

ARTICLE X.  
ON ASSYRIOLOGY.<sup>1</sup>

THE following Review, which appeared originally in E. v. Leutsch's *philologischen Anzeiger*, Vol. vii. p. 532, is translated from the German of Professor de Lagarde, Lic. Theol., Ph.D., for the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, at his own suggestion. The Review is written by one of the leading Semitic scholars of the world, one whose knowledge of Syriac especially, and whose work in applying to the Semitic family of languages the same principles as Grimm and others have successfully followed in Indo-European comparative philology, has already given rich promise and rich fruit. What has seemed chaos begins to be orderly and living. What seemed only a field for empirics and mystics is beginning to reveal its real character under strict scientific treatment. Professor de Lagarde's opinion on Assyriology must be carefully heeded. We shall publish soon an Article on the subject by another leading Semitic scholar. An Article by Professor de Lagarde on another important subject will shortly appear in our pages, with his special permission. — Archibald Duff, Jr., assistant editor of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, is the translator of the following Review.

In 1875 A. v. Gutschmid discussed in Teubner's *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie*, the new edition of M. Duncker's *History of Antiquity*; and in the discussion gave it to be understood, in a manner at once careful and strictly reasoned from beginning to end, that what the Assyriologists had published as facts, were to be used more cautiously than Duncker had done. A notice counter to this appeared in the *Jenaer Litteraturzeitung*, not from Duncker himself, but from E. Schrader. Gutschmid has thought proper to reply to this anticriticism by an octavo volume of one hundred and fifty-eight pages. In this he certainly acknowledges explicitly, as he granted in 1875, that the work of the mere deciphering of Assyrian monuments has been in the main successful. But he reiterates, and that much more exhaustively, the grounds he had previously laid down which forbid following the Assyriologists with any confidence, notwithstanding what he had granted, as above stated. I must say that I regret the precious time which Gutschmid has spent on this work, but I can see that such a μέμνος ἀπιστεῖν is necessary, since the Prussian Government has been

<sup>1</sup> *New Contributions to the History of the Ancient Orient. Assyriology in Germany*, by Alfred von Gutschmid. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner. 8vo. pp. 158. 4 Marks. 1876. *Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Orients. Die Assyriologie in Deutschland*: von Alfred von Gutschmid.

persuaded to give a seat and a voice to Assyriology, still extremely youthful, as it is, in Germany. For the experiment of J. Brandis ought not surely to count. The warning is necessary too, since younger savants bow down before this rising sun in enthusiastic and rather loud worship (cf. F. Delitzsch's preface to his brother's German translation of Smith's Chaldee Genesis. — Ed. Bib. Sac.); since, also, in theological, and other periodicals, and in books of reference, the new wisdom is eagerly brought before the public. Men are constructing here a "public opinion" as they do on other questions, in order that they may afterwards be able to prove themselves right by reference to this public opinion. Among men who are not amateurs, and who have been able to follow the literature of the subject, it has long been unquestionable that least of all may historians count upon the supposed results of Assyriology as additions to their stock of facts. The Egyptologists are able to decipher names with some certainty, but with texts they can deal only in such a way as to excite doubt in the minds of the few who are skilled in Coptic. Upon this subject I have recently expressed myself in plain terms. But Assyriologists are, least of all, able to decipher names, since ideography and polyphony are perpetually laying snares for them (cf. in confirmation of this, Smith's Chaldee Genesis, chap. i., beginning, where the same fact is stated and explained by Mr. Smith. — Ed. Bib. Sac.). Translations of Assyrian texts, such as those of the Descent of Istar into Hell, if made by a scholar with Oppert's talent for feeling the way, his tact and practical experience, give the impression of being, on the whole, reproduced with fidelity to the sense. Oppert would be the last to deny that advance can be made from day to day, and therefore he will not feel himself aggrieved, if we do not immediately adopt the results of Assyriology into our school-books. If other Assyriologists are more exacting in their claims they will find themselves compelled to render a reckoning to the future (see Delitzsch's preface, as above quoted, for statements which merit this opinion. — Ed. Bib. Sac.). It may be easily seen how much right Gutschmid has, as I think, to caution historians. Let me urge the reader to study the subject further in Gutschmid's book itself. This seems especially indispensable for all teachers of Ancient History. I cannot think that a calm reader of the book should not be convinced by it. Every student of Greek will be pleased, let me add, that Gutschmid finds he is able to protect Greek classics and scholars repeatedly against the late news from Nineveh.

Gutschmid has very correctly remarked (p. 134) that Schrader's manner of conducting Assyriology can be successfully attacked, "can suffer such blows of the axe as will strike the roots, only by the hands of a linguist." I do not claim to be what Gutschmid terms a linguist. I have never declared myself to be other than a theologian. But since I have become rather intimately concerned with languages, and that too, with Semitic languages, because of the present condition of the study of the

History of Religion, and because of the problems therein which I have set myself to investigate, I must allow myself to say that the comparative grammar and comparative lexicography of the Semitic languages look very dubiously, and shake the head at the half of what is offered to us in Germany as Assyrian. The latter of these two departments is a science which was early begun, but which has lain long quite neglected; one in which I feel a peculiarly deep interest. It lies in the nature of the Assyrian mode of writing, which expresses ideas by conventional signs, that sharp-minded men, who are at home in this kind of representation, should be able to get at the sense of a slab without on that account being at all able to pronounce correctly even the majority of the arrow-head groups, much less all of them, that is to say, to pronounce them as the old Assyrians did themselves. The writing may be read as one reads musical notes or mathematical formulæ. Anything more exact than this must be found out from a mass of widely scattered facts and phenomena (cf. my "Reliquiæ Græcæ," 83 infra.). And from these sources it can be obtained only by one who is really thoroughly acquainted with the known Semitic dialects — acquainted with them by being in some measure at home in their classics. He must possess a sufficient measure of the gift of combination to be able to recognize the features of the common mother of these dialects — not to learn them in the grammars and dictionaries, but to gather them for himself from *the Grammar*, and from *the Dictionary*, that is, from the whole stock of words and constructions in the language. If we consider that, instead of the twenty-two letters which the original Semitic alphabet contained, there are but eleven to be distinguished in the Assyrian, we must acknowledge that to justify a man in expressing an opinion here he must know Semitic as perfectly as does the native who is able to read the hasty running-hand of another native. For no sensible person will to-day affirm that he knows Assyrian thoroughly. It will be readily believed that persons who have studied Semitic texts in rather considerable number, judge somewhat differently as to what is possible in Assyrian, from the way in which those judge who at the most have nibbled at a few books of the Old Testament, in the way so usual amongst us, and who have labored through attendance on some course of occasional lectures on a few Syriac or Arabic reading-lessons. In any case, three things are necessary to the genuine Assyriologist; namely, first, extensive knowledge of the inscriptions already accessible; secondly, an intimate, if not exactly an extensive, knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic-Ethiopic, obtained not from text-books, but from personal investigation; thirdly, ability, when an inscription comes up for consideration, to think, as one observes, what facts of the mother Semitic grammar and the mother lexicon, so far as already known, afford an explanation of this and that combination of characters. This last qualification comes only to persons possessed naturally of a peculiar talent, and even to these it comes only on

condition that the first and second qualifications have been acquired by the quiet ordinary method of patient learning. Familiarity with the inscription material, a willingness to search grammars and dictionaries after the manner of the Indo-German comparative philologist, even the liberty to use Professor Fleischer's interleaved and annotated copy of Freytag; all these would be equipments none too complete. My medical colleague, Dr. Baum, may lend me his whole set of saws and knives, and I may still be unable to perform an operation. In order not to be misunderstood, let me add that the fact that one has heard lectures on the Old Testament is no proof of a familiar knowledge of Hebrew. Even the delivery of such a course of lectures is no proof thereof. Many deceive themselves into confidence in their Hebrew, because they find courage to have an opinion about some text, after the use of a hundred helps. Perhaps their acquaintance with the text has been obtained altogether through translations. A slight effort to understand Charizi, Judas the Levite, or Avicbron's poems, and, say, to compose idiomatic Hebrew by one's self, might be quite serviceable in teaching modesty to professors of Hebrew in Gymnasias, and even to others who count themselves something much higher than that. Do you count yourself a poet? Then command poetry.

We are not yet quite done with this. The brothers d'Abbadie showed, in the *Journal Asiatique* for 1843, that in the eastern part of Middle Africa there are spoken, besides Semitic languages, dialects which have much that is peculiar, mixed with much that is Semitic. So far as I am aware, these gentlemen were the first to point this out. H. Ewald made the fact known in Germany in the *Zeitschrift für Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 5, 410 ff. By considerations of a more general nature I came early to the conclusion that these African-Semitic dialects must be connected with Assyrian. In 1852 and 1853, while in constant active intercourse with my friend Edwin Norris, who was at that time busied with the arrow-head inscriptions of the Scythian class, I became interested in such inscriptions, and conceived the hope of being able to prove that Assyrian was the elder sister of the Saho, and of like idioms. It was evident that Assyrian was considerably different from what was already known as Semitic. The leaves of that early spring in my work have long since been scattered by a quickly following autumn; but to-day I regard the matter in the main exactly as I did at that time. I think that the Semites separated into two principal divisions, one of which had its centre in the territory about the mouths of the Euphrates and Tigris, whence colonies wandered, some to Africa, — the ancestors of the Saho people, — some to the north, and perhaps to the west. To the other, which does not concern us here, belonged the Ethiopians. Since in Assyrian a range of linguistic facts do not at all correspond with the characteristics of the Semitic languages hitherto known, and I have no right to doubt the Assyriologists when they tell us

there are such facts, it is evident to me that at least an effort must be made to investigate the relation of Babylonian and Assyrian not only to the sister dialects in general, but also especially to the native idioms of Africa. Of course, I should more correctly say, their relation to the probable original form of these idioms as it is to be discovered by exhaustive investigation. Let me remark, by the way, that Ewald did not know the real facts of the case, when he says, as above quoted (p. 421), that the termination of the third person of the perfect in *ʔn* is something preserved from time immemorial in the Saho, but that this ending has been entirely lost in all the other Semitic dialects known to us, although it is a form thoroughly accordant with the original Semitic mother. The Arabic translation of the Psalms made in the diocese of Antiochia in 1050, which I recently published, has exactly this ending; to say nothing of Syriac (save that I purposely mention only A. G. Hoffmann, § 53, note 3, written in 1827).

It might be said, those who are thoroughly conversant with the comparative grammar and lexicography of the Semitic languages ought to undertake a criticism of the authorized Assyriology on the basis of the Semitic knowledge already obtained. It would not be absolutely impossible, in the nature of the thing, to satisfy this claim; but it is impossible, in the present condition of things. The number of those who have a right to a voice in the matter can be counted on less than the ten fingers, and for these such a criticism is not indispensable. Others would assuredly not be converted by a mere criticism, but would demand a positive reply to the whole question; since they would probably see in the multitude of details necessary to such an investigation and criticism as above required, nothing but much ado about trifles, or else ill-will. They would see this where nothing further really existed than the application of the faculty of reasoning from the smaller to the greater, nothing save the earnest endeavor to find the truth. Besides, in a question which is so closely allied with theological apologetics, there are too many interested to make it advisable to do otherwise than say a yes that means no.

The review just sketched will perhaps make it possible to see clearly how much will be dark in Assyrian even to any one who is skilled in Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic. In like manner, another investigation, started at the suggestion of Oppert, but since left unfinished, will probably lead to a definite result respecting the polyphony of the Assyrian written character. If we may read one and the same sign, as *dich, umvus*, and *tip*; if "*most, if not all, of the Assyrian characters are polyphones*"; if the names Tigris, Babylon, Nabuchodnosor are expressed by groups of signs which at other times are read Bartikgar Sintirki, Anapasadusis, then this arrangement must have had a cause somewhere, although it seems to us, at first sight, like the work of insane persons. It is to be hoped that when this cause is discovered, and so the explanation of the phenomena, certain laws in the use of the signs will become evide

In European languages something similar occurs to a small extent. Englishmen write the old sign for *litra*, that is usually an L, and read it "pound"; we write —, and read it "less," and also "minus." In stating a mathematical proportion we use the colon and the sign of equality, and we read the former "to," and the latter not "equals," but "is as." The sign for *litra* is the most suitable to serve us for an example. It points to the fact that the English are indebted for certain parts of their culture to an older people, one originally foreign to them. From Brugsch's Hieroglyphic-Demotic Dictionary, 1, 57 (aps), it may perhaps be gathered that we have to go very far back in our researches in this field. Oppert gave it as his opinion, in 1855 (see Z. D. M. G. 10, 288), that signs with double meaning in Assyrian writing belong in one of the meanings to the language of the people that invented the sign, and in the other meaning to the idiom of the nation that adopted the other nation's mode of writing. A rudely-sketched fish was read originally, perhaps, *ha*, because the inventor had called the fish *ha*. In Semitic tongues fish was called *nun*. Thus the same picture of a fish came to represent both *nun* and *ha*; the picture becoming unrecognizable as that of a fish, because it gradually came to be sketched not with lines, but with arrow-heads. I myself adhered long to this explanation of the matter, and even gave it public approval prematurely, in my "Gesammelten Abhandlungen," 217; but one circumstance now contradicts the explanation, viz. that the signs are not diphones, but polyphones. It is true that in 1855 it was taught that they were diphones, and nothing else was taught. It is not possible to conceive of four or five layers of peoples, so to speak, deposited one on the other, each belonging to a different lingual family, and each bequeathing its own reading of the common hieroglyphics to its extirpators and successors; the hieroglyphics remaining known and recognizable in spite of all the political revolutions and annihilations which had taken place, in spite, too, of the miserable mode of writing. The *beneficium inventarii* of inheritance probably did not extend, in those days, to the treasures of the mind. But even if Oppert's explanation of the phenomenon is impossible, some explanation of it must be obtained. It will be necessary to investigate the history of the writing in all the relations of part to part thereof. We may remind ourselves that it may be certain that the Cyprian syllabary arose under the influence of the same culture which wrote on the walls and earthen tablets of Assyria, and that that syllabary named must be instructive in the investigation of this culture. It is not flattering to Semitic philology that the process which has repeatedly been so easily successful in the Indo-Celtic field does not succeed in the Semitic.

After these expositions it will hardly be doubtful that thus far not even the foundations of an Assyrian philology have been laid broadly enough. One series of facts is already certainly obtained. More may be won if the students of Assyriology will only begin to go systematically to work,

if they will set about acquiring knowledge which we cannot do without, and which, as Assyriology now stands, must be had before investigators in other departments can attempt to co-operate. The Assyriologist must take for associate that sort of scepticism which tries a stone ten times before setting it into the wall of the building.

Again, it seems to me, pressingly urgent that the evil habit of ingratitude be not let spread over this field, that habit which now so widely overruns elsewhere. One may be almost certain concerning many books treating of Indo-German comparative philology, books now used, and useful and highly esteemed, that nine tenths of what is in them is not the property of the man whose name stands on the title-page. The works on Assyriology are more easily numbered, and the workers are few. Only Hincks and Norris are no more: Rawlinson, Oppert, Ménant, Smith (now also gone, *Ed.*), Sayce, Schrader, still live. It would be well for the new science if there were prepared for it a book of reference, in which should be credited to each man what is his own, with exact references. No one likes to be unjust, and while there rules a race in Germany whose motto is *suum cuique*, it may even be held as patriotic to follow this watchword in all things. I think that the results of the investigation would be very surprising.

Gutschmid probably means Max Müller when, on page 128, he speaks of a talented linguist, who in an unfortunate hour coined the word Turanian; but that expression arose, not with Max Müller, but, further back, with Friedrich Rückert. I remember still very distinctly how, in November or December of 1844, in a conversation concerning the character of the South-Indian languages, Rückert surprised Müller and myself by the assertion that the lingual character of Turkish was exactly that of Tamul. cf. not my "Political Essays" (1853), for they are inaccessible, but my "Report on the present Situation of the German Empire," page 9.

On page 96 Nöldeke is thanked for the reference of the Syrian *Agabātāma* in Herodotus 3, 64 to Hamāt, but Nöldeke is rich enough to be able to share these thanks with others. I myself have already treated this view as common property of the fellow-workers in this department of study (see *Symmicta* 121), although Gutschmid credits it to Nöldeke. F. Hitzig was the first to defend the view, as the ninth Thesis of his Dissertation "*de Cadyti urbe Herodotea*," on April 13, 1829, in Göttingen.

Both the treatises which were the occasion of Gutschmid's book are printed as a preface by Gutschmid.

It will be useful to note that I have written this present Article at special request.

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