

before the invasion of Sihon, recorded in ancient Hebrew poetry of the days of Moses, as we learn from Numbers xxi. 27-30 ; and the Moabites seem to have remained undisturbed and prosperous until the days of Isaiah. Hence is explained, what has always hitherto occasioned not a little perplexity to biblical scholars, the power, wealth, and prosperity which this Mesha, Isaiah, in his fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, declared "the burden of Moab."

These few remarks may serve to illustrate the vast importance of this ancient lapidary monument in reference to history. Scarcely less valuable is it in other particulars. It is the only original document of times earlier than the Maccabees, which is extant in the ancient Hebrew ; for the language of Moab, as written by Mesha, presents but slight, though grammatically interesting, variations from the Biblical Hebrew. It is older than two-thirds of the Old Testament, and has come down to us without modification from transcribers and redactors, which cannot be said of any part of the Old Testament. It is by far the most ancient inscription as yet discovered in letters of this kind, and throws much new light upon the early history and palæography of the Phœnician and the Greek alphabets. But we must refer our readers to Dr. Ginsbury's work itself for able and copious statements and illustrations of the many-sided importance of this discovery. He has taken great pains so to write and explain as to enable the novice in these studies to understand and appreciate the deeply interesting and very important matter here brought before him. The book, by no means a large one, contains a *facsimile* of the Stone ; a reproduction of the inscription in the square Hebrew character ; a translation in English ; essays upon the discovery of the Stone, the present state of its text, the relation of its inscription to the narrative of the Bible, and on its importance and literature ; a very careful and elaborate commentary on its every word ; and the various translations in German, French and English, twelve in number, exhibited in a tabular form ; and, finally, a complete vocabulary, in which are marked all the words and forms of words peculiar to the Stone. Nor must we forget to add that a very good map of the transjordanic country is prefixed to the volume,—a map which exhibits the results of the most recent investigation, and gives much aid in understanding the statements of this ancient chronicle.

It will be, of course, familiar to our readers that the Stone was broken by the Bedouins in November, 1869. The endeavours made by the emulous Consuls at Jerusalem to gain this precious relic for their several States aroused the attention of the Mahometan authorities : the Governor of Nablous made an attempt to possess himself of this treasure for which rival Franks were bidding so high ; and the Bedouins, dreading the total loss of that which they had learned to prize through the eagerness of others to get it, broke the Stone and distributed the bits amongst their different families.

The Moabite Stone was originally nearly four feet high, two feet in breadth, and rather more than fourteen inches in thickness. It is hewn out of the black basalt of the country, out of which, perhaps, the famous bedstead of Og was constructed ; a stone which contains a large proportion of iron, and is, indeed, called iron by the natives. The inscription now in part lost had endured almost uninjured for twenty-five centuries. As the top and bottom of the Stone were rounded almost to a semicircle, the number of lines, and approximately that of the letters can be ascertained from the two large fragments which still remain, and which comprise more than half the entire surface, including much of the upper and some of the lower margin. Dr. Ginsbury estimates that there must have been about eleven hundred letters in the thirty-four lines of which the inscription consists, of which six hundred and sixty-nine have been recovered. An impression, unfortunately only a hasty and imperfect one, was taken of the Stone before its destruction ; and two or three independent "squeezes" of the other two large fragments have been taken, whilst a number of smaller portions, the most important of them containing thirty-eight letters, are also extant. Sufficient material exists, it will be observed, for ascertaining much of the text, and for restoring with toler-