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Recent Biblical Archaeology.

BY PROFESSOR A. H. SAYCE, D.C.L., LL.D., OXFORD.

THE first volume of one of the most useful works yet published on Assyriology has just appeared. This is Professor Rogers's *History of Babylonia and Assyria* (London: Luzac & Co., 1900). But its title does not at all adequately describe its contents. It is not only a history of Babylonia and Assyria, brought up to date, it is also a history of Assyrian and Babylonian excavation and of cuneiform decipherment. For the first time the reader has placed before him a full and interesting account of one of the romances of historical science—the discovery and decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions.

The story is a long one, and Professor Rogers has wisely dwelt on its earlier stages. It is indeed a story of one of the most remarkable achievements of human genius and patience. Little by little the lost scripts and languages of the past have been recovered and re-read, and a whole world of forgotten civilization has been brought to light. The question is often asked how the cuneiform inscriptions came to be deciphered, and what grounds there are for accepting the decipherers' results. Professor Rogers has answered the question once for all, and the story which forms the answer is fascinating. We begin with the early travellers, with Pietro della Valle's first copies of the cuneiform characters in 1621, with the desire of the newly founded Royal Society for accurate accounts of the old Persian ruins, and with Hyde's invention of the term 'cuneiform,' and we come down to the age of Grotefend and Burnouf, of Rawlinson and Hincks. It is shown how, when once a correct method of investigation was adopted, one discovery led on to another, the Old Persian becoming the key to Assyrian and Elamite, and Assyrian in its turn to Sumerian and Vannic. The Tel el-Amarna tablets have revealed the fact that the cuneiform syllabary was once in use throughout the whole civilized world of Western Asia, and through the cuneiform syllabary accordingly our knowledge of that world will have to be obtained.

The last third of the volume, which deals with the early history of Babylonia, naturally does not possess the same general interest as the first part

of it. But it gives us the latest results of monumental research, and to the historian, therefore, will be very acceptable. Professor Rogers is cautious in his conclusions, and this makes me the more surprised at his accepting Professor Hilprecht's conjecture about the origin of the word Shinar, which is traced to a metathesis of Girsu, the name of one of the leading cities of Southern Babylonia. The conjecture, however, is disproved by the list of gods in *W.A.I.*, iii. 66, from which we learn that the Sumerian Nin-girsu was pronounced In-gurisa in Assyrian (*Obv. l. 14, Rev. f. 3*). Moreover, one of the letters of the king of Alasia, in the Tel el-Amarna collection, has shown us that the cuneiform equivalent of Shinar was Sankhar, which also occurs, it may be added, in the long letter of the king of Mitanni.

Another interesting addition to recent Assyriological literature is Mr. King's *Letters and Inscriptions of Khammurabi*, vols. ii. and iii. (London: Luzac & Co., 1900). Here again the title of the book is not altogether adequate, for Mr. King has included in it some of the letters of Khammurabi's immediate successors. It is, however, an admirable piece of work. Mr. King may be congratulated on his copies of the cuneiform texts, and still more on his translations and notes. He has successfully overcome most of the difficulties presented by the vocabulary and construction of the letters. It is but seldom that we come across anything to which exception could be taken. In the fragmentary inscription of Samsu-iluna, however, given on p. 198, he has misunderstood the meaning of the *Reverse*, where it is not a river, but Arakhtu, the canal on which Babylon stood, that is referred to. *Adda*, moreover, is not a title, but the Sumerian word for 'father,' after which the possessive *mu*, 'my,' must be applied, so that the whole passage should read: 'The . . . on the bank of the Arakh[tu] which Khammurabi [my] father built.'

The fact that Khammurabi is now known to be the Amraphel of Genesis ought to lend a special interest to the letters which were written or dictated by him. What would not classical scholars give

for an autograph letter of Plato or Cicero? And yet here we have the actual letters of a contemporary of Abraham, the letters, too, of a king who marked an epoch in Babylonian history and made Babylon the capital of the kingdom.

They bear witness to an astonishing amount of energy and administrative power. All the business of the state, down to the minutest details, came before the king, and he seems to have found time to attend to it. In one of his letters he summons a money-lender to Babylon for punishment, in another he orders that a loan of corn be repaid with the interest upon it, in a third he gives the sizes of the pieces of wood required by the metal-workers in a neighbouring town. Other letters deal with finance or the arrest of defaulting officials, or with the repair of the canals and the *corvée* called out for the purpose. There was also a conscription for military service, a fact which has been overlooked by Mr. King, who has accordingly been landed in the impossible supposition that the sons of a *patesi*, or chief priest, had been handed over to a 'taskmaster of the public slaves.'

The *ridûti*, however, were simply recruiting sergeants, and Khammurabi merely intends to lay down that the sons of a high official were exempt from the conscription. From one of the letters we learn that Assyria was still part of the Babylonian empire, and had not yet become an independent state.

Mr. King has included in his work a very important document, the chronological annals of the dynasty to which Khammurabi belonged, compiled in the reign of Ammi-zadok, his fourth successor. He has made a revised copy of the cuneiform text and supplemented it by another contemporaneous, but independent, document of the same class. The notes which accompany the translation contain very full references to the dates found in the legal documents of the period, by means of which several of the mutilated passages in the annals can be restored. The second copy of the annals ends with the tenth year of Ammi-zadok, which, according to Professor Rogers's chronology, would be 2192 B.C. The value of these annals can scarcely be over-estimated.

The Apostle of Unity.¹

By THE REV. CANON J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, D.D., WESTMINSTER.

AT this solemn moment of our national life, gathered on the spot where our monarchs are crowned, we cannot utter what is in our hearts.² We have lost our great Queen. She was the mother of her people, and we all loved her. In our childhood we were taught to associate her name with tenderness and purity and truth: as we grew to manhood we learned also her strength and her wisdom, and we gave her the unreserved homage of our loyalty and our love.

The occasion which has brought us together will remind us of the Church's debt to a sovereign

'The building of the body of the Christ, till we all come . . . to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ.'—Eph. iv. 12, 13.

whose constant devotion has vindicated her historic claim to be the Defender of the Faith. It is a pathetic incident of our service to-day that the mandate which calls for the consecration of the bishop is the mandate of Queen Victoria, while the oath of allegiance has been taken to King Edward the Seventh. We accept the omen of continuity, and we pray in the King's own words that he may 'walk in the footsteps' of his beloved mother. In gratitude and confidence we lift our hearts to God.

But our present duty presses, and I must pass to my appointed task. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, in the twelfth and thirteenth verses, you will find these

¹ Preached at the Consecration of Dr. H. E. Ryle as Bishop of Exeter.

² This sermon was preached three days after the death of Queen Victoria.