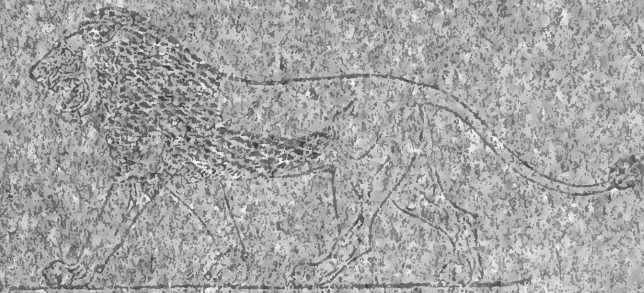


# Natur und Kultur

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# BABEL AND BIBLE

A LECTURE ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF  
ASSYRIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
FOR RELIGION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE GERMAN EMPEROR

BY

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## BABEL AND BIBLE.

**T**O what end this toil and trouble in distant, inhospitable, and danger-ridden lands? Why all this expense in ransacking to their utmost depths the rubbish heaps of forgotten centuries, where we know neither treasures of gold nor of silver exist? Why this zealous emulation on the part of the nations to secure the greatest possible number of mounds for excavation? And whence, too, that constantly increasing interest, that burning enthusiasm, born of generous sacrifice, now being bestowed on both sides of the Atlantic on the excavations of Babylonia and Assyria?

One answer echoes to all these questions,—one answer, which, if not absolutely adequate, is yet largely the reason and consummation of it all: *the Bible*. A magic halo, woven in earliest youth, encircles the names of Nineveh and Babylon, an irresistible fascination abides for us all in the stories of Belshazzar and the Wise Men of the East. The long-lasting dynasties here awakened to new life, however potent for history and civilisation they may have been, would not have aroused a tithe of their present interest, did they not number among them the names of Amraphel, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar, with whom we have been familiar from childhood.

And with the graven memories of youth is associated the deeper longing of maturity,—the longing, so characteristic of our age,—to possess a philosophy of the world and of life that will satisfy both the heart and the head. And this again leads us directly to the Bible, and notably to the Old Testament, with which historically our modern views are indissolubly connected.

The minute, exhaustive scrutiny to which untold numbers of Christian scholars in Germany, England, and America—the three Bible-lands, as we may justly call them—are submitting the Old Testament, that little library of books of most varied hue, is nothing less than astounding.

Of these silent intellectual labors the world has as yet taken but little notice. Yet this much is certain, that when the sum-total and ultimate upshot of the new knowledge shall have burst the barriers of the scholar's study and entered the broad path of life,—shall have entered our churches, schools, and homes,—the life of humanity will be more profoundly stirred and be made the recipient of more significant and enduring progress than it has by all the discoveries of modern physical and natural science put together. So far, at any rate, the conviction has steadily and universally established itself that the results of the Babylonian and Assyrian excavations are destined to inaugurate a new epoch, not only in our intellectual life, but especially in the criticism and comprehension of the Old Testament, and that from now till all futurity the names of *Babel* and *Bible* will remain inseparably linked together.

How times have changed! There was David and



there was Solomon, 1000 years before Christ ; and Moses, 1400 years ; and Abraham eight centuries prior. And of all these men we had the minutest information ! It was so unique, so supernatural, that one credulously accepted along with it stories concerning the origin of the world and mankind. The very greatest minds stood, and some of them still stand to-day, under the puissant thrall of the mystery encompassing the First Book of Moses. But now that the pyramids have opened their depths and the Assyrian palaces their portals, the people of Israel, with its literature, appears as the youngest member only of a venerable and hoary group of nations.

The Old Testament formed a world by itself till far into the last century. It spoke of times to whose latest limits the age of classical antiquity barely reached, and of nations that have met either with none or with the most cursory allusion from the Greeks and the Romans. The Bible was the sole source of our knowledge of the history of Hither Asia prior to 550 B. C., and since its vision extended over all that immense quadrangle lying between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf and stretching from Mount Ararat to Ethiopia, it naturally teemed with enigmas that might otherwise have tarried till eternity for their solution. But now the walls that formed the impenetrable background to the scenes of the Old Testament have suddenly fallen, and a keen invigorating air and a flood of light from the Orient pervades and irradiates the hoary book,—animating and illuminating it the more as Hebrew antiquity is linked together from beginning to end with Babylonia and Assyria.

The American excavations at Nippur brought to

light the business records of a great wholesale house, Murashû & Sons, operating in that city in the reign of Artaxerxes (450 B. C.). We read in these records the names of many Jewish exiles that had remained in Babel, as Nathaniel, Haggai, and Benjamin, and we read also of a canal *Kabar* in connection with the city of Nippur, which is the original of the canal of *Kebar* rendered famous by Ezekiel's vision and situated "in the land of the Chaldæans" (Ezekiel i. 3). This "grand canal," for such the name means, may possibly exist to this very day.

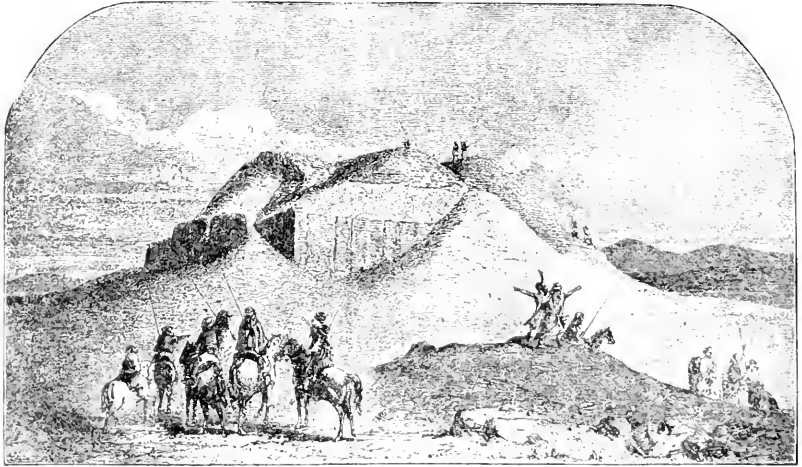


Fig. 1. UR OF THE CHALDEES, THE HOME OF ABRAHAM AND THE FOREFATHERS OF ISRAEL.

(Ruins of el-Muqayyer, pronounced *Mukayyer*, English *Mughcir*.)

Since the Babylonian bricks usually bear a stamp containing along with other marks the name of the city in which the building of which it formed a part was erected, it was made possible for Sir Henry Rawlinson as early as the year 1849 to rediscover the much-sought-for city of *Ur of the Chaldees*, the home of Abraham and the

ancestors of the tribes of Israel (Genesis xi. 31 and xv. 7). The discovery was made in the gigantic mound of ruins of el-Muqajjar on the right bank of the lower Euphrates (see Fig. 1), which is now the storm-center of warring Arab tribes. The certainty of the discovery has been more and more established.

The data of the cuneiform literature shed light also on geographical matters: formerly the site of the city of



Fig. 2. HITTITE IDEOGRAPHIC WRITING FROM CARCHEMISH.<sup>1</sup>



Fig. 3. KING HAMMURABI. THE KING AMRAPHEL OF THE BIBLE.

Carchemish, where Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B. C. won his great battle from Pharaoh-necho (Jeremiah xlvi. 2) was sought for at random on the banks of the Euphrates, but in March, 1876, the English Assyriologist George Smith, starting from Aleppo and following the river downward from Biredshik, rode directly to the spot where from the

<sup>1</sup> Confirming the discovery of the site of Carchemish, where Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho in 605 B. C.

tenor of the cuneiform inscriptions the city of the Hittite kings must have lain, and at once and unhesitatingly identified the vast ruins of Dsherabis there situate, with their walls and palace-mounds, more extensive than Nineveh itself, with the ancient city of Carchemish,—a conclusion that was immediately afterward confirmed by the inscriptions in the unique ideographic Hittite script that were strewn over the entire site of the ruins (Fig. 2).

And like many names of places, so also many of the personalities named in the Bible, have received new light and life. The book of the prophet Isaiah (xx. 1) mentions an Assyrian king by the name of Sargon, who sent his marshal against Ashdod; and when in 1843 the French consul Émile Botta began his excavations on the mound of ruins situated not far from Mosul, and thus inaugurated archæological research on Mesopotamian soil, the first Assyrian palace unearthed was the palace of this same Sargon, the conqueror of Samaria. Nay, on one of the superb alabaster reliefs with which the walls of the palace chambers were adorned, the very person of this mighty warrior conversing with his marshal appears before our eyes (Fig. 4).

The Book of Kings (2 Kings xviii. 14) narrates that King Sennacherib received tribute from King Hezekiah in the city of Lachish in southern Palestine. Now, a relief from Sargon's palace in Nineveh shows the great Assyrian king enthroned before his tent in sight of a conquered city, and the accompanying inscription reads: "Sennacherib, the king of the universe, king of Ashur, seated himself upon his throne and inspected the booty of Lachish."

And again, Sennacherib's Babylonian rival Mero-dach-Baladan, who according to the Bible (2 Kings xx. 12) sent letters and a present to King Hezekiah, is shown us in his own likeness by a magnificent diorite relief now



Fig. 4. KING SARGON II. AND HIS MARSHAL.

in Berlin, where before the king is the lord-mayor of the city of Babylon, to whom the sovereign in his graciousness has seen fit to grant large tracts of land. Even the



Fig 5 KING SENNACHERIB IN GALA COSTUME.

contemporary of Abraham, Amraphel, the great king Hammurabi, is now represented by a likeness (Fig. 3). Thus, all the men that made the history of the world for 3000 long years, rise to life again, and the most costly

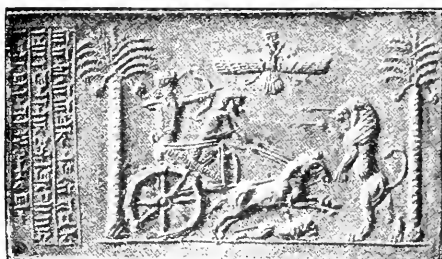


Fig. 6. SEAL OF KING DARIUS.

relics have been bequeathed to us by them. Here is the seal of King Darius, the son of Hystaspes (Fig. 6), where the king is represented as hunting the lion under the sublime protection of Ahura Mazda, and at the side is the trilingual inscription: "I am Darius, the great king,"—

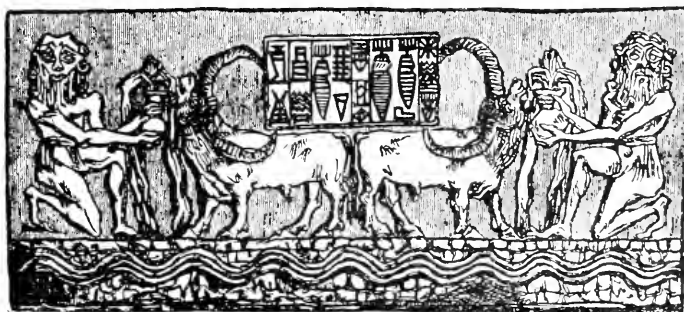
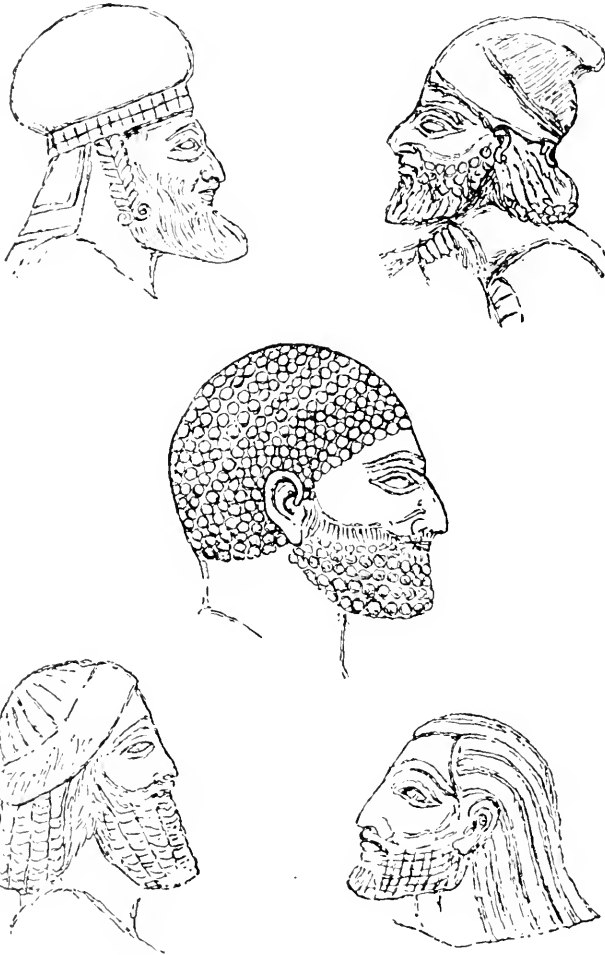


Fig. 7. SEAL OF SARGON I. (Third or fourth millennium B. C.)

a genuine treasure of the British Museum. Here is the state seal of one of the oldest known Babylonian rulers, Shargani-shar-ali, or Sargon I., who flourished in the third, or possibly the fourth, millennium before Christ

(Fig. 7). This king, as the legend runs, knew not his own father, the latter having met his death prior to the birth of his son; and since the father's brother cared not



Elamite  
Babylonian merchant

Jew of Lachish

Israelite  
Arab horseman

Fig. 8. RACIAL TYPES.

for the widowed mother, great affliction attended the son's entrance into this world; we read: "In Azupiran, on



the banks of the Euphrates, she bore me in concealment ; she placed me in a box of reeds, sealed my door with pitch, and cast me upon the river, which conveyed me on its waves to Akki, the water-carrier. He took me up in the kindness of his heart, reared me as his own child, made me his gardener. Then Ishtar, the daughter of the King of Heaven, showed fondness for me and made me king over men.'"

And not only kings and generals, but also *entire nations*, have been brought to life again by these discoveries. If we compare the various types of nationality engraved on the monuments of Assyrian art, and, taking for example two types that we know, here scrutinise the picture of a Jew of Lachish (Fig. 8), and here the representation of an Israelite of the time of Jehu, we are not likely to be wrong in our conclusion that also the other national types, for example the Elamite chieftain, the Arab horseman, and the Babylonian merchant, have been depicted and reproduced with the same fidelity and exactness. Particularly the Assyrians, who sixty years ago were supposed to have perished with all their history and civilisation in the great river of time, have been made known to us in the minutest details by excavations in Nineveh, and many passages in the prophetic books receive gorgeous illustration from our discoveries. Thus, Isaiah describes in the following eloquent language the Assyrian troops :

“Behold, they shall come with speed swiftly : None shall be weary nor stumble among them ; none shall slumber nor sleep ; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken : Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows

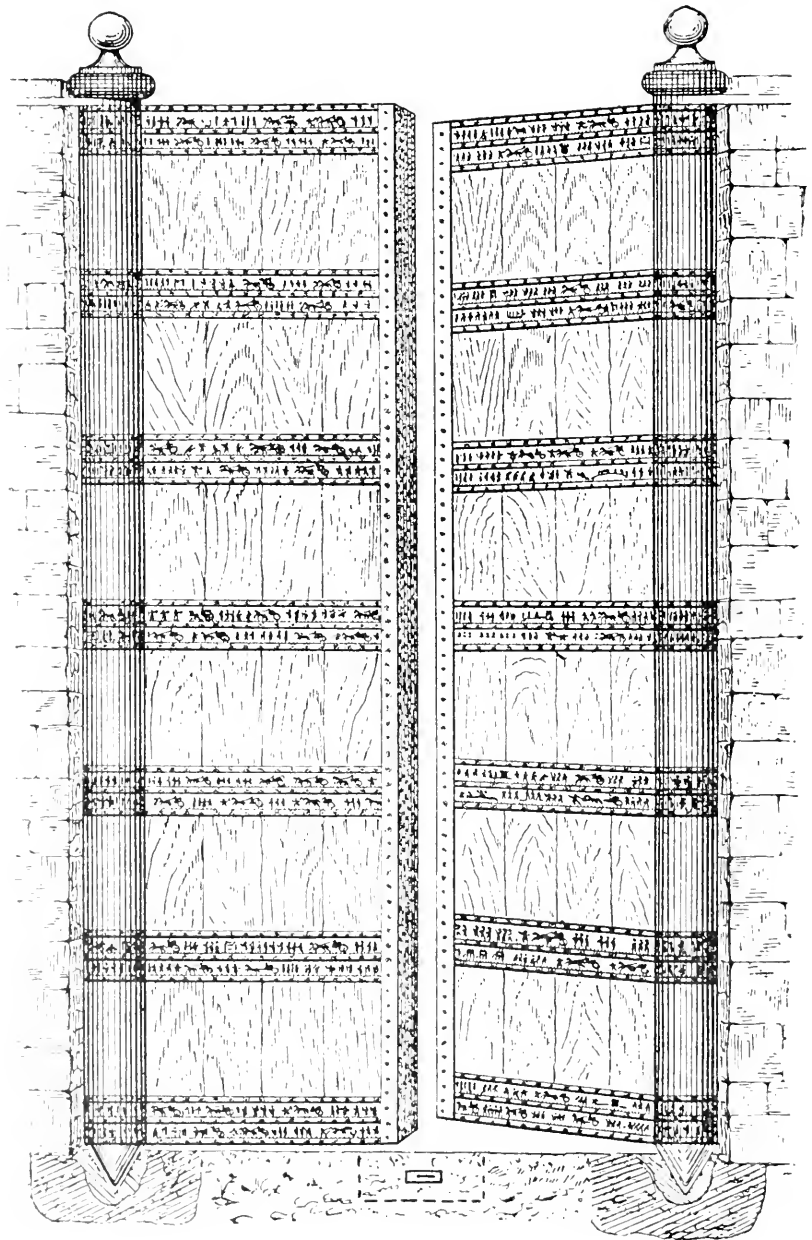


Fig. 9. BRONZE GATES OF THE PALACE OF SHALMANESER II. (At Balawat.)

bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: Their roaring shall be like a lion, yea, they shall

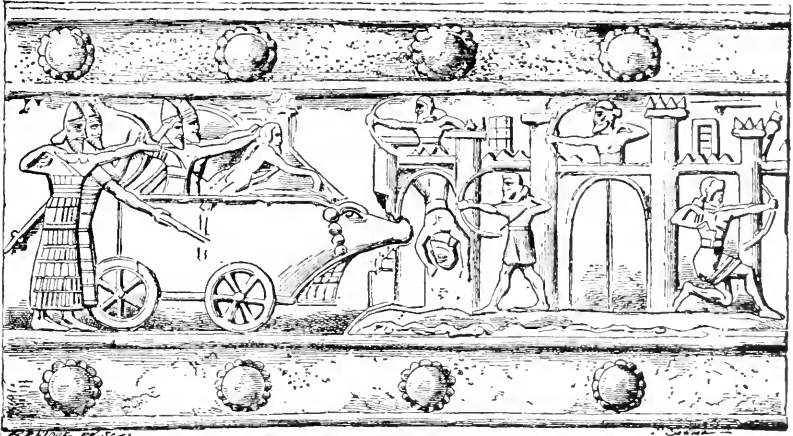


Fig. 10. ASSYRIANS BATTERING A FORTRESS.

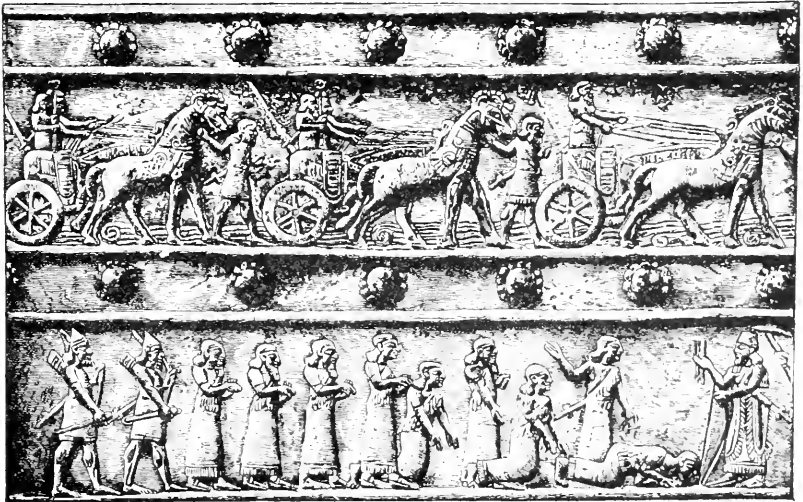


Fig. 11. DETAIL-GROUP ON BRONZE GATE.

Above war-chariots and below captives led before the king.

roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it."—(Isaiah, v. 27-29.)

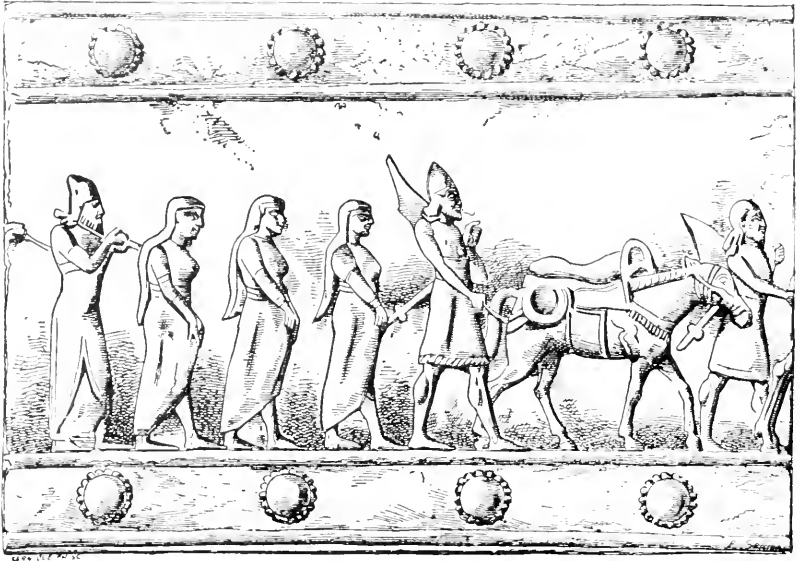


Fig. 12. PROCESSION OF FEMALE CAPTIVES. (Detail-group on bronze gate.)

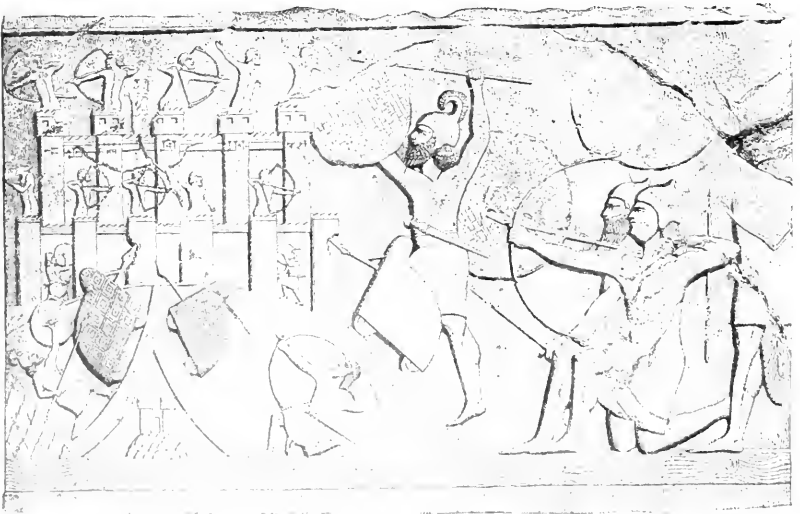


Fig. 13. ASSYRIAN BOWMEN AND SPEARMEN ATTACKING A HOSTILE FORTRESS.

We can now see these same Assyrian soldiers arising from their camp in the early morn and dashing their battering-rams against the enemy's fortress (Fig. 10) ; and



Fig. 13a. GRAZING ANTELOPES.  
(Idyllic scene picturing the intense realism of Assyrian art.)



Fig. 14. ASSYRIAN SLINGERS.

on other representations (Figs. 11 and 12) may be seen the unfortunate prisoners conducted the way from which

there is no home-coming. We see also (Fig. 13) the Assyrian bowmen and spearmen casting their weapons toward the hostile fortress, and in another case Assyrian warriors storming an elevation defended by hostile archers. They pull themselves upward by the branches of



Fig. 15. HEAD OF WINGED BULL.

Showing details of Assyrian mode of dressing the beard, as worn by the king and the officers of the army.

the trees, or clamber to the summit with the help of staffs; whilst others drag in triumph the severed heads of their enemies into the valley.

The military system of this first great warrior-state of the world is shown forth to us in a vast number of sim-

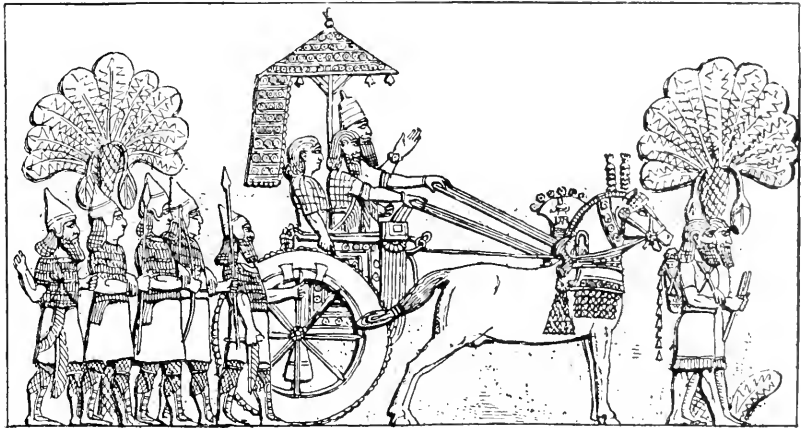


Fig 16. THE KING'S CHARIOT IN A PARADE.



Fig. 17. OFFICERS OF ASHURBANIPAL (SARDANAPALUS) ENTERING COURT.

ilar representations on the bronze doors of Shalmaneser II. (Fig. 9) and on the alabaster reliefs of the palaces of Sargon and Sennacherib, with all details of armament and equipment and in all phases of development. (See, for example, Fig. 14.)



Fig. 18. PAGES CARRYING THE ROYAL CHARIOT.

Again we have the portrait of an Assyrian officer of Sargon's general staff, the style of whose beard surpasses in artistic cut anything that has been attempted by modern officers. (See, for example, Fig. 15.) Here we see the officers of the royal household making their ceremonial entry (Fig. 17), or pages carrying the royal char-



iot (Fig. 18), or the royal throne (Fig. 19). Many beautiful reliefs show us King Sardanapalus following the chase, especially in his favorite sport of hunting lions, of which a goodly number of magnificent specimens were



Fig. 19. PAGES CARRYING THE ROYAL THRONE.

constantly kept at hand in parks specially reserved for this purpose. (Figs. 20-25.)

When King Saul refused to suffer young David to go forth to do battle with the giant Goliath, David re-

minded him that he had been the shepherd of his father's flocks and that when a lion or a bear had come and taken a lamb from his flock, he had gone out after the beast and

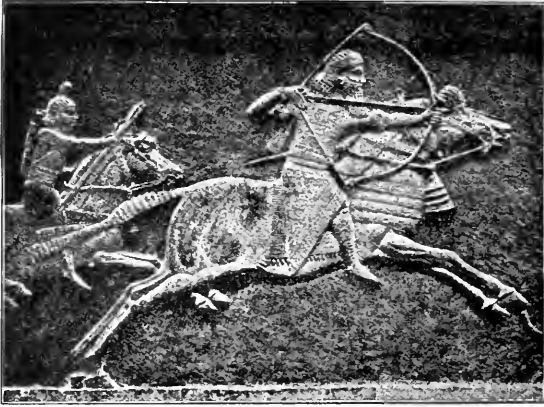


Fig. 20. KING SARDANAPALUS ON HORSEBACK.

had smitten it and wrested from it its prey, and that if after that it had risen against him he had caught the lion

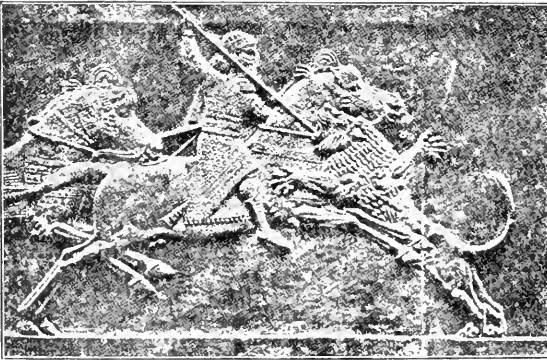


Fig. 21. SARDANAPALUS HUNTING THE LION ON HORSEBACK.

by its beard and slain it. Precisely the same custom prevailed in Assyria; and the reliefs show King Sardanapalus doing battle with the lion, not only on horseback

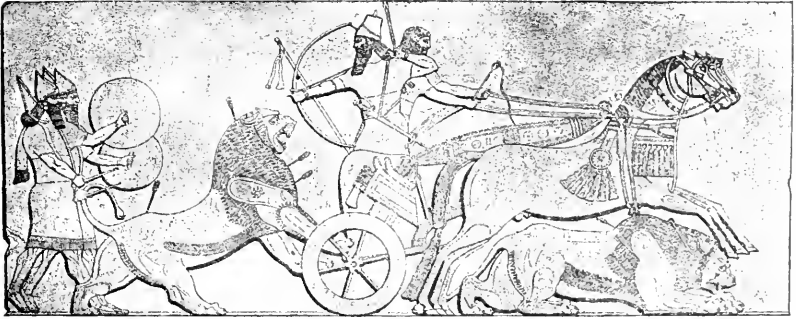


Fig. 22. HUNTING THE LION FROM A CHARIOT.



Fig. 23. SARDANAPALUS BEARDING THE LION.  
(The king of Ashur measures his strength with the king of the desert.)

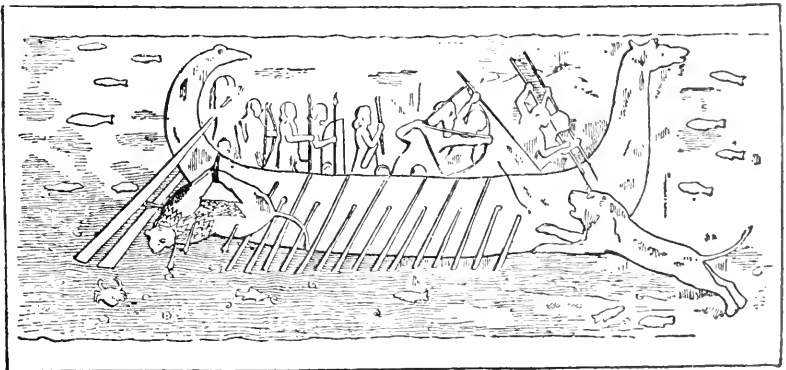


Fig. 24. HUNTING FROM A BOAT.

(Fig. 21) and from his chariot (Fig. 22), but also in hand to hand combat (Fig. 23),—the King of Ashur measuring his strength with the king of the desert.

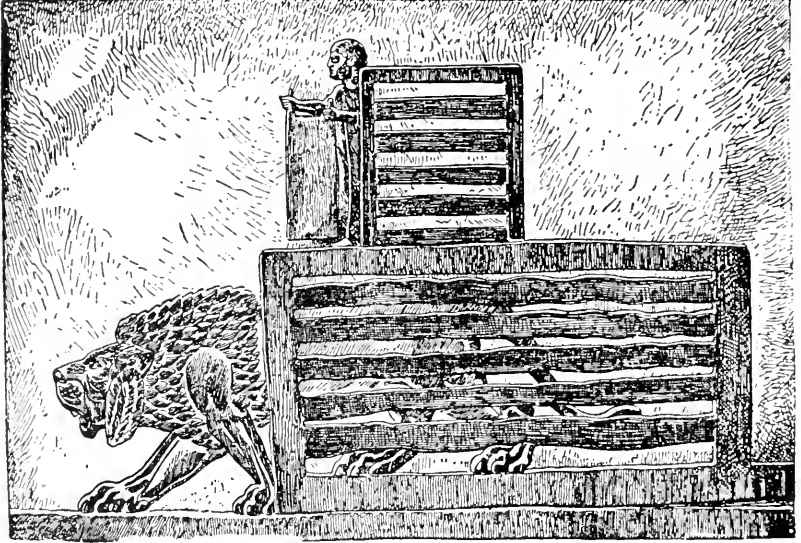


Fig 25. CAGED LION SET FREE FOR THE CHASE.



Fig. 26. SERVANTS CARRYING FRUIT, HARES, PARTRIDGES, SPITTED GRASSHOPPERS, AND ONIONS.

We catch glimpses of the preparations which were made for the royal meal (Figs. 26 and 27) ; we see the

servants bringing hares, partridges, spitted grasshoppers, a plenitude of cakes and all manner of fruits, and carrying fresh branches for driving away the flies. We are even permitted to see on a bas-relief of the harem (Fig. 28) the king and queen quaffing costly wine in a leafy bower, the king reclining on an elevated divan, the queen seated opposite him on a chair, and clothed in rich garments. Eunuchs waft cooling breezes toward them from

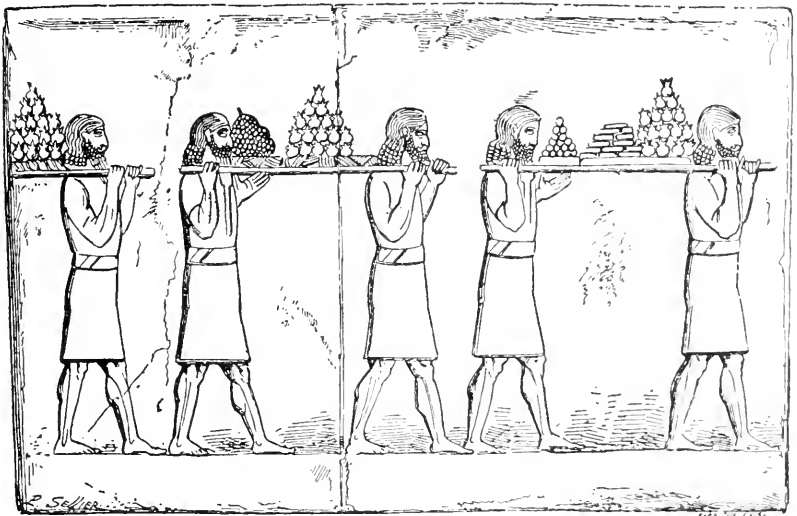


Fig. 27. SLAVES CARRYING FRUIT

their fans, while soft music from distant sources steals gently upon their ears (Fig. 29). This is the only queen of whom we possess a picture. Her profile as it appeared years ago in a better state of preservation has been saved for posterity by a sketch made in 1867 by Lieutenant, afterwards Colonel, Billerbeck (Fig. 30). This consort of Sardanapalus was apparently a princess of Aryan blood with blond hair.

Many other things of interest in Assyrian antiquity

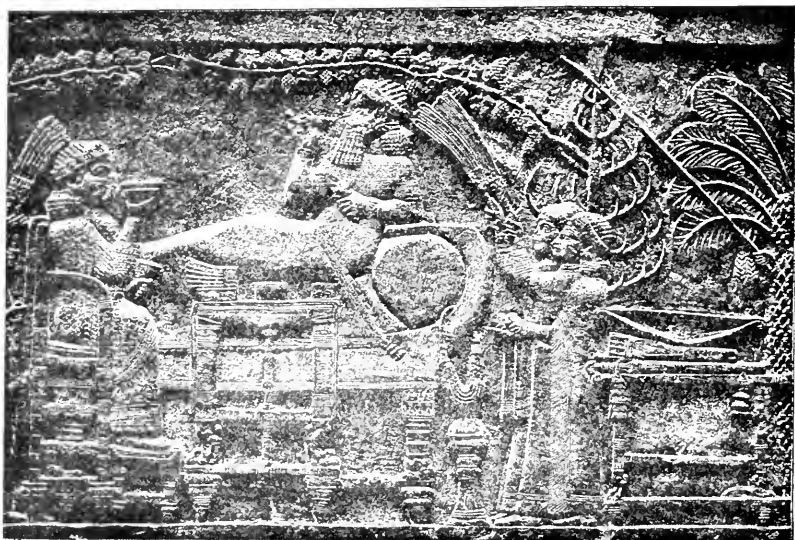


Fig. 28. KING SARDANAPALUS AND HIS CONSORT.

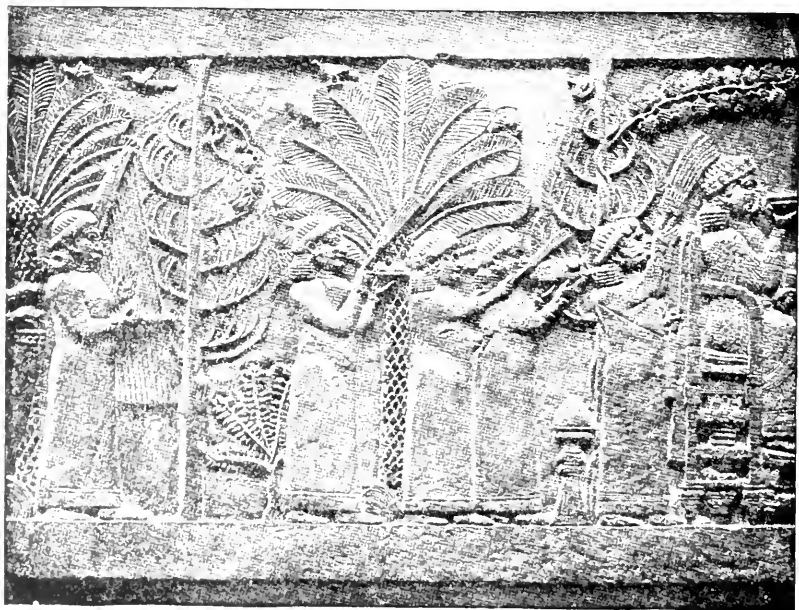


Fig. 29. ATTENDANTS UPON KING SARDANAPALUS AND HIS CONSORT.

have also been restored to our bodily vision. The prophet Isaiah (xlvi. 1) mentions the procession of the idols, and in Fig. 31 we actually witness one,—with the goddesses in front, and behind, the god of the weather armed with hammer and bolts; Assyrian soldiers have been commanded to transport the idols.

We see in Figure 32 how the statues of the gigantic stone bulls were transported, and catch in this way all manner of glimpses of the technical knowledge of the Assyrians. But our greatest and most constant delight is



Fig. 30. CONSORT OF SARDANAPALUS.  
(From a sketch by Colonel Billerbeck.)

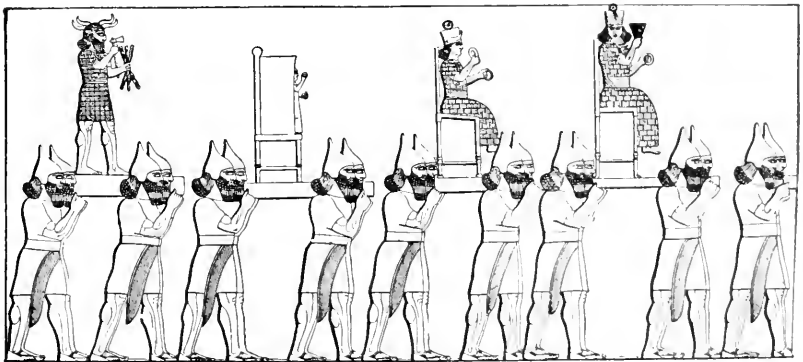


Fig. 31. PROCESSION OF IDOLS.

derived from the contemplation of their noble and simple architecture, as it is exhibited for example in the portal

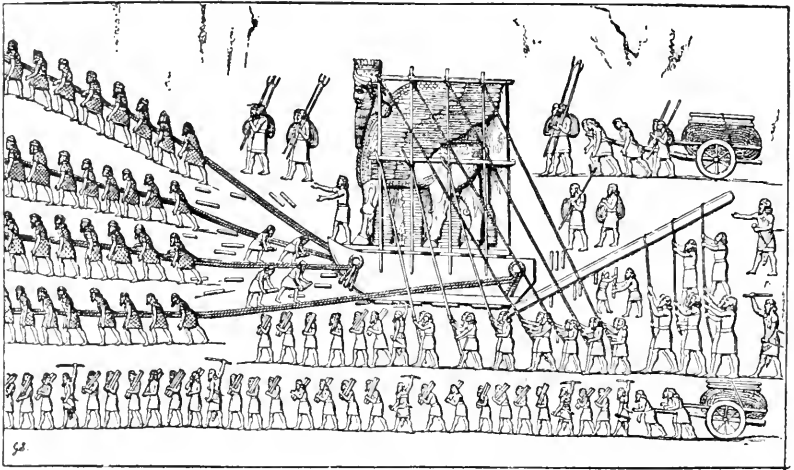


Fig. 32. TRANSPORTATION OF THE GIGANTIC STONE BULLS.

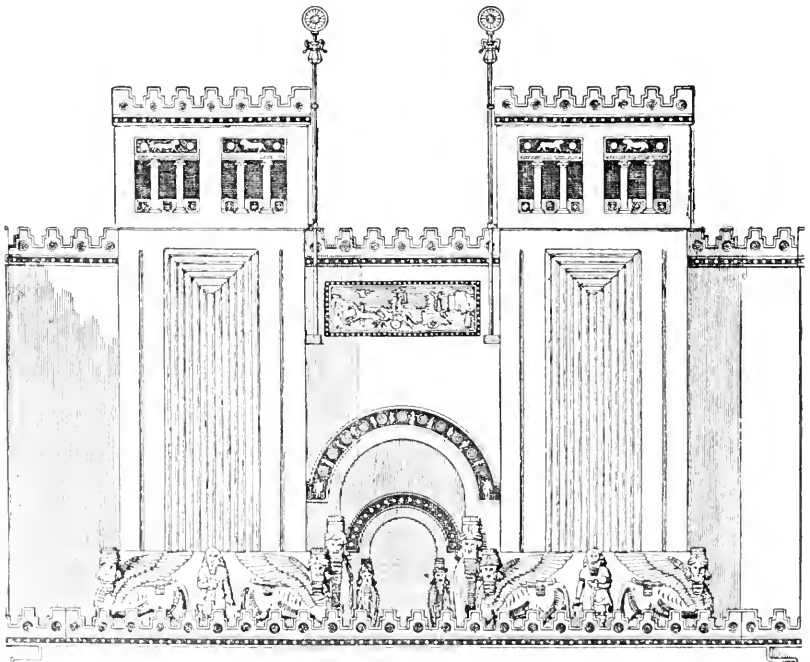


Fig. 33. PORTAL OF THE PALACE OF SARGON.  
(Representing the noble style and simplicity of the Assyrian architecture.)



of Sargon's palace excavated by Botta (Fig. 33), or from the magnificent representations of animals, replete with the most startling realism, which these "Dutchmen of antiquity" created. For example, the idyllic picture of the grazing antelopes (Fig. 13*a*; also Fig. 34), or the dying lioness of Nineveh, so justly renowned in art (Fig. 35).

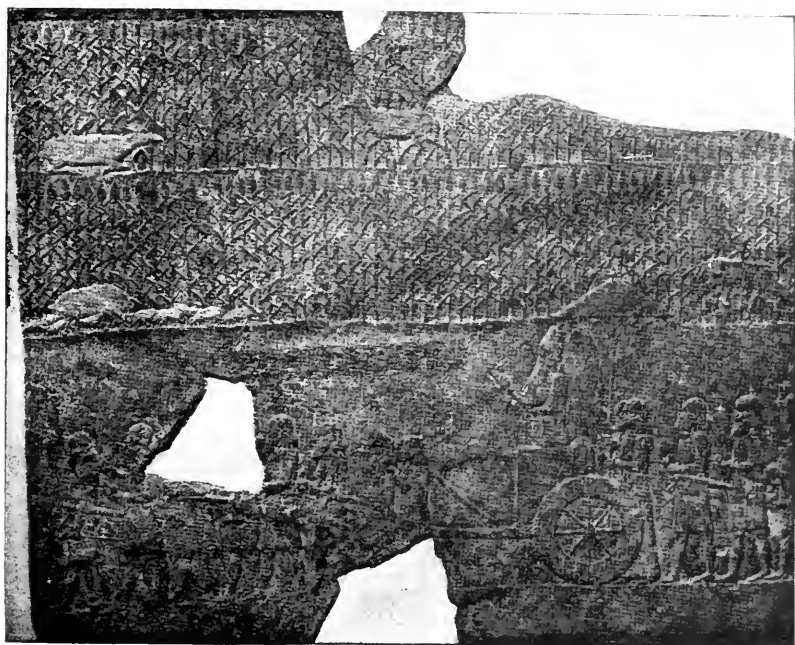


Fig. 34. IDYLIC SCENES FROM ASSYRIAN ART.

The excavations on Babylonian soil disclose in like manner the art and culture of the mother country of Assyrian civilisation far back in the fourth millennium,—a period which the boldest flights of fancy would otherwise have scarcely dreamt of recovering. We penetrate lastly here into the period of that primitive un-Indo-Germanic and likewise un-Semitic nation of Sumerians, who are

the creators and originators of the great Babylonian civilisation, of those Sumerians for whom the number 60 and not 100 constituted the next higher unit after 10.

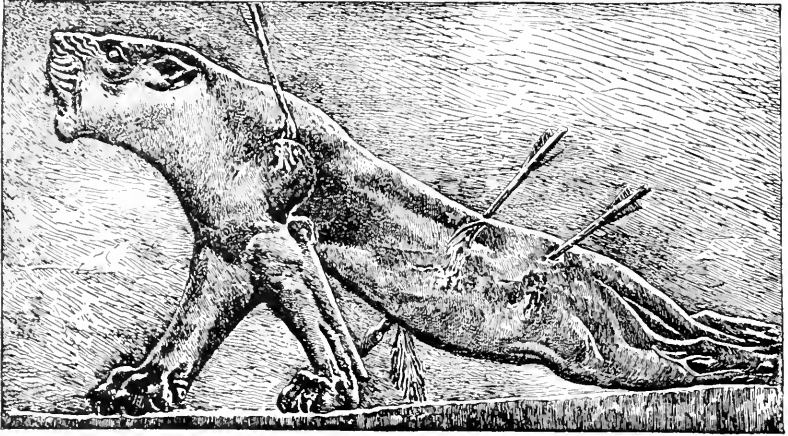


Fig. 35. THE DYING LIONESS OF NINEVEH.

That Sumerian Priest-King whose magnificently preserved head (Fig. 36) the Berlin Museum now shelters,



Fig. 36. HEAD OF A SUMERIAN PRIEST-KING  
(A noble type from the dawn of human history.)

may unquestionably be characterised as a noble representative of the human race from the twilight of history.

But gratifying and instructive as all these discoveries may be, they have yet, so to speak, the significance of details and externalities only, and are easily surpassed in scope and importance by the revelations which it still remains for us to adduce.

I am not referring now to the highly important fact that the Babylonian and Assyrian methods of reckoning time, which were based on accurate astronomical observations of solar eclipses, etc., enabled us to determine the chronology of the events narrated in the Book of Kings,—a circumstance that was doubly gratifying owing to the discovery of Robertson Smith and Wellhausen that the chronology of the Old Testament had been forcibly made to conform to a system of sacred numbers, which counted 480 years from the end of the Exile back to the founding of the temple of Solomon, and again 480 years backward from that date to the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt (1 Kings vi. 1).

I can also adduce in this place but a single, and that an inconspicuous, illustration of the far-reaching influence which the cuneiform investigations have exercised on *our understanding of the text of the Old Testament*,—a result due to the remarkably close affinity between the Babylonian and Hebrew languages and to the enormous compass of the Babylonian literature. We read in Numbers vi. 24–27 :

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

Countless times has this blessing been given and re-

ceived! But it was never understood in its full depth and import until Babylonian usage informed us that "to lift up one's countenance or eyes upon or to another," was a form of speech for "bestowing one's love upon another, for gazing lovingly and feelingly upon another, as a bridegroom upon a bride, or a father upon a son." This ancient and glorious benediction, therefore, invokes on man with increasing emphasis God's blessing and protection, God's benignant and gracious consideration, and lastly God's own love,—finally to break forth into that truly beautiful greeting of the Orient, "Peace be with thee!"

Yet the greatest and most unexpected service that Babel ever rendered the philological interpretation of the Bible must yield the palm for wide-reaching significance to the fact that here on the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris as early as 2250 B. C. we find *a highly organised constitutional state*. Here in these Babylonian lowlands, having an area not greater than that of Italy, yet extraordinarily rich by nature and transformed by human industry into a veritable hotbed of productiveness, there existed in the third millennium before Christ *a civilisation comparable in many respects with our own*.

It was Hammurabi, the Amraphel of the Bible, that ultimately succeeded in expelling the Elamites, the hereditary enemy of Babylon, from the country, and in welding North and South together into a single union, with Babylon as political and religious center. His first solicitude was to establish a uniform system of law over the entire country, and he accordingly promulgated a juridic code that determined in the minutest manner the rights

and privileges of his citizens. The relations of master, slave, and hireling, of merchant and apprentice, of landlord and tenant, are here precisely fixed. There is a law, for example, that a clerk who has delivered money to his superior for goods that he has sold shall obtain a receipt for the transaction. Reductions in rent are provided for in case of damage by storms and wild beasts. The fishing rights of boroughs along the canals are precisely defined. And so on. Babylon is the seat of the Supreme Court, to which all knotty and disputed points of law are submitted. Every able-bodied man is subject to military duty. But Hammurabi softened by many decisions the severity of the recruiting laws; for example, in the interests of stock-raising he exempted herdsmen from military service, and he also conferred special privileges on ancient priestly families.

We read of money having been coined in Babylon, and the distinctively cursive character of their script points to a very extensive use of writing. Many letters of this ancient period have been preserved. We read, for example, the letter of a wife to her absent husband, asking his advice on some trivial matter; the epistle of a son to his father, announcing that a certain person has unspeakably offended him, and that his impulse is to give the miscreant a severe drubbing, but that he prefers to have the advice of his father on the matter; and another, still stranger one, in which a son implores his father to send him at once the money that he has so long promised him, fortifying his request with the contumelious insinuation that in that event only will he feel justified in resuming his prayers for his father's salvation. Every-

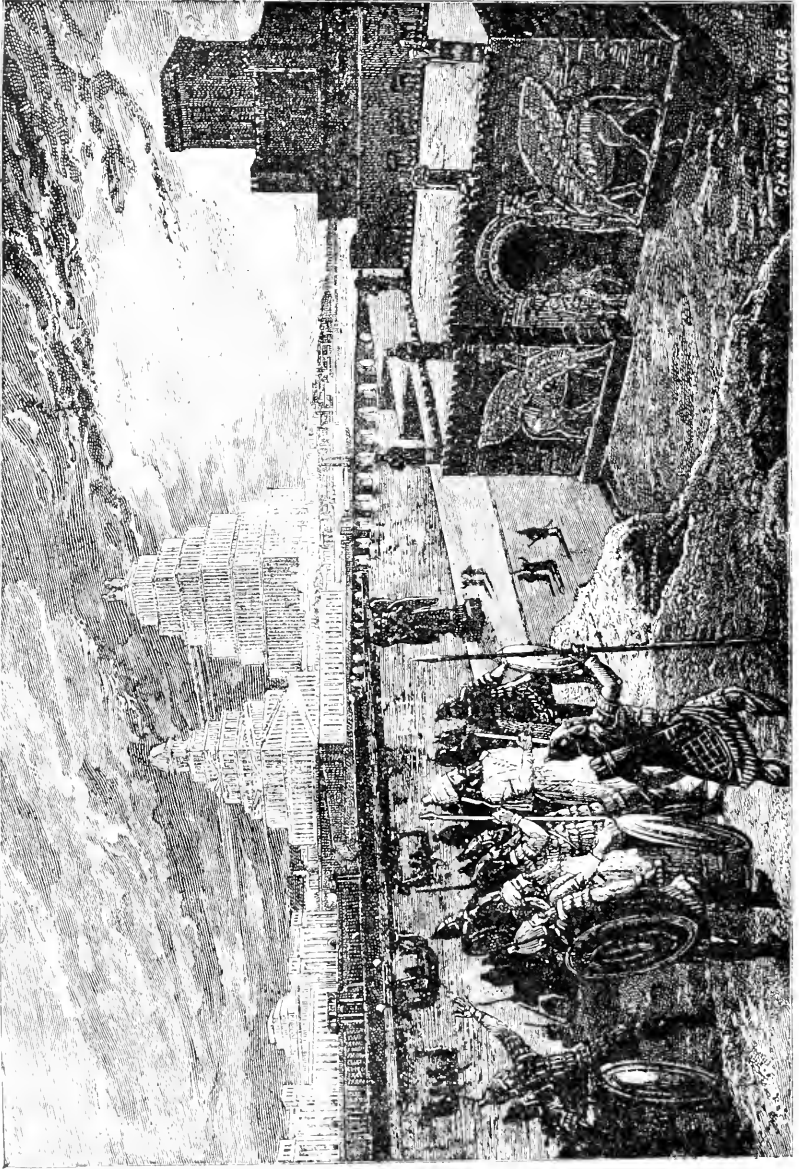


Fig. 37. THE TEMPLES AND PALACES ON THE QUAYS OF BABYLON. (After G. le Bon.)

thing, in fact, points to a thoroughly organised postal system throughout the empire, and this conclusion is corroborated by the distinctest evidence that there existed causeways and canals in Babylonia which extended far beyond its boundaries and which were kept in perfect condition.

Commerce and industry, stock-raising and agriculture, flourished here in an eminent degree, while science,

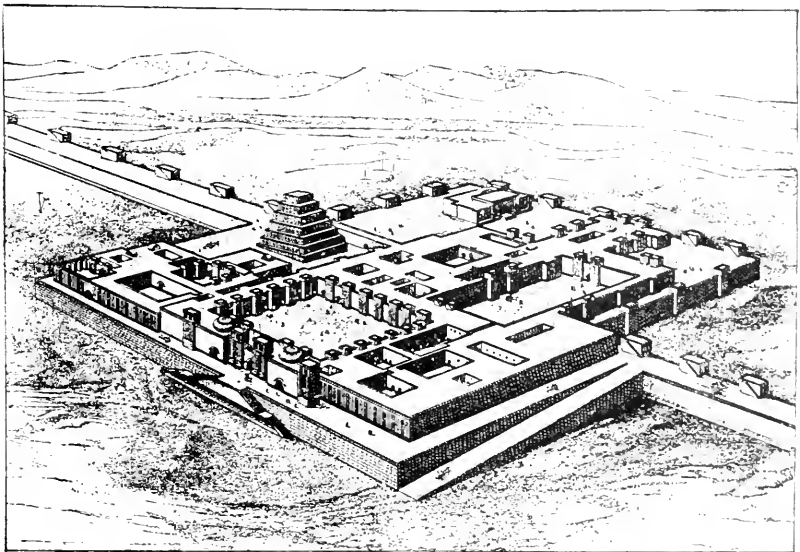


Fig. 38. PALACE OF KING SARGON AT KHORSABAD.  
(Restored by Victor Place.)

geometry, mathematics, and notably astronomy, attained a height of development that has repeatedly evoked the admiration of modern scientists. Certainly not Paris, and at most Rome, can bear comparison with Babylon in the extent of influence which it exercised upon the world for 2000 years.

Bitter testimony do the prophets of the Old Testa-

ment bear to the surpassing splendor and unconquerable might of the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar (see Figs. 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41). "Babylon," cries Jeremiah, "hath been a golden cup in Yahveh's hand, that made all the earth drunken" (Jer. li. 7); and the Revelation of St. John still quivers with the detested memory of Babel the Great, the gay voluptuous city, the wealth-teeming metropolis of commerce and art, the mother of harlots and

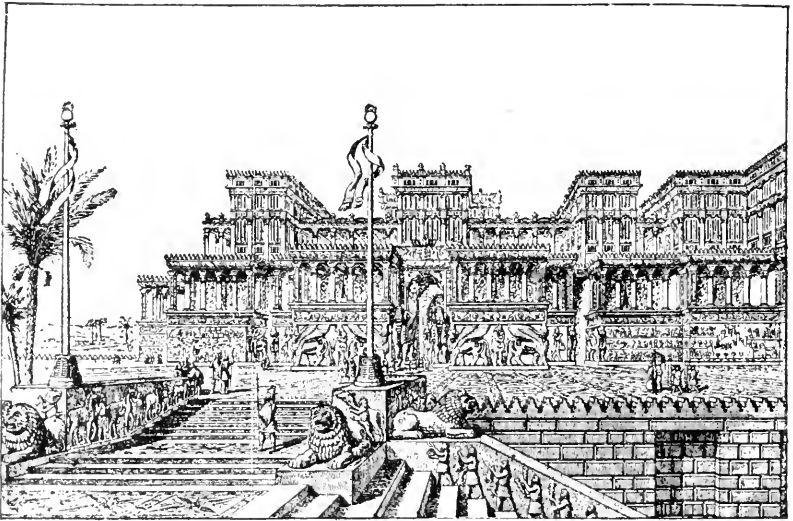


Fig. 39. PALACE OF SENNACHERIB AT NINEVEH (RESTORED).

(After Ferguson.)

of all abominations of the earth. Yet so far back as the beginning of the third millennium before Christ Babylon had been this great focus of culture, science, and literature, the "brain" of Hither Asia, the power that dominated the world.

In the winter of 1887, a band of Egyptian fellahs who were excavating in the ruins of the palaces of Amenophis IV. at El-Amarna, between Thebes and Memphis,



discovered about 300 clay tablets of many forms and sizes. These tablets were found to contain the correspondence of Babylonian, Assyrian, and Mesopotamian kings with the Pharaohs Amenophis III. and IV., and, most important of all, the letters of the Egyptian governors of the great Canaanite cities of Tyre, Sidon, Akko, Askalon, etc., to the Egyptian court; and the museum at Berlin is so fortunate as to possess the only letters that

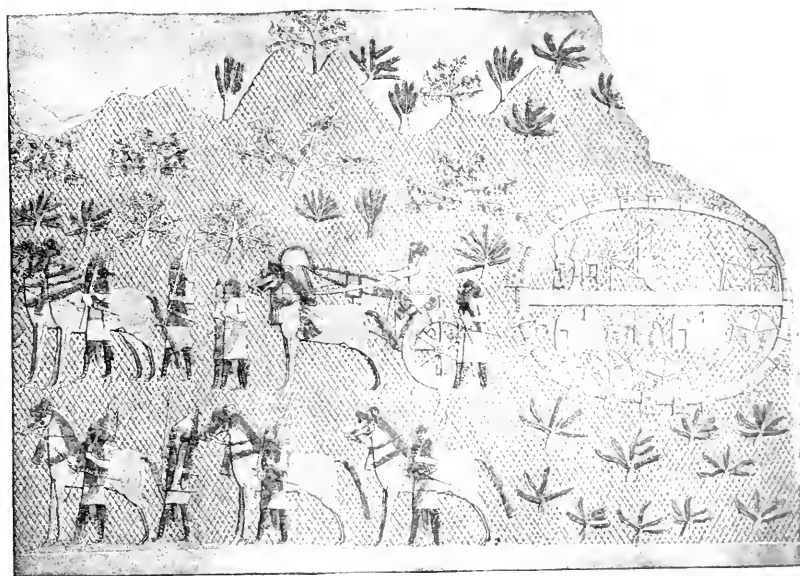


Fig. 40. CHARIOT AND ATTENDANTS OF SENNACHERIB WITH CASTLE ON A MOUNTAIN. (After Layard.)

came from Jerusalem,—letters written before the entrance of the Israelites into the promised land. Like a powerful searchlight, these clay tablets of El-Amarna shed a flood of dazzling effulgence upon the profound obscurity which shrouded the political and cultural conditions of the period from 1500 to 1400 B. C.; and the mere fact that the magnates of Canaan, nay, even of Cyprus, made use of the

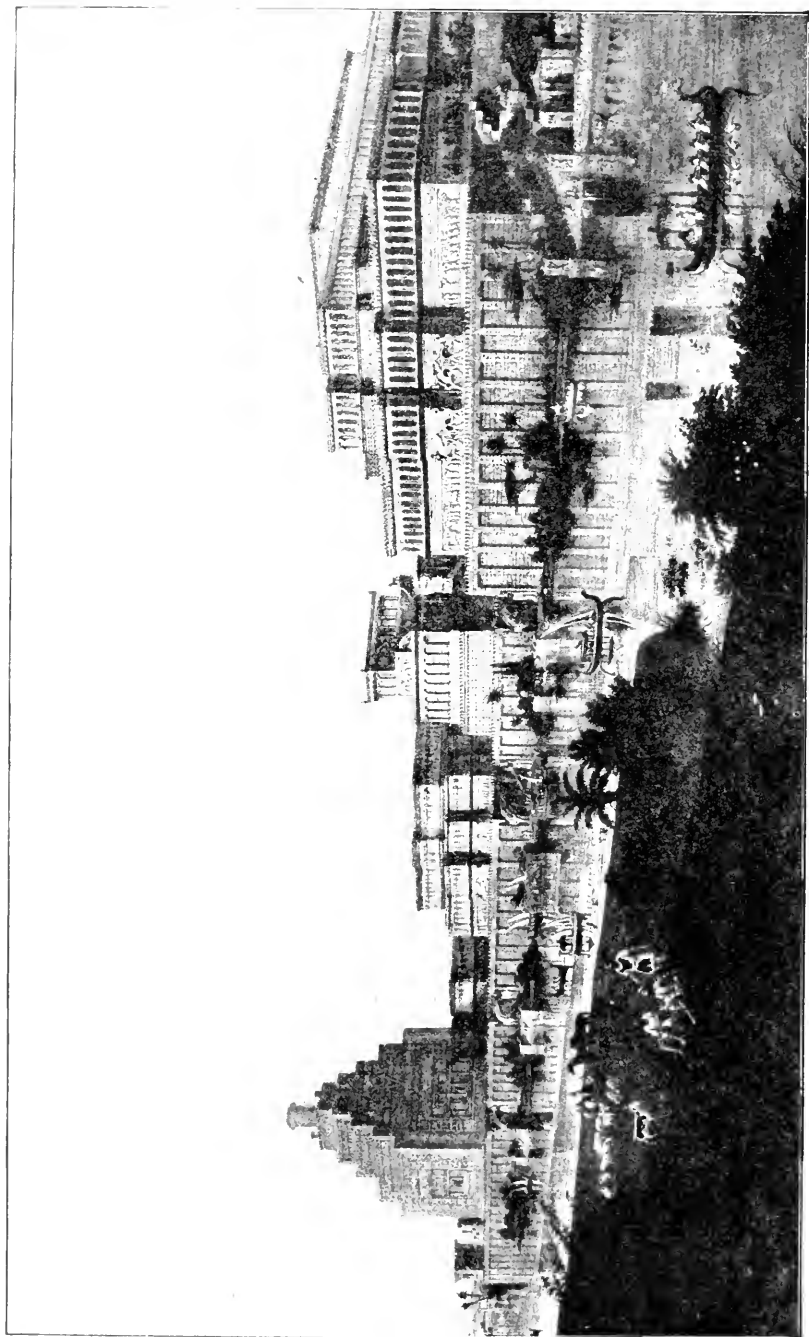


Fig. 41 THE PALACES OF NIMRUD RESTORED From a Sketch by James Ferguson. (Layard)

Babylonian language and script, and like the Babylonians wrote on clay tablets, the mere fact that the Babylonian language was the official language of diplomatic intercourse from the Euphrates to the Nile, is in itself indisputable proof of the omnipotent influence which Babylonian civilisation and literature exercised on the world from the year 2200 until 1400 B. C.

When the twelve tribes of Israel invaded the land of Canaan, they entered a country *which belonged absolutely to the domain of Babylonian civilisation*. It is an unimportant but characteristic feature of the prevailing state of things that a *Babylonish* garment excited the avarice of Achan when the first Canaanite city, Jericho, was stormed and plundered (Joshua vii. 21). And not only the industry, but also the commerce and law, the customs and the science of Babylon were the standards of the land. Knowing this, we comprehend at once why the systems of measures, weights, and coins used in the Old Testament, and the external form of their laws ("if a man do this or that, he shall be punished after this manner or that") are Babylonian throughout. So also the sacerdotal customs and the methods of offering sacrifices were profoundly influenced by Babylonian models; and it is a remarkable fact that Israelitic traditions are altogether at variance in their accounts of the origin of the Sabbath,—as will be rendered apparent by a comparison of Exodus xx. 11 and Deuteronomy v. 15. But now the matter is clearer.

The Babylonians also had their Sabbath day (*shabbattu*), and a calendar of feasts and sacrifices has been unearthed according to which the 7th, 14th, 21st, and

28th days of every month were set apart as days on which no work should be done, on which the king should not change his robes, nor mount his chariot, nor offer sacrifices, nor render legal decisions, nor eat of boiled or roasted meats, on which not even a physician should lay hands on the sick. Now this setting apart of the seventh day for the propitiation of the gods is really understood from the Babylonian point of view, and there can therefore be scarcely the shadow of a doubt that in the last resort we are indebted to this ancient nation on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris for the plenitude of blessings that flows from our day of Sabbath or Sunday rest.

And more still. There is a priceless treasure in the Berlin Museum, a tablet of clay, containing the Babylonian legend of how it came to pass that the first man forfeited the boon of immortality. The place where this tablet was found, namely El-Amarna in Egypt, and the numerous dots scattered over it in red Egyptian ink, showing the pains that some Egyptian scholar had taken to master the intricacies of the foreign text, are ocular evidence of the zeal with which the productions of Babylonian literature were cultivated over the vast extent of territory which stretched from Canaan to the land of the Pharaohs. Shall we be astonished, therefore, to learn that entire cycles of Biblical stories have been suddenly brought to light from the darkness of the Babylonian treasure-heaps, in much purer and more primitive form than they exist in the Bible itself?

The Babylonians divided their history into two great periods: that before the Flood and that after the Flood.

Babylonia was in the true sense of the word the land of deluges. Like all alluvial lowlands bordering on great streams that flow into the sea, it was exposed to floods of the direst and most unique character. It is the home of the cyclone or tornado, with its accompaniment of earthquake and cloudburst. Only twenty-five years ago, in the year 1876, a tornado of this character gathered in the Bay of Bengal, and amid the crashing of thunder and with a violence so terrific as to dismast ships distant nearly two hundred miles, approached the delta of the Ganges, met the ebbing tide, and engulfing it in its own titanic tidal-wave, hurled oceans of water over an area of 141 square leagues to a depth of 45 feet, drowning 215,000 human beings, and only losing its strength as it broke against the highlands that lay beyond. Now the credit belongs to the celebrated Viennese geologist, Eduard Suess, for having discovered the exact and detailed description of just such a tornado in the Babylonian story of the Flood inscribed on this tablet (Fig. 42) from the library of Sardanapalus at Nineveh and committed to writing 2000 years before Christ. The *sea* plays the principal part in this flood, and therefore the ark of the Babylonian Noah, Xisuthros, is *cast back* upon a spur of the Armenio-Medean mountains; but in other respects it is the same old story of the Flood, so familiar to us all.

Xisuthros receives from the god of the watery deep the command to build a ship of certain dimensions, to coat it thoroughly with pitch, and to put on board of it his entire family together with the seeds of all living things. The ship is entered, its doors are closed, it is cast adrift upon the devastating waves, and is finally

stranded upon a mountain bearing the name of Nizir. Then follows the famous passage: "On the seventh day I took forth a dove and released it; the dove flew hither and thither, but finding no resting-place returned." We then read that a swallow was sent forth; it also found no resting-place and returned. Finally a raven was sent forth, which, noticing that the waters had subsided, did



Fig. 42. TABLET CONTAINING BABYLONIAN STORY OF THE FLOOD.

not return. Xisuthros then abandons his ship and offers sacrifices on the summit of the mountain. The sweet odor was scented by the gods, etc., etc.

This entire story, precisely as it is here written, afterwards travelled to Canaan, but owing to the totally different conformation of the land in this latter country, it was forgotten that the sea had played the principal rôle,

and we accordingly find in the Bible two distinct versions of the Flood, which are not only absolutely impossible from the point of view of natural science, but are also at diametrical variance with each other, the one giving as the duration of the Flood a period of 365 days and the other a period of  $40 + (3 \times 7)$ , or 61 days. We owe the discovery that two fundamentally different versions of the story of the Flood were welded together into one in the Bible, to the orthodox Catholic body surgeon of Louis XV., Jean Astruc, who, in the year 1753 first submitted, as Goethe expresses it, the books of Moses "to the probe and knife," and thus became the founder of Pentateuch criticism, or that branch of inquiry which seeks to increase and clarify our knowledge of the many diversified sources of which the Five Books of Moses are composed.

These are facts which from the point of view of science are as immutable as rock, however stubbornly people on both sides of the Atlantic may close their eyes to them. When we remember that minds of the stamp of Luther and Melancthon once contemptuously rejected the Copernican system of astronomy, we may be certain that the results of the scientific criticism of the Pentateuch will tarry long for recognition. Yet it is just as certain that some day they will be openly admitted.

The ten Babylonian kings who reigned before the Flood have also been accepted in the Bible as the ten antediluvian patriarchs, and the agreement is perfect in all details.

In addition to the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, the eleventh tablet of which contains the story of the Flood,

we possess another beautiful Babylonian poem, the story of the Creation.

In the primordial beginning of things, according to this epic, down in the gloomy chaos, surged and raged the primeval waters, the name of which was Tiamat. When the gods declared their intention of forming an orderly cosmos out of the chaos, Tiamat arose (usually represented as a dragon, but also as a seven-headed serpent), and made ready for combat to the death. Monsters of all descriptions she spawned from her mighty depths, especially gigantic venom-blown serpents; and in their company she set forth bellowing and snorting to her conflict with the gods. The Celestials quaked with terror when they saw their direful foe. The god Marduk alone, the god of light, of dawn, and of the vernal sun, came forward to do battle with her, his sole stipulation being that sovereign rank among the gods should be accorded him.

Then follows a splendid scene. First the god Marduk fastened a gigantic net to the East and the South, to the North and the West, lest any part of Tiamat should escape. He then mounted in shining armor and radiant with majesty his celestial chariot, which was drawn by four spirited steeds, the admired cynosure of the eyes of all the surrounding gods. Straightway he made for the dragon and her dread embattled train, sending forth his challenge for the contest. Then Tiamat shrieked loudly and fiercely, till her deepest foundations trembled and shook. She opened her maw to its uttermost, but before she could shut her lips Marduk made enter into her belly the evil hurricane. He seized his lance and pierced her



heart. He cast her carcass down and placed himself upon it, whilst her helpers were taken captive and placed in close confinement. Thereupon Marduk cut Tiamat in twain, as cleanly as one would sever a fish, and of the one half he made the roof of heaven and of the other he made the earth; and the heaven he inlaid with the moon, and the sun, and the stars, and the earth he covered with plants and animals, until finally the first man and the first woman, made of mingled clay and celestial blood, came forth from the hand of their creator.

Since Marduk was the city-god of Babel, it is quite intelligible that this story found widespread diffusion in Canaan. Nay, the poets and prophets of the Old Testament went so far as to attribute directly to Yahveh the heroic deeds of Marduk, and to extol him as the champion that broke the head of the dragons in the water (Psalms lxxiv. 13 et seq.; lxxxix. 10), and under whom the helpers of the dragon stooped (Job ix. 13).

Passages like the following from Isaiah li. 9:

“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Yahveh; awake, as in the days of old, in the generations of ancient times. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab in pieces and pierced the dragon?”

or passages like that from Job xxvi. 12:

“He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth the dragon,”

read like explanatory comments on the little image which our expedition found representing the god Marduk, of the powerful arm, the far-seeing eye, and the far-hearing ear, the symbol of intelligence clad in majestic glory, with the conquered dragon of the primeval waters at his feet (Fig. 44).

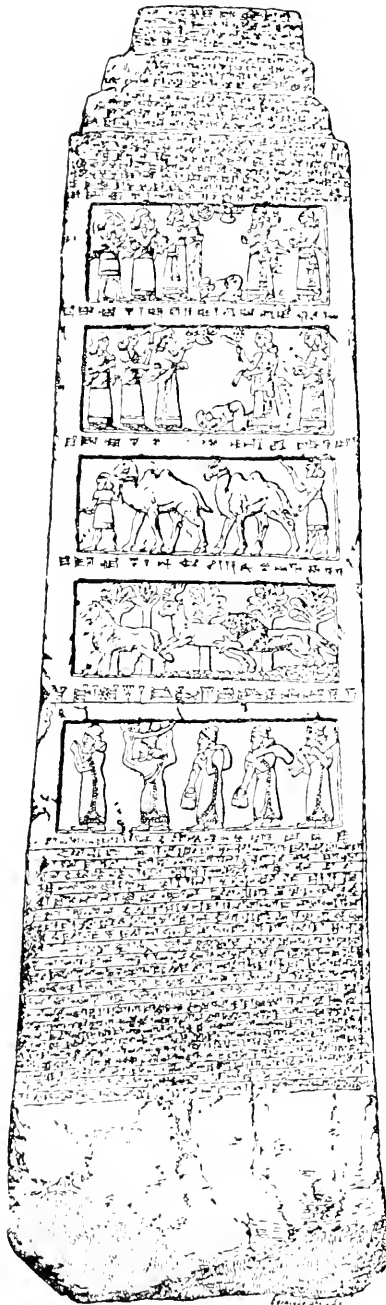


Fig. 43 THE "BLACK OBELISK."<sup>1</sup>  
(Lenormant, V., p. 329.)

<sup>1</sup> Erected by Shalmaneser II. (860-825 B.C.) to record the victories of his 31 military expeditions.



Fig. 44. MARDUK WITH THE CONQUERED  
DRAGON OF THE PRIMEVAL WATERS  
AT HIS FEET.



Fig. 45. CONICAL PIECE OF CLAY FROM A  
BABYLONIAN COFFIN.

The priestly author that wrote the first chapter of Genesis took infinite pains to eliminate all mythological features from his story of the creation of the world. But since his story begins with the gloomy, watery chaos which bears precisely the same name as Tiamat, namely *Tehom*, and since this chaos was first divided by the light, and heaven and the earth appeared afterwards, and heaven was set with the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the earth was covered with flowers and with animals, and finally the first man and woman went forth from the hand of God, it will be seen that there is a very close relationship between the Biblical and the Babylonian story of the creation of the world; and it will be obvious at the same time how absolutely futile all attempts are and will forever remain, to harmonise our Biblical story of the creation with the results of natural science.

It is an interesting fact that echoes of this same conflict between Marduk and Tiamat may still be heard in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, in the battle between the archangel Michael and the beast of the deep, "that old serpent called the Devil and Satan." This entire group of stories, which is also represented in the tale of St. George and the dragon, brought by the crusaders from the East, is distinctively Babylonian in character; inasmuch as many, many hundred years before the Apocalypse and the first chapter of Genesis were written, we find this conflict between the powers of light and the powers of darkness renewed at the break of every day and the beginning of every spring, depicted in gorgeous relief on the walls of the Assyrian palaces (Fig. 46).

But the discovery of this relationship is of still

greater importance. The commandment not to do unto one's neighbor what one would not like to have done unto oneself is indelibly engraven on every human heart. "Thou shalt not shed the blood of thy neighbor," "thou shalt not draw near thy neighbor's wife," "thou shalt not take unto thyself the garment of thy neighbor,"—all these fundamental postulates of the human instinct of

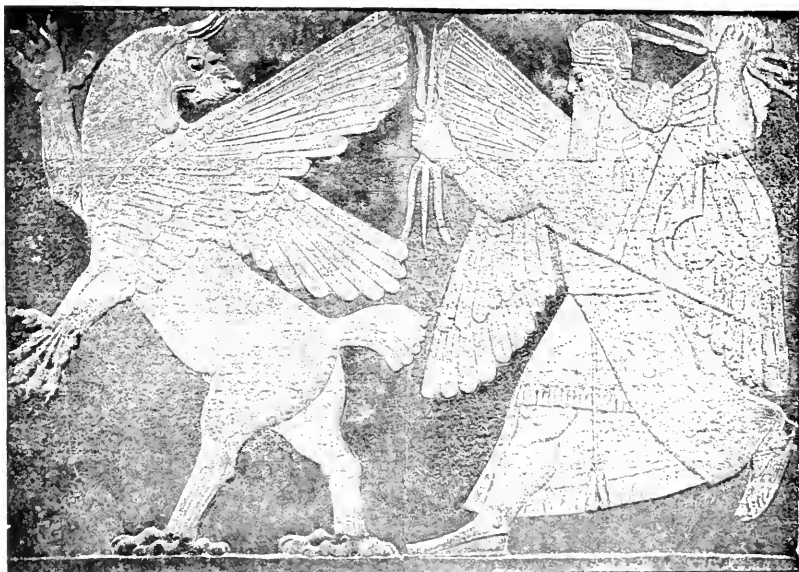


Fig. 46. BATTLE BETWEEN MARDUK AND TIAMAT, THE POWERS OF LIGHT AND THE POWERS OF DARKNESS.

(Ancient Assyrian bas-relief now in the British Museum.)

self-preservation are read in the Babylonian records in precisely the same order as they are given in the fifth, sixth and seventh commandments of the Old Testament.

But man is also a social being, and for this reason the commandments of humanity, charity, mercy, and love, also form an inalienable patrimony of the human race. Therefore when a Babylonian Magus was called to a man

who was ill and began to inquire what sin had stretched him on the sick-bed, he did not rest satisfied with the recital of the greater sins of commission like murder and robbery, but he asked: "Hath this man refused to clothe one that was naked; or hath he refused light to one that was imprisoned?" The Babylonian lays great stress, too, on the higher forms of human morality; speaking the truth and keeping one's word were sacred duties with them, while to say "yes" with the lips and "no" with the heart was a punishable transgression. It is not surprising that infringements of these commandments were regarded by the Babylonians precisely as they were by the Hebrews, as *sins*, for the Babylonians also in all their doings considered themselves as dependent on the gods. But it is certainly more remarkable that they also conceived all human afflictions, particularly sickness and death, as a *punishment* for sins. In Babel as in the Bible, the notion of sin dominates everything. Under these circumstances it is intelligible that Babylonian thinkers also pondered deeply over the problem of how it was possible that a creature that had been created in the image of God and was God's own handiwork could have fallen a victim to sin and to death; and the Bible has a profound and beautiful story of the temptation of woman by the serpent.

The serpent again? That has an unmistakably Babylonian ring. It was doubtless the same serpent, the primordial foe of the gods, that sought to revenge itself on the gods of light by seeking to estrange from them their noblest creature? Or was it the serpent of which it is once said that it "destroyed the dwelling-place of life"?

The question as to the origin of the Biblical story of the Fall of Man is of the utmost importance from the point of view of the history of religion as well as from that of the theology of the New Testament, which, as is well known, contrasts with the first Adam by whom sin and death were brought into the world, a second Adam.

May I lift the veil, may I point to an old Babylonian cylinder-seal (Fig. 47), on which may be seen in the center a tree bearing pendent fruits, to the right a man,

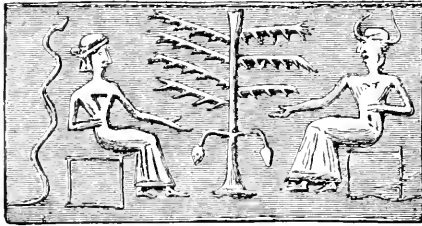


Fig. 47. SACRED TREE AND SERPENT.

A Babylonian conception of the Fall of Man.  
(After Smith.)

distinguishable by his horns, which are the symbol of strength, to the left a woman, both with their hands outstretched toward the fruit, and behind the woman the serpent? Is it not the very acme of likelihood that

there is some connection between this old Babylonian picture and the Biblical tale of the Fall of Man?

Man dies, and while his body is buried in the grave his departed soul descends into "the land of no returning," into Sheol, into Hades, into the gloomy, dust-impregnated locality, where the shades flutter around like birds and lead a joyless and sodden existence. Dust covers the doors and the bolts, and everything in which the heart of man took delight is mouldy and dust-laden.

With such a disconsolate outlook it is intelligible that both Hebrews and Babylonians looked upon length of days here below as the sovereign boon; and on every single one of the great flag-stones with which the holy

street of Marduk in Babylon was paved, and which was discovered by the German expedition to that city, there was engraved a prayer of Nebuchadnezzar which closed with the words: "O, Lord Marduk, grant to us great length of days!"

But strange to say, the Babylonian conception of the Underworld is one degree pleasanter than that of the Old Testament. On the twelfth tablet of the Gilgamesh epic, the Babylonian Underworld is described in the minutest details. We read there of a space situated beneath the Underworld which was apparently reserved for souls of unusual piety and "in which they reposed on beds of ease and quaffed clear water."

Many Babylonian coffins have been found in Warka, Nippur, and Babel, but the Berlin Museum recently acquired a small conical piece of clay (Fig. 45), which has evidently been taken from a coffin of this kind, and the inscription of which plaintively requests that whosoever may find the coffin shall leave it undisturbed and uninjured in its original resting-place; and the text concludes with words of blessing for him who performs so kind a deed: "May his name be blessed in the Upperworld, and in the Underworld may his departed spirit drink of clear water."

In Sheol, therefore, there exists a place for particularly pious souls, where they repose on beds of ease and quaff clear water. The remainder of Sheol, therefore, appears to be especially adapted to the needs of the impious and to be not only dusty but to be also without water, or at most furnishing "roily water,"—in any event a place of thirst.

In the Book of Job (xxiv. 18), which appears to be extremely conversant with Babylonian modes of thought, we find comparisons drawn between the arid, waterless desert which is reserved for those that have sinned, and the garden with fresh, clear water which is reserved for the pious. And in the New Testament, which has most curiously amalgamated this sentiment with the last verse of the Book of Isaiah, we read of a flaming hell in which the rich man languishes from want of water, and of a garden (for that is the meaning of Paradise) full of fresh, clear water for Lazarus.

And the pictures which painters and poets, theologians and priests, and last of all Mahomet the prophet, have drawn of this Hell and this Paradise, are well known.

Behold yonder poor Moslem, sick and feeble, who on account of his weakness has been abandoned by the caravan in the desert. A jug filled with water is by his side. With his own hands he digs his shallow grave in the desert sands, resignedly awaiting his death. His eyes are aglow with expectation, for in a few moments angels will issue from the open portals of Paradise and greet him with the words: "*Salam 'alaika*, thou hast been a god-fearing man; enter therefore for all eternity the garden that Allah has prepared for his own."

The garden stretches before him like the vast expanse of heaven and earth. Luxuriant groves casting plentiful shadows and laden with sweet fruits are intersected in all directions with babbling brooks and dotted with bubbling springs; while aerial bowers rise from the banks of the streams. Paradisian glory suffuses the



countenances of the beatified ones, who are filled with happiness and serenity. They wear green brocaded garments made of the finest silk; their arms are adorned with gold and silver spangles; they lie on couches with lofty bolsters and soft pillows, and at their feet are thick carpets. So they rest, seated opposite one another at richly-furnished tables which offer them everything their hearts desire. Brimming goblets go the rounds, and youths endowed with immortality and resembling scattered pearls carry silver beakers and crystal vessels filled with Maïn, the most delicious and clearest water from the spring Tasnim, from which the archangels drink, redolent with camphor and ginger. And this water is mixed with the rarest old wine, of which one can drink as much as one pleases, for it does not inebriate and causes no headaches.



Fig. 48. ASSYRIAN ANGEL.  
Type representing manly strength and  
intelligence. (Bas-relief of Kuyunjik.  
Lenormant, IV., pp. 432-433 )

And then there are the maidens of Paradise! Maidens with skin as soft and delicate as the ostrich egg, with voluptuous bosoms, and with eyes like glittering pearls concealed in shells of oysters,—gazelle-like eyes full of chaste but enrapturing glances. Two and seventy of

these Paradisian maidens may every god-fearing man choose unto himself, in addition to the wives that he possessed on earth, provided he cares to have them (and the good man will always cherish desire for the good). All hatred and envy has departed from the breasts of the devout ones; no gossip, no slander, is heard in Paradise. “*Selam, Selam!*” everywhere; and all utterances con-



Fig. 49. ANGELS WITH EAGLE HEADS.

The Holy Tree in the Centre. (British Museum.)

clude with the ringing words: *el-hamdu lillahi rabbi-l-'alamin*, the praise is the Lord's, the master of all creatures.

This is the culminating point in the development of that simple and unpretentious Babylonian conception of the crystal-clear water which god-fearing men were destined to drink in Sheol. And these conceptions of the

torments of Hell and of the blissful pleasures of Paradise to-day sway the hearts of untold millions.

It is well-known, also, that the conceptions of the messengers of the gods, or of the *angels*, with which the Egyptians were utterly unacquainted, are characteristically Babylonian, and also that the conception of cheru-

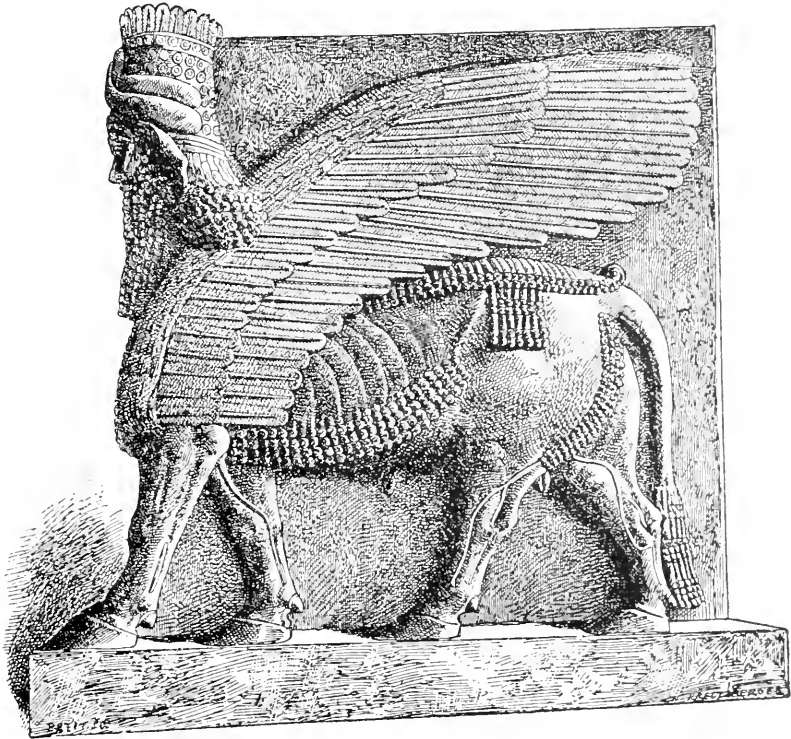


Fig. 50. WINGED CHERUB, WITH BODY OF BULL AND HUMAN HEAD  
(After Layard.)

bim and seraphim and of the guardian angels that watch over the ways of men had its origin in Babylon. The Babylonian rulers stood in need of hosts of messengers to bear their behests into all quarters of their dominions; and so also their gods were obliged to have at their beck

and call legions of messengers or angels,—messengers with the intelligence of men, and therefore having the form of men, but at the same time equipped with wings, in order to be able to carry through the winds of heaven the commands of the gods to the inhabitants of earth; in addition, these angels were invested with the keenness of vision and the rapidity of flight of the eagle; and to those

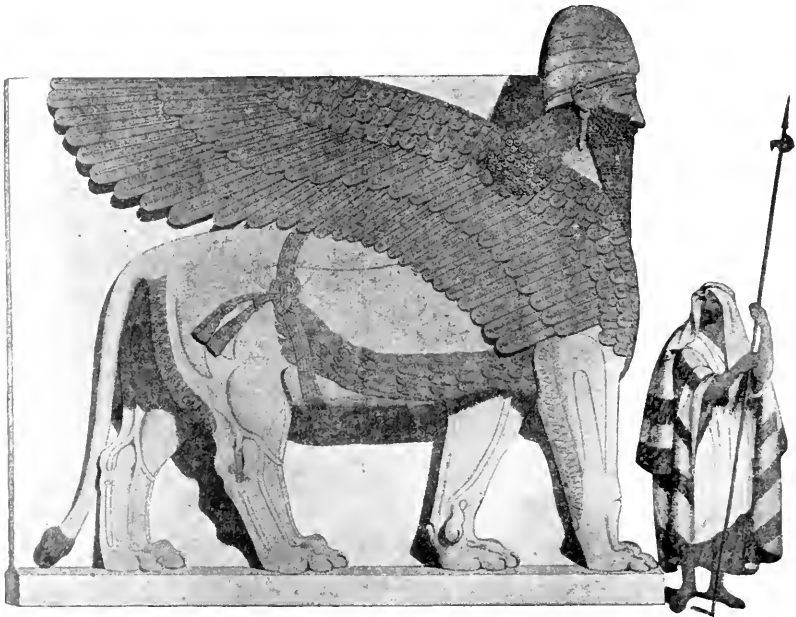


Fig. 50a. WINGED CHERUB, WITH BODY OF LION AND HUMAN HEAD  
(After Layard.)

whose chief office it was to guard the entrance to their divine masters was imparted the unconquerable strength of the bull, or the awe-inspiring majesty of the lion. (Figs. 48, 49, 50, and 50a.)

The Babylonian and Assyrian angels, like those in Ezekiel's vision, are very often of hybrid shape. Take, for example, the cherubim of which a type is given in

Fig. 50, with their wings, their bull's bodies, and their honest, serious human countenances. Then again we find types like that discovered in the palace of Ashurnazirpal (Fig. 51), which bears the closest possible resemblance to our conception of angels. These noble and radiant figures, which art has rendered so attractive and familiar in our eyes, will always retain a kindly place in our hearts.

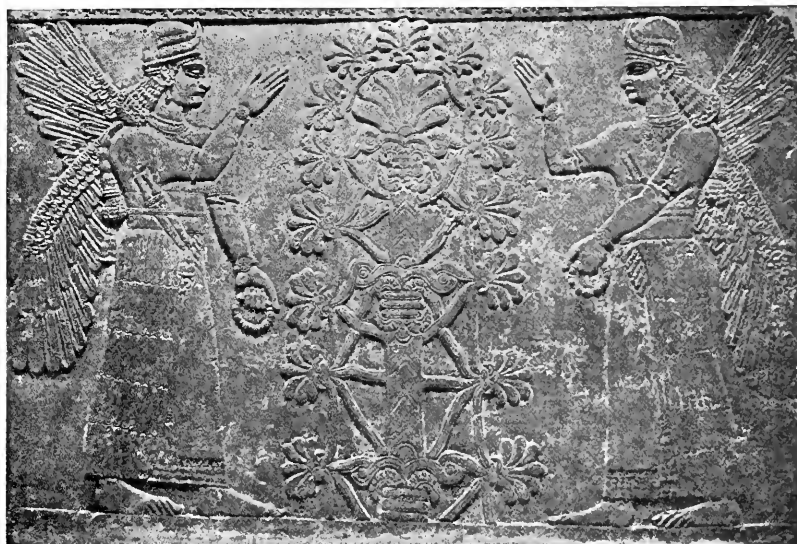


Fig. 51. ANGELS WITH HUMAN HEADS.

(Noble types closely resembling the Christian conception of angels.)

But the *demons* and the *devils*, whether they take for us the form of the enemies of man or that of the primordial foes of God,—to these we were destined to bid farewell for all eternity, for the ancient Persian dualism was not after our hearts. “I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: *it is I, Yahveh, that do all these things.*” So justly declares the greatest

prophet of the Old Testament, Isaiah (xlv. 7). Demons like that represented in Fig. 52,—though such pictures are not without interest for the history of duelling,—or caricatures like that represented in Fig. 53, may be com-



Fig. 52. DUEL OF LION-HEADED AND EAGLE-FOOTED DEMONS.

(British Museum. After Lenormant.)

mitted forever and aye to the obscurity of the Babylonian hills from which they have risen. (See also Fig. 54.)

In his excavations at Khorsabad, Victor Place discovered the supply-depot of the palace of Sargon. One of the store-rooms contained pottery of all sorts and sizes,

and another utensils and implements made of iron. Here were found arranged in beautiful order abundant supplies of chains, nails, plugs, mattocks, and hoes, and the iron had been so admirably wrought and was so well preserved that it rang like a bell when struck; and some of these implements which were then twenty-five centuries old could be forthwith put into actual use by the Arabian workmen.

This drastic intrusion of Assyrian antiquity upon our own days naturally fills us with amazement, and yet it is nothing more than what has happened in the intellectual domain. When we distinguish the twelve signs of the zodiac and call them Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc. (see Fig. 55), when we divide the circle into 360 parts, the hour into 60 minutes, and the minute into 60 seconds, and so on,—in all this, Sumerian and Babylonian civilisation still lives with us to-day.

And possibly I have also been successful in my endeavor to show that many Babylonian features still cling, through the medium of the Bible, to our religious thinking.

The elimination from our religious thought of the purely human conceptions derived from these admittedly



Fig. 53. BABYLONIAN DEVIL.  
Demon of the Southwest Wind.  
(Louvre. After Smith.)

talented peoples, and the liberation of our thought generally from the shackles of deep-rooted prejudices, will in no wise impair true religion and the true religious spirit, as these have been taught us by the prophets and poets of the Old Testament, but most sublimely of all by Jesus; on the contrary, both will come forth from this

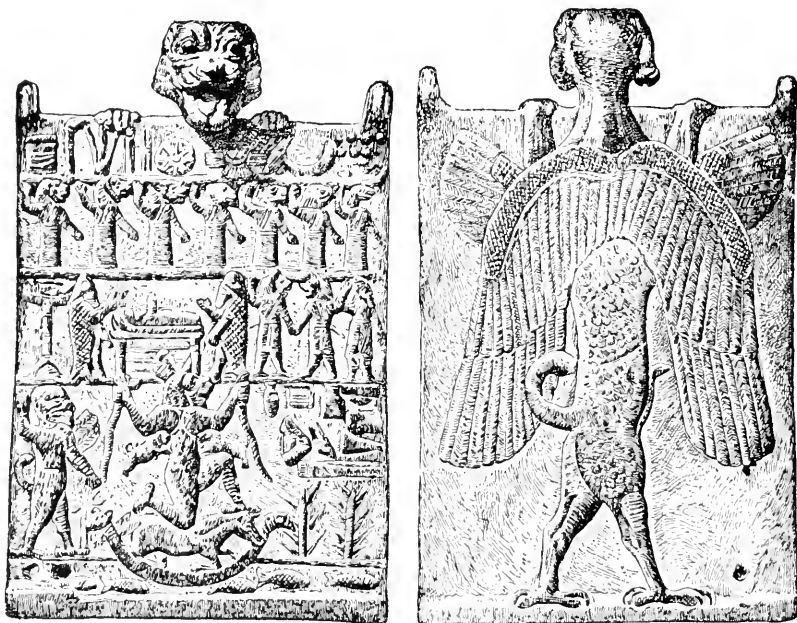


Fig. 54. A DEMON SUPPORTING A TABLET.<sup>1</sup>  
(Assyrian bronze tablet. After Lenormant.)

process of purification far truer and far more intensified than ever they were before.

I may be allowed finally a word with regard to the feature that invests the Bible with its main significance

<sup>1</sup>The two upper horizontal strips in the left-hand side of the figure represent the heavens (the celestial bodies and the celestial genii). The third strip exhibits a funeral scene on earth. The fourth strip represents the Underworld bathed in the floods of the ocean.



from the point of view of general history,—its *monotheism*. Here too Babel early opened a new and undreamt-of prospect.

It is remarkable, but no one can definitely say what our Teutonic word *God* originally signified. Philologists vacillate between “inspiring timidity” and “deliberation.” But the word which the Semitic Canaanite races,

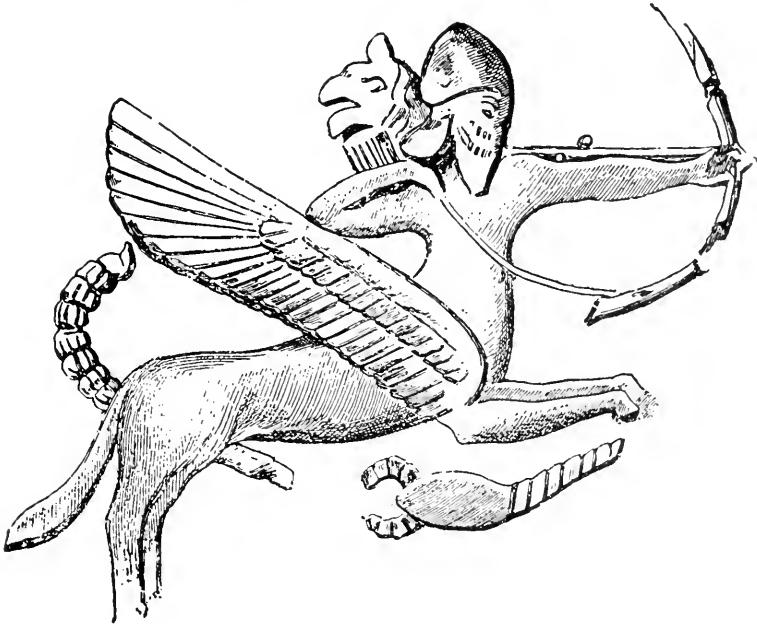


Fig. 55. SAGITTARIUS AND SCORPIO.

Signs of the Zodiac, as represented by the Babylonians. (Lenormant, V., p. 180.)

to whom the Babylonians are most nearly related and from whom the Israelites afterward sprang, coined for God, is not only lucid as to its meaning, but conceives the notion of divinity under so profound and exalted a form that this word alone suffices to shatter the legend that “the Semites were, time out of mind, amazingly deficient in religious instinct;” while it also refutes the

popular modern conception that the religion of Yahveh, and therefore also our Christian belief in God, is ultimately sprung from a species of fetishism and animism such as is common among the South Sea cannibals or the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego.

There is a remarkably beautiful passage in the Koran, VI, 75 et seq., which so fascinated Goethe that he expressed the desire to see it dramatised. Mahomet has mentally put himself in the place of Abraham, and is endeavoring to realise the manner in which Abraham had reached the monotheistic idea. He says: "And when the gloom of night had fallen, Abraham stepped forth into the darkness; and behold, there was a star shining above him. Then he cried out in his gladness: 'This is my Lord!' But when the star grew dim, he said: 'I love not those that grow dim.' And when the moon rose radiantly in the firmament, he cried out in exceeding gladness: 'This is my Lord!' But when it set, he said: 'Alas, I shall surely be one of the people that must needs err.' But when the sun rose dazzlingly in the morning, he said: 'This is my Lord, this is the greatest of all!' But when the sun set, then he said: 'O, my people, verily I am rid of your idolatry of many gods, and I lift up my countenance to him alone that created the heavens and the earth.'"

That ancient Semitic word for God, so well known to us from the sentence, *Eli Eli lama azabtani*, is *El*, and its meaning is *the goal*; the goal toward which are directed the eyes of all men that look Heavenward only, "which every man sees, which every man beholds from afar" (Job xxxvi. 25); the goal to which man stretches

forth his hands, for which the human heart longs as its release from the uncertainties and imperfections of this earthly life,—this goal the ancient Semitic nomads called *El*, or God. And inasmuch as there can in the nature of things be only one goal, we find among the old Canaanite races which settled in Babylonia as early as 2500 years before Christ, and to whom Hammurabi himself belonged, such beautiful proper names as “God hath given,” “God be with thee,” “With the help of my God I go my way,” etc.

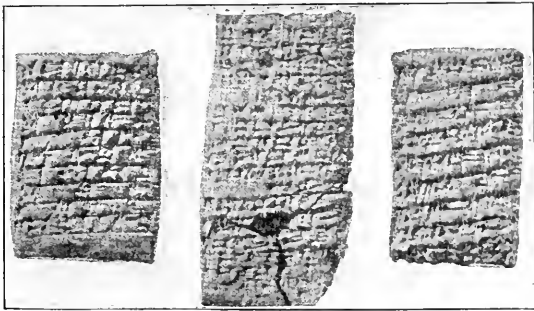


Fig. 56. CLAY TABLETS CONTAINING THE WORDS "YAHVEH IS GOD."  
(Time of Hammurabi or Amraphel. British Museum.)

But more! Through the kindness of the director of the Egyptian and Assyrian department of the British Museum I am able to show you here pictures of three little clay tablets (Fig. 56). What, will be asked, is to be seen on these tablets, fragile broken pieces of clay, with scarcely legible characters scratched on their surface? True enough, but they are valuable from the fact that their date may be exactly fixed as that of the time of Hammurabi, one of them having been made during the reign of his father, Sin-muballit; but still more so from

the circumstance that they contain three names which are of the very greatest significance from the point of view of the history of religion. They are the words:



*Yahveh is God.* Yahveh, the Abiding One, the Permanent One (for such is, as we have reason to believe, the significance of the name), who, unlike man, is not tomorrow a thing of the past, but one that endures forever, that lives and labors for all eternity above the broad, resplendent, law-bound canopy of the stars,—it was this Yahveh that constituted the primordial patrimony of those Canaanite tribes from which centuries afterward the twelve tribes of Israel sprang.

The religion of the Canaanite tribes that emigrated to Babylonia rapidly succumbed, indeed, before the polytheism that had been practised for centuries by the ancient inhabitants of that country. But this polytheism by no means strikes an unsympathetic chord in us, at least so far as its conception of its gods is concerned, all of whom were living, omnipotent, and omnipresent beings that hearkened unto the prayers of men, and who, however much incensed they might become at the sins of men, were always immediately ready again with offers of mercy and reconciliation. And likewise the representations which these deities found in Babylonian art, as for instance that of the sun-god of Sippar enthroned in his Holy of Holies (Fig. 57)<sup>1</sup> are far removed from every-

<sup>1</sup> See also Fig. 31.

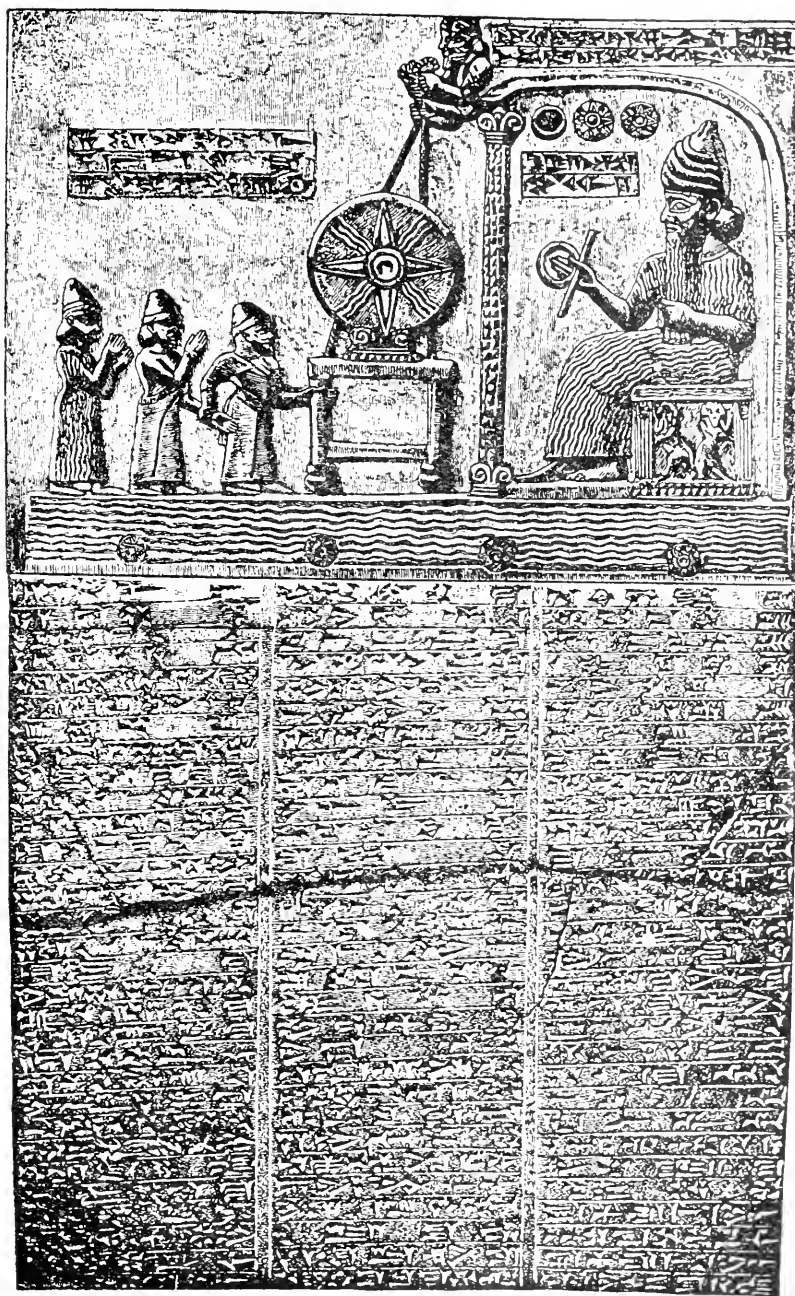


Fig. 57. THE SUN-GOD OF SIPPAR ENTHRONED IN HIS HOLY OF HOLIES.  
(Lenormant, V., p. 301.)

thing that savors of the ugly, the ignoble, or the grotesque. The Prophet Ezekiel (chap. i.) in his visions of his Lord saw God enter on a living chariot formed of four winged creatures with the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle, and on the heads of these cherubim he saw (x. 1) a crystal surface supporting a sapphire throne on which God was seated in the likeness of a man, bathed in the most resplendent radiance. Noting carefully these

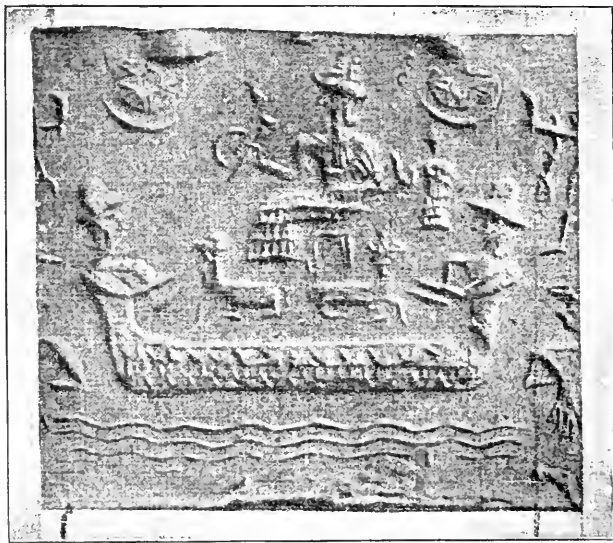


Fig. 58. BABYLONIAN CYLINDER-SEAL WITH REPRESENTATION RESEMBLING THE VISION OF EZEKIEL.

details, can we fail to observe the striking resemblance which his vision presents to the representation of a god which has been found on a very ancient Babylonian cylinder-seal (Fig. 58)? Standing on an odd sort of vessel, the prow and stern of which terminate in seated human figures, may be seen two cherubim with their backs to each other and with their faces, which are human in form,

turned to the front. Their attitude leads us to infer that there are two corresponding figures at the rear. On their backs reposes a surface, and on this surface stands a throne on which the god sits, bearded and clothed in long robes, with a tiara on his head, and in his right hand what are apparently a scepter and a ring: and behind the throne, standing ready to answer his beck and call, is a servitor of the god, who may be likened to the man "clothed with linen" (Ezekiel ix. 3, and x. 2) that executed the behests of Yahveh.

Notwithstanding all this, however, and despite the fact that many liberal and enlightened minds openly advocated the doctrine that Nergal and Nebo, that the moon-god and the sun-god, the god of thunder Rauman, and all the rest of the Babylonian Pantheon were one in Marduk, the god of light, still polytheism, gross polytheism, remained for *three thousand years* the Babylonian state religion,—a sad and significant warning against the indolence of men and races in matters of religion, and against the colossal power which may be acquired by a strongly organised priesthood based upon it.

Even the religion of Yahveh, under the magic standard of which Moses united into a single nation the twelve nomadic tribes of Israel, remained infected for centuries with all manner of human infirmities,—with all the unsophisticated anthropomorphic conceptions that are characteristic of the childhood of the human race, with Israelitic particularism, with heathen sacrificial customs, and with the cult of legal externalities. Even its intrinsic worth was impotent to restrain the nation from worshipping the Baal and the Astarte of the indigenous Canaan-

ite race, until those titanic minds, the prophets, discovered in Yahveh the god of the universe, and pleaded for a quickening of the inner spirit of religion with exhortations like that of Joel, "to rend their hearts and not their garments," and until the divinely endowed singers of the Psalms expressed the concepts of the prophetic leaders in verses which awaken to this day a living echo in the hearts of all nations and times,—until, in fine, the prophets and the psalmists paved the way for the adhortation of Jesus to pray to God in spirit and truth and to strive by dint of individual moral endeavor in all spheres of life after higher and higher perfection,—after that perfection which is our Father's in Heaven.



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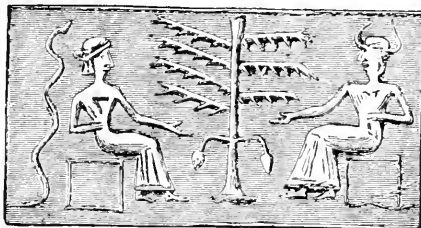
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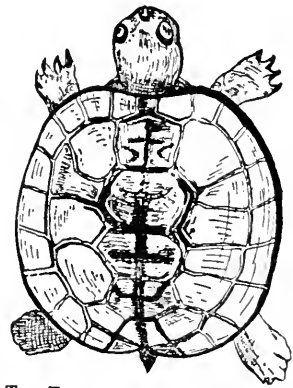
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