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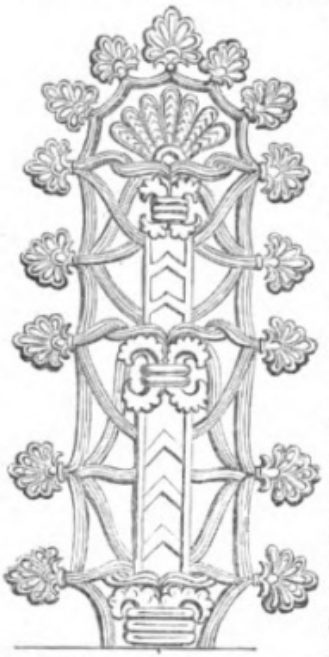
does not stand connected with the *Ashêrah* of the Phœnicians, which was certainly not a "grove," in the sense in which we commonly understand that word. The *Ashêrah* which the Jews adopted from the idolatrous nations with whom they came in contact, was an artificial structure, originally of wood,[2] but in the later times probably of metal,[3] capable of being "set" in the temple at Jerusalem by one king,[4] and "brought out" by another.[5] It was a structure for which "hangings" could be made,[6] to cover and protect it, while at the same time it was so far like a tree that it could be properly said to be "cut down," rather than "broken" or otherwise demolished.[7] The name itself seems to imply something which stood straight up;[8] and the conjecture is reasonable that its essential element was "the straight stem of a tree,"[9] though whether the idea connected with the emblem was of the same nature with that which underlay the phallic rites of the Greeks[10] is (to say the least) extremely uncertain. We have no distinct evidence that the Assyrian sacred tree was a real tangible object: it may have been, as Mr. Layard supposes,[11] a mere type. But it is perhaps on the whole more likely to have been an actual object;[12] in which



Sacred Tree—final and most elaborate type. (Nimrud.)

[2] Judges vi. 26. "Take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the *wood* of the grove (*Ashêrah*) which thou shalt cut down."

[3] According to the account in the Second Book of Kings, Josiah "burnt the grove at the brook Kidron, *and stamped it small to powder*, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people" (xxiii. 6). Unless the *Ashêrah* had been of metal there would have been no need of stamping it to powder after burning it.

[4] 2 Kings xxi. 7.

[5] Ibid. xxiii. 6. [6] Ibid. verse 7.

[7] Judges vi. 25, 28; 2 Kings xviii. 4; xxiii. 14; 2 Chron. xiv. 3; xxxi. 1, &c.

[8] *Ashêrah* (אֲשֵׁרָה) is from אָשַׁר, the true root of which is יָשַׁר, "to be straight" or "upright."

[9] So Dr. Gotch in Smith's *Biblical Dictionary*, vol. i. p. 120.

[10] Ibid. loc. cit.

[11] *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. p. 447. "The sacred tree is before him, but only, it may be presumed, as a type."

[12] It is found with objects which are all certainly material, as on Lord Aber-

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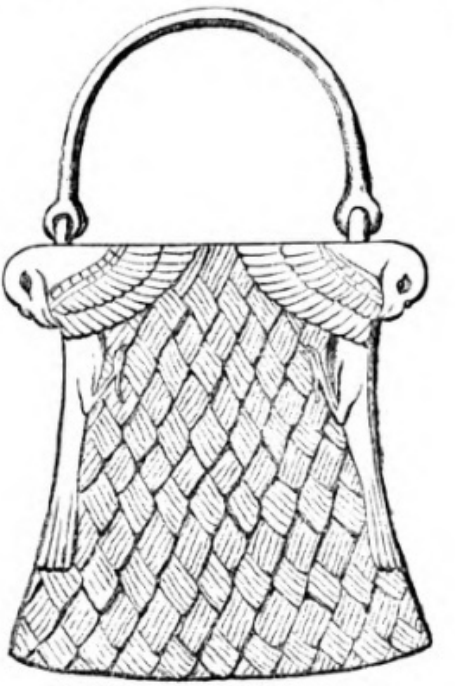
attending upon the monarch when he is employed in any sacred function,[5] would seem to be his tutelary genius—a benignant spirit who watches over him, and protects him from the spirits of darkness. This figure commonly bears in the right hand either a pomegranate or a pine-cone, while the left is either free or else supports a sort of plaited bag or basket. Where the pine-cone is carried, it is invariably pointed towards the monarch, as if it were the means of communication between the protector and the protected, the instrument by which grace and

Winged figure in horned cap (Nimrud).



The sacred basket (Khorsabad).

power passed from the genius to the mortal whom he had undertaken to guard. Why the pine-cone was chosen for this purpose it is difficult to form a conjecture. Perhaps it had originally become a sacred emblem merely as a symbol of productiveness,[6] after which it was made to subserve a further purpose, without much regard to its old symbolical meaning.

The sacred basket, held in the left hand, is of still more

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[5] Layard, *Monuments*, 1st Series, Pls. 6, 25, 36; Botta, *Monument*, Pls. 27 and 28.
[6] Supra, page 9.

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dubious interpretation. It is an object of great elegance; always elaborately and sometimes very tastefully ornamented.[7] Possibly it may represent the receptacle in which the divine gifts are stored, and from which they can be taken by the genius at his discretion, to be bestowed upon the mortal under his care.

Another good genius would seem to be represented by the hawk-headed figure, which is likewise found in attendance upon the monarch, attentively watching his proceedings. This figure has been called that of a god, and has been supposed to represent the Nisroch of Holy Scripture;[8] but the only ground for such an identification is the conjectural derivation of Nisroch from a root *nisr*, which in some Semitic languages signifies a "hawk" or "falcon." As *nisr*, however, has not been found with any such meaning in Assyrian, and as the word "Nisroch" nowhere appears in the Inscriptions,[9] it must be regarded as in the highest degree doubtful whether there is any real connection between the hawk-headed figure and the god in whose temple Sennacherib was assassinated. The various readings of the Septuagint version[10] make it extremely uncertain what was the name actually written in the original Hebrew text. Nisroch, which is utterly unlike any divine name hitherto found in the Assyrian records, is most probably a corruption. At any rate there are no sufficient grounds for identifying the god mentioned, whatever the true reading of his name may be, with the hawk-

The hawk-eyed genius (Khorsabad).

[7] The basket is often ornamented with winged figures in adoration before the sacred tree, and themselves holding baskets. (See Layard, *Monuments*, First Series, Pls. 34 and 36.)

[8] Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. p. 459.

[9] M. Oppert, it is true, reads a certain monogram as "Nisruk," and recognises in the god whom it designates—Hea or Hoa—the Nisroch of Holy Scripture. But sounder scholars regard his reading as a very wild and rash conjecture.

[10] In Is. xxxvii. 38, the MSS. give either Ἀσαράχ or Νασαράχ. In 2 Kings xix. 37, the greater part of the MSS. have Μεσοράχ.

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stone, perfectly plain, except that it was sometimes inscribed round the edge.[4] A third type is that represented in the sacrificial scene on the last page but one. This is a sort of portable stand—narrow, but of considerable height, reaching nearly to a man's chin. Altars of this kind seem to have been carried about by the Assyrians in their expeditions: we see them occasionally in the entrenched camps,[5] and observe priests officiating at them in their dress of office.

Triangular altar (Khorsabad).

Besides their sacrifices of animals, the Assyrian kings were accustomed to deposit in the temples of their gods, as thank-offerings, many precious products from the countries which they overran in their expeditions. Stones and marbles of various kinds, rare metals, and images of foreign deities, are particularly mentioned;[6] but it would seem to be most probable that some portion of all the more valuable articles was thus dedicated. Silver and gold were certainly used largely in the adornment of the temples, which are sometimes said to have been made "as splendid as the sun," by reason of the profuse employment upon them of these precious metals.[7]

Portable altar in an Assyrian camp, with priests offering (Khorsabad).

It is difficult to determine how the ordinary worship of the

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[4] An altar of this shape was found by M. Botta at Khorsabad. (*Monument*, Pl. 157.) Another nearly similar was discovered by Mr. Layard at Nimrud (*Monuments*, 2nd Series, Pl. 4), and is now in the British Museum.

[5] Botta, Pl. 146; Layard, 2nd Series, Pl. 24.

[6] *Inscription of Tiglath-Pileser I.*, pp. 30, 38, 66, &c.

[7] *Assyrian Texts*, p. 16.

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