

whether there was to be an empire in western Asia instead of a multitude of petty states in perpetual conflict with one another, and owing allegiance to no permanent over-lord. By renewing and confirming Assyrian predominance he set the example of imperial rule which has since been followed by the founders of all the great empires of the Western world. At the same time he disposed of the fortunes of the lesser states, among whom Israel and Judah occupied a prominent place. When he came to the throne his country was feeble and spiritless. For half a century it had been declining in power and enterprise, and now seemed to be on the eve of dissolution. Among the indirect consequences of this decline was a certain measure of renewed strength and ambition among the Aramæans of Damascus. When Assyria was strong and aggressive the whole of Syria was bound to succumb to its persistent assaults. But now, having had a free hand for fifty years, Damascus found itself in a position once more to take a part in the affairs of Palestine. By a strange combination of circumstances it was now, however, allied with its old enemy, the kingdom of Samaria, against the kingdom of Judah. The interference of Tiglath-Pileser, brought about by the appeal of Ahaz, put an end to this anomalous condition of things. But it went much further; for the Eastern invaders not only subdued and annexed Damascus, but converted a large portion of Israel also into Assyrian territory, as we learn both from his own statement and from the record of our text.

A word further may be said personally of Tiglath-Pileser, for the matter has a biblical interest. Before the original annals of Assyria were known and interpreted, and, indeed, for many years after their first discovery, a great deal of misunderstanding prevailed as to his real identity. The Bible record itself served for a time to increase the confusion. In verse 19 of this same chapter, the Assyrian invader who had been bought off by Menahem, king of Israel, is twice called "Pul." Now, as our knowledge of Assyrian history was enlarged, it became increasingly evident that there was no place for this "Pul" among the kings of that country. Thus it came to be a question among those who trusted to the accuracy of the cuneiform documents, whether the Bible record did not here contain an error, in spite of the fact that the name "Pul" occurs also in 1 Chron. v. 26. At the same time it was continually becoming more probable that Pul and Tiglath-Pileser were the same person, in spite of the absolute dissimilarity of the names. All difficulty, however, has been removed by evidence which goes to show that Pul or Pûlu was the original name of the great ruler and general, and that he assumed the other in imitation of Tiglath-Pileser I., a noted monarch who ruled in Assyria several hundred years before. This being the official title, it occurs in the state documents of his own proper country, whereas in Babylonia the shorter and earlier name Pul was retained. Thus all the conditions are suited, and the accuracy of the biblical narrative surprisingly attested.

But what is suggested by the latter portion of the text is of far more significance than the personal relations of Tiglath-Pileser and even than his achievements in war, important as these were for all the nations of western Asia. It is the policy of which he was the chief promoter and exponent to which I would venture to direct the special attention of students of the Bible. I refer to the method of dealing with the peoples subject to Assyria which he brought to a system and carried out vigorously and consistently. Followed out by his successors till the close of the ancient Semitic *régime*, it settled the fate of Israel and even helped to shape the course of revelation.

In studying the leading peoples of the Bible, we are struck with two remarkable and apparently paradoxical facts in their history: their extraordinary racial and social vitality or tenacity, and the rapidity with which they dissolve and pass away when once disintegration fairly begins. The causes necessarily lie in the nature of the internal bonds which hold them together. We must bear in mind first