Notes from the Oriental Congress.

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The Ninth International Congress of Orientalists, 1892,—so runs the official title,—is now *un fait accompli*. Nothing, after all, occurred to mar the harmony of the series of meetings which were held in London in September last, under the presidency of Professor F. Max Müller, K.M. The fact of the committee of organisation having secured so distinguished and popular a scholar as general president, and the still more distinguished First Minister of the Crown as a sectional president, was the means of attracting to the proceedings of the Congress a more than usual measure of public attention. The more popular subjects of discussion were duly noted in the leading London dailies; the *Times*, in particular, was exceptionally generous, usually devoting the greater part of a page, and sometimes more, to reports of the papers read before the various sections. Those, accordingly, who wish a fairly complete and reliable account of the whole proceedings are once for all referred to the columns of "the leading journal." What is attempted here is merely to give the briefest possible summary of the more important papers, the whole or part of which the writer was able to hear, so far as these have a bearing more or less direct on the progress of Old Testament studies.

The wide field of Semitic study was represented at the Congress by two sections, or more correctly by one section with two sub-sections, viz.—III. (*a*) Babylonian and Assyrian Sub-Section, presided over by the first, and as yet the only, Professor of Assyriology in Great Britain, Professor Sayce, with Mr. T. G. Pinches as acting secretary; and III. (*b*) General Semitic Sub-Section, with Professor Robertson Smith and Mr. A. A. Bevan of Trinity College, Cambridge, as president and secretary respectively. It is certainly to be regretted that these two sub-sections, so nearly allied to each other, and each including not a few who were interested in the work of both, should not have held at least one combined meeting in the course of the week, as was unanimously recommended should be done at future congresses in the case of the Assyrian and Egyptian sections.

Oddly enough, one of the papers of greatest interest to the Old Testament student was not read in either of the Semitic sections, but in that devoted to "Egypt and Africa," of which the distinguished Egyptologist, Mr. Le Page Renouf, was president. I refer to the account by the Rev. W. H. Hechler, chaplain to the British Embassy at Vienna, of "The Oldest MS. of the Old Testament." The manuscript for which this honour is claimed is, unfortunately, a mere fragment. It consists of only sixteen leaves or sheets of papyrus, making thirty-two pages in all, and contains the greater part of Zechariah (chaps. iv.–xiv.) and the first part of Malachi. The sheets measure about ten inches by seven, and were "bound together in the form of a book in a primitive but very careful manner, and tied together with strips of old parchment." One of the leaves of the manuscript (Zech. xii. 2–8) was exhibited at the Congress, protected by two sheets of glass in the usual way. A facsimile was published in the *Times* of Wednesday, 7th September, accompanied by a transcription, in ordinary Greek characters and an English translation. It should be mentioned, however, that the writing on the papyrus itself is much more distinct than might be supposed from the facsimile. The manuscript (assuming its genuineness, which has not, so far as I know, been called in question) is the property of a gentleman in Vienna, into whose hands it came a few weeks ago direct from the Fayoum. Its Egyptian origin is vouched for by the rounded forms of A and M (almost like α and μ), which are said to be the result of Coptic influence.[1] It is written in bold, heavily-formed uncials; the latter are almost a quarter of an inch in height, in this respect not unlike those of the Codex Nitriensis.[2] There is but one column on the page, which must have contained twenty-nine or thirty lines of fourteen to seventeen letters each. The lines begin regularly, but are not of uniform length, the scribe, perhaps, following his exemplar line for line.

[1] See art. "Palæography" in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th ed.), and cf. the preface to the phototype reproduction of the Codex Alexandrinus (p. 9), or "Catalogue of Ancient MSS. in the British Museum," part i., Greek, p. 19.

[2] Phototype facsimile in "Catalogue of Ancient MSS., etc." Cf. Scrivener's "Introduction" (2nd. ed.), plates ii. 5 and vi. 17.

Of the value of the fragment for the study of the Septuagint, and through it for the textual criticism of the Old Testament, it is impossible to speak definitely until the whole text is published. Of one thing, however, I feel constrained to express a doubt. Is this fragment really "the oldest MS. of the Old Testament," older, that is, than the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus, or even than the Codex Alexandrinus? "The extreme antiquity of the manuscript," it was contended, "is attested by the uncial characters in which it is written, which would place it *well before* 300 A.D., but still more by the absence of divisions between words." Now, I speak in this matter with the greatest reserve as becomes one who has no special knowledge of Greek palæography; but after having, through Mr. Hechler's kindness, examined and in part copied the fragment exhibited, I fail to find anything in the forms of the letters to justify a third century date. The squareness of the uncials and the absence of capitals and punctuation marks are, no doubt, marks of a high antiquity, but, on the other hand, there are certain features of the MS. which seem to point the other way. (1) The numerous contractions with the characteristic upper stroke—$\overline{\text{KΣ}}$, $\overline{\text{ΔΑΔ}}$, $\overline{\text{ΙΑΗΜ}}$, $\overline{\text{ΠΡΑ}}$, $\overline{\text{ΜΡΑ}}$,[1] and doubtless others. (2) The presence of several ligatures is surely inconsistent with an "extreme antiquity," where a biblical codex is concerned. For instance, αι in και and in ται is almost always written without lifting the pen, and the same is true of τα in παντα in line 16 (col. 1 of the facsimile), and of τω of παντοκρατωρ in the line above. (3) Still more puzzling in a biblical MS. of the third century are the forms of Z and Ξ. Of the former, an example will be found in col. 1, line 10, while of the latter there are quite a number of examples, all of which are very different from the restrained forms of these letters in the two great fourth century manuscripts, where, as the phototype reproductions show, they do not exceed the other letters in height.[2] In the Vienna papyrus, on the other hand, Z is of enormous breadth and height, while in the case of Ξ the terminal "flourish" always fills the interlinear space, and more than once intrudes among the letters of the line below. This abnormal development of "tail" on the part of these two letters seems inconsistent with the sobriety of a biblical "uncial" of "extreme antiquity." So far, therefore, as the palæographical evidence goes, I should not be surprised to hear that it must be assigned, at the earliest, to the fifth century (but later than A), in which case it would be a copy of a much older MS. in which capitals and punctuation marks were absent.

In the paper that followed, by Mr. Flinders Petrie on "Recent Excavations at Tell-el-Amarna," an entirely new chapter in the history of Egyptian art was read to the Congress. Every one now knows the story of Amenophis IV., the "heretic king," how he embraced the religion of his Syrian mother, Queen Thi, and sought to supplant the worship of Amen of Thebes by that of the sun's disc, Aten in Egyptian (whence the king's "new name" Khu-en-Aten, the glory of the solar disc), and how the opposition of the Theban priesthood compelled him to build a new capital on the site of the modern Tell-el-Amarna. By the generosity of Lord Amherst of Hackney, Mr. Petrie was enabled to carry out a series of systematic excavations with the most satisfactory results. The royal palace, the great temple of Aten, private houses and workshops were successfully laid bare, and a mass of objects of every kind brought to light, the whole affording us a very complete picture of life in Egypt in the days of the "heretic king," a hundred years before the Exodus. The most remarkable result of Mr. Petrie's excavations is undoubtedly the proof which the sculptures and other art remains have furnished that Khu-en-Aten's religious reformation was accompanied by a veritable renaissance in the sphere of art. The art of the eighteenth dynasty had become lifeless and conventional in the extreme; Khu-en-Aten's reform consisted in a return to nature. "The direct aim of the artists was as exact an imitation of nature as was possible. In sculpture, the work of the best hands equals the finest work of other countries or ages. In painting, nature is closely followed with much memory-work apart from models; the plants are superior to those in most classical work, and the animals are free and vigorous." Not the least noteworthy among the objects brought to light by Mr. Petrie's excavations is the death-mask of the royal reformer, Khu-en-Aten, himself. A cast was handed round, and naturally excited the greatest interest among the

[1] The first three occur in the facsimile, the last two I observed in the copy which Mr. Hechler generously showed me of the whole fragment.

[2] More accessible and, in this case, equally serviceable, are Scrivener's plates in his "Introduction."

members present. It has been described as "a wonderful portrait of a remarkable man. The face is full of character, the lips thin and clean cut, the mouth firmly set, showing immense determination. The aquiline nose and deeply-set eyes reveal a man who could defy the whole priesthood of Ammon." Unfortunately, Khu-en-Aten's revival was short-lived. A few years after his death the national religion was restored, the new capital deserted, and the brief reign of truth in art was at an end.

Egypt was the subject of another paper of great interest which was read in the Assyrian and Babylonian section by Professor Hommel of the University of Munich, on "The Babylonian Origin of Egyptian Culture." This brilliant, if somewhat imaginative, scholar has succeeded in making out a case which the advocates of the indigenous origin of Egyptian civilisation will find it difficult to meet. He called attention, in the first place, to the similarity, if not absolute identity, in the significations of some of the oldest cities in Babylonia and Egypt. Eridu, for example, the oldest home of culture in Southern Babylonia, the city of Ea, is in Accadian "the city of the good (god)," which is precisely the signification of Men-nofer, the Egyptian form of Memphis. In the second place, he pointed out certain striking resemblances in the cosmological ideas of the Egyptians and Babylonians. The Sumerian or Accadian conception of the universe as presided over by Anum, the god of the sky, by En-lilla, and by Ea, the god of the primeval waters, found its exact parallel in the Egyptian triad, Nun, Shu, and Seb, whose significations were identical with those of the gods of Babylonia. Other cases of identity were also discussed, such as that of Merodach with Osiris—both being written by a couple of ideograms signifying house + eye[1] — of the Babylonian god Enzu with the Egyptian Khonsu, Ishtar with Hathor, etc. A third line of argument was supplied by the acknowledged affinity between Egyptian and the languages of the Semitic group,[2] from all which, Professor Hommel maintained, we must conclude that the civilisation and culture of Egypt were not the indigenous products of the Nile valley, but had been brought at some very early period by Semitic immigrants who had already assimilated the still older Accadian culture of the Babylonian plain. This theory, I may add, received the emphatic support of the learned president of the section, Professor Sayce, who supplemented Professor Hommel's arguments by others of his own.

On the following day a large and enthusiastic audience greeted Professor Sayce as he rose to deliver the presidential address. The first part of it was devoted to a survey of the progress made in the last twenty years by the new science of Assyriology; the difficulties to be overcome by the student, the dangers to be avoided, and the needs and promise of the future were successively touched on. The remainder of the address was devoted to a spirited repudiation of the charge that Assyriologists too often pander to a craving for sensation on the part of the public, and to an account of some of the latest discoveries in the domain of Assyriology. To one of these reference was made in the October number of this magazine, the story of Adapa or Adama, the first-fruits of Ea's creative activity. Another discovery, which it is to be hoped is the earnest of many that are to follow, was explained at length to the Congress. This was the finding in the mound of Tell-el-Hesy, in South-Western Palestine, only last June, of the first literary monument yet recovered from the soil of Palestine of a date prior to the Hebrew conquest. The excavations in this now celebrated Tell were begun, it will be remembered, by Mr. Flinders Petrie under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Society, and have been continued for the last two seasons with, on the whole, disappointing results by Mr. Fred Bliss of Beyrout. This patient excavator, however, has at last been rewarded by the discovery, along with various Babylonian cylinders and other objects of interest, of a small tablet, written in the peculiar form of the Babylonian cuneiform which characterises the famous tablets of Tell-el-Amarna. The tablet in question, a cast of which I had recently an opportunity of seeing in a Lebanon village, was about two inches square, and its genuineness is considered by Professor Sayce as above suspicion. A translation by the last-named scholar was published in the *Times* of 1st July, and in the *Academy*

[1] At a subsequent meeting, Professor Hommel called the attention of the section to the fact that the identity of Merodach and Osiris had been previously advocated by the Rev. C. J. Ball, Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn, a fact of which he was not aware when his paper was read.

[2] Most recent discussion of this affinity by Adolf Erman in *Ztschr. d. deuts. morgl. Gesellt.* xlvi. 1. 1892, pp. 93–129.

of 9th July. The mention in it of Zimrida, who is known from the Tell-el-Amarna correspondence to have been governor of Lachish, is thought to settle once for all the identity of Tell-el-Hesy with the ruins of that famous city. In any case, the importance of the discovery can hardly be over-estimated, although this importance lies not so much in the contents of the tablet itself, as in the magnificent promise which it holds of other and infinitely more important documents that may one day be disinterred from their age-long resting-place beneath the soil of Palestine.

I have left myself little space to speak of Mr. Pinches' elaborate and scholarly paper on "The New Version of the Creation Story," of which a full report is given in the *Times* of 10th September. In the course of last year Mr. Pinches was fortunate enough to discover among the cuneiform documents in the British Museum a Babylonian version of the story of creation, differing from the familiar version originally published by the late George Smith, somewhat as the account given in the second chapter of Genesis differs from that in the first. "Whilst the version of the first chapter of Genesis," said Mr. Pinches, "begins with a description of chaos, and the old Semitic Babylonian version with a mention of the time when 'the heavens were not proclaimed, and the earth recorded not a name' — a very good parallel to the first verses of Genesis — the Akkadian or Sumerian account (the new version) begins with a description of the time when the glorious house of the gods (apparently the sky) had not been made, a plant had not been brought forth, and a tree had not been created; when a brick had not been laid, a beam not shaped, a house not built, a city not constructed, and a glorious foundation or dwelling of men had not been made." An interesting parallel in this new version to a part of the Bible story has been already discussed by Mr. Pinches in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES (vol. iii. pp. 268, 269). The relation of these ancient Babylonian accounts of the creation to those of the Hebrew Genesis is a subject too large and too complicated for discussion here.

A word must suffice regarding the work of the general Semitic section, which had little before it dealing directly with the Old Testament. Mention should be made, however, of the Rev. G. Margoliouth's paper on "The Superlinear Punctuation; its Origin, its Development, and its Relation to other Semitic Systems of Punctuation." The subject is one so obscure and intricate that a paper hurriedly read hardly does justice to either reader or hearer. This method of vocalisation, generally known as the Babylonian, in contradistinction to the familiar Tiberian of our Hebrew Bibles, Mr. Margoliouth does not consider to have originated in Babylon, or with the Jewish sect of the Karaites. It was based, he contended, on a combination of the two systems of Syriac vocalisation, and was originally applied exclusively to the Targums or Aramaic translations of the Scriptures, and only at a later date to the sacred text itself.

An important communication was read at the same meeting from Professor Nestle of Tübingen, suggesting that in future editions of Dr. Swete's *Septuagint* (Cambridge University Press) certain critical emendations of the text on which it is based might be added on the margins. Critical students of the Septuagint were invited by Professor Smith to communicate the results of their studies to Mr. F. E. Burkitt, M.A., Secretary of the Cambridge Septuagint Society.

In the Geographical section, Mr. Haskett Smith gave a *résumé* of "Syrian Exploration since 1886," from which we learned that he still holds his peculiar notions as to the origin of the Druses, and still believes that one of the Sidon sarcophagi, now in the Museum at Constantinople, is the veritable coffin of Alexander the Great!

Several other very valuable papers it is impossible even to mention. The same holds good of a number of practical suggestions for the furtherance of Oriental study, which were adopted by the Congress. The most practical result to some of us, however, is the impulse we have derived from contact with eminent authorities in our special lines of study, and the fresh enthusiasm which comes to the isolated student from a season of pleasant intercourse with his fellows.