

- 31 ..... the flocks of the land. And as for Horonain, therein dwelt  
the sons of Dedan, and Dedan said (?).....
- 32 ..... and Chemosh said to me: go down, fight against Horonain;  
and I went down (and fought)
- 33 ..... Chemosh restored it in (my) days and ..... from thence
- 34 ..... And I ....."

The inscription reads like a chapter from one of the historical books of the Bible. The phrases are the same. The words and grammatical forms are all found in Scriptural Hebrew. Mesha, in ascribing his successes to the orders of Chemosh, the national god of the Moabites, speaks as a monotheist, and uses familiar Scripture language. The covenant name of the God of Israel (*Yahveh*) itself occurs in the inscription, spelt in exactly the same way as in the Old Testament.

Apart, however, from the historic importance of the "Moabite Stone," the special interest attaching to it is that it is the most ancient specimen of alphabetic writing, and takes us nearer to the origin of our written characters, than any other document or monument that has yet been discovered. The verdict of Professor Nöldeke is:

"It is the most ancient of all Semitic inscriptions, indeed the oldest example of pure alphabet writing—far older than anything Greek. It is the only independent and original source of Israelitish history prior to the time of the Maccabees."

By means of it we know what the characters were in which a contemporary of Elijah and Ahab wrote, and in which the Proverbs and Songs of Solomon, the Psalms of David, and the historical books of the Old Testament were first written. And it may be that, as Canon Rawlinson suspects, in the characters of which we have to-day the photographic representations, we see the forms of the letters in which, nearly four thousand years ago, the Books of Moses were penned, and which were traced by "the finger of God" on the Two Tables of stone.

J. A. MACDONALD.