



Monument of a Hittite king, accompanied by an inscription in Hittite hieroglyphics, discovered on the site of Carchemish and now in the British Museum.

By-Paths of Bible Knowledge. A

II.

FRESH LIGHT FROM THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS.

A SKETCH OF THE MOST STRIKING CONFIRMATIONS OF THE
BIBLE, FROM RECENT DISCOVERIES IN

EGYPT.

PALESTINE.

ASSYRIA.

BABYLONIA.

ASIA MINOR.

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PREFACE.



THE object of this little book is explained by its title. Discovery after discovery has been pouring in upon us from Oriental lands, and the accounts given only ten years ago of the results of Oriental research are already beginning to be antiquated. It is useful, therefore, to take stock of our present knowledge, and to see how far it bears out that "old story" which has been familiar to us from our childhood. The same spirit of scepticism which had rejected the early legends of Greece and Rome had laid its hands also on the Old Testament, and had determined that the sacred histories themselves were but a collection of myths and fables. But suddenly, as with the wand of a magician, the ancient eastern world has been reawakened to life by the spade of the explorer and the patient skill of the decipherer, and we now find ourselves in the presence of monuments which bear the names or recount the deeds of the heroes of Scripture. One by one these "stones crying out" have been examined or more perfectly explained, while others of equal importance are being continually added to them.

What striking confirmations of the Bible narrative have been afforded by the latest discoveries will be seen from the following pages. In many cases confirmation has been accompanied by illustration. Unexpected light has been thrown upon facts and statements hitherto obscure, or a wholly new explanation has been given of some event recorded by the inspired writer. What can be more startling than the discovery of the great Hittite Empire, the very existence of which had been forgotten, and which yet once contended on equal terms with Egypt on the one side and Assyria on the other? The allusions to the Hittites in the Old Testament, which had been doubted by a sceptical criticism, have been shown to be fully in accordance with the facts, and their true place in history has been pointed out.

But the account of the Hittite Empire is not the only discovery of the last four or five years about which this book has to speak. Inscriptions of Sargon have cleared up the difficulties attending the tenth and eleventh chapters of Isaiah's prophecies, and have proved that no "ideal" campaign of an "ideal" Assyrian king is described in them. The campaign, on the contrary, was a very real one, and when Isaiah delivered his prophecy the Assyrian monarch was marching down upon Jerusalem from the north, and was about to be "the rod" of God's anger upon its sins. Ten years before the overthrow of Sennacherib's army his father, Sargon, had

captured Jerusalem, but a "remnant" escaped the horrors of the siege, and returned in penitence "unto the mighty God."

Perhaps the most remarkable of recent discoveries is that which relates to Cyrus and his conquest of Babylonia. The history of the conquest as told by Cyrus himself is now in our hands, and it has obliged us to modify many of the views, really derived from Greek authors, which we had read into the words of Scripture. Cyrus, we know now upon his own authority, was a polytheist, and not a Zoroastrian; he was king of Elam, not of Persia. It was Elam, and not Persia, as Isaiah's prophecies declared, which invaded Babylon. Babylon itself was taken without a siege, and Mr. Bosanquet may therefore have been right in holding that the Darius of Daniel was Darius the son of Hystaspes.

Hardly less interesting has been the discovery of the inscription of Siloam, which reveals to us the very characters used by the Jews in the time of Isaiah, perhaps even in the time of Solomon himself. The discovery has cast a flood of light on the early topography of Jerusalem, and has made it clear as the daylight that the Jews of the royal period were not the rude and barbarous people it has been the fashion of an unbelieving criticism to assume, but a cultured and literary population. Books must have been as plentiful among them as they were in Phœnicia or Assyria; nor