

BOOK REVIEWS.

ARCHAIC CLASSICS: AN ELEMENTARY GRAMMAR, WITH FULL SYLLABARY AND PROGRESSIVE READING BOOK OF THE ASSYRIAN LANGUAGE, IN THE CUNEIFORM TYPE.—By the Rev. A. H. Sayce, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Queen's College, Oxford. Bagster and Sons, London.

RECORDS OF THE PAST: BEING ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE ASSYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN MONUMENTS. Published under the sanction of the Society of Biblical Archaeology. Bagster and Sons, London.

We think we are perfectly safe in asserting that if Dr. Kay had studied this Grammar before writing his notes on Isaiah, in the Speaker's Commentary, a considerable portion of it would have been cast in a different mould. In the estimate he formed of the state of Assyrian lore when he wrote, he seems to have imagined, that because a fair number of the cuneiform characters have a variety of meanings, and are polyphones as well, therefore nothing definite can be made of them. There never was a greater mistake. One might just as well conclude that because, in Ainsworth's dictionary, sixty or seventy renderings are given to some of the Latin words, they have no definite meaning, and that one may make any thing he pleases out of any Latin sentence whatever. Assyrian is like every other language in this respect, that it is constructed on certain principles; and those principles must be understood before we can form any correct opinion about its literature. Mr. Sayce's Grammar will show very clearly that the principles of the three languages which made use of the cuneiform characters are by no means more than usually difficult of acquirement. The work is sufficiently full to give an interest in the study, and a sure groundwork in the acquisition of Assyrian, and sufficiently compendious for the student to acquire its contents within a reasonable period of time. It contains also, the latest and the most complete syllabary of the language.

The discovery of Assyrian is even more interesting than the grand results of finding the Rosetta Stone in the case of Egyptian hieroglyphics. At the beginning of the present century, not a human being on the face of the earth could read, pronounce, or even guess the value of one cuneiform character. In 1808, however, Grotefend, a German Professor, thought the matter over. He had no bilingual inscription, but he fancied he was pretty sure that the palace at Persepolis belonged to a King of Persia, and the title of this ruler was always "King of Kings." Such a phrase he thought, would be shown by the repetition of a group, with other characters between them, for the grammatical structure. The characters which preceded these he thought would be the name of the monarch. In this way he found the name of Darius; then Xerxes and Artaxerxes; and thus the Persian cuneiform was made out. Lassen and Burnouf worked at it. Sir H. Rawlinson climbed the rocks of Behistun, and got paper impressions of the celebrated bulletin of Darius.

But, in those ancient days as now, on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the inhabitants spoke three different languages, which were then as now, types of the three great divisions of human speech—Semitic, Aryan, and Turanian; corresponding with the Syriac or Arabian, Persian, and Turkish. Susa spoke the Turanian tongue of the Medes; Persepolis, the Aryan; and Babylon, the oldest capital had a chiefly Semitic, the most ancient form of that branch of language. The three languages were used on the same

public monuments; first, the Persian, then the Median, finally the Babylonian. Nearly seventy proper names are found on the Behistun inscription, so that the requisite elements of the other two alphabets were gathered from this; and they obtained a solution from Sir H. Rawlinson, Hincks, Oppert, and Norris. In Assyria, thousands of fragments of broken clay tablets, inscribed with cuneiform characters have been dug up by Botta, Oppert, Layard, Loftus, and Rassam. Most of them were the destroyed archives and library of Assurbanipal or Sardanapalus. In 1873-4, Mr. G. Smith added about five thousand additional pieces to the 20,000 fragments already in the British Museum. Thousands more still lie in the Assyrian mounds, and Mr. G. Smith is probably at this time employed in digging them out. Among the most remarkable of the documents yet discovered are accounts of the Deluge, the descent of Ishtar or Aphrodite, and her return to heaven. The historical inscriptions give the annals of Assyria from the reign of Shalmaneser to the fall of Nineveh, and mention the contemporary kings of Israel, the expedition of Sennacherib against Jerusalem, and the conquest of Egypt by Sardanapalus or Assurbanipal; also the succession, of the eponymous officers, by whose year of office all deeds and events were dated from B. C. 650 to 908. There are also found lists, vocabularies, elementary grammars, and bilingual documents, which reveal the existence of the Turanian language, now called Accadian, which was totally unknown a very few years ago. The effects of these Assyrian discoveries have not yet been generally realized, for these clay books are contemporary with the events they describe, and lead us face to face with twenty centuries before Christ. A great deal of ancient history will have to be re-constructed from absolutely original sources. Learned men have of late been accustomed to treat us with dissertations on the origin of language, always referring to the later Sanscrit, not a monument or written line of which is older than four hundred years before Christ; but here, in these hitherto mystic symbols of Babylon, we have forms of the three types of human language which were engraven in imperishable characters, sixteen centuries earlier.

The first volume of the RECORDS OF THE PAST, contains translations of texts representing the chief branches of Assyrian literature. Among them is the cylinder called Bellino, from the name of its first possessor. It gives an account of the first eight campaigns of Sennacherib, and relates his success against Hezekiah. He says the King of Judah was overwhelmed by the splendour of the exploit, and only too glad to seek reconciliation by offering thirty talents of gold, eight hundred of silver, besides other tribute. The private testament of Sennacherib is also given, who bequeathed all his personal property to Esarhaddon, his son. The annals of Assurbanipal give an account of the conquest of Egypt, and throw considerable light on a hitherto dark passage of Egyptian history.

The second volume of the RECORDS contains translations of some of the most important inscriptions of the valley of the Nile. The monuments of Egypt present an almost unbroken chain for more than twenty centuries before Christ, and hieratic papyri of the same antiquity are known. These are more interesting for variety than the Assyrian remains. In this volume the annals of Thothmes are given. Next the campaign of Ramses the 2nd against the Khita, which, as a literary composition, is of the highest order; it rises to the dignity of an epic poem, and the Scribe Pentaur, the

author, raises the mortal Ramses to the skies. Alone in his war chariot, surrounded by 2,500 of the enemy, Ramses—like another Achilles—withstands their entire force, revives the drooping courage of his charioteer; and, dashing through the ranks, regains his host, to lead it, inspired by his example, to the total defeat of Asia, confederated in arms against him.

The third, fourth, and fifth volumes contain numerous interesting translations of Egyptian and Assyrian texts. In the fourth volume is a translation of the inscription on the Rosetta Stone.

As time rolls on, this old Semitic and Hamitic literature will doubtless take its place in the Universities, side by side with Greek and Latin. In all European countries, the language and literature of Egypt and Assyria are taught by professors appointed for the purpose.

"WAKE UP," a Plain Discourse by Rev. R. S. Forneri, B.A., Incumbent of Christ Church, Belleville. Preached on Sunday, March 26th, 1876, in connection with present agitations in the parish.

The quietest and most judicious clergyman that ever lived must not imagine that he can do his work conscientiously and honestly without stirring up evil influences against him. He may think he can abjure party, and take neither one side nor the other in the questions of the day; but a party position will be fastened on him whether he will or no. From what we know of Mr. Forneri, we should have thought he was the last man in the world to be accused of excessive or unauthorized Ritual; and it appears that he has done the work of his parish with his well known care and energy, introducing nothing more than all parties in the church have long ago agreed upon as essential to the decent celebration of Divine worship. He might, therefore, look for peace with those among whom he labors. But some parishes seem to be afflicted with a chronic discontent, which nothing can cure; and this is a great trial for a clergyman who is sincerely anxious for the success of the church. If Mr. Forneri will look into the *Echo* newspaper for the year 1860, he will find that matters in his parish were considerably more unpleasant then than now. So that no very "strange thing" has happened, after all.

We must quote one of the closing sentences of Mr. Forneri's sermon:—"There is often as much Ritualism about those who oppose as about those who favour it; for who is the Ritualist but the man whose whole thoughts, time, and earnestness are frittered away about the externals of religion? And he who is against these things may be as much absorbed by them as he who is for them. Therefore, I hope you will not suffer yourselves to be drawn in with the Ritualists on either side—the Ritualists whose religion consists in practising Ritualism, or the Ritualists whose religion consists in opposing Ritualism, or what they take the notion to call by this name. If you do so, it will be to the damage and hurt of your soul."

THE presence of the Holy Spirit is a wondrous power in breaking down the walls of separation and bringing Christians to see eye to eye in the one great work of saving souls.

FAR away in Eastern Bengal, south of Assam, are the Khassiah Hills, in which the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists have a mission. The children (over three hundred) in the mission school at Cheera Poonjee are singing "Hold the Fort," and "I am coming, Lord," and other hymns, in their own language.