

THE OLDEST BOOKS IN THE WORLD.

Among the oldest writings which have come down to us are the arrow-headed, or wedge-shaped writings used in Assyria and Media. These writings are either stamped on bricks, or chiselled into stone and rock. They date about 3,000 years B.C. The letters are all formed by combinations of a stroke with a head to it, like a barb, or a wedge. By the labors of recent scholars the meaning of tablets and inscriptions written in this way can be deciphered. Then there are the papyri, or paper books of Egypt. Papyrus is a flowering reed growing luxuriantly in the still waters and marshes of the Nile. There are specimens of it to seen in the basins of our parks in New York. The pith of this reed is taken out, flattened and gummed together so as to make long pages and rolls. The Greek for this natural paper is *byblus* hence our Bible. These rolls of papyrus are then filled with writing. The writing of Egypt was hieroglyphic, or produced by a series of pictures of different natural objects. The trustees of the British Museum have recently obtained a roll of papyrus written out by an Egyptian scribe called Ani. He lived more than 1,300 years B. C., i. e., about 3,200 years ago. Every chapter of the book is illustrated by vignettes of extraordinary beauty. In this respect it resembles one of the illuminated parchments of monkish times. The colors laid on so carefully by the skillful brush of Ani, although most delicate, are apparently as fresh to-day as ever they were. A group of weeping women, which forms part of the first vignette, is particularly well done. The book itself is a copy of the Book of the Dead, which contains prayer and devotions relating to the condition of the disembodied soul. For the Egyptians believed in the soul's immortality.

The trustees of the British Museum are going to have this old book reproduced by the press, with all its colors. There will be a full description of the vignette, or translation and introductions. Thus we shall be able to read old Ani's work 3,000 years after he wrote it. Homer is almost a modern author in comparison.—*Ex.*

Some men forget that they are, in some important senses, the keepers of each other, while others are hard to convince that they are not especially intrusted with the guardianship of their brethren—actions, consciences, and all. One of the most difficult maxims to be brought into practical, every day life, is that which reads: "Mind your own business."—*Observer.*

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