

considerations all argue strongly for this plan. It rests upon those who would reject the suggestion to show wherein it would be bettered, either by the transference of the territory to the Agricultural Department, as has been proposed, or by its retention in the present dual control of the Interior and War departments—a plan which, though temporarily advantageous, is likely to break down before the first considerable demand for military forces for other service.

Bible Exploration, Past and to Come.

THE significant feature of modern Bible study and biblical research is the independence of the several divisions of which it consists. Professor Moulton has recently shown how distinct the literary study of the Bible is from biblical exegesis in the common acceptance of the term. Equally distinct are the historical and archaeological phases; though it is to be noted that the study of the political and social conditions prevailing at the various periods of ancient Palestinian history follows closely in the wake of the advance that has been achieved through the researches of modern scholars in our knowledge of the manner in which the books comprising the Old and New Testaments assumed their present shape.

Travels in the East, and explorations conducted during the past decades, have imparted a fresh stimulus to what may comprehensively be termed biblical archaeology. Through the activity of the Palestine exploration societies of England and of Germany many a site prominent in biblical times has been definitely identified, and a much clearer grasp has been obtained of the physical geography—that indispensable factor in the solution of the many problems that confound the historian. The position of Palestine, wedged in the great area of ancient culture, accounts for the abundance of light that has also been shed upon the customs, traditions, and events of her past by the recovery of ancient records and monuments exhumed from the soil of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Syria. Palestine paid the penalty for her position by being constantly menaced in her political independence. Hebrew supremacy in Palestine is comprised within a period of five hundred years, at either end of which lies a rivalry for control between Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and the principalities of Syria. On the other hand, the close contact into which the inhabitants of Palestine were brought with surrounding states proved fertile, and it is especially in the case of the Hebrew people that the traces of foreign influence extending into the domain of religious ideas and rites have been clearly brought out through the extension of our knowledge of the ancient world.

There are several reasons why the bearings of the Assyrian and Babylonian monuments on the Old Testament occupy the first place in respect to prominence and importance. The article published in this number of *THE CENTURY* sets forth the more significant phases of these bearings. Egypt, too, has contributed many an interesting chapter to biblical archaeology. True, of the sojourn of Hebrew clans in Egypt only the faintest traces have as yet been met with—so faint as to remain for the present outside of the pale of popular exposition; but for an earlier period a recent find made in Egypt has furnished material of a most re-

markable character. By the merest accident, some peasants, while rummaging the ruins at El-Amarna, about 100 miles to the south of Cairo, struck upon several hundred clay tablets inscribed in the cuneiform characters of Babylonia. El-Amarna stands on the site of a city founded by Amenophis IV. in the fifteenth century before this era, and the tablets comprise, among other things, the reports and communications of this monarch's officials stationed along the coast of Phenicia and in the interior, or Palestine proper. The whole district was at that time tributary to Egypt, having been wrested after a long struggle out of the hands of Babylonian rulers, who had exercised a certain measure of control over it for several centuries previous. Through these archives a remarkable picture is obtained of the political and social conditions prevailing in Palestine before the Exodus. Many of the places that afterward were closely bound up with the fortunes of the Hebrew people are already in existence. Sidon is there, and also Tyre and Gaza, Lachish in the interior, and, strangest of all, Jerusalem appears, 500 years before King David, as a center of political activity with its garrison and its governor.

Following El-Amarna comes the account of excavations at a mound in northern Syria, which, besides affording a view of one of the numerous principalities that divided the region in the eighth century B. C., contribute largely to our knowledge of biblical days, though chiefly in illustration of the language and script of the Hebrews. In Palestine itself, beginnings have been made toward securing the treasures of the past that the soil unquestionably holds. Besides some sporadic efforts, systematic excavations have been conducted during the past two years at Tel-el-Hesi, the site of the ancient Lachish, and the finding of a tablet there dating, like those of El-Amarna, from the fifteenth century B. C., may be regarded as an index of what may be expected when once the lowest stratum of the towns of Palestine shall be thoroughly explored. Lachish is only a few miles distant from Jerusalem. Will it ever be possible for the explorer to attack the most interesting of all ancient sites? The amicable relations existing between this country and Turkey place us in a favorable position for the successful issue of negotiations conducted with this end in view. In such a case the discoveries of the past bid fair to be eclipsed by those of the future.

Now for Free Art!

THIS is the moment when every art institution and association in the country, every enlightened journal, and every person who appreciates and loves art, should urge Congress, through the nearest congressman, to strike from our tariff laws the barbarity of a tax upon the introduction of art into America. That the newest of the great nations, the one least equipped artistically, the one most needing the example and culture of art in its homes, schools, and manufactures, should be the one to stand at the ports of entry with a club in its hand to beat back the very thing we most require, is a reproach to American intelligence and a disgrace to our legislators. The lesson of the World's Fair will have been in great part lost unless it teaches our lawmakers the necessity of removing a tax which is an ignorant and brutal clog upon national progress.