaning toward the belief that Hebrew monotheism dates from the time of Moses, and seems to insist that, though the conception of the deity at that period is not as high or as strong as it was during the prophetic period, it is none the less a monotheistic conception, with the idea of justice as the basis. His argument that the ethical character of the deity is usually the highest conception prevalent in the community is the usual one, and presents no new features.

This is very interesting, coming from the source that it does. The bringing of the introduction of Hebrew monotheism down to a comparatively late period has always, so it has seemed to many, rested upon some fundamental misconceptions as to the nature of religion. Doubtless the Hebrews were acquainted and did ascribe some sort of supernatural power to the gods of their neighbors, but there is not any sound reason for supposing that they ascribed to them the same power, or held them in the same category, with the God of the Hebrews. Indeed, if there is one thing that the national consciousness exhibits more than any other thing, it is just this, that there existed an impassable gulf between the Hebrew conception of God and that which was commonly held around them. All the apparent variations from this consciousness can be readily explained. The late date of many of the writings, the Law especially, does not in the least affect the argument. In fact, all that we have that carries us back into the religious consciousness of the ancient Hebrews has for its necessary background the monotheistic idea.

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Natural development applied to the Hebrew people does not present so smooth a road, and so intelligible a succession of ideas and institutions, as we are often assured. And it is by no means a settled question yet, whether monotheism preceded or succeeded polytheism. Sure and by no means unscientific standing-ground can be found for the theory of primitive monotheism and the subsequent origin of polytheistic practices. But, be that as it may, the story of Israel's development seems to require for its rationale, at least so far as we know the race historically, a strong and well-developed monotheistic conception throughout. Mr. Montefiore's concession of monotheism, or something resembling it, at the time of Moses is halting enough. But the case will be stronger when the present mania for late dates and Maccabean literary splendor has passed away. One is almost tempted to think that every individual Maccabee sat, from early morn to dewy eve, pen in hand, scribbling books for the canon. Such literary activity as is ascribed to this period would be, if true, one of the most astounding literary facts in history. Nothing but the blindest determination to bring everything down to a late date can so manifestly outrage the simplest precepts of critical historical judgment. The apparently wilful ignoring of the influence of the ancient records of Assyria, is even more surprising now, than it was a few years ago. It might then have been fairly alleged that the evidence for ancient authorship was at least doubtful, and that the production of manuscripts was a matter of comparatively rare occurrence. Every step, however, in Oriental study has tended to show, not only that the art of writing was far more ancient than we have long supposed, but that composition and editorship after a fashion were very old also. There will come the time, and we think it is not far distant either, when the absurd process of lowering dates will be modified by more rational judgment, and then we shall arrive more nearly at the truth.

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