

BABEL AND BIBLE.

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN BERLIN BEFORE THE GERMAN
EMPEROR.¹

BY FRIEDRICH DELITZSCH.

TO what end this toil and trouble in distant, inhospitable, and danger-ridden lands? Why all this expense in ransacking to their utmost depths the rubbish heaps of forgotten centuries, where



Fig. I. UR OF THE CHALDEES, THE HOME OF ABRAHAM AND THE
FOREFATHERS OF ISRAEL.

(Ruins of el-Muqayyer, pronounced *Mukayyer*, English *Mugheir*.)

we know neither treasures of gold nor of silver exist? Why this zealous emulation on the part of the nations to secure the greatest possible number of mounds for excavation? And whence, too, that

¹ Translated by T. J. McCormack. The original has just been published by J. C. Hinrichs of Leipsic, one of the foremost German publishers of theological and Oriental works. See note under "Miscellaneous."

constantly increasing interest, that burning enthusiasm, born of generous sacrifice, now being bestowed on both sides of the Atlantic on the excavations of Babylonia and Assyria?

One answer echoes to all these questions,—one answer, which, if not absolutely adequate, is yet largely the reason and consummation of it all: *the Bible*. A magic halo, woven in earliest youth, encircles the names of Nineveh and Babylon, an irresistible fascination abides for us all in the stories of Belshazzar and the Wise Men of the East. The long-lasting dynasties here awakened to new life, however potent for history and civilisation they may have

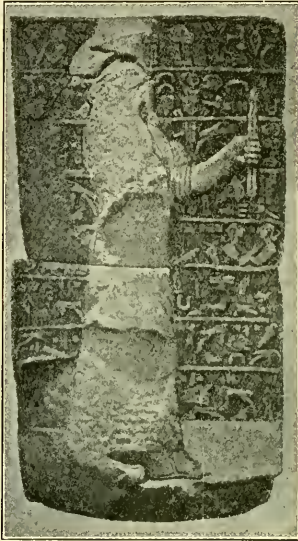


Fig. 2. HITTITE IDEOGRAPHIC WRITING FROM CARCHEMISH.¹



Fig. 3. KING HAMMURABI. THE KING AMRAPHEL OF THE BIBLE.

been, would not have aroused a tithe of their present interest, did they not number among them the names of Amraphel, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar, with whom we have been familiar from childhood.

And with the graven memories of youth is associated the deeper longing of maturity,—the longing, so characteristic of our age,—to possess a philosophy of the world and life that will satisfy both the heart and the head. And this again leads us directly to the Bible, and notably to the Old Testament, with which historically our modern views are indissolubly connected.

¹ Confirming the discovery of the site of Carchemish, where Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho in 605 B. C.

The minute exhaustive scrutiny to which untold numbers of Christian scholars in Germany, England, and America—the three Bible-lands, as we may justly call them—are submitting the Old Testament, that little library of books of the most varied hue, is nothing less than astounding.



Fig. 4. KING SARGON II. AND HIS MARSHAL.

Of these silent intellectual labors the world has as yet taken but little notice. Yet this much is certain, that when the sum-total and ultimate upshot of the new knowledge shall have burst the barriers of the scholar's study and entered the broad path of life,—have entered our churches, schools, and homes,—the life of human-



Fig. 5. KING SENNACHERIB IN GALA COSTUME.

ity will be more profoundly stirred and be made the recipient of more significant and enduring progress than it has by all the discoveries of modern physical and natural science put together. So far, at any rate, the conviction has steadily and universally established itself that the results of the Babylonian and Assyrian excavations are destined to inaugurate a new epoch, not only in our

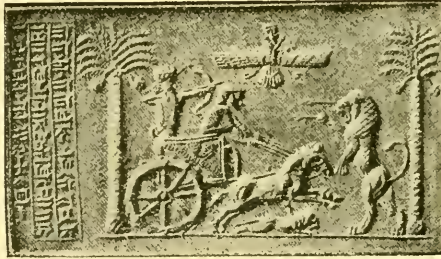


Fig. 6. SEAL OF KING DARIUS.

intellectual life, but especially in the criticism and comprehension of the Old Testament, and that from now till all futurity the names of *Babel* and *Bible* will remain inseparably linked together.

How times have changed! There was David and there was Solomon, 1000 years before Christ; and Moses, 1400 years; and Abraham eight centuries prior. And of all these men we had the

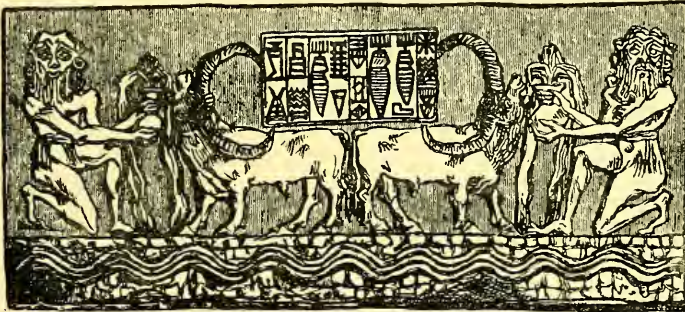
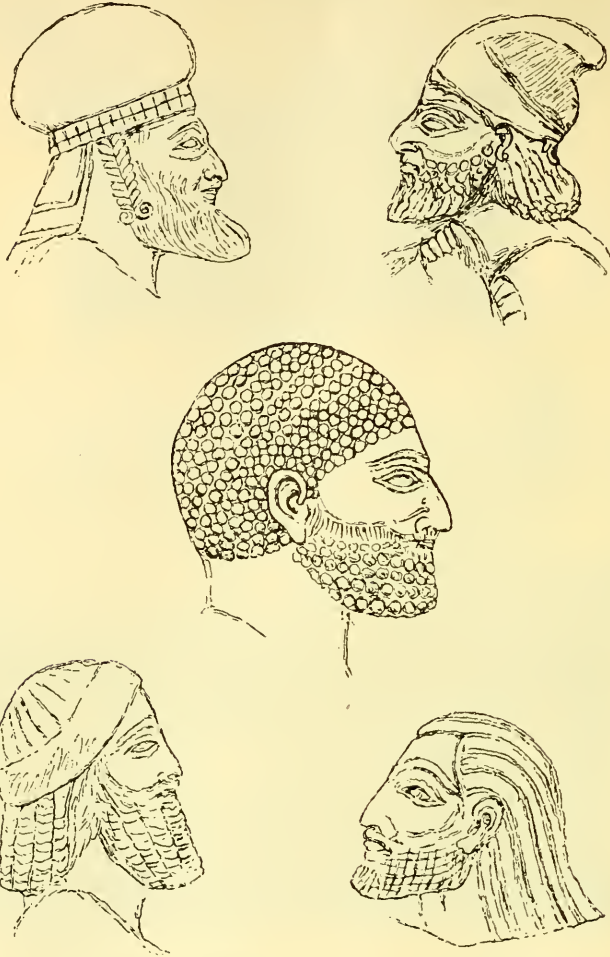


Fig. 7. SEAL OF SARGON I. (Third or fourth millennium B. C.)

minutest information! It was so unique, so supernatural, that one credulously accepted with it also stories concerning the origin of the world and mankind. The very greatest minds stood, and some of them still stand to-day, under the puissant thrall of the mystery encompassing the first book of Moses. But now that the pyramids have opened their depths and the Assyrian palaces their portals,

the people of Israel, with its literature, appears but the youngest member of a venerable and hoary group of nations.

The Old Testament formed a world by itself, till far in the last century. It spoke of times to whose latest limits the age of classi-



Elamite
Babylonian merchant

Jew of Lachish

Israelite
Arab horseman

Fig. 8. RACIAL TYPES.

cal antiquity barely reached, and of nations that have met either with none or with the most cursory allusion from the Greeks and the Romans. The Bible was the sole source of our knowledge of

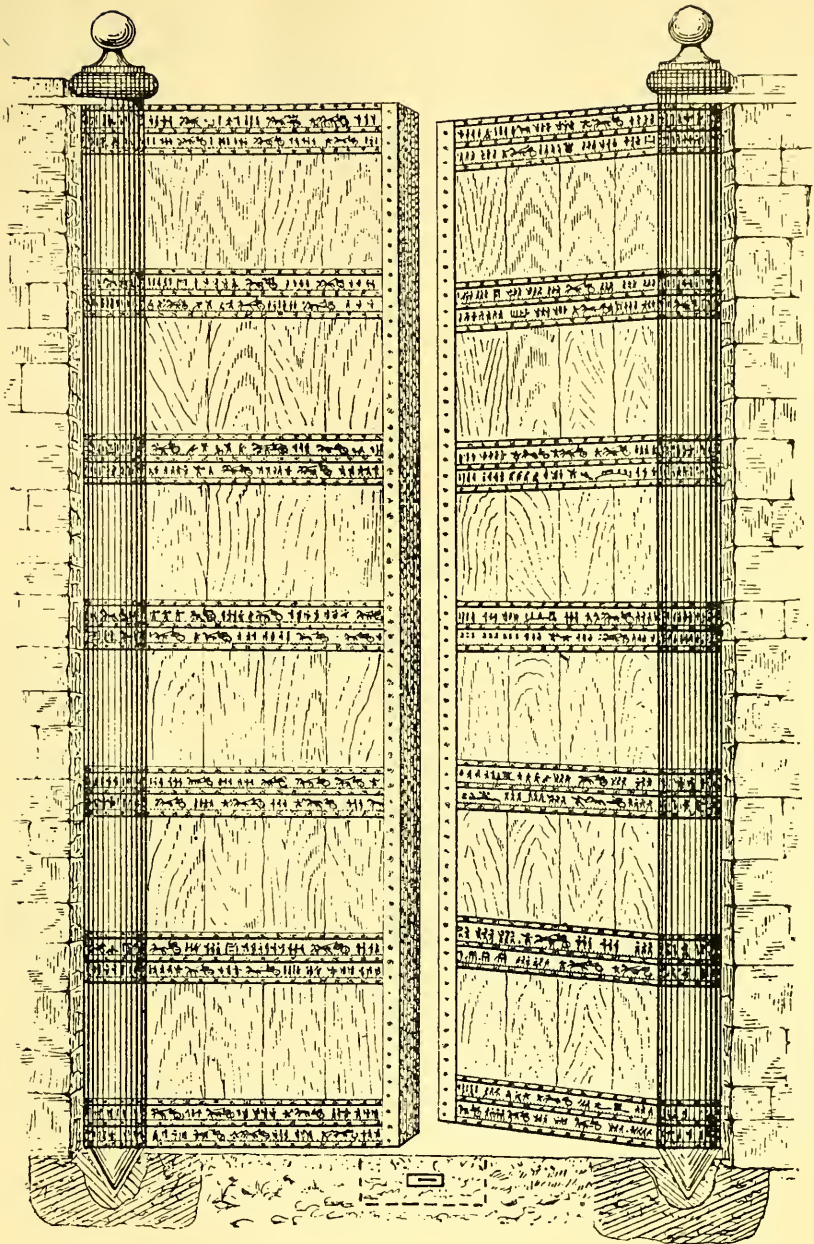


Fig. 9. BRONZE GATES OF THE PALACE OF SHALMANESER II. (At Balawat.)

the history of Hither Asia prior to 550 B. C., and since its vision extended over all that immense quadrangle lying between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf and stretching from Mt. Ararat

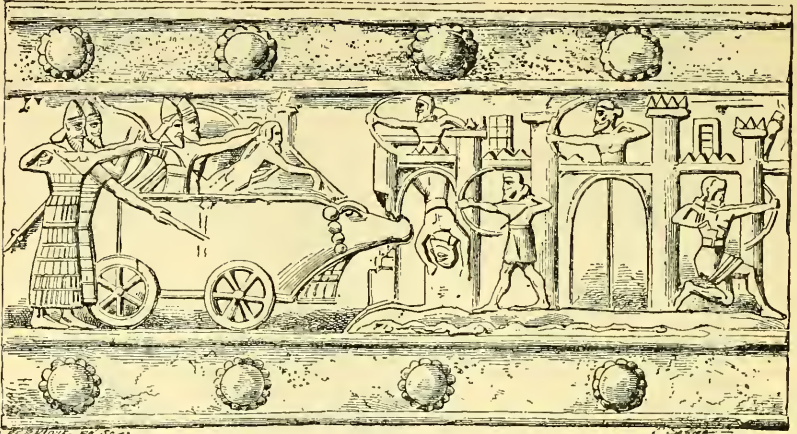


Fig. 10. ASSYRIANS BATTERING A FORTRESS.

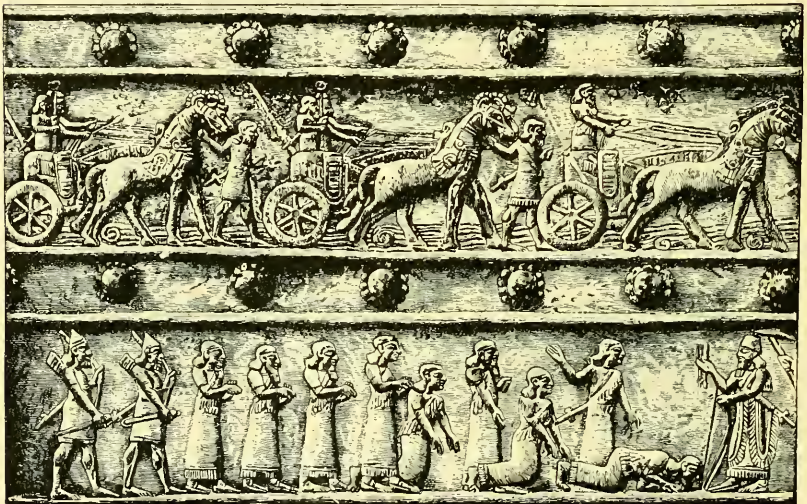


Fig. 11. DETAIL-GROUP ON BRONZE GATE.

Above war-chariots and below captives led before the king.

to Ethiopia, it naturally teemed with enigmas that might otherwise have tarried till eternity for their solution. But now the walls that formed the impenetrable background to the scenes of the Old Tes-

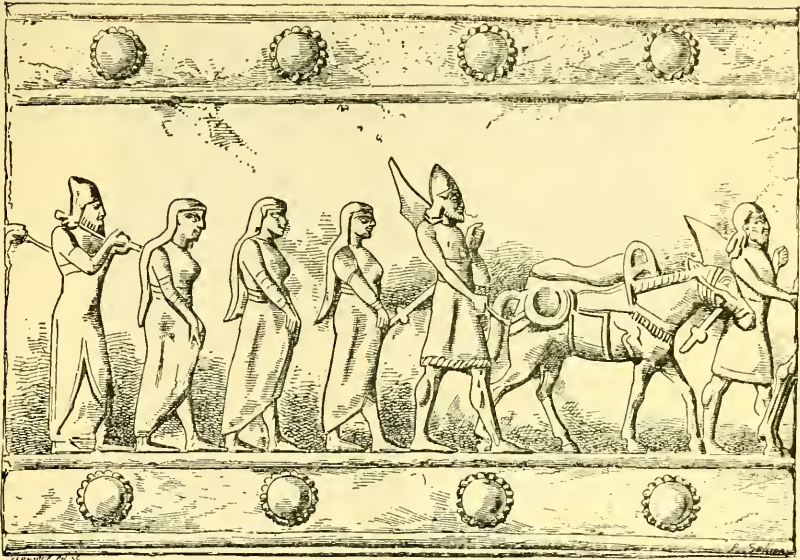


Fig. 12. PROCESSION OF FEMALE CAPTIVES. (Detail-group on bronze gate.)

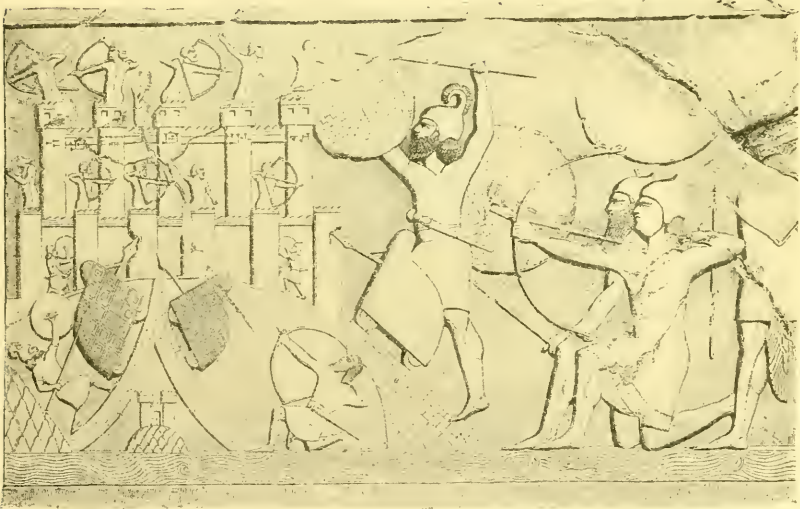


Fig. 13. ASSYRIAN BOWMEN AND SPEARMEN ATTACKING A HOSTILE FORTRESS.

tament have suddenly fallen, and a keen invigorating air and a flood of light from the Orient pervades and irradiates the hoary

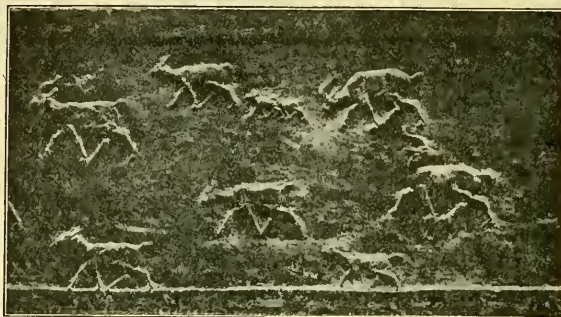


Fig. 13a. GRAZING ANTELOPES.
(Idyllic scene picturing the intense realism of Assyrian art.)

book,—animating and illuminating it the more as Hebrew antiquity is linked together from beginning to end with Babylonia and Assyria.



Fig. 14. ASSYRIAN SLINGERS.

The American excavations at Nippur brought to light the business records of a great wholesale house, Murashû & Sons, operat-

ing in that city in the reign of Artaxerxes (450 B. C.). We read in these records the names of many Jewish exiles that had remained in Babel, as Nathaniel, Haggai, and Benjamin, and we read also of a canal *Kabar* in connection with the city of Nippur, which is the original of the canal of *Kebar* rendered famous by Ezekiel's vision and situated "in the land of the Chaldæans" (Ezekiel i. 3).



Fig. 15. HEAD OF WINGED BULL.

Showing details of Assyrian mode of dressing the beard, as worn by the king and the officers of the army.

This "grand canal," for such the name means, may possibly exist to this very day.

Since the Babylonian bricks usually bear a stamp containing along with other marks also the name of the city in which the building of which it formed a part was erected, it was made possible for Sir Henry Rawlinson as early as the year 1849 to rediscover the much-sought-for city of *Ur of the Chaldees*, the home of

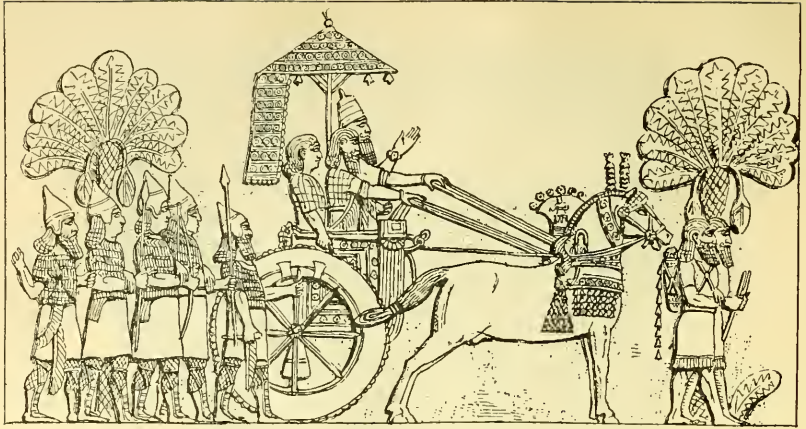


Fig. 16. THE KING'S CHARIOT IN A PARADE.



Fig. 17. OFFICERS OF ASURBANIPAL ENTERING COURT.

Abraham and the ancestors of the tribes of Israel (Genesis xi. 31 and xv. 7). The discovery was made in the gigantic mound of ruins of el-Muqajjar¹ on the right bank of the lower Euphrates (see Fig. 1), which is now the storm-center of warring Arab tribes. The certainty of the discovery has been more and more established.

The data of the cuneiform literature shed light also on geographical matters: formerly the site of the city of Carchemish,



Fig. 18. PAGES CARRYING ROYAL CHARIOT.

where Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B. C. won his great battle from Pharaoh-necho (Jeremiah xlvi. 2) was sought for at random on the banks of the Euphrates, but in March, 1876, the English assyriologist George Smith, starting from Aleppo and following the river downward from Biredshik, rode directly to the spot where from the tenor of the cuneiform inscriptions the city of the Hittite kings must have lain, and at once and unhesitatingly identified the vast

¹ Pronounced Mu^zayyer, English Mugheir.

ruins of Dsherabis there situate, with their walls and palace-mounds, more extensive than Nineveh itself, with the ancient city of Carchemish,—a conclusion that was immediately afterward confirmed by the inscriptions in the unique ideographic Hittite script that were strewn over the entire site of the ruins (Fig. 2).



Fig. 19. PAGES CARRYING THE ROYAL THRONE.

And like many names of places, so also many of the personalities named in the Bible, have received new light and life. The book of the prophet Isaiah (xx. 1) mentions an Assyrian king by the name of Sargon, who sent his marshal against Ashdod; and when in 1843 the French consul Émile Botta began his excavations on the mound of ruins situated not far from Mosul, and thus, at the suggestion of a German scholar, inaugurated archæological research

on Mesopotamian soil, the first Assyrian palace unearthed was the palace of this same Sargon, the conqueror of Samaria. Nay, on one of the superb alabaster reliefs with which the walls of the palace chambers were adorned, the very person of this mighty warrior conversing with his marshal appears before our eyes (Fig. 3).



Fig. 20. KING SARDANAPALUS ON HORSEBACK.

The Book of Kings (2 Kings xviii. 14) narrates that King Sennacherib received tribute from King Hezekiah in the city of Lachish



Fig. 21. SARDANAPALUS HUNTING THE LION ON HORSEBACK.

ish in southern Palestine. Now, a relief from Sargon's palace in Nineveh shows the great Assyrian king enthroned before his tent in sight of a conquered city, and the accompanying inscription reads: "Sennacherib, the king of the universe, king of Ashur, seated himself upon his throne and inspected the booty of Lachish."



Fig. 22. HUNTING THE LION FROM A CHARIOT.



Fig. 23. SARDANAPALUS BEARDING THE LION.
(The king of Ashur measures his strength with the king of the desert.)

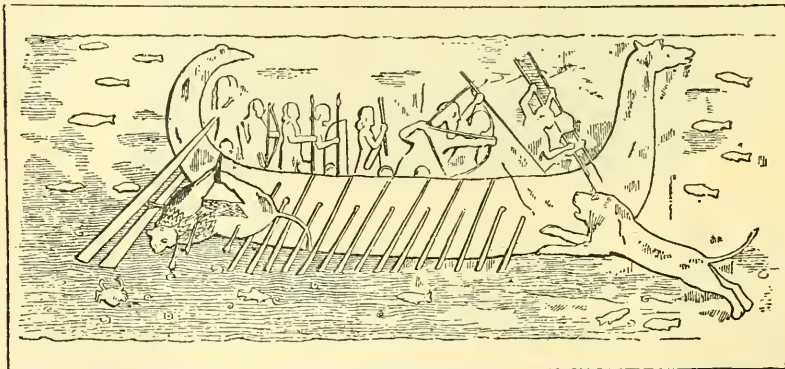


Fig. 24. HUNTING LIONS FROM A BOAT.

And again, Sennacherib's Babylonian rival Merodach-Baladan, who according to the Bible (2 Kings xx. 12) sent letters and a present

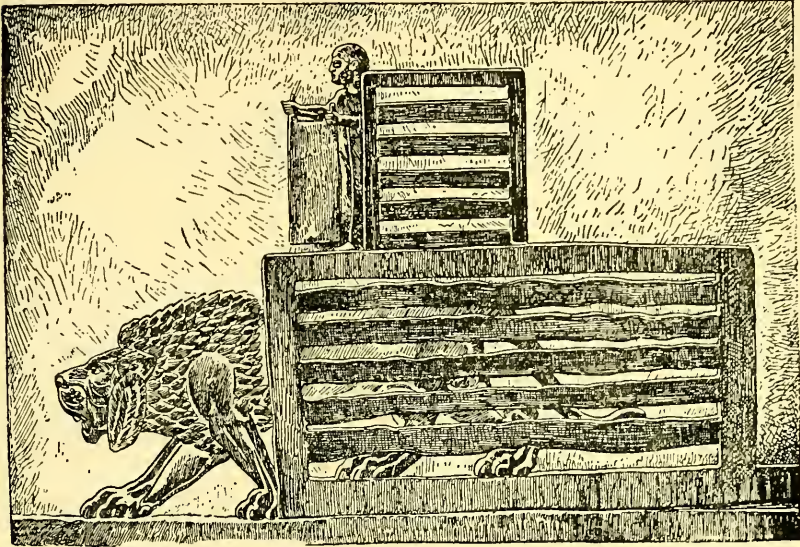


Fig 25. CAGED LION SET FREE FOR THE CHASE.

to King Hezekiah is shown us in his own likeness by a magnificent diorite relief now in Berlin, where before the king is the lord-mayor of the city of Babylon, to whom the sovereign in his gra-



Fig. 26. SERVANTS CARRYING FRUIT, HARES, PARTRIDGES, SPITTED GRASSHOPPERS, AND ONIONS.

ciousness has seen fit to grant large tracts of land. Even the contemporary of Abraham, Amraphel, the great king Hammurabi, is

now represented by a likeness (Fig. 3). Thus, all the men that made the history of the world for 3000 long years, rise to life again,



Fig. 27. SLAVES CARRYING FRUIT

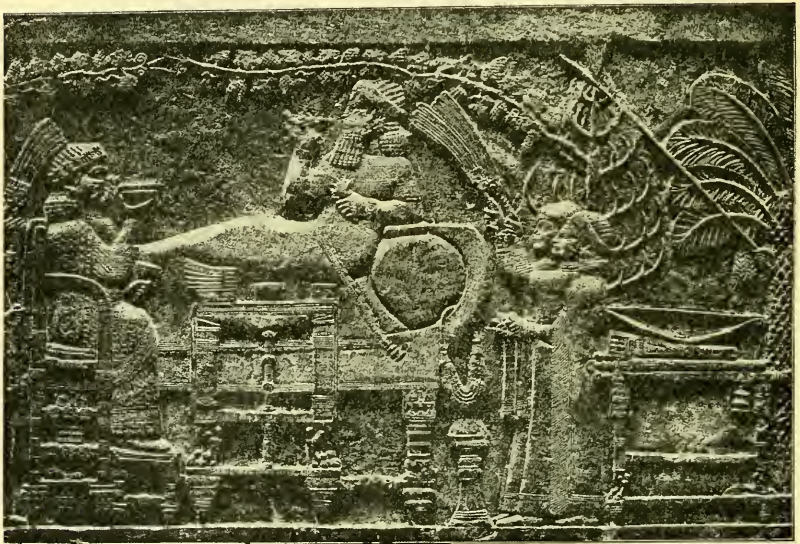


Fig. 28. KING SARDANAPALUS AND HIS CONSORT.

and the most costly relics have been bequeathed to us by them. Here is the seal of King Darius, the son of Hystaspes (Fig. 6),

where the king is represented as hunting the lion under the sublime protection of Ahura Mazda, and at the side is the trilingual inscription: "I am Darius, the great king,"—a genuine treasure of the British Museum. Here is the state seal of one of the oldest known Babylonian rulers, Sargani-sar-ali, or Sargon I., who flourished in the third, or possibly the fourth, millennium before Christ (Fig. 7). This king, as the legend runs, knew not his own father, the latter having met his death prior to the birth of his son; and since the father's brother cared not for the widowed mother, great affliction attended the son's entrance into this world; we read:



Fig. 29. ATTENDANTS UPON KING SARDANAPALUS AND HIS CONSORT.

"In Azupiran, on the banks of the Euphrates, she bore me in concealment; she placed me in a box of reeds, sealed my door with pitch, and cast me upon the river, which conveyed me on its waves to Akki, the water-carrier. He took me up in the kindness of his heart, reared me as his own child, made me his gardener. Then Istar, the daughter of the King of Heaven, showed fondness for me and made me king over men."

And not only kings and generals, but also *entire nations*, have been brought to life again by these discoveries. If we compare the various types of nationality engraved on the monuments of As-

syrian art, and, taking for example two types that we know, here scrutinise the picture of a Jew of Lachish (Fig. 8), and here the



Fig. 30. CONSORT OF SARDANAPALUS.
(From a sketch by Colonel Billerbeck.)

representation of an Israelite of the time of Jehu, we are not likely to be wrong in our conclusion that also the other national types, for example the Elamite chieftain, the Arab horseman, and the Babylonian merchant, have been depicted and reproduced with the same fidelity and exactness. Particularly the Assyrians, who sixty years ago were supposed to have perished with all their history and civilisation in the great river of time, have been made known to us in the minutest details by excavations in Nineveh, and many passages in the prophetic books receive gorgeous illustration from our discoveries. Thus, Isaiah describes in the following eloquent language the Assyrian troops :

“ Behold, they shall come with speed swiftly : None shall be weary nor stumble among them ; none shall slumber nor sleep ; neither shall the girdle of their loins

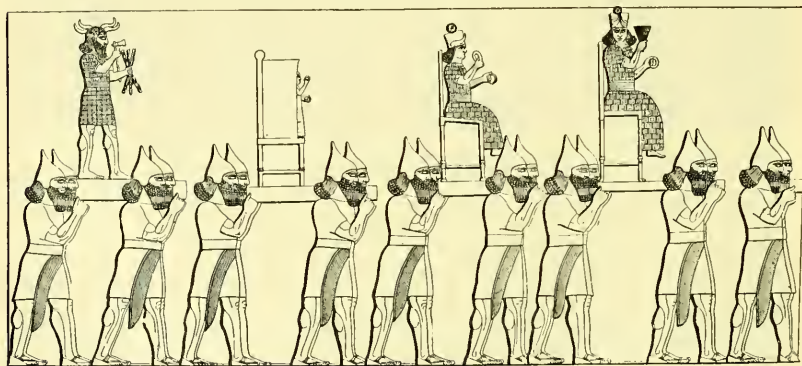


Fig. 31. PROCESSION OF IDOLS.

be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken : Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind : Their roaring shall be like a lion, yea, they shall roar, and lay

hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it."—(Isaiah, v. 27-29.)

We can now see these same Assyrian soldiers arising from their camp in the early morn and dashing their battering-rams against the enemy's fortress (Fig. 10); and on other representations (Figs. 11 and 12) may be seen the unfortunate prisoners conducted the way from which there is no home-coming. We see also (Fig. 13) the Assyrian bowmen and spearmen casting their weapons toward the hostile fortress, and in another case Assyrian warriors storming an elevation defended by hostile archers. They pull themselves upward by the branches of the trees, or clamber to the summit with the help of staffs; whilst others drag in triumph the severed heads of their enemies into the valley.

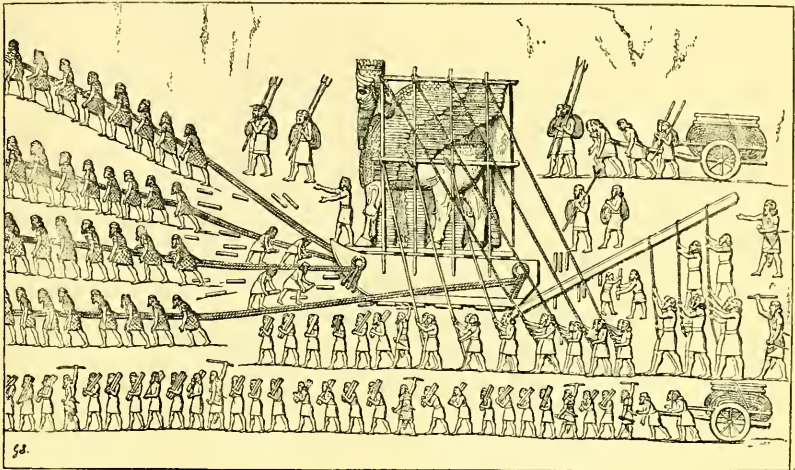


Fig. 32. TRANSPORTATION OF THE GIGANTIC STONE BULLS.

The military system of this first great warrior state of the world is shown forth to us in a vast number of similar representations on the bronze doors of Shalmanezar II. (Fig. 9) and on the alabaster reliefs of the palaces of Sargon and Sennacherib, with all details of armament and equipment and in all phases of development. (See, for example, Fig. 14.)

Again we have the portrait of an Assyrian officer of Sargon's general staff, the style of whose beard surpasses in artistic cut anything that has been attempted by modern officers. (See, for example, Fig. 15.) Here we see the officers of the royal household making their ceremonial entry (Fig. 17), or pages carrying the royal chariot (Fig. 18), or the royal throne (Fig. 19). Many beautiful

reliefs show us King Sardanapalus following the chase, especially in his favorite sport of hunting lions, of which a goodly number of magnificent specimens were constantly kept at hand in parks specially reserved for this purpose. (Figs. 20-25.)

When King Saul refused to suffer young David to go forth to do battle with the giant Goliath, David reminded him that he had been the shepherd of his father's flocks and that when a lion or a bear had come and taken a lamb from his flock, he had gone out after the beast and had smitten it and wrested from it its prey, and that if after that it had risen against him he had caught the lion by its beard and slain it. Precisely the same custom prevailed in Assyria; and the reliefs show King Sardanapalus doing battle

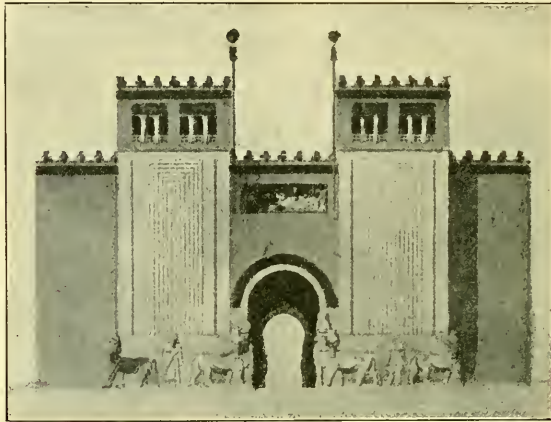


Fig. 33. PORTAL OF THE PALACE OF SARGON.

(Representing the nobility and simplicity of the Assyrian architecture.)

with the lion, not only on horseback (Fig. 21) and from his chariot (Fig. 22), but also in hand to hand combat (Fig. 23),—the King of Ashur measuring his strength with the king of the desert.

We catch glimpses of the preparations which were made for the royal meal (Figs. 26 and 27); we see the servants bringing hares, partridges, spitted grasshoppers, a plenitude of cakes and all manner of fruits, and carrying fresh branches for driving away the flies. We are even permitted to see on a bas-relief of the harem (Fig. 28) the king and queen quaffing costly wine in a leafy bower, the king reclining on an elevated divan, the queen seated opposite him on a chair, and clothed in rich garments. Eunuchs waft cooling breezes toward them from their fans, while soft music from dis-

tant sources steals gently upon their ears (Fig. 29). This is the only queen of whom we possess a picture. Her profile as it appeared years ago in a better state of preservation has been saved for posterity by a sketch made in 1867 by Lieutenant, afterwards Colonel, Billerbeck (Fig. 30). This consort of Sardanapalus was apparently a princess of Aryan blood with blond hair.

Many other things of interest in Assyrian antiquity have also been restored to our bodily vision. The prophet Isaiah (xlvi. 1) mentions the procession of the idols, and in Fig. 31 we actually

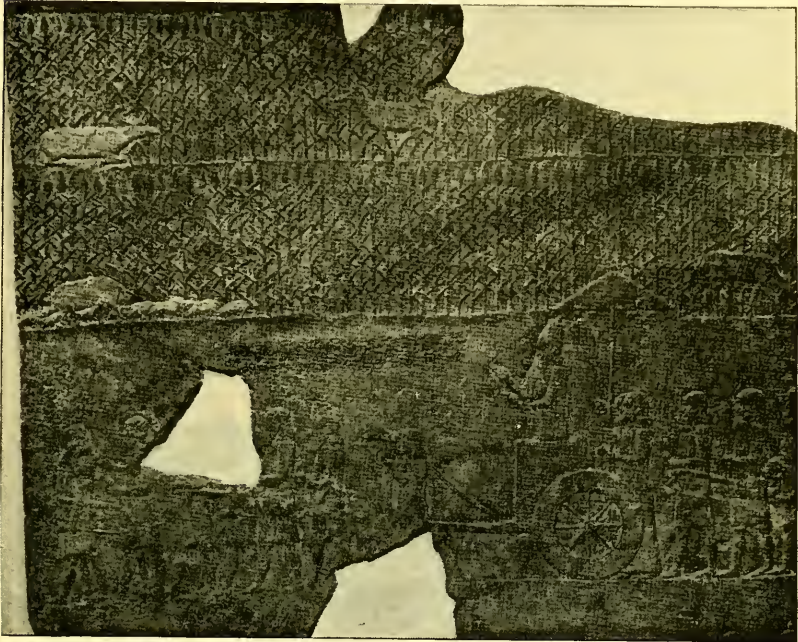


Fig. 34. IDYLIC SCENES FROM ASSYRIAN ART.

witness one,—with the goddesses in front, and behind, the god of the weather armed with hammer and bolts; Assyrian soldiers have been commanded to transport the idols.

We see in Fig. 32 how the statues of the gigantic stone bulls were transported, and catch in this way all manner of glimpses of the technical knowledge of the Assyrians. But our greatest and most constant delight is derived from the contemplation of their noble and simple architecture, as it is exhibited for example in the portal of Sargon's palace excavated by Botta (Fig. 33), or from

the magnificent representations of animals, replete with the most startling realism, which these "Dutchmen of antiquity" created. For example, the idyllic picture of the grazing antelopes (Fig. 13*a*;

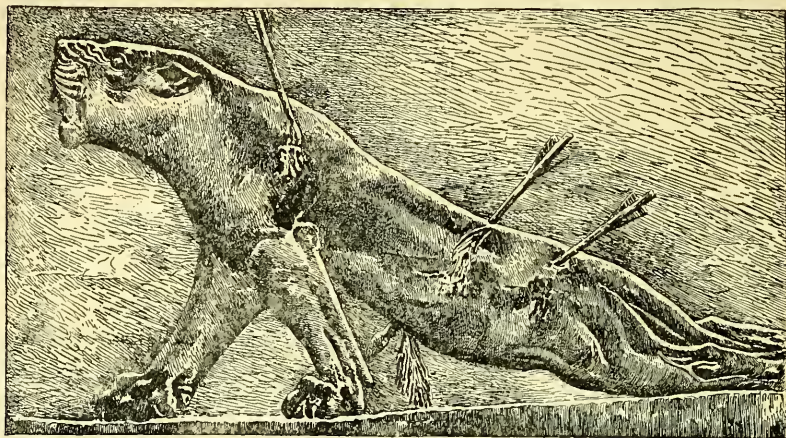


Fig. 35. THE DYING LIONESS OF NINEVEH.

also Fig. 34), or the dying lioness of Nineveh, so justly renowned in art (Fig. 35).

The excavations on Babylonian soil disclose in like manner



Fig. 36. HEAD OF A SUMERIAN PRELATE.
(A noble type from the dawn of human history.)

the art and culture of the mother country of Assyrian civilisation far back in the fourth millennium,—a period which the boldest flights of fancy would otherwise have scarcely dreamt of recovering.

We penetrate lastly here into the period of that primitive un-Indo-Germanic and likewise un-Semitic nation of Sumerians, who are the creators and originators of the great Babylonian civilisation, of those Sumerians for whom the number 60 and not 100 constituted the next higher unit after 10.

That Sumerian prelate whose magnificently preserved head (Fig. 36) the Berlin Museum shelters, may unquestionably be characterised as a noble representative of the human race in the twilight of history.

But gratifying and instructive as all these discoveries may be, they have yet, so to speak, the significance of details and externalities only and are easily surpassed in intrinsic scope and import by the facts that we shall adduce in the continuation of the present article which will appear in the May *Open Court*.