

Special Notes on Cuneiform.

The cuneiform writing which was used at least as early as 3000 B.C., and continued to be used up until the beginning of our era, is one of the most important systems of writing in the world's history. We find tablets which used it in many lands. It was employed for royal inscriptions on the cliffs at great mountain passes and for their monuments of the kings in the centre of their capital cities. Literature of ^{every} type was written in it. Thousands of contracts have come down to us which used this type of writing. Many letters of the most ephemeral character have been found written in a sort of cuneiform scribble. It must have been widely known and not merely the property of a small writing class.

The code of Hammurapi was engraved on a great diorite column about 8 ft. high. On the sides of this stone were 3600 lines of cuneiform, giving the 247 laws which this king promulgated. At the end of this column the king proclaims that if anyone is wronged, he shall come before this column which was put up in the public square and shall read upon it the laws giving his rights and shall see what he can claim against his oppressors. This statement of the king seems to imply that practically anyone in Babylonia would be able to read the cuneiform inscription:

There would certainly be no point whatever in such an injunction if it could not be read by those to whom it was addressed. Some of the laws in the code enable us to realize how great was the importance of writing in that early day (about 2000 B.C.). If anyone had lost a piece of property and discovered this property in the possession of another person and could prove that it was his property, the responsibility rested upon the other person to prove that he had acquired it rightfully. If he could not produce witnesses who would declare that he had purchased the property in their presence or a cuneiform tablet declaring his purchase and