

A NEBUCHADNEZZAR CYLINDER.

BY EDGAR J. BANKS.

IN recent years the Babylonian Arabs have learned a new industry from the excavators, for when no more lucrative employment is to be had, they become archeologists, and though it is forbidden to excavate for antiquities without special permission, they roam about the desert digging into the ruins at will. A day's journey to the south of Babylon, near the Euphrates, is a ruin mound so small that it has scarcely attracted the attention of the explorers. It is marked upon the maps as Wannet es-Sa'adun, but among the Arabs of the surrounding region it is known as Wana Sadoum. During the past two years this mound has been the scene of the illicit labor of the Arabs.

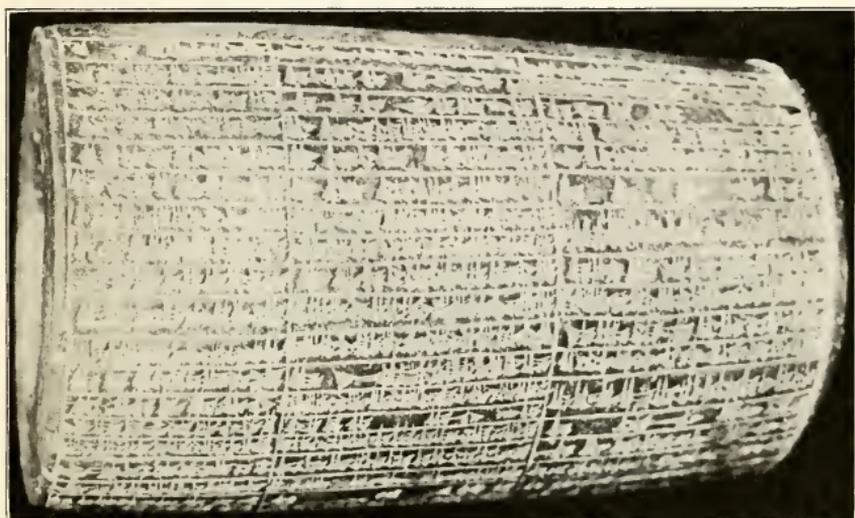
The greatest of all ancient builders was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon from 604 to 561 B. C. There is scarcely a ruin in all southern Mesopotamia which does not contain bricks stamped with his name, or some other evidences of his activity. He delighted in restoring the ancient temples which had long been in ruins, and in supporting the neglected sacrifices to the gods. He preferred to build new cities and enlarge the old ones rather than to wage war. Few of his records hint of military expeditions, for he was a man of peace, and it is as a builder or restorer of old temples that he should best be known. That his name might be remembered it was his custom, when restoring a temple, to inscribe large cylinders of clay with his building records, and to bury them in the walls of the structure. Some years ago several of the cylinders were found at Babylon, and they are considered among the most valuable of all things ancient.

Recently, when the Arabs attacked the little mound of Wana Sadoum, they came upon the walls of a fallen temple. In the walls they found, not one, but several of the Nebuchadnezzar cylinders in as perfect a condition as when they left the hands of that great king. They all contained the same inscription. The first part of it

is similar to that upon the cylinders previously discovered; the latter part is a new and valuable contribution to Babylonian history.

One of the cylinders discovered at Wana Sadoum has come into the possession of the writer. It is eight and one-half inches high and eighteen in circumference. Though such objects are generally called cylinders, this is in reality a truncated cone. It is hollow like a vase without a bottom, and the finger marks of the ancient potter clearly show that it was formed upon a wheel. The exceedingly fine clay was burned so hard that it resembles a fine hard stone of a yellowish color.

The inscription contains about fifteen hundred cuneiform signs,



THE CYLINDER OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

or one hundred and forty-five lines of writing in three columns running about the cylinder. Every sign is still perfect. In his customary way Nebuchadnezzar begins by telling who he is, and then follows an account of his building operations interspersed with words of self-praise. The translation reads:

"I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, the great, the mighty, the favorite of Marduk, the powerful prince, the beloved of Nabu, the ruler who knows not weariness, the protector of the temples Esagil and Ezida, who is obedient to Nabu and Marduk his lords, who does their bidding; the wise lord, the darling and the joy of the heart of the great gods, the first-born son of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon.

"When Marduk, the great lord, made me the rightful son, to rule the land, to be the shepherd of his people, to care for the city, to rebuild the temples, he bestowed upon me great power. Tremblingly I was obedient to Marduk, my lord. I completed Imgur-Bel and Nimitti-Bel, the great walls of Babylon, the mighty city, the city of his exalted power. At the entrance of the great gates I erected strong bulls of bronze, and terrible serpents standing upright. My father did that which no previous king had done. With mortar and bricks he built two moat walls about the city, and I, with mortar and bricks, built a third great moat wall, and joined it and united it closely with the moat walls of my father. I laid its foundation deep to the water level; I raised its summit mountain high. I constructed a moat wall of burned bricks about the west wall of Babylon.

"My father built the moat wall of the Arahtu canal securely with mortar and bricks. He built well the quays along the opposite shore of the Euphrates, but he did not finish all his work. But I, his first-born son, the beloved of his heart, built the moat walls of Arahtu with mortar and bricks, and joining them together with those of my father, made them very solid.

"Esagil, the wonderful temple, the palace of heaven and earth, Ekua, the temple of Marduk, the lord of the gods, Ka-hili-sug, the dwelling-place of Zarpanit, Ezida, the temple of the king of the gods of heaven and earth, I clothed with shining gold, and made bright like the day.

"Ezida, the favorite temple, the beloved of Marduk, I restored in Borsippa. (Col. 2) With gold and jewels I gave to it the beauty of paradise. I overlaid with gold its great beams of cedar, and arranged them by threes to cover Emachtila, the shrine of Nabu.

"I rebuilt and made lofty Emach, the temple of Ninharsag, in the center of Babylon. . . . and E-kiki-ini, the temple of Ninlil-anna, near the wall of Babylon.

"A thing which no king before had ever done!

"To the west of Babylon, at a great distance from the outer wall, I constructed an enclosing wall 4000 cubits in length about the city. I dug its moat to the water level. I walled up its sides with mortar and burned bricks, and I united it securely with the moat wall of my father. Along its edge I built a great wall of mortar and burned bricks mountain high.

"I rebuilt Tabisu-pur-shu, the wall of Borsippa. To strengthen it, I built the wall of its moat about the city with mortar and burned bricks. In Borsippa I rebuilt the temple to Tur-lil-en, the

god who breaks the weapons of my foes. Ebarra, the temple of Shamash in Sippar, Edurgina, temple of Shar-sabi in Bas, E-idi-Anu, temple of Anu in Dilbat, E-anna, temple of Ishtar in Erech, Ebarra, temple of Shamash in Larsa, Egish-shirgal, temple of Sin in Ur, the sacred temples of the great gods I rebuilt and completed.

“The support of Esagil and Ezida, the rebuilding of Babylon and Borsippa, which I caused to be more magnificent than before, I did according to instructions. All my noble deeds in regard to the support of the sacred temples of the great gods, which I did better than the kings my fathers, I wrote upon a stone tablet and fixed for future days.

“May the wise men after me read of all my works which I have written upon a tablet. May they comprehend the glory of the gods. The building of the cities of the gods and goddesses, which Marduk, the great lord, (Col. 3) set me to do, and kept urging my heart to undertake, with fear and without rest, I accomplished.

“At that time, for Ninkarrak, my beloved mistress, who guards my life and makes my dreams good, I dug up and beheld the ancient foundation of Eharsagil, her temple in Babylon, which fell to ruins in ancient days, and which no previous ruler had rebuilt . . . but the construction of the temple was not suitable for Ninkarrak. I endeavored eagerly to strengthen the wall of that temple, and of mortar and burned bricks to build a temple worthy of Ninkarrak. Upon the day when it is customary to ask the gods concerning the future, Ramman and Shamash gave me the fixed oracular response, to make three burned bricks sixteen finger breadths in size, and to make an image of burned bricks, as a charm against disease. And so I made three bricks of sixteen finger breadths in size, and an image of baked clay, a charm to drive away disease, and I placed it at the base of the foundation. With mortar and burned bricks I erected the temple mountain high.

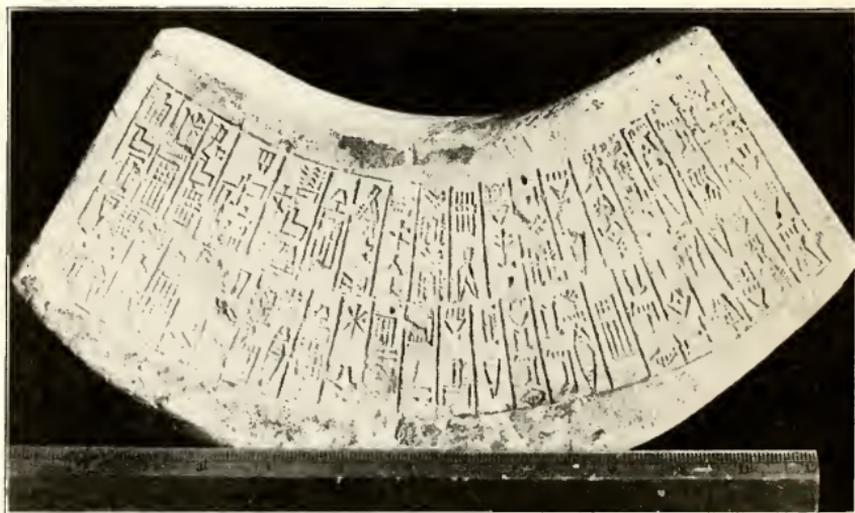
“O Ninkarrak, majestic mistress, when with joy thou enterest thy house Eharsagil, the house of thy pleasure, may words in my favor be ever upon thy lips. Increase my days and make long my years. Decree for me a long life and an abundance of posterity. Give peace to my soul. Make my body strong. Protect me and make my visions clear. O, in the presence of Marduk, lord of heaven and earth, command the destruction of my foes, and the ruin of the land of my enemies.

“At that time in the temple of Lugal-Maradda, my lord, in Marad, whose foundation no former king had seen since ancient days, I sought and found the ancient foundation stone, and upon

the base of Naram-Sin, my ancient ancestor, I fixed its foundation. I wrote an inscription and my name and placed it therein.

“O Lugal-Maradda, lord of all, hero, look favorably upon the work of my hands. Grant as a gift a life of distant days, an abundance of posterity, security to the throne, and a long reign. Smite the evil-minded; break their weapons, and devastate all the land of my enemies. Slay all of them. May thy fearful weapons, which spare not the foe, stretch forth and be sharp for the defeat of my enemies. O may they ever be at my side. Intercede for me with Marduk, lord of heaven and earth, and make my deeds appear acceptable.”

The inscription is of value for several reasons. It identifies



THE FOUNDATION INSCRIPTION OF NARAM SIN.

Wana Sadoum with Marad, thus adding another city to the map of ancient Babylonia. It speaks of the restoration of the temples in the Biblical cities of Sippar, Ur, Larsa and Erech. It gives an interesting picture of the belief in the efficacy of the little clay images which were buried in the house walls to drive away disease, but most interesting of all is the mention of the inscription of Naram Sin, which Nebuchadnezzar says that he saw when he had dug to the ancient foundation of the temple at Marad.

The name of Naram Sin has long been known, and several inscriptions have come from him. He was the son of Sargon, the first known Semitic king of Babylonia. Some years ago there was

discovered in the ruins of Sippar a cylinder with a long inscription of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon and the father of the Biblical Belshazzar. The inscription says that as Nabonidus was digging down to the foundation of the old temple at Sippar to restore it, he saw the foundation stone of Naram Sin, the son of Sargon, which no one had seen for three thousand and two hundred years. Nabonidus may or may not have been correct in saying that Naram Sin lived three thousand and two hundred years before his time, yet certainly he had access to the long chronological lists of the kings of Babylonia. Nabonidus was king of Babylon from 555 to 538 B. C., and if his statement is correct, then Naram Sin lived about 3750 B. C. However, most scholars are inclined to believe that he did not live so long ago. Interesting would it be if among the ruins of Sippar the ancient foundation stone, which Nabonidus claims to have seen, could be discovered.

The Arabs who were excavating at Wana Sadoum were so successful in finding the cylinders of Nebuchadnezzar that they dug deeper to the foundations of the temple, and however strange it may seem, they found the very inscription of Naram Sin which Nebuchadnezzar says that he saw; in fact they found the inscription in duplicate, and one of the stones is before me as I write. Originally the inscription was on a round flat piece of yellowish marble about twenty inches in diameter. In the center was a shallow hollow, probably a socket for a door post, for the stone seemed to serve as the foundation of the temple door. The inscription of thirty eight lines was carefully written about the hollow, but for the sake of lightness the Arabs have cut away the uninscribed part. The inscription reads:

“Naram Sin, the mighty king of the four quarters of the earth, who subdued nine armies in one year. When he overcame those armies he made their three kings captive, and brought them before the god En-lil. On that day Libit-ili, his son, the governor of Marad, built the temple of Lugal-marada in Marad.”

This long inscription of one of the earliest known kings is of historical importance. It identifies Wana Sadoum with the ancient Marad, and it gives the name of Libit-ili, the governor of Marad.

Of all the stories that the archaeologist may tell, this is as interesting as any. To dig from the ground the royal records of Nebuchadnezzar seems wonderful enough, but to read in those records of inscriptions which he saw, and then to find them, is more wonderful still. And Naram Sin lived as long before the time of Nebuchadnezzar as Nebuchadnezzar lived before our time.