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ARTICLE II.

ESSAYS IN PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM.

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V.

THE NUMBERS OF THE ISRAELITES.

WE now have to consider matters which have caused grave embarrassment to successive generations of interpreters. Dr. Gray's statement is as follows:—

"It will be convenient to gather together here and to consider once for all the numbers yielded by the two censuses recorded in Numbers (chaps. i–iv, xxvi). The details given are the numbers (1) of male Israelites over twenty years belonging to each of the twelve secular tribes: (*a*) in the second year of the Exodus, chap. i f.; (*b*) in the fortieth year, chap. xxvi; (2) of firstborn male Israelites above a month old, iii 43; (3) of males above a month old belonging to the three Levitical families; (*a*) in the second year, chap. iii; (*b*) in the fortieth, chap. xxvi; (4) of male Levites between thirty and fifty years of age, chap. iv.

"1. The tribes in the table below are arranged according to their size at the first census; the order in the text of chap. i (in chap. xxvi it is the same, except that Manasseh precedes Ephraim) is indicated by the bracketed number to the left; the sign + or — to the right indicates that the tribe is represented as having increased or diminished in the interval between the two censuses, and the bracketed figure to the right indicates the order of size in chap. xxvi.

	Chap. i, year 2.		Chap. xxvi, year 40.	
(4)	Judah	74,600	76,500 +	(1)
(10)	Dan	62,700	64,400 +	(2)
(2)	Simeon	59,300	22,200 −	(12)
(6)	Zebulun	57,400	60,500 +	(4)
(5)	Issachar	54,400	64,300 +	(3)
(12)	Naphtali	53,400	45,400 −	(8)
(1)	Reuben	46,500	43,730 −	(9)

	Chap. i, year 2.	Chap. xxvi, year 40.	
(3) Gad	45,650	40,500 −	(10)
(11) Asher	41,500	53,400 +	(5)
(7) Ephraim	40,500	32,500 −	(11)
(9) Benjamin	35,400	45,600 +	(7)
(8) Manasseh	32,200	52,700 +	(6)
Totals	603,550	601,730	

"2. The firstborn male Israelites above a month old number 22,273.

"3. The numbers of male Levites are:—

	Above 1 month old.	Between 30 and 50 years.
Kohath	8600	2750
Gershom	7500	2630
Merari	6200	3200
Total	22,000 (in text) 22,300 (actual)	8580

"At the second census (xxvi 62) 23,000.

"These numbers must on every ground be regarded as entirely unhistorical and unreal; for (1) they are impossible; (2) treated as real, and compared with one another, they yield absurd results; and (3) they are inconsistent with numbers given in earlier Hebrew literature.

"1. The total represented is impossible. Males over twenty form but very little more than a quarter of a whole population, thus (neglecting the 51,000 odd Levites) the total in chap. i f. (603,550) represents a total of men, women, and children well exceeding 2,000,000. And yet this multitude is represented as spending forty years in the wilderness! The impossibility cannot be avoided by the assumption that the two millions wandered far and wide; for (1) this is not the representation of the text, according to which, for example, they camped in a fixed order (chap. ii), and marched together at a signal given by two trumpets (chap. x); and (2) the numbers are impossible even if we think of them as dispersed over the whole peninsula of Sinai, the present population of which is estimated at from 4000 to 6000.

"'As we saw the peninsula,' writes Robinson (*Bibl. Researches*, i. 106), 'a body of two millions of men could not subsist there a week without drawing their supplies of water, as well as of provisions, from a great distance.' By a miracle, no doubt, this multitude might have been sustained; but it ought to be observed that the miracles actually *recorded* are not on an adequate scale; for let any one read the story in xx 1–13, and ask himself whether this suggests a water supply sufficient for a multitude equal to the combined populations of Glasgow, Liverpool, and Birmingham. It must suffice to

bring this number once more to the touchstone of reality. The number at the end of the wilderness period is virtually the same as at the beginning, *i.e.* we are to think of two million people ready to fall on and settle in Canaan, already long inhabited. Now, what data exist point to about one million as the outside population of Israel and Judah when settled in the country; even this population representing a density of about 150 to the square mile, *i.e.* a density nearly twice that of Spain, and about the same as that of Denmark or Scotland.

"The numbers of the several tribes must stand or fall with the total.

"It is the great merit of Colenso to have demonstrated the absolute impossibility of the numbers; and to his discussion (*Pentateuch*, pt. i. chap. iv.–xiii.) reference must be made for further detail. Colenso, being concerned with the credibility of the Pentateuch as a whole, very properly tests the compatibility of the numbers with statements in any part of the whole. In what is here said they are compared only with the statements in P.

"2. The unreality of the numbers is independently proved by comparing them one with another. Thus: the number of male firstborn is 22,273; allowing the number of female firstborn to be equal, the total number of firstborn is 44,546, and, therefore, the total number of Israelites being between 2,000,000 and 2,500,000, the average number of children to a family is about 50! Again, if, as is probable, the firstborn of the *mother* is intended (cp. iii 12), then, since the number of firstborn and of mothers must have been identical, there were 44,546 mothers: but the number of women being approximately the same as of men, the women over twenty numbered something over 600,000, and therefore only about 1 in 14 or 15 women over twenty were mothers! The comparison of the two sets of Levitical figures bring less absurd, but still unreal, results to light. The average European percentage of persons (male and females) between thirty and fifty years of age to the *whole* population is barely 25, and in the U. S. A. the percentage is 22; but the percentage (males only considered) among the Kohathites is 32, the Gershonites 35, the Merarites 52. For the sake of simplicity the numbers are here taken as they stand; some slight difference would be made by allowing for children under a month, or again by adopting the view that firstborn means the firstborn to the father, and then allowing for the influence of polygamy; but no legitimate allowance or device can get rid of the essential impossibility of the figures. For a full discussion and an account of the attempts to surmount the difficulties, see Colenso, *Pentateuch*, pt. i. chap. xiv.; pt. vi. p. 500 ff.

"3. The 40,000 (? fighting men) of Jud. v 8 stands in striking contrast with the 301,000 (first census 273,300) of men above twenty assigned in Nu. xxvi to the six tribes (Benjamin, Ephraim, Manas-

seh, Naphtali, Zebulun, Issachar) celebrated in Deborah's song as participating in the war. Again, the male Danites above twenty, according to the census, just before settling in Canaan numbered 64,000; in Jud. xviii we have a narrative recording a migration of at least a considerable part of the tribe of Dan: yet the migrating party includes only 600 armed men.

"But if the numbers are unhistorical, how did they arise, and how much do they mean? The total, 600,000, was derived by P from the earlier work JE (Ex. xii 37, Nu. xi 21), unless we assume that the original number in these two earlier passages has been removed by a later harmonising scribe in favour of P's 600,000. How the number was obtained we are just as little able to determine as in the parallel cases of high numbers elsewhere (*e.g.* Jud. xx 2, 17, 2 S. xxiv 9); it must suffice to have shown that they are impossible even under the conditions prevailing after the settlement in Canaan. The exacter totals (603,550 and 601,730) appear to have been given to gain an air of reality; in the same way the numbers of the individual tribes are not precisely $\frac{600,000}{12}$, *i.e.* 50,000 for each tribe; but the numbers are so manipulated that in each census precisely six tribes have over and precisely six under 50,000; somewhat similarly the number of the Levitical cities (48) is represented not as 12×4, but as $13+10+13+12$ (Jos. xxi 4–7). Under the circumstances it seems likely that *all* the tribal numbers are purely artificial; though the number assigned to Judah presupposes a population not greatly in excess of a quarter of a million (which may be taken as a rough approximation to the actual population of the Southern Kingdom), and might, if it stood alone, be treated as an anachronism rather than an artifice. The fact that in both censuses Judah shows the largest numbers may be intentional, and due to the writer's desire to illustrate the pre-eminence of Judah (cp. p. 18); but for the most part no significance can be detected in, and was probably not intended to attach to, either the numbers of the several tribes themselves or the variations between the first and second census.

"The numbers of the male firstborn (22,273) and the male Levites (22,000) are intimately connected. Since the impossibility of the proportion noted above forbids us to believe that the number of the male firstborn was inferred from the total number of male adults, we must consider it based on the number of Levites, a slight excess (273) being attributed to the firstborn in order to admit of an illustration of the law of xviii 16. But this consideration leads us further. The number of the Levites was reached independently and without reference to the 600,000. Whence or how we cannot say: it is more moderate than the Chronicler's impossible figure (38,000 over thirty years old = about 94,000 over a month old), but scarcely corresponds to reality at any period." (Gray, Numbers, pp. 10–15.)

That the numbers as stated in our present Hebrew text are impossible must be immediately conceded. We do not believe them to be correct as they stand. But, in order to use them in support of the higher critical position, it would be necessary to show that the documentary hypothesis removes, or at any rate alleviates, the difficulty. After what we have seen of the mathematical feats of the critics, nobody will be surprised to learn that, far from doing this, it actually doubles the embarrassment.

The present numbers might be claimed as supporting the hypothesis, if it could be shown, either that they were confined to one of the documents (leaving the other with no numerical statements at all, or else only with statements that were credible), or, at any rate, that one of the documents contained no representations that were inconsistent with these numbers. The exact opposite is the case. The inflated numbers are found in JE as well as in P, while the other statements of P make it quite clear that his own conception of the number of the Israelites was very moderate. It must further be remembered that we are dealing with men who have proved their incapacity for remembering the book of Joshua, and that book naturally helps to dislodge the theory.

Before indicating the lines along which in our opinion the solution of the problem is to be sought, we propose to examine first the statements of JE, and then those of P, with a view to showing in detail that the documentary theory provides absolutely no assistance.

1. JE: In Exodus i. 9, 20b; v. 5 (all J), language is used (more or less rhetorical in nature) implying that the Israelites are very numerous, yet in iii. 8 the same source speaks of Canaan as "a good land and a large," which it certainly was not if the standard for judging it is to be found in the 600,000

fighting men that J gives the Israelites in xii. 37. On the other hand, in i. 15 ff., E regards two midwives as sufficient for the needs of the whole community. Exodus xiv. 7 (E) is textually doubtful, but it speaks of at least 600 chariots as going in pursuit. This, though probably quite inadequate for the 600,000, suggests a considerable force. At Elim J apparently finds twelve springs of water sufficient for the needs of the people (xv. 27). In the next chapter E supplies them with water by smiting a rock. Certainly in this and all the other water passages it must be admitted that there is nothing to suggest "a water supply sufficient for a multitude equal to the combined populations of Glasgow, Liverpool and Birmingham." The organization of Exodus xviii. recognizes a body large enough to need rulers of thousands (E); but this does not carry the matter much further. Exodus xxiii. gives us considerable light. The command to make the three pilgrimage festivals (xxiii. 17 (E or a harmonist); xxxiv. 23 f. (J and R^d)) could hardly have been intended to apply to anything like 600,000 people, while the language of xxiii. 29 f. (E), promising that the Canaanites shall only be driven out gradually, "lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee," would, as Colenso has pointed out, be ridiculous in the case of a small land like Canaan if the Israelites numbered some 2,000,000. In xxxii. 28 (J) about 3000 men fall. Numbers x. 36 is a fragment of song and thousands may mean families; so that it would not be safe to draw any numerical inference from this passage. In Numbers xi. 21 (J) we once more find the 600,000 footmen; but in xx. a water-supply is again drawn from a rock, and part of this narrative belongs to the same source. "Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel" (Num. xxiii. 10 (E)) is another poetical passage, which cannot be pressed into service for

statistical purposes, and we pass to the book of Joshua. The compassing of Jericho in chapter vi. (partly J and partly E) obviously excludes the idea of the army's numbering anything that faintly approached 600,000 warriors. In vii. (J) the people are thrown into a panic by the defeat of some three thousand men, with thirty-six killed! In viii. J knows of an ambush of 30,000 (ver. 3), but E has only 5000 (ver. 12), and the total adult population of Ai (male and female) was only 12,000 (ver. 25).

Such are the principal data of JE. It will be seen that there is a glaring discrepancy between a few figures and the rest of the narrative.

2. Like J, P uses language of a rhetorical character indicating that the Israelites were numerous (Ex. i. 7). He too gives the various numbers set out in the above extract from Dr. Gray, which need not be repeated here, and these appear at first sight to be confirmed by Exodus xxxviii. 25 f. In addition we find that 14,700 Israelites died on one occasion (Num. xvi. 49 (Hebrew xvii. 14)) and 24,000 on another (Num. xxv. 9). But side by side with these passages we find an entirely different representation. P's ideas of an adequate water-supply are identical with those of J and E (Num. xx., etc.). His tabernacle and sacred furniture are so small and light as to be capable of transportation in six pair-ox wagons assisted by Levitical porters. The Israelites are so few that all the higher priestly duties can be discharged by the males of a single family. The camps are all within sound of two trumpets (Num. x. 2). The congregation can assemble without difficulty at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. viii. 4). In Numbers xxxi. he sends an expedition against the Midianites, but the warriors number only 12,000 (4 f.), though the booty seems rather large (ver. 32–54). But it is in Joshua that the greatest surprise

awaits us. Unfortunately we have only one number there, but it is in irreconcilable conflict with the data of the book of Numbers. According to the last census, Reuben had 43,730 fighting men, and Gad 40,500. Yet, in Joshua, the united forces of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh amounted, according to the Hebrew text, to only 40,000 (iv. 13). How can this be made to fit in with the critical theory?

The fact is that the documentary theory does not solve the difficulties of the numbers: it shirks them. We must look elsewhere for the desired explanation.

On the materials that are at present available it is impossible to restore the original numbers; but it is possible to go some way behind the Massoretic text and show how they reached their present form. For this purpose it will be necessary to take into account facts that are habitually neglected.

1. We begin with Joshua iv. 13, where the fighting men of the trans-Jordanic tribes are given as 40,000. Here the solution is extremely easy. In Hebrew the tens from 30 to 90 are the plurals of the units. Now it is known that in Hebrew MSS. a final ם (the sign of the masculine plural) was frequently not written, and Lagarde, as reported by Dr. Driver, says that final ן and final ך were also omitted in MSS. used by the LXX, being represented by a mark of abbreviation (consisting of a little stroke).[1] It is well known that, although modern Hebrew writing distinguishes between the forms used in certain letters, according as they occur at the

[1] Samuel, p. lxix. We have not been able to see a copy of the work of Lagarde's to which Dr. Driver refers: but we would point out that there are ample examples in extant Hebrew MSS. and editions. See, for instance, pp. 601, 618, 820 of C. D. Ginsburg's "Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical edition of the Hebrew Bible." His chapter on "Abbreviations" should also be consulted. It is noteworthy that in some of Ginsburg's examples the abbreviations do not even have a mark to show that they are abbreviations.

end of the word or in some other position, such duplicate forms were not used earlier. Accordingly forty thousand could have been written ארבעאלפ, possibly with a little stroke after the ע. But this differs from 4000 either not at all, or, if the little strokes were used, only by the absence of the mark of abbreviation after the פ. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that the Lucianic recension of the LXX actually has 4000 as the figure. It may be added that such variations of reading are extremely common. For example, in Numbers i. 21, forty (thousand), one MS. omits the termination; in verse 27, for four, one MS. had in the first hand forty, while another has the final ה of ערבעה over an erasure (a fact that points in the same direction); in 1 Samuel xiii. 5 the Lucianic LXX and the Syriac have 3000 for the Hebrew 30,000. It would seem that in our passage of Joshua the reading 4000 is clearly preferable, and this number may be historical. In any case it cannot be far from the mark.

2. The case of the Pentateuchal numbers is far more complicated. We must therefore break it up into sections for the purpose of discussion. We begin with Exodus xxxviii. 25 ff., which states that the silver produced by the ransom of souls at the census amounted to 100 talents 1775 shekels. At first sight this appears to confirm the census numbers; but on closer investigation it becomes evident that there is something wrong with the text. In the first place, this passage depends on the census, which was not taken until *after* the erection of the tabernacle. Secondly, a comparison of xxxviii. 24–31 with xxv. 3 and xxxv. 22–24 shows that something has been lost. In xxv. 3 God commands the taking of an offering of three metals — gold, silver, and brass (bronze). In xxxvi. we read that offerings of these three metals were in fact brought: in this passage of xxxviii. we read of the use made of the gold

and the brass, and we expect to find an account of the silver between the other two metals. Instead we meet with this misplaced passage, referring to the census. Moreover the command for the ransom of souls in xxx. 11–16 provides that the proceeds shall be used for the *service* of the tent of meeting, not for its erection. When we combine these facts with what we have already learned about the order of the Pentateuchal narrative and the divergence of the Septuagint in these chapters, the inference seems plain. These chapters go back to a MS. that was defective. The account of the use of the silver offering had perished. To make this good, the account of the census was removed from its proper position and inserted here. It is impossible to say what other editorial adjustments the text may have undergone. The evidence of the LXX seems to show that the text was known to be in a bad condition, and that various attempts were made to produce a satisfactory version of it.[1] But, for our purpose, it is sufficient to

[1] It is no part of our plan to discuss the difficulties that beset the account of the Tabernacle, as this requires expert knowledge that we lack. At the same time we think it right to point to certain phenomena that have been overlooked:—

1. As shown above, the account demonstrably contained at least one lacuna. It is, therefore, perfectly possible that it may have contained others, and that this is the explanation (at any rate in part) of the omissions of which the critics complain.

2. It will become increasingly clear that very little reliance can be placed on the numbers. The amount of the silver here obviously depends on the census numbers, which are corrupt. In the case of the brass, Kennicott records an extant Hebrew variant giving twenty as the number of talents, instead of seventy; while the facts we shall have to note about the transmission of Hebrew numbers are such as to make it impossible to condemn any narrative on the ground that the numbers it contains are excessive. These phenomena, together with the evidence of the LXX and the divergence in the statement of Deuteronomy as to the construction of the Ark, seem to show that the text of these chapters has suffered very seriously in transmission.

see that these verses belong properly to the account of the first census, and that the numbers they contain will stand or fall with the latter.

3. Coming now to the census itself, there is extant evidence to show that the text once existed in a form in which Gad lacked fifty of the numbers now assigned to that tribe in Numbers i. 25. Owing to the amount of information available, the importance of this greatly exceeds that of the number involved, for we are enabled to see clearly one of the ways in which the numbers grew.

At present the numbers of Gad are forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty. Three of Kennicott's Hebrew MSS. (including 6) omit "and fifty," and these are confirmed by two Greek MSS. (54 and 75 according to Holmes's notation, i.e. the g and n of the new Cambridge Septuagint) and the Georgian. With regard to the number of the hundreds, one Hebrew MS. omits the word, another reads "and five," while a third (6) has the first two letters (i.e. the ח of חש over an erasure. The interpretation we put upon these facts is as follows: At a time when Gad had only a round number of hundreds, corruption set in. Two readings arose — six hundred and five hundred. The five was inserted in the margin of one or more MSS. that read six hundred. Then it was taken into the text and read as "fifty," in accordance with the common mistake that we have already explained. The sum total of the Israelites in i. 46; ii. 32, and its dependent number in the half-shekel ransom were then altered to agree, and this number was impressed on all the MSS. Fortunately in a few cases the numbers of Gad were not brought into harmony with the new form of the text. No. 6 had 500 originally, and traces survive in the other MSS. Similarly in ii. 15 a memory of the earlier text is preserved by two other Hebrew MSS., that

again omit "and 50." Thus it was that the scholarship of a past age reinforced the hosts of Israel with a contingent of fifty paper Gadites.

Before passing from this source of MS. corruption, we would draw attention to another biblical passage in which it has probably been at work. In 1 Samuel vi. 19 we read of the smiting of "seventy men, fifty thousand men." Yet in the text as known to Josephus the casualties appear to have amounted to seventy only. Doubtless the "fifty" represented a variant to the seventy with the result that "fifty men" was written in the margin, while the thousand came in as the result of the source of corruption next to be mentioned.

4. A study of the variants to the census figures collected by Kennicott reveals the fact that a large number of readings depend upon the undue omission or insertion of the Hebrew word for thousand. Here are some illustrations:—

REFERENCE.	RECEIVED TEXT.	VARIANT.
Num. i. 23.	Fifty thousand.	1 MS. (109) thousand and fifty.
Num. i. 33.	Forty thousand.	2 MSS. (84 and 189) omit thousand.
Num. i. 35.	Two and thirty thousand.	1 MS. (107) omits thousand.
Num. ii. 6.	Fifty thousand.	1 MS. (109) omits thousand.
Num. ii. 11.	Forty thousand.	1 MS. (189) omits thousand.
Num. ii. 16.	A hundred thousand.	1 MS. (109) omits thousand.
Ibid.	And four hundred and fifty.	1 MS. (89) and four hundred and fifty thousand.

When it is remembered that we have ample evidence of the use of abbreviations in Hebrew MSS., it is natural to suspect that variations of this kind are due to the use of some abbreviation for thousand which was readily inserted or omitted in mistake, and that the archetypes of 109 and 189, in particular,

presented texts which frequently differed from the generally received tradition.

5. A number of facts may be explained by another conjecture which is also based on the known partiality for abbreviations. The use of a single letter to denote a word is abundantly testified by our existing material. Now the initial letter of the Hebrew word for hundred is מ, the final letter of the tens. The supposition lies near at hand that in some cases a מ, written as the final letter of a ten was mistaken by a copyist for an abbreviation for the word "hundred." Thus, in 2 Samuel xxiv. 9, Israel has 800,000 warriors and Judah 500,000. It is suggested that, in an age when MS. abbreviations were common, these figures may have arisen from a misreading of 80,000 and 50,000 respectively. Similarly, in 2 Chronicles xiii. 3, where the received text has *four hundred* ארבע מאות one MS. reads *fourteen* (עשר for מאות). Such a variant would naturally arise if the second word were represented by a single letter which had become illegible, and was consequently misread by a scribe.

6. It is well known that a study of biblical numbers reveals a general tendency to multiply by ten, even where the palæographical peculiarities noted above do not assist the process. Thus in Numbers xxxi. 37–40 the Syriac reads 6750 for 675, 720 for 72, 610 for 61, 320 for 32. Similarly Canon R. B. Girdlestone writes, as the result of his comparison of the texts of Kings and Chronicles, that the Chronicler "tends to turn hundreds into thousands and sometimes the LXX does the same."[1] This tendency must be borne in mind in any estimate of the processes through which the numbers have passed.

7. Our evidence further shows that there were certain

[1] Deuterographs (1894), p. x.

cases in which the number of the original text had become quite uncertain. For instance, in Numbers i. 23, the received text has 300, one MS. of Kennicott's 500, another 700; while Lucian read 400. Or, again, in Numbers xxvi. 47, for the 400 of the ordinary texts, one MS. has 500, another 700, two others have the usual reading over erasures, while the LXX reads 600. Examples could, of course, be multiplied with ease, but these will suffice to illustrate the fact that there are cases within our knowledge where an original number had simply become corrupt, and no man can say whether any of the various readings is to be preferred, and, if so, which, or whether the original is not represented by any extant text.

8. Some of these illustrations also give us the clue to another factor that has been at work in the formation of our present text. The books were studied by persons who could of course add up figures, and, at any rate in some instances, the text has been amended on an arithmetical basis; thus, to take the case just cited, where Lucian reads 400 in Numbers i. 23, as against the 300 of the Hebrew text. If this stood alone the total of the fighting men in verse 46 would necessarily be wrong, but the difficulty is removed by his reading 600 for 700 in verse 39. Similarly his text makes the numbers of the Levites in chapter iii. add up correctly, for it presents us with 7200 Gershonites in verse 22, instead of the 7500 of the Massoretic text, thus arriving at the total 22,000 stated in verse 39. In such cases it is clear that scribes have made changes in a faulty text in deference to the principles of addition.

9. One other factor must be taken into account. In determining between various possibilities, some criterion must have been employed by those whose duty it was to hand on the text. If a word could be read as either four or forty, the choice of reading must have been made for some reason or other. Now

it is material to observe that the Pentateuch was copied in ages when the Israelites were infinitely more numerous than in the days of Moses: and it is probable that the judgment of the scribes would be swayed rather by their knowledge of the conditions of their own day than by historical considerations. The historical spirit is not found at all periods of human history. Further, national pride would probably tend in the same direction. It is not every age that has a statistical conscience. Hence there would usually be a marked leaning towards the larger number.

We think, therefore, that the most probable account of the present form of the numbers may be simply stated as follows: Numbers that were originally correct underwent corruption in the first instance partly through the ordinary decay of a MS. text, and partly through the peculiarities of Hebrew writing. These causes were reinforced by a natural but unfortunately misleading theory of the copying scribes and by well-meant but unhappy attempts to correct obvious errors. These causes, acting sometimes successively, sometimes jointly, have resulted in our present received text, but the last stages of the process can still be traced in some instances: and by arguing from the known to the unknown we can obtain some adequate understanding of the way in which our present difficulties arose.

THE WAR WITH MIDIAN.

The thirty-first chapter of Numbers has been the object of particularly numerous onslaughts by the critics. Colenso attacked it on chronological grounds. We have met this in our discussion of the chronology of the concluding chapters of Numbers. Dr. Gray (Numbers, pp. 418 f.) claims that the story is not history, but *Midrash*. His reasons appear to be: (1) that if every male Midianite was slain, Midian must have

disappeared from history in the time of Moses, whereas it is found subsequently; (2) that the law of the division of the booty (ver. 25–30) "is an inference from ancient Hebrew custom" (1 Sam. xxx. 24 f.); and (3) that it is incredible that "the Israelites, while slaughtering a multitude, never lose a single man." It is true that this is not all he writes. Thus he complains that verses 19–24 merely describe the application of the law of chapter xix.; but, as this and similar remarks have no probative force whatever, they may be neglected. Now, as to every male Midianite, we have already explained that "all" is not a mathematical term and need not be pressed. Further we cannot help thinking that the Midianites in question were really a subdivision of the tribe. Such a view presents no difficulty when it is understood that the Midianites were a nomadic Arabian tribe, so that the reference is probably to that particular branch of the tribe which had been implicated in the sin against Israel. With regard to the law of booty we exposed this confusion on pages 113 f. of the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA for January, 1908, and need not labor the point further. Lastly, we see no incredibility in the statement that on this expedition no lives were lost; but this remark must be qualified by another, viz. that there seems no particular reason for assuming that the numbers (which are very large) may not have suffered in transmission, owing to the causes already indicated.

On the other hand, there is one very important legal point on this chapter which entirely rebuts the late *Midrash* theory. Moses expressly permits unions with Midianitish women (ver. 18). This, it is hardly necessary to say, is in entire accord with the views and practice of the husband of Zipporah, who forbade unions with foreign women for the high priest only, but for no other Israelite, and laid down express provisions (Deut. xxi. 10–14) for the regulation of unions with foreign

captives. But it is utterly alien to the spirit and practice of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the supposititious priestly school. If there was one thing that was anathema to Ezra and Nehemiah, it was a union with a foreign woman.

CONCLUSION.

We have now carried out our promise to investigate the assertions of the higher critics respecting the main difficulties alleged in regard to the narrative of the last four books of the Pentateuch, and our readers can form their own opinions of the competence of the higher critics to deal with the matters in question. It will be in place that, in conclusion, we should say a few words on the question of authorship.

The secure basis of the inquiry will in the future be the indubitable Mosaic authenticity of the speeches in Deuteronomy (apart from certain well-known glosses). That authenticity can be proved by three separate lines of argument: First, it is most distinctly asserted that these speeches are by Moses. Secondly, the covenant structure of the book (as well as the style) makes it certain that they are from the same hand as the laws, and the authenticity of these laws cannot be doubtful, save in inquiries conducted or dominated by men who are not jurists.[1] Thirdly, such passages as Deuteronomy xi. 10 are

[1] See Studies in Biblical Law, pp. 71–75. It may be worth while to point out the errors of Dr. Driver's reasoning with regard to Deuteronomy xxiii. 5 (4). "in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt." He writes: "Here, at any rate, where the reference is to a date at the *close* of the 40 years' wanderings, the expression 'when ye came forth out of Egypt' could not have been used by a contemporary, writing but six months afterwards, but betrays the writer of a later age, in which the 40 years had dwindled to a point." (Deuteronomy, p. 61.) The fact is that the reference is to an incident which, though not narrated in our present text of Numbers, had occurred some thirty-eight years previously. Moses had sent from Kadesh not merely to Edom, as stated in Numbers, but also

only applicable to the Mosaic age, and would not have been forged at any subsequent time.

But these speeches will inevitably carry with them large portions of the anonymous narrative of the preceding books which are intimately connected with them. In this matter the labors of the critics have not been wholly fruitless, but have gone far to show the intimacy of connection between Deuteronomy and passages in the earlier books.

(Judges xi. 17) to the king of Moab. It is quite clear, from the language of Jephthah's message, that this took place near the beginning of the forty years. It is natural that Moses, speaking some thirty-eight years later, should use the phrase "when ye came forth out of Egypt" to refer to this period. The same phrase is used to designate the same period in Deuteronomy xxiv. 9 (Miriam's leprosy on the way to Kadesh) and xxv. 17 (Amalek's attack at Rephidim). Indeed had the reference in this passage been to the forty years as a point, we should have had "because they met you not with bread . . . . and because they hired Balaam . . . ., when ye came forth out of Egypt." But the actual text of Deuteronomy puts the phrase about Egypt after the charge of not meeting the Israelites, thus showing that this charge, as contrasted with the accusation of hiring Balaam (which occurred later) refers to an earlier period.

Two other phrases are sometimes pressed into service by the critics — "at that time" and "beyond Jordan." In both the answer is the same, viz. that the use of language is determined by the linguistic feeling of the age, and not by the dogmas of strangers living three thousand years later. "At that time" can obviously be used in Hebrew idiom where an English writer would probably choose "then." But that proves nothing as to authorship. As to the other phrase, "beyond Jordan" is used in the speeches once of the East (Deut. iii. 8) in a passage which Mr. Carpenter does not regard as original, and three times of the West (iii. 20, 25; xi. 30). This probably should merely be held to show that here again Hebrew idiom is different from English (see especially Num. xxx. 19, 32; xxxv. 14.) The force of the passages in Numbers may, however, be held by some (as by Dr. Driver, Deuteronomy, p. xliii, note, as to Numbers xxxii. 14) to be broken by other considerations. Yet at the worst Deuteronomy iii. 8 could only be regarded as proving that Mr. Carpenter is right in thinking this verse an interpolation. It shows a hopeless lack of sense of proportion to deny the Mosaic origin of these lengthy speeches on the ground of a single phrase in *one* verse!

While, therefore, it is undoubtedly the fact that the Pentateuch contains post-Mosaic elements, the possible extent of such elements will be recognized as very much more restricted than is now supposed to be the case, while the wild theories at present current as to documents, schools of writers, forgers of laws, revelation by literary fraud, etc., will be recognized as merely absurd. On the other hand, the duties of the textual critic will be seen to possess far more importance than has been generally allowed.

The effect of such conclusions on the views entertained of the history of Israel must of course be prodigious. Genuine Mosaic legislation, genuine Mosaic prophecies, genuine Mosaic narratives, will revolutionize current conceptions of Old Testament history. And the work done by conservative Pentateuchal criticism is being reinforced by the discoveries of archæology. Colenso could write: "If our view be correct, then the use of the word Salem,[1] also, especially as it occurs in the substance of the main story, would indicate a writer living in later times; since the Canaanitish name of the city was Jebus, Josh. xviii. 28, Jud. xix. 10, 11, and there can be little doubt that the name Jerusalem, 'possession of peace,' was first given to it by David, after its capture by him from the Jebusites." (The Pentateuch, Part ii. p. 218.) No critic could now be found to indorse this view, seeing that the Tell-el-Amarna tablets have disposed of this notion once for all. Similarly it is extremely improbable that Mr. Carpenter would now argue elaborately for a late date for "J" on the ground that it takes the Tetragrammaton to have been known early and used outside Israel.[2] Nor, again, in view of the fresh evidence

[1] Gen. xiv. 18.

[2] Oxford Hexateuch, vol. i. p. 107. It is probable that the Tetragrammaton has not yet been discovered in Babylonian material. See an article by Dr. S. Daiches in the Zeitschrift für Assyriologie, 1908.

published by Mr. King, is it possible to hold that "there are grave chronological embarrassments affecting the contemporaneousness of Abraham with the Mesopotamian kings."[1] The progress of monumental research is gradually grinding such arguments out of the critical case, and the process, if slow, is at any rate singularly effective.

But if it should hereafter be found in early cuneiform tablets, the discovery would only confirm the statement of Genesis.

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 158.