

not hesitate in selecting them." The next method was to give to these names, hitherto unknown to us only by Greek pronunciation, their true Persian form. This was soon done by means of the Zend language. Thus, more than twelve letters were discovered.

Still, although much had been done, the great mass of the inscriptions remained undecyphered, the grammatical construction of the language in which they were written in a great degree unknown, and the alphabet incomplete. At this juncture, M. Bournouf of Paris, Professor Lassen of Bonn, M. Westergaard, a Danish Orientalist, and Major Rawlinson, British resident at Bagdad, arrived at most gratifying results, so singularly coincident on all important points, as to prove their common truth. In the alphabet so much is this the case, that scarcely the slightest difference exists between that of Professor Lassen and that of Major Rawlinson. Of Bournouf's, too, Rawlinson says:—"The Professor's labours have been of no further assistance to me than of adding one new character to my alphabet." This unanimity is perhaps unparalleled in the whole history of philological pursuits.

We shall now briefly describe the character of the language thus made known to us, and then refer to the historical and geographical information which the inscriptions supply, merely premising that our remarks refer to but one of the three different combinations of the arrow-headed character—the Persian.

M. Bournouf, in his *Mem. sur deux Insc.*, says:—"We can positively affirm, that the language which occupies the first rank in the Persepolitan inscriptions, is not the idiom of the sacred books of Zoroaster; but, at the same time, we may be sure that it has sprung from the same origin. It is a proximate dialect of the Zend, and makes an approach to the modern Persian." Lassen terms it the Medo-Persian. He says that it possessed "nearly the whole stock of inflexions belonging to the Asian languages." With respect to the 39 letters, in which these inscriptions are written, M. Bournouf thinks that they originally belonged to the Semitic language, and have been forced into the use of an Indo-European dialect, the words of which they are not

properly fitted to express. His reason for entertaining this opinion is, that the writing is extremely deficient in vowels, whereas in the language the complete and regular indication of all the vowels is necessary. There is great probability in this conjecture. It agrees with the testimony of Herodotus, who tells us that Assyrian letters were used by the Medo-Persian kings. Thus, then, the Medes and Persians obtained the art of writing from Assyria and Babylon. Lassen says that the region of cuneiform inscriptions holds, geographically, the middle place between the Semitic alphabets and the Indian systems of writing. "These three kinds of writing," he adds, "comprise all the alphabets of Upper Asia and of the ancient world; and the discovery of the arrow-headed writing was wanting to complete the palæography of Asia."

The historical and geographical information derived from these inscriptions is valuable, and may be expected to be much more so in the further progress of the study. Such as it now is we proceed to give it.

The space of time covered by these inscriptions is not great. "The earliest monument of the class," says Major Rawlinson, "at present known, is the inscription of Cyrus the Great at Pasargada; the latest dates from the time of Artaxerxes Ochus."

From the great Behistun inscription, in the midst of ancient Media, the following sentences, among others, have been decyphered. We give the version of Rawlinson with a few alterations from Lassen:—

"I am Darius the Great King, the King of Kings, the King of Persia, the King of the Provinces," &c.

"Says Darius the King:—'My father was Hystaspes; of Hystaspes, the father was Arsames; of Arsames, the father was Ariyaramnes; of Ariyaramnes, the father was Teispes; of Teispes, the father was Achæmenes.'"

"Says Darius the King:—'These are the countries of Ormuzd,—I have become King of them,—Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Sardis, Ionia, both inland and maritime; Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Zarangia, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria,