ENING NEWS.

Monday, January 13, 1873.

THE CHALDEAN TABLET.

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THE [illegible] COVERED RECORD OF NOAH'S [illegible] LEGENDS THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD — NEW DETAILS REGARDING THE ARK AND THE DELUGE —SIR HENRY RAWLINSON VOUCHES FOR THEIR AUTHENTICITY.

[CONCLUDED.]

Mr. Smith, before proceeding to examine the bearings of the details of the tablet on our existing records of the flood, gave an outline of the Mosaic account as contained in Genesis, and cites the text of the Chaldean history as given by Berosus — which assigns Xisuthrus as the name of the builder of the ark, Cronos as the name of the deity who commanded him to build it, five stadia long and two broad as its dimensions, and the land of Armenia as its resting place. The proper names, Mr. Smith considered to be the least satisfactory part of the subject, from the corruption of the Greek forms and the difficulty of reading phonetically the Cuneiform names, mostly written in monogram. The Cuneiform account agrees with the Biblical narrative in making the Deluge a Divine punishment for the wickedness of the world; this point is omitted in the Greek account of Berosus. The dimensions of the vessel in the inscription are unfortunately lost by a fracture which has broken off both numbers; the dimensions are expressed in cubits as in the Biblical account, but while Genesis makes the ark fifty cubits broad, and thirty cubits high, the inscription states that the height and breadth were the same. Some details of the launching of the ark, such as that of leaks being stopped by bitumen, have no parallel either in the Bible or in Berosus; but the description of the filling of the ark generally agrees with the two other accounts—though differing from Genesis in not mentioning the sevens of clean animals, and in including others besides the family of the builder. The date of the Deluge's commencement, given by the Bible and Berosus, is not mentioned in the tablet.

With regard to the duration of the Deluge there appears a serious difference between the Bible and the inscription. According to the account in Genesis the flood commenced on the 17th day of the second month, the ark rested on Ararat after 150 days on the 17th day of the seventh month, and the complete drying up of the flood was not until the 27th day of the second month of the following year. The inscription, on the other hand, states that the flood abated on the seventh day, and that the ship remained seven days on the mountain before the sending out of the birds. On this point it must be remarked that some Biblical critics consider that there are two versions of the flood story in Genesis itself, and that these two differ as to the duration of the flood. The Greek account of Berosus is silent as to the duration of the Deluge. Pursuing his examination, Mr. Smith finds differences in the accounts as to the mountain on which the ark rested, and the test of birds, by which the abatement of the flood was ascertained, while in the building of the altar and the sacrifice on leaving the ark all three accounts agree.

On reviewing the evidence Mr. Smith continued, it is apparent that the events of the flood narrated in the Bible and the inscription are the same, and occur in the same order; but the minor differences in the details show that the inscription embodies a distinct and independent tradition. In spite of a striking similarity in style, which shows itself in several places, the two narratives belong to totally distinct peoples. The Biblical account is the version of an inland people. The name of the Ark in Genesis means a chest or box, and not a ship; there is no notice of the sea, or of launching, no pilots are spoken of, no navigation is mentioned. The inscription, on the other hand, belongs to a maritime people; the Ark is called a ship, the ship is launched into the sea, trial is made of it, and it is given in charge of a pilot. He points out circumstances which suggest the question whether the Chaldean narrative itself may not have been compiled from two distinct and older accounts, and notes it as remarkable that the oldest traditions of the early Babylonians seem to centre round the Persian Gulf.

In conclusion, he remarked that this account of the deluge opened a new field of inquiry in the early part of the Bible history. The question has often been asked, "What is the origin of the antediluvians, with their long lives so many times greater than the longest span of human life? Where was Paradise, the abode of the first parents of mankind? Whence comes the story of the flood, of the Ark, of the birds?" The Cuneiform inscriptions are now shedding new light on these questions, and supplying material which future scholars will have to work out. It would be a mistake to suppose that with the translation and commentary on an inscription like this the matter is ended. Beneath the mounds and ruined cities of Chalden, now awaiting exploration lie, together with older copies of this Deluge text, other legend and histories of the earliest civilization in the world.

The chairman, in opening the discussion which followed, said he could guarantee the accuracy of Mr. Smith's translation, except as to the names, about which there were considerable doubts, and which were merely provisional, until some gloss was obtained by which their phonetic power could be ascertained, and the real reading be given. The most important point, and the question which would be asked generally was, "What was the antiquity of the legend?" He wished, therefore, to explain to the meeting that although the tablets found in the ruins of Nineveh dated only from the age of Sardanapalus in the sixth and seventh century B. C., yet they were copies of very much more ancient documents. Every tablet had at the foot of the writing a "colophon," which stated that the above writing was a copy of the original document, and it was found in many places that tablets from which the scribes of Sardanapalus had copied were defective, and the scribes had added the glosses, "Here the original is defective." The honorable gentleman then proceeded to show, by a masterly train of reasoning, that the historical era of the Assyrians dated back 5,150 years before Christ, and that the legend belonged to the mythological period, probably 1,000 or 1,500 years earlier still, and that the Izdubar of the text was identical with Zoroaster.—*London Telegraph, Dec. 4th.*

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