

OBITUARY NOTICE

Dr. Theophilus Goldridge Pinches

With the death of Dr. Pinches we lose another link in the chain of Assyriology with the pioneers who elucidated the problems in this form of Oriental research. It was as a boy of 19, in 1875, that Pinches first took up cuneiform, by which time the groundwork had been settled. Rawlinson had read the Behistun inscription, the three languages written in cuneiform, Persian, Susian, and Babylonian, were now an open book; the great test made by four of the principal scholars on the Tiglath-Pileser prism, whether Assyrian really could be read, was now past history by nearly twenty years; and George Smith had already discovered and published the Deluge tablet. The second stage of cuneiform study was now beginning.

Pinches entered the British Museum as an assistant to Dr. Birch's Department, and here he began work on those texts which made his name, first, in helping Sir Henry Rawlinson with the publication of the volumes of *Western Asiatic Inscriptions*, and subsequently with *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets*, where his love of accuracy and innate capacity for fine and delicate work stood him in good stead. As a copyist he was admirable.

But it was his first scientific article which showed that he was also to be a scholar. In 1878 he published translations of some of that very difficult class of text, the letters, which, as everyone who has worked on old letters knows, present peculiar problems, each having been wrested from its environment, to which (if anything is to be made of it) it must be restored. Moreover, the handwriting and the linguistic peculiarities must, of necessity, be different from the stereotyped texts of the royal libraries. In spite of this, Pinches' results were admirable, notably in that very interesting letter of Sennacherib to his father Sargon, when he was acting as G.S.O.I. for Intelligence on the northern border, and, in his *résumé* of the reports which he has received, he records the

beginnings of the great, successful invasions by the Cimmerians, which were to have such far-reaching results.

Alive to the necessity of a knowledge of the cognate Semitic languages, he studied these as essentials for comparative purposes, as can be seen from any of his numerous articles in *Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.*, *JRAS.*, or *Trans. of the Victoria Inst.* Two of his works are outstanding, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, 1906, and *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria*, 1908, both indicating the position which Assyriology was by now holding in the scientific world on the religious side, and the extent of our knowledge in relation to the Old Testament. Glasgow recognized his scholarship in making him an LL.D., and he was made lecturer in Assyrian at University College, Gower Street, and the Liverpool Institute of Archæology.

He was always alert to discover new texts in the collections of the British Museum, where he had, fortunately, such great opportunities, and from the beginning of his career, every now and then he would put forward some tablet which enlivened the Assyriological world, whether it was on the Capture of Babylon by Cyrus, or the mention of Chedorlaomer in cuneiform. Sir Ernest Budge pays him well-merited tribute in his *Rise and Progress of Assyriology*, and apart from his recognition of Pinches' skill in copying, his activities in publishing texts, translations, and even guides to his Department, Sir Ernest's note, which is indicative of so much in scientific circles, stresses that "George Smith and Pinches each worked for some years for a salary that was smaller than that then received by a master carpenter or a master mason". Personally, I myself owe him a lively gratitude for many kind-hearted reviews; he was always ready to see the best, and shut his eyes to the worst, and it was only the other day in this *Journal* that he wrote a long account of our excavations at Nineveh, in spite, alas! of eyesight that had long been failing. Kindness of heart and gentleness were, I think, among his outstanding characteristics.

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