

the law to take antiquities of any kind out of the Turkish Empire, yet they find their way out in the most astounding ways. It is not the fault of the traveller if a few antiquities should follow him in bales of wool or other commodities of export. Mr. Budge left Egypt fully expecting that these tablets would follow him, but after he had gone, a German, Gräb by name, turned up who offered the fellaheen more than Mr. Budge had paid for them and they immediately sold them over again. In this way 160 of these tablets found their way to the Berlin Museum, 82 to the British Museum in London, and 56 to the Gizeh Museum in Cairo, and perhaps 20 more are in the hands of private individuals.

These tablets have at last been translated, the translations forming a volume half as large as the Pentateuch. They prove to be letters and despatches from the kings and governors of Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, Mesopotamia, Eastern Cappadocia, Phœnicia and Palestine. From Palestine there are 176 letters, chiefly from the coast of the Mediterranean. These are, of course, to us the most interesting. These tablets treat of various subjects, *e.g.*, of marriages, dowries, presents, social relations, diplomacy and war. The events recorded include the conquest of Damascus by the Hittites; of Phœnicia by the Amorites, and of Judea by the Abiri, whom Colonel Conder, Capt. Haynes, Prof. Zimmern and others identify as the Hebrews. The names of Japhia, king of Lachish, mentioned in Joshua x., and Jabin, king of Hazor, mentioned in Joshua xi., and possibly Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, occur among those of the writers.

The gods mentioned are those found in the Bible, including Baal, Baalah, Rimmon, Shamash, Nebo and Dagon, and an expression which corresponds to the Hebrew word *Elohim* occurs frequently. A great number of towns and cities,

several* of which are important biblical places, *e.g.*, Gath, Makkedah, Baal Gad, Enam, Lachish, are mentioned in such a way that their sites are practically settled, and the topography of the Holy Land is made much more definite than before.

These letters are addressed for the most part to two Egyptian kings, Amenophis III. and IV. It is a matter of great regret that none of them are dated, yet through two kings (Assurballidh, king of Assyria, and Burna-burrias, king of Babylon), from whom some of the letters came, we are enabled to arrive at a date around which they may be clustered. Of all nations the Assyrians and Babylonians were the most careful in keeping their chronologies, and Sayce places 1430-1410 B.C., and 1400 to 1370 B.C. as probable dates for Burna-burrias and Assurballidh respectively.

The earliest despatch is one addressed to Thothmes IV. whose date is 1423 B.C. The whole of the correspondence, covering some fifty years, may be placed between the years 1415 and 1365, and evidently clusters around the year 1400 B.C. This takes us back, according to the chronology of Old Testament writers, to the date of the conquest of Palestine. We will hardly understand the bearing of the Tel-el-Amarna correspondence on Old Testament history without first getting a clear idea of its place in the history of Egypt.*

How came these tablets to Tel-el-Amarna, and what are their contents? During the earlier part of the 18th dynasty Egypt was a great military power, and extended her conquests as far as the Euphrates and the Tigris. Amenophis III., in order to strengthen his influence in the conquered countries, made affiliations by marriage, as Solomon did later.

He treated his foreign wives well, allowed them to worship the gods of their own land, erected temples to Baal or Aten, the "Lord of heaven," whose

* The dates of the dynasties in the following table are from Professor Petrie's "History of Egypt," now being published.

Their place in history:

Dynasty I.	B.C.	4777-4514.	Menes first ruler—Memphis—Ptah—Sphinx (?).
" II.-III.		4514-3998.	Little known.
" IV.		3998-3721.	Pyramids—Government highly organized—Statue of Khaf-ra.
" V.-VI.		3721-3322.	Climax of painting and sculpture.
" VII.-XI.		3322-2778.	Little known.
" XII.		2778-2565.	Wars of Extension—Lake Mœris.
" XIII.-XIV.		2565-1998.	Little known.
" XV.-XVII.		1998-1587.	Hyksos or Shepherd Kings—Abraham—Descent into Egypt, 1870 B.C.
" XVIII.		1587-1327.	Military prowess—Tel-el-Amarna—Exodus 1438 B.C.—Conquest of Palestine.

It was during the latter part of the eighteenth dynasty that our letters were written.