MOSES IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND CRITICISM.

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We all know the Moses of tradition—the Hebrew hero, the deliverer of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the first of legislators, the compiler of the Pentateuch. Cast adrift on the Nile and rescued by the daughter of Pharaoh, a fugitive in Midian from the vengeance of the Egyptian government, a worker of miracles who brought the ten plagues upon the land of Egypt, he led his people to the edge of the Promised Land, and then died, alone with his God, on the summit of Pisgah, so that "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Such was the Moses of tradition, the Moses whose story has claimed the belief of generation after generation for more than two thousand years.

The Moses of tradition has disappeared in the crucible of twentieth century criticism. There was no babe left to die in his cradle of bulrushes on the Nile; similar stories were told of other national heroes, of Romulus at Rome and of Sargon the Elder in Babylonia; it was but a folk-tale that came perhaps from Babylonia. There were no ten plagues, for they are all represented as miraculous, and the very mention of a miracle in a narrative makes it suspicious; criticism admits of nothing that savours of a miracle in the history that it reconstructs. There was no miraculous passage of the Red Sea and destruction of pursuing hosts; if the Israelites escaped from Egypt at all, they were but a small company of despised and insignificant serfs whom the Pharaoh would never have thought of pursuing with his armies. There was no legislation, for a code of laws at so early a date is inconceivable. There was no compilation of the Pentateuch, for if Moses and his compatriots existed they would have been unable to read or write. Has not Wolf shown that

there were no books even in the Greek world of the sixth century B. C.?

Moreover criticism has succeeded in analysing the Pentateuch into minute parts, in dividing even a single verse among three different writers, and none of these parts is as old as the age assigned to Moses. Indeed between the earliest of them and the Mosiac age there is a gap of several centuries. The legislation assigned to the single hero was the work of anonymous and for the most part self-interested priests, which extended over a great length of time. The critic can distinguish in it at least three successive strata, the earlier of which were revised and supplemented by the latter as priestly authority became more confirmed and priestly greed more grasping. In a hodge-podge of this sort, separated from its legendary author by so great a space of time, and written to a large extent with the purpose of claiming divine authority for a late ceremonial law, it is useless to look for history. When there were no books to hand it down, anything like authentic history was necessarily out of the question.

Here, however, twentieth century criticism ceases to be consentient. Some writers draw the logical conclusion that Moses never existed, and that the Israelites were never in the land of Goshen, or at any rate that we have no evidence for believing that they were. Other writers, less logical, or more influenced by old associations, shrink from so extreme a scepticism, and in spite of their premisses still cling to the belief that there was a Moses and even a Jewish legislator, though they have themselves destroyed all valid grounds for such a belief. As long as we confine ourselves to the Old Testament, an analysis of the Pentateuch which results in assigning it to a number of different and very inharmonious writers who lived long after the Mosiac period has only one logical conclusion—if there ever was a Moses, there is no literary evidence of the fact.

But the critical analysis of the Pentateuch involves

certain prodigious assumptions. First of all, that we are better acquainted with ancient Hebrew than we are with modern English. Secondly, that the student of the West is a competent judge of the motives and points of view of the ancient oriental. And thirdly, that what the critic imagines ought to have been the particular line of evolution in religious ideas actually was so. As a matter of fact, we cannot dissect into its component parts an English work which we know to have been written by two—much more three—persons. The critics who can distinguish with such mathematical precision the various "sources" of the Pentateuch cannot separate Besant from Rice in one of the novels which bear their conjoint names, or pick out the individual authors of the leading articles in a newspaper. And yet Hebrew is not only a dead language; all our acquaintance with it is confined to a limited number of books, and our knowledge of its grammar, and still more of its vocabulary is very imperfect. In fact, it is just because of our ignorance that it has seemed possible to dissect the Pentateuch; the field of comparison is not large enough to check and correct our supposed results.

For comparison is the instrument of science, and where the materials for comparison are wanting, a scientific conclusion is impossible. Criticism is still debating whether the Apocalypse and the Gospel of St. John are by the same author, although Greek is a European and not a Semitic language, and our knowledge of Greek is infinitely greater than our knowledge of Hebrew. But it is just because of this that the criticism of the New Testament is more modest than the criticism of the Old Testament; the more we know, the wider the range of our materials, the more difficult it is to come to a conclusion when the subject in hand is purely literary.

One reason for this is that in such cases the evidence is philological, and from philological premisses only philological conclusions can be drawn. The province of the grammarian is grammar, not history. A study of the

words of a language or of a document will tell us in what way they have been read at a particular time, what their history has been and what their relation is to the words of another language; it cannot tell us anything about the history of the people who spoke them or of the individual authors who employed them. There was a time, indeed, when the comparative philologist thought that, in the case of the Indo-European languages at any rate, it was possible to extract from them a picture of the primitive "Aryan" community; but the picture was wiped out by anthropology, and the scientific philologist of to-day recognizes that language and history belong to different provinces. There is a history of words, but out of words we cannot construct history.

The picture which the comparative philologist had drawn of the prehistoric Aryan community was shown to be a fiction when confronted with anthropology. The negative picture of the analyst of the Pentateuch belongs, not to the prehistoric age, but to the middle of the historical age of Western Asia, and oriental archæology has now given us the means of testing its truth. For archæology is scientific history, that is to say, history as gathered not merely from literary sources, but from contemporaneous evidence, which can for the most part be handled and felt. In place of the subjective impressions and "literary tact" of the critic we have the testimony of pottery and similar objects which are like the fossils of the geologist or the chemical elements and compounds with which the chemist deals; in place of books written long after the events they narrate, which have come down to us through numerous copyists, and the language of which admits of more than one interpretation, we have contemporaneous annals and first-hand documents. The method of archæology is that of the other inductive sciences, and its conclusions, therefore, have the same scientific authority. In the words of German philosophy they are "objective" and not "subjective."

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which oriental archæology has a good deal to say. And what it has to say by no means agrees with the conclusions of the literary criticism of the Pentateuch. Between this and the results of archæological science there is about the same relation as between the philological picture of the primitive Aryan community and the results of authropological research.

In the first place, the Mosiac age, we have now learnt, was a highly literary one. It came at the end of a long-preceding period of literary culture and intercourse. All over Western Asia there were roads along which the postman travelled and letters passed to and fro between Babylonia and Egypt, between Canaan and Cappadocia. Libraries were multiplied all over the East, and Canaan was filled with schools where the foreign script and language of Babylonia were taught and learned. In Egypt the commonest articles of every-day life were inscribed, and even the potters had a system of writing of their own. The overseers of the workmen were required to be able to read and write like the heads of the villages or of the tribes who were settled in the land. As in Babylonia, so too in Egypt, books had been written and edited from a remote antiquity; in Egypt even the historical novel had come into existence, and the Egyptian gentleman counted among the future delights of Paradise the enjoyment of books. In Canaan the petty shêkhs of third-class towns, like Taanach, were writing to one another about their private affairs in the foreign language of Babylonia and in the complicated cuneiform syllabary. And in this correspondence women took part, not only in Babylonia, but also in Canaan. If Moses and his people had been brought up in Egypt, it would have been nothing short of a miracle had neither he nor the Israelitish upper classes been able to read and write.

In the second place, a codification of law in the Mosaic age, so far from being "inconceivable," turns out to have been the most natural thing in the world. Eight centuries previously Khammu-rabi or Amraphel king of

Babylonia had codified the Babylonian law, and a copy of his code is now in the Museum of the Louvre. Khammu-rabi was king of Canaan as well as of Babylonia, Canaan being at the time a province of the Babylonian empire, and the Babylonian law was consequently in use there also. Hence the code was known and obeyed not only in the country of Abraham's birth, but also in that of his adoption, and the conception of it had been familiar to the inhabitants of Western Asia and Egypt long before the Israelites left the land of Goshen. The code had been compiled out of the case-law of Babylonia, the individual laws in it being the decisions given by the judges in actual cases which had come before them; each law is, therefore, introduced by an "if." The individual laws of the civil code of Israel have precisely the same form (Exod. XXI., etc.), and the account of the manner in which they had first been laid down (given in Exod. XVIII. 21-26) exactly agrees with what we now know to have been the origin of the laws of the Babylonian code. The compilation of the civil code of Moses was but an imitation of that of the Babylonian code which had so long been in force in Western Asia and with which the civilized world of the East must have been thoroughly acquainted.

Then, thirdly, the very name of "Israelites" has been found on an Egyptian monument. The discovery was unexpected, for it seemed probable that the Egyptians were as little likely to record the name of the Hebrew serfs as the Anglo-Egyptians of to-day are to record the name of the Bedâwin in the eastern part of the Delta, more especially if these same serfs had escaped after bringing disaster upon their masters. Nevertheless, the unexpected has happened. In 1896 Prof. Flinders Petrie discovered at Thebes a stela containing a poem in honor of Meneptah, on which the name of the Israelites is spelt in full. Their "seed" is said to have been destroyed so that their kinsfolk in the land of the Horites, or Edom, have become "as widows" for want of men to marry. As

the determinative of "country" is not attached to the name of the Israelites as it is to those of the other peoples mentioned along with them, it would appear that though the Israelites had already fled from Egypt they had not as yet conquered a new home for themselves in Palestine.

That Meneptah, the son and successor of Ramses II. of the nineteenth dynasty, was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, has long since been recognized by the Egyptologists—supposing, that is, that credence should be given to the story of the Pentateuch. Here we read (Exod I. 11) that the Pharaoh of the Oppression built Pithom and Raamses with Israelitish labour. That Ramses II. was the builder of the city of Ramses or Raamses in the Delta was already known from a papyrus, and Prof. Naville's excavations at Patum, the Biblical Pithom, proved that Ramses II. was the founder also of this latter city. Ramses II. was the greatest of Egyptian builders; all over Egypt he built, repaired and restored—or in some cases deformed—and foreign captives and royal serfs were employed in his works. He died after a long reign of sixty-seven years and was followed by his son Meneptah II., whose accession is referred to in Exod. II. 23. Then it was, according to the Old Testament narrative, that Moses returned from Midian to Egypt and demanded of the new Pharaoh that he should let the people of Israel "go three days' journey into the desert" that they might sacrifice unto the Lord their God. Since his predecessor had built Pithom and Raamses, and Egyptian discovery has shown that their builder was Ramses II., it follows that Meneptah must have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Once this is admitted the archæological facts fit in with the Biblical story. The exceptionally long reign of Ramses II and his mania for building agree with the use made of the children of Israel as well as with the length of time during which it is implied that their oppression lasted. Forty years, it is true, and its multiples signify merely an indefinite or unknown period of time in

Hebrew idiom (see for example 2 Sam. XV. 7, compared with XIII. 38, XIV. 28), but Moses was already a grown man when he left Midian, so that we may suppose him to have been at least thirty years of age. In the latter part of the reign of Ramses the power of Egypt had begun to wane, and there were signs that invaders might again assail it on its Asiatic frontier as had been the case in times past. The Asiatic tribe, therefore, settled in the land of Goshen on the eastern side of the Delta was a standing danger; an Asiatic invader might find in them useful allies, and in view of their rapid increase it seemed sound policy to break their spirit and limit the number of their male offspring. Hence we can understand why the Israelitish herdsmen of Goshen were transformed into the Pharaoh's serfs who had to toil for him at his numerous buildings in the Delta, and why the order was issued to destroy their male seed.

The invasion actually came in the fifth year of Meneptah. Egypt was attacked on both sides, by the Libyans from the west and by the nations of Asia Minor and the Greek seas from the north. The invaders made their way across the Delta and encamped near the modern Belbeis at the western extremity of the land of Goshen and not far from the site of Pithom. The fears of Ramses were thus justified, and though the invading troops were eventually defeated in a decisive battle, the Delta had been ravaged and the Egyptian monarchy had never been nearer its overthrow. That the enemy should have encamped on the borders of Goshen is significant; it is still more significant that immediately after the invasion is over we find the land of Goshen is empty.

In the account of the invasion we are told that this land "had been left as pasture for cattle for the sake of the foreigners, abandoned (to them) since the days of (Meneptah's) ancestors." The "foreigners" were still there with their "tents" when the invasion took place. But three years later a letter was written to the king, the papyrus original of which is now in the British

Museum. In this the writer says: "Here is another matter for the consideration of my master. We have allowed the tribes of the Bedâwin (Shasu) from the land of Edom to pass the fortress of Meneptah in the land of Succoth (Thukut), (and go) to the lakes of Pithom of Meneptah in the land of Succoth, in order to feed themselves and to feed their herds on the great estate of the Pharaoh, the beneficent sun of all countries. (Dated) the year 8." Consequently, between the 5th and the 8th years of Meneptah the pasturage land of Succoth or Goshen had been denuded of its population. The fact that the land of Goshen was regarded as an estate of the Pharaoh throws light on its gift to Joseph's brothers as well as on the right of Ramses II to turn the herdsmen settled in it into his own workmen. Its Hebrew title was derived from the name of the capital of the District Kosem in Egyptian, now Saft-el-Henna, which was excavated by Prof. Naville in 1884.

We may perhaps infer that the escape of the Israelites from their "house of bondage" was aided by the Libyan invasion. At all events we are told that "a mixed multitude" accompanied them in their flight, which led them from Raamses to Succoth, then to Etham, the Egyptian Khetem, and to "the sea." This geography agrees exactly with what the papyri of the age of Ramses and Meneptah have informed us was the geography of the eastern Delta at this particular age. And it is noticeable that it was a geography which does not suit any other period. Raamses had no existence before the time of Ramses II. and falls out of sight after the epoch of the nineteenth dynasty, while Etham, "in the edge of the wilderness," is either the Khetem or "Fortress" of Ramses II on the border of the desert or the Khetem of Meneptah "in the land of Succoth," both of which disappear from later history.

The Exodus of Israel centers around the figure of Moses. He is presented to us as at once an Israelite,—full of patriotism and sympathy with his fellow-tribes-

men,—and as the adopted son of an Egyptian princess who had been brought up at the Egyptian court where he had been instructed in all the literary "wisdom of the Egyptians" and had learnt the art and principles of statecraft. In the age of the nineteenth dynasty we find other Semites similarly rising to posts of influence at the Pharaoh's court where (like Joseph in earlier days) they assumed Egyptian names. Thus the prime-minister of Meneptah was a certain Ramses-em-pe-Ra, whose father, Ben-Mazan, had come from the land of Bashan and settled in Egypt and there received the name of "Yu the Elder." Moses, or rather Mosheh as it is written in Hebrew, the name given by the daughter of Pharaoh to "the child" she had rescued from the water, was a common Egyptian name at the time. It is generally transcribed Messu by Egyptologists and signified "son" or "child." A governor of Ethiopia under Ramses II. bore it, so also did another governor of Ethiopia under Meneptah, who has left a record of himself on the granite rocks of the First Cataract, not far from the modern Cataract Hotel. Another Egyptian name of the same period was Pi-Nehasi "the Negro," which we find again in Phinehas the grandson of Aaron.

The flight of Moses to Midian and his subsequent return to Egypt is curiously paralleled in the history of an Egyptian named Saneha who lived many centuries earlier in the time of the twelfth dynasty and whose biograpgy has been preserved in a papyrus. Why Moses should have fled so far as Midian from the vengeance of the Egyptian government has now been made clear to us by the hieroglyphic inscriptions discovered in the Sinaitic Peninsula. The turquoise mines of Sinai had been worked by the Egyptians from a very early epoch, and the Peninsula (or Market as it was called), was an Egyptian province, possessing an Egyptian temple and stations for Egyptian soldiers. If, therefore, the fugitive wished to be beyond the reach of the Egyptian power and

to evade the Egyptian garrisons, Midian was his nearest point of safety.

Midian was at the time ruled by a high-priest. This, too, is in agreement with the latest results of archæological research. The early inscriptions found in Arabia have disclosed the fact that there, as in Assyria, the "high-priest" preceded the "king." The high-priest did not become a king until after the Mosiac age was past.

On the ten plagues archæology is not likely to throw any direct light. The native monuments of Egypt are not likely to record national disasters. The Pharaohs describe their triumphs, but naturally not their defeats. Those, however, who have lived in Egypt know that the ten plagues were but intensified examples of the common visitations of the country. Year by year at the time of inundation the Nile becomes blood-red and is for a short while undrinkable; frogs and lice, and still more flies, are annual plagues—the plague of flies, indeed, it may be said, has never been removed. The cattle of Egypt at present are but just recovering from a "murrain" which has all but destroyed them, and boils and blains are the commonest of diseases. More than once during the past ten years the crops have been ruined by the hail and rain of violent thunder-storms, and the locust is still a cause of dread. Even the plague of darkness can be matched to a limited extent by the darkness occasioned by a bad "khamasin," when the sun becomes invisible from the blinding dust which fills the air and produces a darkness that "may be felt." And cholera and plague carry away their victims in a few hours. The "ten plagues" were characteristic of Egypt and, as a whole, of no other country on the globe.

Here, however, we pass from archæology to the modern world. What archæology has done and is doing is to recreate the age in which Moses lived, and the social, political and geographical conditions under which he was born. Thanks to recent research and discovery that age

is now becoming as well known to us as the age of Alexander the Great, and we have at last a scientific test for determining how far the history contained in the Pentateuch is trustworthy. We can now compare its statements with the contemporaneous records of the epoch to which it professes to belong, and see whether or not it agrees with them. We have been told that the use of writing for literary purposes was unknown in the Mosiac age and that consequently the books ascribed to that age must be of much later date, and now archæology has shown us that the age was really almost as literary as ours. We have been assured that a codification of law in the time of Moses was inconceivable, and we have learned that a code of law, obeyed in Canaan as well as in Babylonia, had been compiled eight centuries before he was born. It has been asserted that the geography of the Exodus was the invention of Jewish writers of a late date, and we now find that it agrees with the map of north-eastern Egypt as it existed in the epoch of the nineteenth dynasty and at no other period. It has been maintained that the story of the Exodus has no standing place in actual history, and contemporaneous monuments have now proved that it is in full harmony with the political circumstances of the time. Moses himself has been pronounced to be a myth, and, behold, the very name has turned up in hieroglyphic inscriptions. Of the two pictures that have been presented to us, the picture of the Moses of tradition and the picture of the Moses of criticism, the second has been demolished by the archæological facts. All we can say of the first is that much of it has been directly or indirectly supported by the progress of archæological discovery, that there is nothing, or little, in it which is inconsistent with what we now know to have been the history and condition of the oriental world in the age of Ramses and Meneptah.