

progressive attempts to trace deeper and deeper into the dust to which had reverted the foundations of successive cities built solely of sun-dried mud-bricks.

Before Botta and Layard took the simple initiative of opening them with spade and pick, burrowing through the mud-filled ruins of palace rooms to lay bare the slabs of sculptured stone which lined them, the stone colossi at the gates, and the massed libraries of clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform script, the curious traveller who climbed these great mud hills might speculate that here probably was Nineveh, or Babylon, or Ur of the Chaldees.



With the interpretation of the cuneiform script almost miraculously solved by Rawlinson in 1847, it was possible for Layard to prove that the palace opened by his workmen on the Kuyunjik mound near Mosul, was a palace of Assyrian Nineveh, its king, the Sennacherib of scripture.

In this magnificent edifice I had opened no less than seventy-one halls . . . whose walls, almost without exception, had been panelled with slabs of sculptured alabaster recording the wars, the triumphs, and the great deeds of the Assyrian king. By a rough calculation, about 9,880 feet, or nearly two miles, of bas reliefs . . . were uncovered.

The twenty thousand-odd tablets of Sennacherib's library, massed two feet deep on the floor of two large chambers, were sent to the British Museum, where in 1872 one was recognised as representing the Chaldean account of the Deluge. The astonished Assyriologist deciphering the tablets in the Museum read "that the ship rested on the mountains of Nizir." This was followed by the account of the sending forth of the dove, and its finding no resting-place and returning. Not only this account of the Deluge, but also the no less significant account of the Creation was identified among Sennacherib's tablets.

These are a few of the triumphs of the pioneers of Mesopotamian archaeology reviewed by the author in his racy narrative. Mr. Seton Lloyd leads the reader on to the no less spectacular achievements of the present century, from the thirteen years' excavation of the site of Babylon, to Sir Leonard Woolley's uncovering of the site of Ur of the Chaldees, and his dramatic excavation of the Royal Cemetery.

The book is well calculated to appeal to the reader who wishes to savour the romance of Assyrian archaeology without having to enrol as an Assyriologist. Students of the Bible might also find here a guide to the considerable output of books on the sources of the Old Testament which followed the deciphering of the Chaldean tablets of the Creation and the Flood.

—R.S.D.

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