

Exploration and Discovery.

A NEW FIND IN CHALDÆA.

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There is no cessation of surprises in the Orient. Every attempt on the part of archæologists to uncover the remains of early civilizations has an abundant reward. The last fifteen years in particular have seen the most significant results touching the oldest empire of ancient Chaldæa. They have brought to us antiquities which date back to a time between 3000 and 4000 years before the Christian era. In 1877, M. de Sarzec was sent by the French government as Consul to Bosrah. Having spent several years in the old Nile valley, he very naturally acquired a taste for the relics of antiquity, the remains of ancient peoples.

From Bosrah he penetrated into the swamps of lower Chaldæa, to investigate the mounds which arose here and there like islands out of their morassy surroundings. He braved the pest-dealing fens and the savage Montifek Arabs with an indomitable energy. His constitutional hardihood and political sagacity insured him a high degree of success in his plans of excavation. He began his work on a mound or hill four miles in length, located about four days south of Bosrah and sixty miles north of Mugheir or Ur of the Chaldees. He soon uncovered at this spot the walls of a temple 175 feet long by 100 feet wide with its angles toward the cardinal points. Within these walls he found thirty-six rooms of different forms and sizes. In most of them some objects of genuine archæological interest were picked up. Headless statues, cylinders, door-sockets, bits of fresco work, heads of statues, etc., etc., were among the treasures.

The most interesting facts connected with all of these finds of M. de Sarzec is that they are the first extensive introduction to the oldest known civilizations of the lower Mesopotamian valley. They give us the assurance of the existence of a high state of culture in this valley long centuries before the call of Abraham or the founding of the Assyrian empire. They reveal to us a people with a beautifully constructed language, an elaborate ritual of worship, well-organized armies, and an advanced state of development in the cultivation of the arts. In short, the occupants of the cities which are covered

(but now partly excavated) at Tello represent a very ancient, thrifty, progressive, skillful and highly developed people.

Among the finds of M. de Sarzec of intensest interest was the *stèle* of the vultures, so called because of the birds which hover above the scenes. Its life-like and truly artistic figures aroused universal attention among scholars of the past. But now this broken and almost ruined *stèle* has been completed by the discovery of three new fragments, making it the most remarkable known specimen of the work of the artists of ancient Chaldæa.

This monument has figures upon both its sides. One of the scenes represents a funeral after a battle or a thanksgiving after a victory. The mass of slain human bodies shows the mortality which was visited upon the armies. We see also an ox provided for sacrifice to the deity. On one fragment, E-anna-du, the king is on his chariot at the head of his troops, who are arranged in six ranks, armed with lances and peculiar rectangular shields. The king is in the act of piercing with a lance a defeated enemy, though the scene is somewhat uncertain because of the damaged character of the fragment. The chariot is a set of panels curiously put together, on the front of which hang a battle-axe and a quiver of arrows. The attire of the king is of great interest, while the weapons he carries are compared by M. Heuzey to those displayed by the leader of the Amu band pictured at Beni-Hassan, which entered Egypt in the XIIth dynasty.

I can mention only one other figure of interest. Under the principal character is a very significant scene. There is a large net within which is a number of naked men crawling about to find a way of escape. Their features are similar to others in another place under the feet of E-anna-du, probably representing captives of the same people. This scene has been compared with Habakkuk 1: 15-17, where he says: "He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in their net, and gathereth them in his drag. Therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net and burneth incense unto his drag. Shall he therefore empty his net and not spare to slay the nations continually?"

A few lines of inscriptions tell us that *E-anna-du* was king of *Shirpurla*, son of *A-kur-gal* and grandson of *Ur-nina* of the most ancient Chaldæan kings— dating from a time at least 1000, possibly 2000, years before the call of Abraham.

These finds tell us that Abraham was not a barbarian, but was nurtured in the midst of one of the greatest civilizations of his day. He had the culture and refinements, the results of long ages of development, which, with faith in Jehovah, sent him on his way to large and ennobling victories for truth and righteousness.