

ABRAHAM AS THE INVENTOR OF AN IMPROVED PLOW.

IN the MUSEUM JOURNAL, vol. I, p. 4, Prof. A. T. Clay published a reproduction and description of a most interesting seal device; that of an Assyrian plow, drawn by two oxen and attended by a gang of three men, one of whom is engaged at a funnel-shaped apparatus at the side of the plow. This without doubt is a *seeder*, the seed being fed through it into the furrow just turned up by the plowshare. The same material has been republished by Dr. Clay in the "Publications of the Babylonian Section," vol. II, p. 65f. The seal can be exactly dated from the document to which it is attached, for this bears the date of the fourth year of Nazi-Maruttash, of the fourteenth century B. C. According to Prof. Clay, similar plows with tubes are found on monuments of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, while they also remain in use in Syria to this day.

It is interesting to note that this seal device illustrates a hitherto obscure passage in an ancient and famous Jewish book. This is the so-called Book of Jubilees, a Judaistic work of the second century B. C., of the character of a Midrash on the biblical Genesis, that is, it tells the inquisitive reader all the thousand and one things which the canonical volume does not vouchsafe to explain in the history of the patriarchs. The story of Abraham is naturally enlarged upon, and much is made of the legend concerning his opposition to the prevailing paganism of Babylonia in the midst of which he was brought up. The people made idols for themselves and indulged in all sorts of abominable practices, and Satan (Mastema) attempted in every way to corrupt and destroy the earth. And so among other things, "the prince Mastema sent ravens and birds to devour the seed which was sown in the land, in order to destroy the land, and rob the children of men of their labors. Before they could plow in the seed, the ravens picked it from the surface of the ground. And for this reason he called his name Terah (*i. e.*, the father of Abraham), because the ravens and the birds reduced them to destitution and devoured their seed."*

Then Abraham is born, distinguishes himself by his youthful piety, and is able by his mere word to turn away the flocks of ravens which came to destroy the crops. The result was that the people were able that year to sow and reap. Thereupon Abraham, we are told, *taught those who made implements for oxen, the artificers in wood,*

*The etymology is obscure. These quotations are from the eleventh chapter and are borrowed from R. H. Charles, *Book of Jubilees*, 1902.

and they made a vessel above the ground, facing the frame of the plow, in order to put the seed thereon, and the seed fell down therefrom upon the share of the plow, and was hidden in the earth, and they no longer feared the ravens. And after this manner they made vessels above the ground on all the frames of the plows, and they sowed and tilled all the land, according as Abraham commanded them, and they no longer feared the birds.

The author of the book, who may have been a Babylonian Jew, has thus made Abraham the inventor of this combination of plow and seeding machine. The ascription of the invention to the patriarch is on a par with the common stock of later Jewish legend, which made of Abraham the discoverer of letters, astronomy and the arts. It is not strange that this wonderful plow, doubtless in common use in the writer's day, was also considered a patent of Father Abraham's.

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NAPOLEON'S EGYPT.

THE President of the Museum, Mr. Eckley B. Coxe, Jr., has recently presented to the Museum Library a copy of the Description of Egypt published under the patronage of Napoleon and growing out of his Egyptian campaign. Mr. E. P. Wilkins has kindly contributed the following descriptive notice of this work for the JOURNAL.—Editor.

My attention was recently called to the copy of Napoleon's Egypt acquired by the Library of the University Museum. Upon examination my interest was aroused by the fact that this proved to be the only perfect set of the first edition that I have ever had the good fortune to see. It was then that I made some investigation of the history of this important and monumental work with a view to finding the reasons for the varying merits of different copies. It may be interesting to the readers of the JOURNAL to recall something of this history.

Napoleon's Egypt, so-called from the fact that it represents the scientific results of Napoleon's Egyptian Expedition in 1798, takes rank as the first great work which revealed to the world the treasures of Ancient Egypt. From the publication of this monumental work dates the real beginning of the long line of scholarly productions