

**THE ASSYRIAN  
MONUMENTS  
ILLUSTRATING THE  
SERMONS OF ISAIAH**

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The Assyrian Monuments Illustrating the Sermons of Isaiah by Max Kellner

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SERMONS OF ISAIAH

BY

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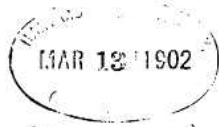
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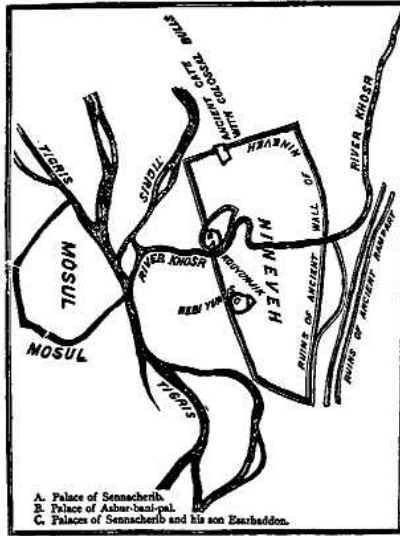
“Ha! Assyria, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! Against an impious nation am I wont to send him, and against the people of my wrath to give him a charge to take spoil and to seize booty, and to make it a trampling like mire in the streets.” *Isaiah x. 6.*

## THE ASSYRIAN MONUMENTS ILLUSTRATING THE SERMONS OF ISAIAH

BY MAX KELLNER, D.D.

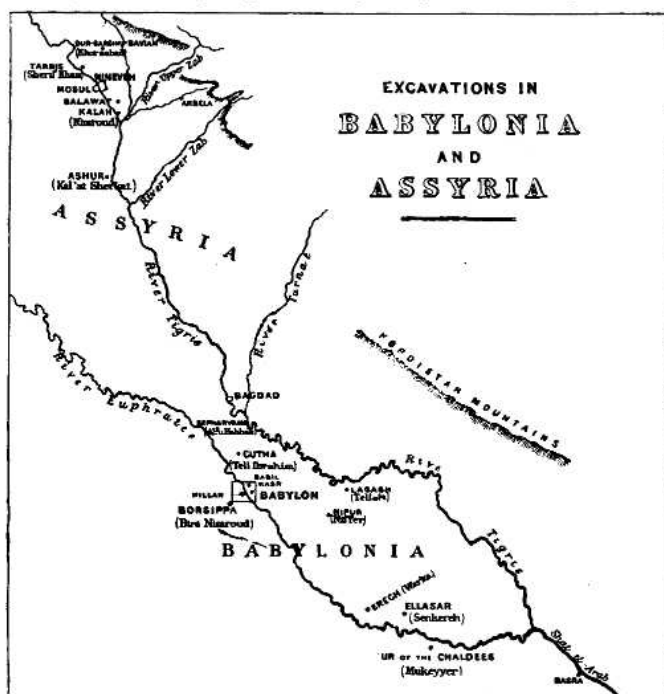
*Professor in the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge*

**I**F you should stand upon the highest point in the Turkish town of Mosul, and face eastward across the River Tigris, your eye would rest upon a group of huge mounds of nearly 9,000 feet circumference; these,—so from very early days tradition has said,—mark the site of a section of the great city of Nineveh. The mound at the southern end of this group is crowned by the village of Nebi Yunus, *i. e.*, the prophet Jonah; a name which rests on the tradition that that prophet lies buried there. The northern end is occupied with the extensive plateau of Kouyunjik. The sides of this mound are too steep for a direct ascent, but a winding road climbs obliquely to the plateau above, whose fertile expanse has been cultivated for centuries, and repays the labor of the fellaheen as liberally as does the plain below. It is these mounds of Kouyunjik and Nebi Yunus that held entombed so long the palaces of three of Assyria's greatest kings; *viz.*, of Sennacherib, of Esarhaddon and of Ashurbanipal.



This Nineveh mound is only one of many. Other ruin-heaps rise above the plain at Khorsabad, twelve miles to the north of Nineveh; at Nimroud (Calah), twenty miles to the south; and at Kalat Sherkat (Ashur), thirty miles farther down on the western bank of the Tigris. And as the traveler moves farther south still, he will find others at Babylon and Birs Nimroud (Borsippa), at Telloh (Lagash), Niffer (Nippur, Calno), Warka (Erech) and Mukeyyer ("Ur of the Chaldees").

These mounds had been known for many years to Oriental travelers; among others Mr. Claudius Rich in the early years of the century (1811, 1820) had seen them, and had brought home inscribed bricks and other objects; but it was not until 1842 that the work of excavating was begun. In that year Mons. Paul Emile Botta, the French consul at Mosul, made an examination of the mound of Kouyunjik. He was, however, not destined to find anything there; and after a few weeks' fruitless trial he moved his workmen to the mound at Khorsabad, where he unearthed the remains of the palace of King Sargon. The palace gates he found guarded by



huge winged bull-deities, and the walls within covered with bas-reliefs of sieges and battles, of hunting and sacrificial scenes, of demons in conflict and cherubic beings in adoration before the sacred tree, and upon or below almost all of them long inscriptions in the cuneiform characters. It was a find to electrify the world.

Mons. Botta was followed by Mr., afterwards Sir, Austen Henry Layard, who inaugurated his work in 1845. His success was immediate and complete. He exhumed the palaces of Ashurnasirpal, Shalmaneser II.





CHERUBIC BEINGS BEFORE THE SACRED TREE.

and Esarhaddon in the mound of Nimroud, and one belonging to Sennacherib at Kouyunjik,—all of them rich in remarkable sculptures and historical inscriptions of inestimable value. The researches of these pioneers were taken up by a number of enthusiastic and able followers: Loftus, Rassam, Place, Oppert, George Smith and others, and by them an art and a literature, which had lain long lost, were restored to the light of day.

The next question was how to decipher these ancient records. A few cuneiform inscriptions from Persepolis, once the residence of the kings of ancient Persia, had been for a long time in the possession of savants in Europe, and had excited their curiosity. The honor of finally discovering the key to the wedge-writing belongs to a German, Georg Friedrich Grotefend, of Hanover [September, 1802]. But the key did not help Grotefend much, and there was little advance for three decades. It was reserved for an Englishman, Colonel, afterwards Sir, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, a young officer in Persia, by his work in copying and deciphering the trilingual inscription of Darius Hystaspes on the face of the mountain at Behistun [1835-1846], to unlock the door and throw open at least the outer portals to the great Assyrian literature. In 1857, in order to settle the claims of Assyriology to respect as a science, Sir Henry Rawlinson, Mr. Fox Talbot, Dr. Edward Hincks and Mons. Jules Oppert agreed to put the results of their work to the test. They prepared independent translations of the inscription of Tiglath Pileser I., which were presented for comparison to the Royal Asiatic Society. The results of the test were more than satisfactory to scholars, and cuneiform study assumed at once a position of prime importance.



CLAY TABLET OF TIGLATH PILESER III.

We have spoken of Botta and Layard, the pioneers in the field of excavation, and of Grotfend and Rawlinson, the pioneer decipherers; but there are two others who should be named and to whom even greater honor is due, for it is to them first of all that we are indebted: Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria [668-626 B. C.], and Nabonidos, the last King of Babylon [555-538 B. C.]. Ashurbanipal has been styled the Grande Monarque of Assyria, and the designation fits him far better than it does the French king. He proved himself not only a successful ruler, but a patron of learning as well. He dispatched his scribes to delve in the libraries of the mother country, and to bring back from Babylonia the literary treasures of even pre-Semitic times. When Hormuzd Rassam, in 1854, reopened the door to Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh, he found a room 50 feet long and 12 feet wide filled with a collection of clay books of marvelous extent. It covered every branch of learning known at the time: mythological works and legends; astrological, astronomical and geographical treatises; grammatical and lexical disquisitions; treaties and contracts; royal proclamations and historical annals; prayers and hymns and penitential psalms. There was something of the same spirit in Nabonidos, whose archæological interest established the date and history of Sargon and Naram-Sin [3800 B. C.],—the earliest kings of the Semitic settlers in Babylonia at the time "when there were but few of them and they strangers in the land."

A literature which so strangely carries us into the past, and which puts us into such close touch with the thought and life of an ancient civilization, naturally commends itself as of the greatest intrinsic interest and value; but after all has been said its supreme importance will be recognized as extrinsic: it throws a new and much-needed light upon the pages of the Old Testament. Less than 100 years ago the Old Testament stood alone as an authentic history of a remote past. Yet it was felt by many a student that its claim to credibility needed the corroboration of contemporaries. This corroboration has seemed all the more necessary as it has become more and more evident that the writing of history was not the province of the Old Testament writers. Their purpose was not to record the history of their people; it was rather to teach spiritual truth, and the historical material they preserved was culled with this evident purpose in view.

Since this is so, it is evident that there is no sphere where there is a more imperative demand for the use of the historical method of study than in the Old Testament. In the past it has been possible to apply it only in a very limited way to the history of the Hebrews; but since the cuneiform literature has given us an insight into the relations of Israel-Judah to the great world-powers of the time, the Empire of the Euphrates and the Empire of the Nile, if we do not learn what it has to teach it will be our own fault. These dominant nations each stood in fear of the other, and either was too strong to make the other safe, and so the history of each became in no small degree a chronic endeavor to weaken the other. Between the two lay Syria-Palestine, the "buffer-state," and Damascus, Samaria and Jerusalem, continually making combinations or temporary confederacies with their smaller neighbors for mutual protection. Such was the course of the history during the lifetime of the statesman-prophet Isaiah, and his sermons are full of allusions that suggest the situation. But what the Judæan prophet only hints at the Assyrian annalist gives with detailed fullness, bringing out the whole history into strong and impressive relief, and we are conscious at once that we have a grasp of the meaning of that history such as would be otherwise unattainable. To concentrate thus into a focus all the light thrown upon the sermons of Isaiah by the monuments will be the aim of our present study. Before we read the records of the great Assyrian kings, it may, however, be well to review the course of events during Isaiah's lifetime.

KINGS ON THE THRONE DURING ISAIAH'S  
ACTIVITY.

*In Assyria.*

Tiglath Pileser III. (Pul), 745-727 B. C.

Shalmaneser IV., 727-722.

Sargon II., 722-705.

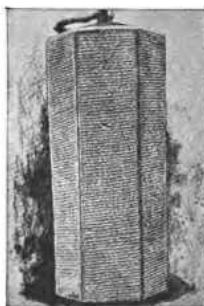
Sennacherib, 705-681.

*In Egypt.*

Shabak.

Shabatak.

Tirhakah.



THE TAYLOR PRISM.

*A hexagonal clay cylinder, containing on the second and third sides King Sennacherib's account of his campaign against Hezekiah, King of Judah.*