

Original Contributions.

THE BIBLE versus INFIDELITY.

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VI.

This, my last article in this series, will be devoted to archæology, as it bears on the authenticity of the scriptures. Archæology in its widest sense includes the knowledge of the origin, language, religion, laws, literature, manners and customs, in fact everything that can be learned of the ancient life and being of a people. When so used, it comprehends some branches of knowledge that are sometimes treated separately, such as philology, ethnology, numismatics, etc. The archæology that we have to do with is that which deals with the heathen or "ethnic" nations mentioned in the Old Testament. In that book we read of Chaldeans, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites, etc. Now these people had more or less dealing with the people of Israel and Judah, and that which illustrates their manner of life, their religion and government, will throw light on many passages of scripture; and not only so, but many of the statements of scripture have been verified and corroborated by the discoveries of archæologists. In a short article like this I can only show the value of this study to the Bible student.

At the close of the last century, and at the beginning of this, infidelity seemed to be having a rapid growth. Many boasts were made as to what infidels were going to do. Voltaire boasted that it took twelve men to establish Christianity, but one (meaning himself) would overthrow it, and signed his letters, "Yours, to crush the wretch" (meaning Christ). Among other objections brought against the Bible were these: that there were mistakes in it as to the names of rulers, the location of places; that the Bible stated certain places were fertile, when in reality they were barren. These, and a number of objections like them, were brought up, and when exploring parties were formed and search was made for ancient cities, and coins, bricks, cylinders, tablets, and many curious things were discovered, such as weapons of war, tools of mechanics, household effects, etc., people began to wonder what it would lead to. Many good people were afraid that something might be dug up that would make good the statement of infidels, thus putting another weapon into their hands; and for several years many good people were in suspense. But the victory was complete on the side of the Bible. Every fresh discovery went to prove the authenticity of the scripture, and infidels were compelled to retire, crestfallen, from the field.

The discovery of the rosetta stone gave a fresh impetus to the study of Egyptian archæology, and we are indebted to such men as Young, Bunsen, Brugsch and Wilkinson for their labors in this department of knowledge.

In the summer of 1881 there were discovered in a cave near Thebes thirty-nine royal mummies, besides papyrus rolls and other objects of interest. Among the mummies was that part of Rameses II, the Pharaoh of the oppression. It was in a perfect state of preservation, and enclosed in a plain coffin of sycamore wood.

When we turn to Assyrian archæology we also find that much light has been thrown on portions of scripture. Such men as Botta, Layard, Rawlinson and Sayce have done much in this department. I have a series of volumes called "Records of the Past," edited by Prof. Sayce—the last one was issued in 1892. These volumes contain translations of inscriptions that have been found on monuments of various kinds, and show the condition of some of these ancient nations thousands of years ago. It is very interesting to read letters that were written from Syria to the king of Egypt 3,400 years ago. Not less interesting are the accounts we have of Assyrian kings, whose names are mentioned in the Old Testament.

Here is a translation from an inscription of Sargon: "(In the beginning of my reign) the city of Samaria I besieged, I captured; 27,280 of its inhabitants I carried away . . . I set my governor over them and laid upon them the tribute of the former king—(Hosea)."

Here is the translation of part of a cylinder now in the British museum: "To Hezekiah of the Jews they gave him as an enemy. In a dungeon he shut him up. Their heart feared. The kings of the country of Egypt, the men of bows and chariots, the horses of the king of Melhhi, a force without numbers they brought together and they marched to their aid. In the sight of the city Altaka before me the order of battle they had placed they appealed to their weapons. By the support of Assur my God with them I accomplished their overthrow." Let it be kept in mind that these cylinders and tablets were to the Assyrians what books are to us.

Prof. Sayce says in his preface to a work on Assyria: "It is a strange thing to examine for the first time one of the clay tablets of the old Assyrian library, . . . When last the characters upon it were read was in days when Assyria was still a name of terror. Judah had not gone into captivity in Babylon. The Old Testament was not a completed volume. The kingdom of Messiah was in the distant future. We are brought face to face, as it were, with men who were contemporary with Isaiah, Hezekiah and Ahaz; nay, of men whose names have been familiar to us since we first read the Bible at our mother's side."

Those who would learn how wonderfully the monuments of Assyria illustrate and corroborate the pages of sacred history need only compare the records they contain with the narratives of the books of kings. Every month brings us tidings of new discovery being made, and we can rest assured that archæology has something good in store for

us in the near future. I would like to have you all read an article in the last *Homiletic Review* by one of our foremost Assyriologists. You would all enjoy it.

I hope that something I have written in this series may have been of some help to some, even if it should be only to stimulate them to investigate and study this great question for themselves, Which shall I have, the Bible or infidelity? May God help all to earnestly consider the question before they decide. There are awful interests at stake, and a mistake means eternal loss. God says, "Come, let us reason together."

USE THE WORLD, NOT ABUSE IT.

T. H. BLERNUS.

But few persons have learned so to use this world as not to abuse it in the matter of pleasure, joy and happiness. Man was evidently designed for happiness, and not for sorrow. His head was not given him to ache, but to be clear and strong. Every sense of his body, the eye, the ear, the taste, was intended to be an avenue of pleasure and happiness. Every faculty of the mind, perception, reflection, memory, conception, judgment, imagination, reason, all are exquisitely adapted to be joy-producing. The world we live in was evidently framed to bring us happiness. Pleasant light for the eyes, sweet sounds for the ear, pure air for the lungs, scenes of magnificent beauty for the æsthetic taste, facts for the perceptive faculty, truth for the conscience, law for the reason, all bespeak the benevolence of the divine Creator. They then abuse this world who deny our right to be happy in it. They would be wiser than God. They would impute malevolence to a Heavenly Father's heart. They would confound piety with gloom, reverence with fear. We are not to be deceived. There are as many devils behind a solemn face as a laughing countenance. Pious forgers are nearly always solemn. It is by no manner of means a trifling employment of a part of our time to try to amuse ourselves. The great workers of the world have been cheerful men, full of vivacity, raciness and sprightliness. No man knows how to work up the maximum of his power that does not understand the art of recuperation. Luther and Macaulay were great workers and great laughers. Men and women work better under the inspiration of hope than under the tyranny of fear. When we are in splendid health, when our faculties are fully awake, when every power within us is fully aroused, when the magnificent soul proudly marches to conscious victory, then we are happy, then we are strong.

Equally do they abuse the world who affirm that happiness is to be sought for its own sake, independent of all higher considerations. Happiness is valuable, as it leads to goodness. Our highest end is moral goodness. Greater and nobler than the capacity to be happy is the capacity to be pure. We are made for righteousness. We are partakers