the original form of the Babylonian and Assyrian history of Creation is many thousands of years old. Whether it originated with the Akkadians or some other non-Semitic people cannot be said definitely at present, but it is very probable that the Semitic Babylonians were only the borrowers and not the inventors of this remarkable work.

We may now note the main heads of the legend. At the beginning of all things, Apsū and Tiamat were water deities and typified chaos; to these were born Lahmu and Lahamu, and later appeared Anshar and Kishar, and still later Anu and other gods came into being. One of the newly-found fragments of the first tablet mentions the birth of Nudimmud (Ea), and although Damascius states that Bēl, the creator of the world, was the son of Ea and Damkina (Ἀός, Δαύκη), it is clear from the fragment that Marduk, who is made to take the leading part in the later tablets of Creation, was supposed to be in existence, like Mummu and Gaga. In the earlier episodes of the Creation story, it is Ea and not Marduk who is the hero, and we learn for the first time, from the new material, that it was Apsū, a god of chaos, and not Tiamat who rebelled against the gods. Apsū disliked the new order of things and the creation of the universe for the simple reason that the beings who formed members of the new world disturbed his peace and rest; as soon as he had made up his mind as to what was likely to happen, he called Mummu his minister (the Μωμύς of Damascius), and the two went to Tiamat and took counsel with her, and complained that "he could get rest neither by day nor by night." The putting of the house of the world into order by the gods destroyed his rest and peace of mind. Of the conflict which took place between Ea and Apsū and his ally Mummu we know little, but that the great god did not succeed in inflicting a decisive defeat on Apsū and his allies is clear from the fact that, later, Anshar found it necessary to exhort Marduk to do battle with Tiamat. Of the defeat and death of Tiamat we need say little, for the story of how the god of light slew her and split her body into halves is familiar to all. The actual account of the creation of the world by Marduk begins towards the end of the fourth tablet, where it is said that one-half of the body of Tiamat formed a covering for heaven, and that Marduk, having formed E-shara, made the great trinity of Anu, Bēl and Ea to dwell therein.

In the fifth tablet, we hear of the fixing of the constellations of the Zodiac, the founding of the year, &c., and it seems as if this section contained an account of the creation of vegetation. The sixth tablet, as we know from one of the new fragments, told the story of the creation of man, and it seems as if Marduk made man with the view both of punishing the gods and of providing a creature who should at all times worship him. Marduk, or Bēl, instructed Ea to cut off his (*i.e.* Marduk's) head, and man was formed out of the blood which flowed from the god's body. Marduk is made to tell Ea that he intends to create man from his own blood and from the "bone" which he will create; it is important to note that the Assyrian word for "bone" is *iššintu*, and that it is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew *'esem*, "bone," which occurs in Genesis ii. 23, in connection with the account of the creation of woman.

The creation of man was the final act of creation, and when this was accomplished the gods assembled in their council chamber in Upshukkinaku, with Marduk at their head, and they sang to him a hymn of praise, the text of which forms the seventh section of the Creation story and contains fifty addresses to the god. How Marduk managed to survive his decapitation is not told us, and we can only surmise that he met the gods in their council chamber in some sort of spiritual body. The space at our disposal will not allow us to call attention to many very interesting details of the legend, especially

in the parallels which may be drawn between parts of it and the Book of Genesis; these prove beyond all reasonable doubt that the Jews borrowed large portions of their religious literature from their kinsmen the Babylonians, and that the seven days of Creation were imagined long before the days of the patriarch Abraham. The student of comparative folklore will find much to interest him in Mr. King's latest work, and will perhaps trace the mingling of legends illustrated in it with somewhat mixed feelings. Mr. King's texts are carefully edited and well copied, and his translations, which we have examined in several passages, are faithful and not unduly literal, and his work is a credit to English Assyriology.

A POT OF BASIL.

THERE is a widely spread belief, both amongst natives and amongst the white sojourners in Western Africa, that the presence of a certain species of plant in a room drives away mosquitos, and, in fact, a single plant is said to be sufficient to clear a room. On his recent return from Northern Nigeria, Major J. A. Burdon, of the Cameron Highlanders, brought with him and gave to me a few leaves of this plant. These, through the kindness of Mr. H. H. W. Pearson, have been identified by the experts at Kew as belonging to *Ocimum viride*, Willd., a member of the order Labiate, which occurs from Senegambia southwards to Angola.

Major Burdon, who is Resident of the Nupe Province, Northern Nigeria, and Hausa Scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge, has given me the following account of the plant:—

"A fragment of what turns out to be *Ocimum viride* was given me in August last at Lokoja, Northern Nigeria, by Captain H. D. Larymore, C.M.G., R.A., Resident of the Kabba Province. Capt. Larymore's notice had been drawn to the plant by a native living in a low-lying part of the native town at Lokoja, who had told him that the natives suffered very little from the swarms of mosquitos which existed in that part, as they protected themselves from them by the use of this plant.

"Capt. Larymore made inquiries and obtained a few specimens of the plant, which grows wild, though not very abundantly, in the neighbourhood of Lokoja. These specimens he planted in pots and boxes and kept in and about his house. The specimens I saw were about the size of a geranium.

"He informed me that the presence of one of these plants in a room undoubtedly drove the mosquitos out, and that by placing three or four of the plants round his bed at night he was able to sleep unmolested without using a mosquito net. This is very strong testimony to the efficacy of the plant, for the house in which Capt. Larymore was living is, as I had cause to know well in former years, infested with mosquitos."

In the fifth volume of Sir W. T. Thiselton-Dyer's "Flora of Tropical Africa," *Ocimum viride* is described as follows:—

"*O. viride*, Willd.; Benth. in DC. Prod. XII. 34. A perennial 3-6 ft. high, with much-branched glabrous stems. Leaves distinctly petioled, oblong, acute, membranous, 3-4 in. long, glabrous on both sides, or obscurely pubescent beneath. Racemes lax, copiously panicle, 3-6 in. long; rachis finely pubescent; bracts deciduous; pedicels not very short. Calyx $\frac{1}{4}$ in. long; tube campanulate; upper lobe orbicular, as long as the tube; lower teeth short. Corolla half as long again as the calyx-lobes. Stamens but little exserted, the two upper with filaments toothed above the base.—Benth. in Hook. Niger Fl. 488; Henriques in Bolet Soc. Brot. X. 149. *O. febrifugum*, Lindl., in Bot. Reg. t. 753. *O. heptodon*, P. Beauv. Fl. Owar. II. 59. t. 94."

The plant is figured on plate 753 of the ninth volume

of the Botanical Register, 1823, under the name *Ocimum febrifugum*, or the "Sierra Leone Fever Plant." This work mentions that the plant is "in request at Sierra Leone for medicinal purposes," and describes the species as an "under shrub 3 feet high," "having in a high degree the smell of common balm."

The leaves of the plant are highly glandular, and in India an allied species, *O. Basilicum*, Linn., the "common sweet basil," produces a "yellowish green volatile oil lighter than water, which, on being kept, solidifies into a crystalline camphor, isomeric with turpentine camphor" (*Gmelin's Handbook*, xiv., 359).¹ The seeds of this species are widely used in the

thyme, and mentions that Dr. Roberts, of Liberia, entirely substituted the use of the plant for that of quinine in cases of fever of all kinds, giving it in the form of an infusion.

There is thus a good deal of evidence that *O. viride* is a plant of considerable curative value, especially in cases of fever, but the question that interests a large number of people in West Africa is whether it is equally efficacious as a preventative. Does it really repel the mosquito which acts as the intermediary in conveying the malarial hæmatozoon from man to man? Further experiment on this point is needed, but there is at least some indication that in this easily cultivated plant man has another weapon with which to fight malaria.

Christ's College, Cambridge.

A. E. SHIPLEY.

FIG. 1.—*Ocimum viride*, Willd. Some leaves drawn from a dried specimen brought back by Major Burdon. Below is a raceme of the same plant taken from the "Botanical Register," vol. ix. Both reduced.

east as a medicine, and their properties "are said to be demulcent, stimulant, diuretic and diaphoretic." "The juice of the leaves mixed with ginger and black pepper is given in the cold stages of intermittent fever." The leaves, like those of thyme, are used as a seasoning in cooking. Another Indian species, *O. sanctum*, Linn., the "sacred basil," is the most sacred plant in the Hindu religion, and is consequently widely cultivated.

In "Notes on the Medicinal Plants of Liberia,"² Mr. E. M. Holmes records that when chewed or rubbed, the leaves of *O. viride* give off a strong odour of lemon

TRANSATLANTIC WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY.

THE announcement of the successful inauguration of the Transatlantic wireless telegraphic system which we were able to make last week must have come as welcome news to all, but hardly as a surprise to those who have followed with any closeness Mr. Marconi's persevering experiments. Those who have done so and who have seen how, in almost every instance, Mr. Marconi has achieved all that he has said he would achieve can hardly have doubted that in this case also he would be successful. And when once it had been demonstrated that Hertz waves were capable of bridging the enormous distance from the Old World to the New, it was evidently only a matter of time to instal suitable stations on both sides of the Atlantic and to put them in operation. Nevertheless, the greatest interest attaches to the transmission of the first messages; one cannot help feeling that it is an historic occasion, not only marking an era in the development of wireless telegraphy, but also forging another link between this country and her colonies, and adding yet one more to the many benefits helping forward civilisation which science has conferred on mankind.

As yet, of course, not much has been done; a few congratulatory telegrams have passed from one side of the Atlantic to the other, and doubtless there will have to be much more experiment and work before a commercially useful system of communication is established. But for this we can wait in patience and confidence. It is easy to see that, though the possibilities are many and great, the difficulties also are formidable and numerous. In the first place, before the system can be commercially important, it is clear that the public must be made to feel confident that it is absolutely trustworthy; any uncertainty in this respect would be fatal to a system which has to make its way against the competition of existing methods. Again, the system is, for the present at any rate, limited in its carrying capacity, since the speed of signalling obtainable is not very great, and from what can be gathered it seems unlikely that multiplexing to any great extent, or even at all, can be regarded as a possibility of the near future. From another point of view also difficulties present themselves, for we have yet to learn what effect will be produced on existing wireless installations by a constant stream of very powerful Hertz waves sent out on either side of the Atlantic. If the Transatlantic signalling seriously interferes with the less pretentious applications of wireless telegraphy, there can be little question as to which it is more desirable to retain. But all these problems we may safely leave for the present, for we know that they are in the hands of one who has shown himself fully competent to deal with them.

Whatever else may be said of his present achievement, all must agree that it is a great personal triumph for Mr. Marconi, and one that he has fully merited by his untiring

¹ Watts's "Dictionary of the Products of India," v. 1891, p. 441.

² *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, third series, viii. 1877-78.