



AN ASSYRIAN INSCRIPTION.

in a saucer, and set it on the floor here just back of me. Gently, man! Quick!"

Not a word was spoken as the officer quickly filled the saucer, walked with it carefully around the table, and put it down where the Major had indicated on the floor.

Like a marble statue sat the young subaltern in his white linen clothes, while a cobra de capello, which had been crawling up the leg of his trousers, slowly raised his head, then turned, descended to the floor, and glided towards the milk.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the report of the Major's revolver, and the snake lay dead upon the floor.

"Thank you, Major," said the subaltern, as the two men shook hands warmly. "You have saved my life."

"You're welcome, my boy," replied the senior. "But you did your share."—*Youth's Companion*.

### ASSYRIAN WRITING.



ANY books grow old and are soon illegible. Paper, the bark of trees, parchment, vellum, cloth, and most of the substances on which writing is done, are liable to mold and decay, or to be consumed by fire. But there is one style of writing which has withstood the ravages of nearly thirty centuries, and is as perfect to-day as it ever was.

When Henry Austen Layard began in 1845 his explorations among the heaps and mounds on the banks of the Tigris opposite the city of Mosul, no one could have foreseen what would be discovered. There was some doubt as to what city had formerly stood there. Four hundred years before Christ, Xenophon marched his 10,000 Greeks across that plain, encamping near what was known as the ruins of the city of

Larissa, little dreaming of the perished splendors which once adorned that plain, when it was the site of the magnificent capitol of the greatest empire of the earth.

Skeptical writers had doubted whether there ever was such a city as Nineveh, a great city of three days' journey. No such city could be found, nor was there any positive proof as to its location, and so the book of Jonah was held to be a very uncertain old story. But it was not long after Layard commenced his work of excavation before strange shapes were thrown up to view. Buried beneath heaps of earth were the wrecks and ruins of halls, temples, palaces, images

and idols, with portraits, inscriptions, statues, and memorials, which sufficiently proved that there was the site of the city where Jonah preached, Nineveh the great. In one of the great palace halls which was explored was found a royal library of books written on tablets of clay. Some of them were several inches long, other were very small, many were broken in fragments; but there were the characters,—shaped somewhat like arrow-heads, and called the *cuneiform* characters,—which apparently were made by pressing with the end of a stick upon the soft clay. This clay when baked or hardened became practically indestructible, or at least exempt from decay, from mold, and from fire; and so these records of the ancient Assyrian empire had come down to us unharmed.

But no man could read the writing. The capitol had been destroyed, the empire overthrown, the nation itself had rotted down through vices and villainies, and its very language was forgotten. No living man could decipher the words inscribed upon those tablets; and yet, after months of patient study, learned men puzzled the inscriptions out. They at length found the same inscription in different languages, and when they could read one language then they could pick out by degrees the meaning of the other. And so after months and years of study, the Assyrian language is known to-day, and thousands of these tablets have been translated into modern tongues. One of them is known as the Deluge Tablet, of which a translation has been made which agrees in very many particulars with the account of the deluge found in the book of Genesis.

So, while these old records have been buried in the wreck of burned and fallen palaces for ages, at last they are brought forth to show that the facts contained in the Scriptures are also to be found in the ancient histories and traditions of those times.—*H.L.H., in The Little Christian*.