

volume contains the result of his researches while so engaged, and also of a second visit, in conduct of the Expedition sent out by the Trustees of the Assyrian Excavation Fund. The volume contains a lively narrative of his travels and adventures—and gives much interesting information regarding the countries visited and the condition and customs of their inhabitants. His researches have also brought to light many facts regarding these countries in ancient times, particularly their architecture, and has also settled some interesting questions of ancient geography. Passing these as beyond our province, we give a summary of those portions of his researches (forming but a small portion of the volume) which throw light upon the sacred volume.

On his way to the scene of his explorations he passed the remains of Nineveh. Of these he merely remarks:—

“We visited the four great mounds, Koyunjik, Khorsabad, Karamles and Nimroud, marking the angles of the Parallelogram, which is supposed to enclose Nineveh. The time spent in our visit consumed exactly three days, and it is probably to a similar circuit of its extent that the passage refers—‘Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey.’”

The next site of Scriptural interest visited by Mr Loftus was Babylon.—His explorations did not add much to the information acquired by Layard and those who preceded him. But we may quote one or two short passages, showing the fulfilment of prophecy. Of Babylonia he says:—

“In former days the vast plains of Babylonia were nourished by a complicated system of canals and water courses, which spread over the surface of the country like network. The wants of a teeming population were supplied by a rich soil, not less bountiful than that on the banks of the Egyptian Nile. Like islands rising from a golden sea of waving corn, stood frequent groves of palms and pleasant gardens, affording to the idler or the traveller their grateful and highly valued shade. Crowds of passengers hurried along the dusty roads to and from the busy city.—The land was rich in corn and wine. How changed is the aspect of that region at the present day! Long lines of mounds it is true mark the courses of those main arteries, which formerly diffused life and vegetation along their banks, but their channels are now bereft of moisture and choked with drifting sand; the smaller offshoots are wholly effaced. ‘A drought is upon her waters,’ says the prophet, ‘and they shall be dried up’* All that remains of that ancient civilization—that ‘glory of kingdoms,’ ‘the praise of the whole earth’—is recognizable in the numerous mouldering heaps of brick and rubbish, which overspread the surface of the plain. Instead of the luxuriant fields, the groves and gardens, nothing now meets the eye but an arid waste—the dense population of former times is vanished, and no man dwells there.”

And of the city he gives his first impressions as follows:—

“‘Truly,’ said the prophet concerning her, ‘Babylon shall become heaps, an astonishment and a hissing without an inhabitant.’† Unsightly mounds alone remain of that magnificence which Scripture so frequently dilates upon, and which the pages of Herodotus so carefully describe. Who can recognize in those shapeless piles, exposed to the ravages of time and the destructive hand of man during twenty centuries, any of its former grandeur.”

Compared with other ancient cities, Babylon is peculiarly desolate. Upon this fact Mr Loftus remarks:—

“There are various causes to account for the complete disappearance of the walls and so much of the buildings. Upwards of 2300 years ago Darius, the son of Hystaspes, caused them to be demolished in consequence of a rebellion in the city, thus bringing about the fulfilment of the prophecy, ‘The wall of Babylon shall fall,’ ‘her walls are thrown down,’ ‘the broad walls shall be utterly broken.’ During that period likewise the ruins were used as a never failing brick field—city after city

* Jer. l. 38. † Jer. li. 37.