

available Egyptian material will be seen to bear an important relationship to something in the Bible<sup>e</sup>, or when a new discovery from Egypt may be of superlative interest in this regard. Although the direct contacts of Egypt with the Bible are far less than those of Mesopotamia, yet Egypt was always a vital factor in the background of Palestinian life and culture.

#### Evidence from Mesopotamia

This leads us to the second great region from which archaeological material bearing on the Bible has come. Many passages in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and in the Prophets<sup>2</sup> books of the Old Testament refer to the series of westward campaigns which culminated in the conquest of Israel by the Assyrians and of Judah by the Babylonians. These campaigns present just the sort of thing which we might expect the heathen rulers to put up monuments to celebrate, and our expectation is not disappointed. Although the great cities of Mesopotamia were further from Palestine than was Egypt, the contacts between the two regions were just as frequent as those with Egypt, and, in addition, there was much more in the relationship which could be expected to leave definite evidence in the monuments. In a whole series of records by the Assyrian kings we find references to Israelite kings, and the number of incidental cultural contacts between Mesopotamian records and Biblical statements is very large.

A century and a half ago even less was known about ancient Mesopotamia than about ancient Egypt, for it contained no great series of stone monuments and buildings to fire the imagination of the world. Here were no great pyramids. Nothing stood above ground in Mesopotamia to compare with the Sphinx in Egypt. Greek sources bore witness that a great civilization had existed in that land, but little was visible to thrill the traveller as in Egypt. This was due in large measure to the difference in building materials, for Egypt possessed a great quantity of fine building stone, but in Mesopotamia most of the building had to be done with bricks, which would not resist the elements in the same way. Most of the large stone monuments which had been erected lay buried under heaps of debris or of decayed bricks.