

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CONQUEST OF EGYPT,

CONFIRMED FROM A

CONTEMPORARY HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTION.

AFTER the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, B.C. 588, those Israelites who were not carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar still obstinately clung to their old foolish confidence in the power and willingness of Egypt to afford them protection. They had already found Egypt no strong staff, but only "a broken reed" (Isaiah xxxvi. 6) when they leaned on her; and Jeremiah had assured them repeatedly that it would be no better now (Chap. xlii. 13). But such a lesson they somehow could not learn; and a large body of the Remnant persisted in emigrating to Egypt, carrying Jeremiah with them, in spite of all his protestations (Chap. xliii.), and took up their residence in Tahpanhes (Tehaphnehes in Ezekiel, the modern *Tell Defenneh*) in the north-eastern corner of the Delta. A prophet is one who can read the figures on the dial-plate of history, and can see how the gnomon points; and Jeremiah had seen the whole broad country, from the mountains of Media to the Mediterranean Sea, with the solitary exception of Tyre, reduced to subjection by Nebuchadnezzar. He knew the ambition of the restless Chaldean too well to suppose that he could dream of letting the rich and powerful kingdom of Egypt alone,

especially if such a good excuse for attack as the presence of Israelite fugitives in Egypt were afforded him. Jeremiah had all along proclaimed the utter fruitlessness of resistance to Nebuchadnezzar, and counselled submission to his rule as the only way of escaping God's three scourges, "sword, famine, pestilence." He now tells them that, as resistance had failed before, so their flight into Egypt will be equally in vain. They have not submitted, as Jehovah advised, and the three scourges will follow them (Chap. xlv. 12, 13) still. This leads him to predict that Nebuchadnezzar's arms will be turned against Egypt, the only remaining free state of any consequence in the Eastern world. Nebuchadnezzar's throne will be set up in that very Tahpanhes which the Israelites vainly expected to be their city of refuge; the power of Egypt will be thoroughly broken; the temples of Egypt will be burnt with fire, the images broken in pieces, &c. (Chap. xliii. 8-13). The then reigning king, who should suffer this humiliation, is named in Chapter xlv. Verse 30: he was Pharaoh-Hophra, the Apries of Herodotus, and Uahabra¹ of the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions.

In this prophecy, as in so many others, Jeremiah is closely followed by Ezekiel. First of all, in the year of Jerusalem's fall, he prophesies ruin to Egypt, as to all the other opponents of the theocracy, in general terms (Chaps. xxix. 1-16 and xxx.). The whole land should be laid waste from north to south, "from Migdol [on the north-east frontier, so read for "*the tower of*" Chap. xxix. 10] to Syene [modern *Assuan*, oppo-

¹ Not Uahprahet, as is given in *Records of the Past*, vi. p. 81. There is no *p* in the name, and the Hebrew "Hophra" seems to shew that the hieroglyphic heart must here have the value *ah*, not *het*.

site Elephantine, at the first cataract], even to the border of Ethiopia." No foot of man shall pass through the land for forty years (*i.e.*, for an indefinite period); after which Egypt shall again be raised, and become a "base kingdom." Then, seventeen years later, in B.C. 572, this prophecy is renewed, being evidently as yet unfulfilled (Chap. xxix. 17-19). Now also the conquest of Egypt is brought into connection with Nebuchadnezzar's long fruitless siege of Tyre, which he had commenced shortly after the fall of Jerusalem, and which had lasted thirteen years, *i.e.*, to B.C. 574 or 573. Ezekiel predicts now that Egypt should be given into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, as wages for his army's unrewarded exertions in executing the Lord's judgments on Tyre.

This prophecy of the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, thus confidently made both by Jeremiah and by Ezekiel, has long been regarded by those who take delight in such things, as an unmistakable instance of the failure of prophetic foresight.¹ The only writer of antiquity who makes any mention of such a conquest is Josephus.² He avers that all took place exactly as predicted;—that, after subduing Coelesyria, Ammon, and Moab, Nebuchadnezzar made an expedition against Egypt, wasted the whole country, slew the reigning king, set up another in his room, and carried off the Israelite fugitives to Babylon. But it was easy to argue that Josephus, or his Jewish authorities, had merely invented the history because they knew of the prophecy. Herodotus and Diodorus, the "unprejudiced" historians, make no mention of any such

¹ See Hitzig's Commentary *in loc.*, and as a recent instance, Kuonen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, p. 122, *et seq.*

² *Ant. Jud.* x. 9, 7.

humiliation of Egypt; and indeed they mention Apries simply as conqueror of Palestine and Cyprus, leaving on our minds the impression that he was a powerful and successful king.

Nevertheless, attention has recently been called to a hieroglyphic inscription in the Louvre, which brings us unimpeachable testimony, from a *contemporary Egyptian source*, to the fact of an actual conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. Herodotus is found to have been not "unprejudiced," but merely ill informed: the Egyptian priests, who narrated their country's history to him, had taken very good care not to mention their own defeats. The inscription is found on the statue of a royal official *Nes-Hor*, a personage of the highest rank, among whose numerous titles is one usually reserved for the Heir-apparent of the Crown, viz., "Governor of the South," *i.e.*, of Nubia. The contemporary character of this inscription is vouched for by the fact that Hophra (Uah-ab-ra) is named twice by Nes-Hor as his master and patron. The statue had originally been erected in the temple of Chnum at Elephantine, where Nes-Hor had lived.

The inscription was first translated by M. Pierret in the *Recueil d'inscriptions hiéroglyphiques du Louvre*, and this translation has been reproduced in an English dress in *Records of the Past*, vol. iv. p. 81 ff. Pierret did not himself observe the reference to the Chaldean victory; and his translation is altogether so hasty and inexact, that probably no one would ever, from his rendering, have formed any conception of the importance of the inscription. It is to the acumen of a German Egyptologist, Dr. A. Wiedemann of Leipzig, that we owe a clear unfolding of the sense

and reference of the inscription.¹ In *Records of the Past* the portion of the inscription important for us is given as follows: "Let my statue be erected to perpetuate my name, and that it may not perish as if I were put in a dwelling afflicted with the ark² of the Aamu, of the people of the North, of the Asiatics, the profane . . . (lacuna). I have made a march against the Shasu (*i.e.*, Bedouins) of the upper country in the midst of them. The terror of His Majesty was against the wicked act they executed after having strengthened their heart in their design. I have let them advance quite into Nubia; I have let them approach the place where was His Majesty, who hath made a great carnage amongst them."

This translation is inexact in several particulars. To mention only the most important, a closer attention to the symbols employed would have shewn that the word rendered "Shasu" (Bedouins), cannot be a noun, much less a proper noun, but must be a *verb*, and a verb of motion: the determinatives used prove this, and Pierret has so rendered the same word a little lower down—"let them *advance*." The meaning must be, "to behave like the Shasu," or Bedouins; *i.e.*, to wander over the country, plundering and wasting it. We translate the whole passage as follows, in all essentials agreeing with Wiedemann: "I have caused my statue to be prepared, through which my name shall be immortal, never to be destroyed in this temple, because I repaired the temple when it was wasted by

¹ See the *Zeitschrift für Aegyptische Sprache*, 1878, i. p. 2 ff.; iii. p. 87.

² This is a blunder in the translation into English. The hieroglyphic is a *bow*, and no doubt Pierret wrote in French "l'arc," the bow, but forgot that "ark" in English has a meaning totally different. Read, "with the bow of," &c.

the attack ¹ of the Aamu, and all the wretched Northerners from the land of Sati . . . To make an expedition to waste and plunder the upper country (Upper Egypt) was in their heart. The fear of His Majesty was slight (with them). They caused to strengthen their heart with plans. I did not let them plunder as far as Nubia : I made them come near the place where His Majesty was, and His Majesty made a great carnage among them."

Here, then, the Governor of Nubia takes credit to himself for having stopped the progress of an invading army of Aamu and various northern tribes from Sati, after they had reached the very borders of Nubia. He admits, however, that they had ravaged the temple of Chnum at Elephantine, for he himself had repaired it. The invaders were defeated by the king "with great slaughter," but not till they had passed Syene, the point mentioned by Ezekiel.

But was this Nebuchadnezzar's army? The Aamu are usually the Shemite tribes of Palestine or the neighbourhood. The word seems to be taken from the Shemitic *am*, "people," just as *Teutones* and *Deutsch* are derived from a root meaning "the people" also. Sati-land, again, is the wide district occupied in succession by the great Mesopotamian world-empires, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, &c. An army consisting of Palestinian and Mesopotamian soldiers could, during the reign of Pharaoh-Hophra, be none else than Nebuchadnezzar's, for the whole of Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Palestine lay under his sway. And if the Chaldean host had reached Ele-

¹ Wiedemann renders, "the foreign troops." It is literally "the bow," for war in general. Cf. Gen. xlvi. 22.

phantine, they must first have ravaged the whole Nile valley; so that, literally, "from Migdol to Syene," all must have fallen into their hands. And a rich booty it would be, well worthy to be called by Ezekiel, God's wages to Nebuchadnezzar for his work at Tyre. The only point in the predictions not confirmed, is that Egypt should lie waste and uninhabited for forty years. But prophets give numbers only as the vaguest estimates, and no doubt never meant themselves to be held strictly to definite figures. The Nile valley may well have lain all but waste for a number of years during the confusions of the war, and this is all that is demanded by the prophecy.

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ST. PAUL'S USE OF ΘΡΙΑΜΒΕΩ.

THIS verb, in Biblical Greek, occurs only in 2 Corinthians ii. 14 and Colossians ii. 15. In our English Bibles we read in the former of these two passages, *causeth (us) to triumph*, and in the latter, *triumphing over*. There is no grammatical reason whatever for the variation, the difference in the two Greek forms being simply that between the present and the past participle active of the same verb; and the Latin Versions read consistently *qui triumphat* and *triumphans* in the two places respectively. This discrepancy in our own Translation is certainly not due to accident or caprice. To remove it by conforming to the Vulgate rendering in 2 Corinthians would only, as we shall see, create new difficulties; and the complications and contradictions in which the interpretation of Colossians ii. 15 is involved are also very closely con-