

**LECTURES UPON THE ASSYRIAN  
LANGUAGE AND SYLLABARY:  
DELIVERED TO STUDENTS OF  
THE ARCHAIC CLASSES**

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Lectures upon the Assyrian Language and Syllabary: Delivered to Students of the Archaic Classes by A. H. Sayce

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**A. H. SAYCE**

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UPON  
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AND  
SYLLABARY.

(Sayce)

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(1) (1877)

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DELIVERED TO  
THE STUDENTS OF THE ARCHAIC CLASSES.

BY  
REV. A. H. SAYCE, M.A.,  
*Deputy Professor of Comparative Philology, Oxford.*



*Multæ terricolis linguæ, cœlestibus una.*

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1877.

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## P R E F A C E .

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**T**HE following Lectures form part of an experiment which took practical shape through the unwearied exertions of Mr. W. R. Cooper, the Secretary of the Society of Biblical Archæology. Classes in Egyptian and Assyrian were started in the rooms of the Society in the spring of 1875; Mr. Le Page Renouf superintending the first, and myself the second. The three first Lectures on the syllabary embody the substance of the Lectures delivered in 1875, before an audience which averaged some thirty students; the remaining Lectures occupied the spring of 1876, the second year of the experiment. The success which attended it leads to the hope that English schools of Egyptology and Assyriology may be permanently formed, and the study of the monumental languages of the great nations of antiquity placed on the same footing as the study of Hebrew.

For Assyrian, two classes of students are urgently required. One, whose eyesight and practice shall enable them to copy the minute characters of the Assyrian tablets with photographic accuracy; the other, who shall bring to the task of decipherment all the varied stores of Semitic philology and learning. Of course both classes must, to a certain extent, intermingle their acquirements; the philologist ought to be able to control the epigraphist,



and the epigraphist to have some knowledge of Semitic philology. But in these days of divided labour, and in a subject of so vast extent as Assyrian decipherment, it is not necessary, indeed it is rarely possible, that the two specialties should be united in the same person. Ordinarily, the philologist must content himself merely with that knowledge of epigraphy needful for his purpose, the epigraphist with that knowledge of philology needful to guide him in his readings. Inasmuch, however, as the study of Assyrian is a monumental one, the philologist will have to be an epigraphist to a far greater extent than is the case with the classical scholar.

There is no doubt a good deal in the following Lectures which may have to be corrected by subsequent discovery. Such must always be the case with a progressive study. Nevertheless, the main outlines of Assyrian grammar have now been sketched with clearness and certainty, its main problems have been solved, and the details alone left to be filled in. I, for one, believe that the day is not far distant when it will be recognised that a knowledge of Assyrian is as important for comparative Semitic philology as is a knowledge of Sanskrit for the comparative study of the Aryan languages.

A. H. SAYCE.

*Queen's College, Oxford, June 6th, 1877.*





## PHILOLOGICAL LECTURES

ON THE

ASSYRIAN LANGUAGE.

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### LECTURE I.

*On the Study of the Assyrian Language.*

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**I**T is with mingled feelings of gratification and diffidence that I come before you this evening to open a series of lectures, the character and object of which are new and even revolutionary in the history of our studies and education. For the first time in this country an attempt will be made to found a system of instruction in languages, which it has been the glory of the present century to recover from the past, which are clothed with all the modern interest that attaches to the great problems of the development of civilization, and which demand, not mere memory or dependence upon the authority of others, but the new methods of patient scientific induction. Thanks to the exertions of the indefatigable Secretary of the *Society of Biblical Archaeology*, Mr. W. R. Cooper, my colleague Mr. Le Page Renouf and myself are enabled to bring before your notice classics more ancient than those of Greece or Rome, or even Judea—classics, too, which are written on contemporaneous monuments, and must be spelled out, as it were, from the lips of a living people—explaining the details of their grammar and idioms, and the key

which has unlocked their secrets. The knowledge of all this has hitherto been confined, like the sacred learning of Egyptian priests, to a small band of workers, from whom the world has been content to accept the startling results which have from time to time awakened its incredulity or excited its interest; and no endeavour has yet been made in England to bring the languages and the literature of the pioneers of civilization out of the mysterious shadow-land of the specialist into the commonplace light of the lecture-room and the school. Shall I be considered presumptuous if I say that the courses of lectures which I have been permitted to inaugurate this evening mark an era in national education? I cannot express the gratification I feel at the attendance which I see before me, so large beyond my boldest expectations, and so encouraging to the success of our work. A few years back the languages and the literature, which will be the subject of our studies, lay forgotten and unknown under the rubbish of centuries, or in the dusty corners of European museums; still fewer years ago they were but a sealed book to all but one or two daring scholars who alone were attempting to penetrate their contents. Already they stand on a level with the manifold subjects of human knowledge which are taught and learned, and the students who have gathered this evening to help us in founding schools and educational courses of Assyrian and Egyptian philology, are a token that a fresh start has been made in the education of the country, and a fresh realm of conquest opened out before the mind.

For, we must remember, the study of Assyrian and Egyptian philology differs in several very essential points from the studies with which we are usually familiar; and since the method by which it must be learnt is a new one, a new method also must be devised for teaching it. Firstly, and especially, the teacher and the pupil must both alike be learners, and the difference between them is one of degree only, and not of kind. The teacher is but a little in advance of the pupil, but feeling a way, as it were, for the latter, and even in the act of teaching, is making fresh discoveries, and rectifying old conclusions. There is no authoritative standard to be referred to, no tradition to be appealed to, no dictionary to be consulted; all must be worked out by the laborious comparison of texts, by extensive knowledge of cognate languages, by ready combination and hypothesis, and by the trained judgment of scientific research. In short, the decipherer is as much