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ARTICLE XIII.

SEMITIC AND ORIENTAL NOTES.

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES.

IN the December (1896) issue of the Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology, Professor Flinders Petrie has a very interesting and suggestive article on the vexed matter of the period of the Judges, which seems to promise that the whole matter may soon be completely understood, and the differences reconciled. And the importance of the relation of the thorough understanding of the Judges period to the whole Egyptian question cannot well be overestimated. Professor Petrie fixes the date of the Exodus at about 1204 B.C., or later, which it seems is certainly late enough, though his method of arriving at the date is clear and reasonable enough. He reasons from the inscription of Merenptah stating that he fought and subdued Israelites, that he did not restrict his campaign to the Philistines, and that, had the Jews been in Palestine at that period, the record of the war would have appeared in the book of Judges. This is in general a safe inference, though it is possible that, from so composite a book as the Judges, a portion of the record may have been lost or dropped out. In addition hereto, there is no sign of a Palestinian campaign of Ramessu III. and that hence, the Jewish invasion must have been subsequent to Ramessu III.'s last campaign. His date appears to have been not later than 1180-1148 B.C., which puts the date of the Jewish invasion at 1164 B.C., or lower; and hence the date of the Exodus at a point very near 1200 B.C.

He also discusses the reigns of the kings and the priestly genealogies, and then proceeds from these results to discuss the period of the Judges itself. Professor Petrie, as others have often done before him, shows the careless use of the expression "forty years" in connection with the reigns of Saul and David, and illustrates, from the probable facts concerning Saul's reign, how productive of misunderstanding that expression has been. For example, Saul was warned in his second year, that his successor was already chosen (1 Sam. xiii. 14), and David comes to the front almost immediately in the Amalekite war. Now if Saul died when David was but thirty (2 Sam. v. 4), David probably not being less than twenty years old in the war just mentioned, Saul's reign is limited to about three years before David, and ten years after, making about thir-

teen years in all. This, it may be mentioned, is but one of many such examples of Old Testament use of figures.

From this it would appear that, taken with the genealogies and other data, the period of the Judges covers about one hundred and five years between 1150 and 1045 B.C. Now the book of Judges, as Professor Petrie again points out, consists really of three histories, which may be designated about as follows: The history of Galilee and the North, that of Moab and the East, and that of the Philistines and the West or Ephraim. This has always been clear, and has frequently been shown, and has been fruitful in much explanation of the matters discussed in the book of Judges itself. The analysis of the periods within the book is thus given:—

- Judges iii. 8 North, 1st captivity and deliverance.
- “ iii. 14 East, 1st captivity and deliverance.
- “ iv. 3 North, 2d captivity and deliverance.
- “ vi. 1 West, 1st captivity and deliverance, continuing
- “ x. 3 East, history to the end.
- “ xii. 11 North, to end.
- “ xii. 14 West, to end.

In this way we see the growth of the power of the Judges, the connection of the various districts with each other, and a picture of the rise of central authority. In each history, before the monarchy appears, there is a stable rule effected in the district.

Now the total period in these districts thus arranged, is in the North 118 years, in the East 122 years, and in the West 121 years. But here is the complicating “forty years” period, included in each one of them; and if the experience in connection with Saul’s reign is taken as a basis of calculation, these periods are very materially reduced. But this leaves the period according to Egyptian history, as stated, 105 years; according to the genealogies, about 116 years; and according to the book of Judges, 120 years, subject to some other modifications as indicated. The reconciliation completely of these differences, Professor Petrie says, is hardly practicable yet, though he indicates some ways in which it can be aided. But in the main, the three sources compared in this way, as our author has compared them, is at least very suggestive, and so approximately correct that it may well stand until something much more definite appears to modify his view. This is by far the most careful discussion of the date question of the period covered in the book of Judges we have seen, and gives hope that it will aid us in fixing some other matters which are intimately allied to the period of the Judges. Professor Petrie’s chronology of the whole period is worthy of being reproduced here for comparison and further study. It is as below:—

Exodus.....	1192.
Invasion of Canaan.....	1152.
First oppressions about.....	1142.
First deliverances.....	1135-1125.

Abimelech in West	1114-1111.
Jabin in North	1112-1092.
Tola in East.....	1111-1088.
Jair in East.....	1088-1066.
Abdon in West	1089-1081.
Philistines in West (including Samson-Samuel).....	1081-1042.
Philistines in East.....	1066-1048.
Jephthah in East	1048-1042.
Elon in North.....	1052-1042.
Saul	1042-1029.

This table is subject to slight variations ; but will be found, as Professor Petrie thinks, a fair working chronology of the period it covers. Certainly the way in which the results have been worked out, and the reasonableness of the general grounds assigned for them are very satisfactory, and entitle the table to great consideration. A. A. B.

ARCHÆOLOGY AND LITERARY CRITICISM.

PROFESSOR FRANCIS BROWN in his annual address, before the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, on "Old Testament Problems," devotes a section or two to the question of the proper relation of archæology to the literary problems of the Old Testament. He appears to think that the discoveries of archæology, though interesting enough in their way, have little real force and bearing as related to the matters of literary judgment and criticism which the higher critics have been discussing.

His view of the case is simply that all such discoveries are themselves historical material which must itself be subjected to careful analysis and criticism, and that its interpretation is often a matter no less difficult than that of the Old Testament documents themselves,—a statement which is certainly very true. Used, he says, as other historical evidence is, it is as good as any, namely, having been itself critically sifted and properly classified and authenticated. Professor Brown thinks that, as an ally of conservatism, it is useless in a battle of literary criticism, because it is not designed to win that kind of a struggle. It may be important as determining a historical fact, but has no influence and can have none in determining a literary fact. Archæology, he says, for example, can have nothing to offer on the question, as to whether Moses did or did not write the Pentateuch.

From Professor Brown's position there can be very little dissent ; first, because what he says is true ; and secondly, because he does not touch the real point at issue in the battle between archæologists and the literary critics. The most casual examination of the materials out of which literary criticism has been constructed in the last fifty or seventy-five years will show, that the higher criticism has been giving itself not mere-

ly to purely literary matters, but to arbitrarily reconstructing history. No plain statement of fact, if of a certain textual character, has been important enough not to be swept away by an assertion totally unjustifiable from the mere literary contemplation of the facts. The presence of a word, or a series of words, or a form of expression, has been sufficient to discredit, in the mind of the literary critic, any number of matters of historical fact. Literary criticism has not confined itself to matters literary, but rather undertaken to reconstruct and alter, each according to the personal inclination of the critic, the most fundamental statements of the document under review. It is just this part of the assumption of the higher critics that the archæologists have punctured, and it is this which causes the resentment of the higher critics. To say that writing did not exist in the time of Moses in any such form as would make the Pentateuch possible, is not a literary fact, but a statement of historical possibility. And to base an argument against Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch upon such a statement, certainly is not literary criticism, whatever else it may be. Yet this has been done. Archæology has shown how insufferably arrogant the cocksure attitude of the higher critics has been; and it may be observed, in passing, that the higher critics have grown more cautious in recent years in the matter of predictions and date-making. Archæology has certainly justified its being, if it does no more than remind a coterie of petty infallibilities that the Almighty reserves such attributes for himself alone.

On the other hand, archæology has rendered positive service in the reconstruction and revivifying of periods of biblical history concerning which we had little or no knowledge. One thinks of the attention now given to the material of Assyriology as contrasted with Robertson Smith's contemptuous dismissal of it as without much significance,—a matter which before his death he saw to be a blunder. Has textual criticism nothing that it owes to Assyriology? and, on the mere literary side, have the Assyrian accounts of biblical themes no significance or weight in the literary argument? Not the weight of the decisive witness, but weight surely. The same is true of Egyptian research, as the preceding note will abundantly show. Professor Sayce certainly has the best of his opponents in this matter. They were sure they knew everything from the literary side. He proved to them that there were many things concerning which they evidently knew nothing, and more concerning which they were mistaken. It is not strange that he should go farther, and apparently seek to discredit them in everything, as they did him.

For the Tell-el-Amarna tablets, Professor Brown has but a single paragraph. In a word they have not been sufficiently "acquired and assimilated." True enough: and there are people who say precisely the same thing about the book of Isaiah. But it seems to a considerable number of persons at least intelligently enough acquainted with the main facts, that the Tell-el-Amarna tablets have been sufficiently "acquired and as-

similate¹ to make a considerable portion of the critical world pause and think twice before venturing to settle offhand some of the fundamental questions of Christian interpretation.

One single statement in Professor Brown's address it will be well not to overlook, and to remember in view of all we have been saying, namely when he says, "With reference to questions of date, there is manifest an increased recognition of the force of arguments diminishing the amount of pre-exilic Hebrew literature that has come down to us, and increasing proportionately the exilic and the post-exilic, particularly the latter." This is not now the time to discuss this statement, but we venture the criticism of the remark, that from this time out a more rational and thorough examination of the literature of the Old Testament will tend to prove precisely the reverse.

A. A. B.

BABYLONIAN PALÆOGRAPHY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE linguistic history of the Old Testament has in recent years developed into one of the most interesting, and in some respects one of the most important, branches of Old Testament study. More than ever the Old Testament is seen clearly to be a rational development of ideas, customs, ritual, and laws which must be suitably placed in their order of development to be thoroughly comprehended. There being no inspired or final authority known on the subject of the arrangement of the material contained in the books of the Old Testament, it becomes the work of scholars and others to grapple with the matter of arrangement; and this, for the most part, is what gives the question of the dates of the documents the importance it has, though, at first glance, the ideas seem to be the only important thing. But obviously the understanding of the ideas depends in great measure upon the knowledge of the conditions from which they emerged, and the necessities which required their enactment into institutions and laws.

Until within a comparatively recent period, the whole tendency of critical study of the Old Testament was to lower all the dates, and thus bring the material and ideas of the Old Testament institutions closer to our own era; and it must be admitted that there seemed to be much to justify the procedure. Many of the books were placed by the present arrangement in a period to which they obviously could not belong. And many documents alleged to be of early or antique origin showed a skill in arrangement and compilation which proved without question that they belonged to a more highly developed literary period than that in which they were alleged to have been created. Consequently there was a general quest for a productive literary period, and one such was found in the exile and the period succeeding. Professor Brown's statement, commented upon in the preceding note, is a type of the prevailing notion. But the interesting thing in connection with the subject is, that it did not seem to oc-

cur to any one that a productive literary period might be found earlier than the alleged date of the documents referred to. Take, for example, the Mosaic books, so-called. The assumption that there might have been such a literary period contemporary or earlier than Moses was dismissed with a contemptuousness that made argument about it almost impossible. To a later period one must look, and the result was that the seventh century B.C. blossomed out into what must have been, if one can credit that it produced all attributed to it, one of the most astounding literary developments in the history of the world.

There was, however, just one shadow across the sunlit landscape of seventh-century beauty and simplicity. It was in the linguistic difficulties, which everywhere persistently protruded themselves, and perplexed, and often stultified the overconfident expositors of seventh-century sunlight and productiveness. The discovery and the remarkable expansion of Assyrian knowledge and literature has still further beclouded that seventh-century brightness, and, what is more amazing still, seems to threaten to make the erstwhile standing-ground *par excellence* as precarious a foundation, for secure results, as the floating reeds upon which Noah's dove in vain essayed to rest her feet. The date-making business took a new turn, and the gaze was and is turned backward, and we have learned to wait more patiently and have no longer the "cock-sure" noisiness of seventh-century self-satisfaction. It is well that it is so, and we shall probably learn more with the latter attitude than with the former, though we shall have less of the dogmatic certitude once so common.

Aside from the great light thrown upon the Old Testament by the comparative Semitic linguistic study, there have been made strong and vigorously eloquent beginnings in a science of Babylonian palæography under Professor Hilprecht's leadership, which will still more begloom the advocates of seventh-century sunlight and productiveness. Not content with the development of words and texts, the very letters themselves, and the history of their form and arrangement, are being studied, which is throwing great light upon the relative age, not merely of texts, but of ideas, because these happen to be expressed in one form or another; and this, too, promises a revolutionary field of activity. It has been pointed out before in these Notes, that there was a striking relationship of form and meaning, with some lateral variations, between the characters of the Babylonian and the Chinese; and from this and similar sources, with the patient comparison of form and palæographic development, we may get more intelligence from a most unexpected source upon these very questions over which we have for a century been struggling, even though it will take a long time to "acquire and assimilate" the material before sound conclusions can be developed.

The instances in which ideas and dates in respect to the Old Testament literature have been clarified and modified have been abundantly shown ever since the publication of Schrader's "Keilinschriften und das Alte

Testament," and this knowledge has gained general acceptance. But no one has as yet attempted what some new Robertson Smith must attempt, the revision of Old Testament religious ideas with the modifications which the knowledge and light of Assyriology compel. That great work is still to be accomplished, and from the new palæographic discoveries and elucidations will come important aid to completer understanding of what more and more is demonstrated to be incomparably the most interesting antique literature in the world. With respect to the New Testament also, this has a most vital relation; because one of the first and most valuable of the Assyrian contributions to our knowledge was a large fund of matter dealing with the Semitic social customs and life, and these in turn have a most decided bearing upon the rise of social institutions. Marriage, property, land tenure, taxation, and a host of other questions are thus made clearer in their development, and bring to the New Testament a better comprehension of the existing ideas and their history, upon which the social mutations proposed by Christ and his disciples were to be imposed. New Testament morality and New Testament doctrine will not be least among the gainers from the increased interest in the letter and form of the primary languages from which the now complex Semitic development arose.

A. A. B.