

is no vague picture but a true characterization of this particular ruler.

Twenty-five hundred years ago this year Babylon was conquered by the Persians under Cyrus (539 B.C.). The Persians tried to weld their empire together by reversing the policy of the Babylonians and thus seeming to be the friend of the various conquered nations. Cyrus issued edicts permitting the conquered peoples to return to their own lands, often giving them help from the imperial treasury. One such edict, contained in the book of Ezra (Ezra 1.1-4), shows Cyrus granting the Israelites freedom to return to their own country. This Biblical picture of the Persian attitude exactly fits the archeological evidence.

New light is constantly being thrown upon particular details in the history of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires. As we learn more about their leaders, and about the events of the different centuries, new problems appear, upon which in turn new light is shed. It is, in a way, like a comparison of a set of pictures regarding a period of history with a book of words describing the same general time. The Biblical account and the archeological material rarely exactly coincide for any length of time. Instead there are frequent overlappings. There are many points where each of them stands alone without any correlate in the other. But new points of relationship are constantly being observed, and in these points of relationship, when carefully studied, it is always found that the two fit together. No real contradiction has ever been proven.

On the other hand, there is often a danger of imagining a relationship between two features which actually have no relationship at all. In such a case, if it is later proved that the two matters are quite unrelated, this may lead people to doubt the accuracy of the whole Biblical narrative. It is much wiser to go slow