ANCIENT ARABIA.

If there is any country which has seemed to lie completely outside the stream of ancient history, it is Arabia. In spite of its vast extent; in spite, too, of its position in the very centre of the civilized empires of the ancient East, midway between Egypt and Babylon, Palestine and India,—its history has seemed almost a blank. For a brief moment, indeed, it played a conspicuous part in human affairs, inspiring the Koran of Mohammed, and forging the swords of his followers; then the veil was drawn over it again, which had previously covered it for untold centuries. We think of Arabia only as a country of dreary deserts and uncultured nomads, whose momentary influence on the history of the world was a strange and exceptional phenomenon.

But the restless spirit of modern research is beginning to discover that such a conception is wide of the truth. The advent of Mohammed had long been prepared for. Arabia had long had a history, though the records of it were lost or forgotten. The explorer and decipherer have been at work during the last few years; and the results they have obtained, fragmentary though they still may be, are yet sufficiently surprising. Not only has Arabia taken its place among the historical nations of antiquity, its monuments turn out to be among the earliest relics of alphabetic writing which we possess.

Arab legend told of the mysterious races of 'Ad and Thamud, who, in the plenitude of their pride and power, refused to listen to the warnings of the prophets of God, and were overwhelmed by divine vengeance. In the south the magnificent palaces of 'Ad might still be seen in vision by the belated traveller, while the rock-cut dwellings of Thamud were pointed out among the cliffs of the north; but the first authentic information about the interior of Arabia came from Europe. The ill-fated expedition of Celso Gal-
lus, the Roman governor of Egypt, in B.C. 24. The spice-bearing regions of southern Arabia had long carried on an active trade with East and West, and the wealth their commerce had poured into them for centuries had made them the seats of powerful kingdoms. Their ports commanded the trade with India and the further East. Already in the tenth chapter of Genesis we learn that Ophir, the emporium of the products of India, was a brother of Hazarnaeth or Hadramat. Western merchants carried back exaggerated reports of the riches of "Araby the Blest," and Augustus coveted the possession of a country which commanded the trade with India as well as being itself a land of gold and spicery. Accordingly, with the help of the Nabateans of Petra, a Roman army was landed on the western coast of Arabia, and marched inland as far as the kingdom of Sheba or the Sabaeans. But disease decimated the invaders, their guides proved treacherous, and Celso Gallus had to retreat under a burning sun and through a waterless land. The wrecks of his army found their way with difficulty to Egypt, and the disaster made such an impression at Rome that the conquest of Arabia was abandoned forever. From that time forward, Arabia remained quiet, and it was not until the rise of Mohammedanism, the Roman and Byzantine courts contented themselves with supporting the native enemies of the Sabaeans, or using Christianity as a means for weakening their power.

As far back as 1810, Setzeen, while travelling in southern Arabia, discovered and copied certain inscriptions written in characters of unknown form; but later travellers brought to light other inscriptions of the same kind; and eventually, with the help of an Arabic manuscript, the inscriptions were deciphered, first by Gesenius, and then by Roediger (1841). They received the name of "Himyarite" from that of the district in which they were found,—Himyar, the country of the Homeries of classical geography. The language disclosed by them was Semitic, while their alphabet was closely related to the so-called Ethiopic or Geez. In certain dialects still spoken on the southern Arabian coast, notably that of Mahrah, between Hadramat and Oman, the peculiarities of the old Himyaritic language are still to be detected.

In 1841 Arnaud succeeded, for the first time, in penetrating inland to the ancient seat of the Sabaeans, and in bringing back with him a large spoil of fragmentary inscriptions. Later inscriptions of a more or less parallel adventure were made by M. Halévy, on behalf of the French Academy, who was rewarded by the discovery of more than 800 texts. But it is to Dr. Glaser that we owe the better part of our present knowledge of the geography and ancient history of southern Arabia. Three times, at the risk of his life, he has explored a country of which our modern geographers still know so little, and, almost alone among Europeans, has stood among the ruins of Mārib, or Marib, called by Strabo the Metropolis of the Sabaeans. He has collected no less than 1,031 inscriptions, many of them of the highest historical interest. The first-fruits of his discoveries have been published in his "Skizze der Geschichte Arabiens," of which the first part has just appeared at Munich.

For some time past it has been known that the Himyaritic inscriptions fall into two groups, distinguished from one another by phonological and grammatical differences. One of the dialects is philologically older than the other, containing fuller and more primitive grammatical forms. The inscriptions in this dialect belong to a kingdom the capital of which was at Ma‘in, and which represents the country of the Mineans of the ancients. The inscriptions in the other dialect were engraved by the princes and people of Salih, the Sheba of the Old Testament, the Sabaeans of classical geography. The Sabean kingdom lasted to the time of Mohammed, when it was destroyed by the advancing forces of Islam. Its rulers for several generations had been converts to Judaism, and had been engaged in almost constant warfare with the Ethiopic kingdom of Axum, which was backed by the influence and subsidies of Rome and Byzantium. Dr. Glaser seeks to show that the founders of this Ethiopic kingdom were the Habībā, or the Habbā, or...
Abissinians, who migrated from Himyar to Africa in the second or first century B.C. When we first hear of them in the inscriptions, they are still the inhabitants of northern Yemen and Mahrah. More than once they are mentioned as having come into contact with the inhabitants of southern Arabia. About A.D. 300 they occupied its ports and islands, and from 350 to 378 even the Sabæan kingdom was tributary to them. Their last successes were gained in 525, when, with Byzantine help, they conquered the whole of Yemen. But the Sabæan kingdom, in spite of its temporary subjection to Ethiopia, had long been a formidable state. Jewish colonies settled in it, and one of its princes became a convert to the Jewish faith. His successors gradually extended their dominion as far as Ormus, and, after the successful revolt from Axum in 378, brought not only the whole of the southern coast under their sway, but the western coast as well, as far north as Mecca. Jewish influence made itself felt in the future birthplace of Mohammed, and thus introduced those ideas and beliefs which subsequently had so profound an effect upon the birth of Islam. The Byzantines and Axumites endeavored to counteract the influence of Judaism by means of Christian colonies and proselytism. The result was a conflict between Sabã and its assailants, which took the form of a conflict between the members of the two religions. A violent persecution was directed against the Christians of Yemen, avenged by the Ethiopian conquest of the country and the removal of its capital to Saba. The later inscriptions of Saba and Axum were engraved in the face of the wall, the Sabæan characters and the language of Petra, inscriptions in which a fertile imagination once discovered a record of the miracles wrought by Moses in the wilderness.

Since Mr. Doughty's adventurous wanderings, Teima and its neighborhood have been explored by the famous German epigraphist, Professor Euting, in company with a Frenchman, M. Huber. The latter was sacrificed to Arab fanaticism, but Professor Euting returned with a valuable stock of inscriptions. Some of these are in Arabico-Nabathean, the most important being on a stèle discovered at Teima, which is now in the Museum of the Louvre. About 750 are in an alphabet and language which have been termed "Proto-Arabic," and are still for the most part unpublished. Others are in a closely allied language and alphabet, called "Lihyanian," by Professor D. H. Müller, since the kings by whose reigns the inscriptions are dated are entitled kings of Lihyãn, though it is more than probable that Lihyãn represents the Thamud of the Arabic genealogists. The rest are in the language and alphabet of Ma'in, and mention Minean sovereigns, whose names are found on the monuments of southern Arabia.

The Minean and Lihyanian texts have been mainly discovered in El-Ola and El-Higr, between Teima and El-Wej, a port that until recently belonged to Egypt, on the line of the pilgrims' road to Mecca. The Proto-arabic inscriptions, on the other hand, are met with in all parts of the country, and, according to Professor Müller, form the intermediate link between the Phoenician and Minean alphabets. Like the Lihyanian, the language they embody is distinctly Arabic, though presenting curious points of contact with the Semitic languages of the north; as, for example, in the possession of an article *aa*. The antiquity of Lihyanian writing may be judged from the fact that Professor Müller has detected a Lihyanian inscription on a Babylonian cylinder in the British Museum, the age of which is approximately given as 1000 B.C. We gather, therefore, that, as far back as the time of Solomon, a rich and cultured Sabæan kingdom flourished in the south of Arabia, the influence of which, if not its authority, extended to the borders of Palestine, and between which and Syria an active commercial intercourse was carried on by land as well as by sea. The kingdom of Sabã had been preceded by the kingdom of Ma'in, equally civilized and equally powerful, whose garrisons and colonies were stationed on the high-road which led past Mecca to the countries of the Mediterranean. Throughout this vast extent of territory alphabetic writing in various forms was known and practised, the Phoenician alphabet being the source from which it was derived.

1 The Minean and Lihyanian texts have been edited and translated, with an important introduction, by Professor D. H. Müller: "Epigraphische Denkmäler aus Arabien," in the "Deutschriften d. K. Akademie d. Wissenschaften zu Wien," vol. xxxviii., 1859.
MR. MACKINDER ON GEOGRAPHY—TEACHING.

The reader in geography in the University of Oxford has been deprived of four lectures at the English College of Preceptors. The introductory lecture was given on Nov. 8, before a crowded audience, consisting mainly of women teachers.

We must first set, said Mr. Mackinder (as given in the London Journal of Education of recent date), what are our aims in geographical teaching, else we shall be like men blindfold, trying to find their way out of a field with but one gate. If we succeed, it will be by a 

\[ \text{a huge right.} \] 

All teaching aims at discipline, or information, or both. Geography, as hitherto taught, has aimed solely at information. Even the leading authorities have supported this view. Thus a general, a distinguished member of the Geographical Society, lately complained to the lecturer of the brutal ignorance displayed by society in general, because at a large dinner-party his wife was the only guest who knew where Nassau, New Providence, was. Such geographical lore the lecturer said he heartily despised. It might have been of use before the invention of gazetteers; now it is utterly useless. Yet some geographical information is worth having, though discipline is the main thing. Thus the question turns up, “Where is Allahabad?” A reference to the gazetteer will tell us, “Allahabad is the capital of the North-West Provinces of India, situate at the junction of the Jumna and the Ganges.” To the uneducated person these statements will convey nothing more than the vague impression that Allahabad is somewhere in the north of India. One who has been trained in geography will at once picture to himself the centre of a great and populous province, standing in the great plain which lies at the foot of the Himalayas. If the teacher has thus given a skeleton into which details may be fitted, he has not merely supplied information, but also developed capacity. Acquaintance with great facts, vividly and familiarly known, so that they are part and parcel of the mind’s furniture, is indeed discipline; for it involves the grasping of contrasts, analysis, learning to deal with ideas.

Then, too, there is the matter of geography itself. It was doubtless the last of the confluent sciences of the ancient world. The army of Galen Gallus was doubtless the first which had sought to gain possession of the cities and spice-gardens of the south. One such invasion is alluded to in an inscription which was copied by M. Halévy. The inscription belongs to the closing days of the Minaean kingdom, and after describing how the gods had delivered its dedicants from a raiding attack on the part of the tribes of Sabh and Khaullan, or Havilah, goes on to speak of their further deliverance from danger in “the midst of Misr,” or Egypt, when there was war between the latter country and the land of Mazi, which Dr. Glaser would identify with the Edomite tribe of Mizzah (Gen. xxxvi. 13). There was yet a third occasion, however, on which the dedicants had been rescued by their deities ‘Athtar, Wadd, and Nikrább: this was when war had broken out between the rulers of the south and of the north. If the rulers of the south were the princes of Misr, whose power extended to the rulers of the north norht of the Euphrates or Tigris. What has been accomplished already with the scanty means still at our disposal is an earnest of what remains to be done. The dark past of the Arabian peninsula has been suddenly lighted up; and we find that long before the days of Mohammed it was a land of culture and literature, a seat of powerful kingdoms and wealthy commerce, which cannot fail to have exercised an influence upon the general history of the world.

A. H. SAYCE.

Text-books are useful as a guide to the teacher, and as a record of what has been taught to the pupil. The old way of using them — “Get up the next three pages; now shut your books; name the departments of France and their capitals” — is a parody of teaching. Nor is the modern fashion of lecturing, by itself, much better. A lecturer can stimulate and direct study; he cannot supply accurate information; he cannot educate knowledge or test its soundness.

Teachers, by blindly following text-books, fall into the vicious method of taking one country at a time. They should go over the same ground again and again, each time in a new connection, showing the physical, commercial, political connection of one country with another countries. For this we need variety of apparatus, maps, sections, models, views, magic-lantern slides, and, above all,