



MAP ILLUSTRATING THE EXTENT OF THE HITTITE EMPIRE.
(Copied by permission from 'The Empire of the Hittites.')

THE HITTITES

THE STORY OF A FORGOTTEN EMPIRE



CHAPTER I

THE HITTITES OF THE BIBLE

WE are told in the Second Book of Kings (vii. 6) that when the Syrians were encamped about Samaria and the Lord had sent a panic upon them, 'they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.' About the year 1843 a distinguished scholar selected this passage for his criticism. Its 'unhistorical tone,' he declared, 'is too manifest to allow of our easy belief in it.' 'No Hittite kings can have compared in power with the king of Judah, the real and near ally, who is not named at all . . . nor is there a single mark of acquaintance with the contemporaneous history.'

Recent discoveries have retorted the critic's objections upon himself. It is not the Biblical writer but the modern author who is now proved to have been unacquainted with the contemporaneous history of the time. The Hittites were a very real power. Not very many centuries before the age of Elisha they had contested the empire of Western Asia with the

Egyptians, and though their power had waned in the days of Jehoram they were still formidable enemies and useful allies. They were still worthy of comparison with the divided kingdom of Egypt, and infinitely more powerful than that of Judah.

But we hear no more about them in the subsequent records of the Old Testament. The age of Hittite supremacy belongs to an earlier date than the rise of the monarchy in Israel; earlier, we may even say, than the Israelitish conquest of Canaan. The references to them in the later historical books of the Old Testament Canon are rare and scanty. The traitor who handed over Beth-el to the house of Joseph fled 'into the land of the Hittites' (Judges i. 26), and there built a city which he called Luz. Mr. Tomkins thinks he has found it in the town of Latsa, captured by the Egyptian king Ramses II, which he identifies with Qalb Luzeh, in Northern Syria. However this may be, an emended reading of the text, based upon the Septuagint, transforms the unintelligible Tahtim-hodshi of 2 Sam. xxiv. 6 into 'the Hittites of Kadesh,' a city which long continued to be their chief stronghold in the valley of the Orontes. It was as far as this city, which lay at 'the entering in of Hamath,' on the northern frontier of the Israelitish kingdom, that the officers of David made their way when they were sent to number Israel. Lastly, in the reign of Solomon the Hittites are again mentioned (1 Kings x. 28, 29) in a passage where the authorized translation has obscured the sense. It runs in the Revised Version: 'And the horses which Solomon had were

brought out of Egypt; and the king's merchants received them in droves, each drove at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.' The Hebrew merchants, in fact, were the mediatories between Egypt and the north, and exported the horses of Egypt not only for the king of Israel but for the kings of the Hittites as well.

The Hittites whose cities and princes are thus referred to in the later historical books of the Old Testament belonged to the north, Hamath and Kadesh on the Orontes being their most southernly points. But the Book of Genesis introduces us to other Hittites—'the children of Heth,' as they are termed—whose seats were in the extreme south of Palestine. It was from 'Ephron the Hittite' that Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah at Hebron (Gen. xxiii), and Esau 'took to wife Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite' (Gen. xxvi. 34), or, as it is given elsewhere, 'Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite' (Gen. xxxvi. 2). It must be to these Hittites of the south that the ethnographical table in the tenth chapter of Genesis refers when it is said that 'Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth' (ver. 15), and in no other way can we explain the statement of Ezekiel (xvi. 3, 45) that 'the father' of Jerusalem 'was an Amorite and' its 'mother a Hittite.' 'Uriah the Hittite,' too, the trusty officer of David, must have

come from the neighbourhood of Hebron, where David had reigned for seven years, rather than from among the distant Hittites of the north. Besides the latter there was thus a Hittite population which clustered round Hebron, and to whom the origin of Jerusalem was partly due.

Now it will be noticed that the prophet ascribes the foundation of Jerusalem to the Amorite as well as the Hittite. The Jebusites, accordingly, from whose hands the city was wrested by David, must have belonged to one or other of these two great races; perhaps, indeed, to both. At all events, we find elsewhere that the Hittites and Amorites are closely interlocked together. It was so at Hebron, where in the time of Abraham not only Ephron the Hittite dwelt, but also the three sons of the Amorite Mamre (Gen. xiv. 13). The Egyptian monuments show that the two nations were similarly confederated together at Kadesh on the Orontes. Kadesh was a Hittite stronghold; nevertheless it is described as being 'in the land of the Amaur' or Amorites, and its king is depicted with the physical characteristics of the Amorite, and not of the Hittite. Further north, in the country which the Hittites had made peculiarly their own, cities existed which bore names, it would seem, compounded with that of the Amorite, and the common Assyrian title of the district in which Damascus stood, *Gar-emeris*, is best explained as 'the *Gar* of the Amorites.' Shechem was taken by Jacob 'out of the hand of the Amorite' (Gen. xlviii. 22), and the Amorite kingdom of Og and Sihon included large

tracts on the eastern side of the Jordan. South of Palestine the block of mountains in which the sanctuary of Kadesh-barnea stood was an Amorite possession (Gen. xiv. 7, Deut. i. 19, 20); and we learn from Num. xiii. 29, that while the Amalekites dwelt 'in the land of the south' and the Canaanites by the sea and in the valley of the Jordan, the Hittites and Jebusites and Amorites lived together in the mountains of the interior. Among the five kings of the Amorites against whom Joshua fought (Joshua x. 5) were the king of Jerusalem and the king of Hebron.

The Hittites and Amorites were therefore mingled together in the mountains of Palestine like the two races which ethnologists tell us go to form the modern Kelt. But the Egyptian monuments teach us that they were of very different origin and character. The Hittites were a people with yellow skins and 'Mongoloid' features, whose receding foreheads, oblique eyes, and protruding upper jaws, are represented as faithfully on their own monuments as they are on those of Egypt, so that we cannot accuse the Egyptian artists of caricaturing their enemies. If the Egyptians have made the Hittites ugly, it was because they were so in reality. The Amorites, on the contrary, were a tall and handsome people. They are depicted with white skins, blue eyes, and reddish hair, all the characteristics, in fact, of the white race. Prof. Petrie points out their resemblance to the Dardanians of Asia Minor, who form an intermediate link between the white-skinned tribes of the Greek seas and the fair-complexioned Libyans of Northern Africa. The

latter are still found in large numbers in the mountainous regions which stretch eastward from Morocco, and are usually known among the French under the name of Kabyles. The traveller who first meets with them in Algeria cannot fail to be struck by their likeness to a certain part of the population in the British Isles. Their clear-white freckled skins, their blue eyes, their golden-red hair and tall stature, remind him of the fair Kelts of an Irish village; and when we find that their skulls, which are of the so-called dolichocephalic or 'long-headed' type, are the same as the skulls discovered in the prehistoric cromlechs of the country they still inhabit, we may conclude that they represent the modern descendants of the white-skinned Libyans of the Egyptian monuments.

In Palestine also we still come across representatives of a fair-complexioned blue-eyed race, in whom we may see the descendants of the ancient Amorites, just as we see in the Kabyles the descendants of the ancient Libyans. We know that the Amorite type continued to exist in Judah long after the Israelitish conquest of Canaan. The captives taken from the southern cities of Judah by Shishak in the time of Rehoboam, and depicted by him upon the walls of the great temple of Karnak, are people of Amorite origin. Their 'regular profile of sub-aquiline cast,' as Mr. Tomkins describes it, their high cheek-bones and martial expression, are the features of the Amorites, and not of the Jews.

Tallness of stature has always been a distinguishing

characteristic of the white race. Hence it was that the Anakim, the Amorite inhabitants of Hebron, seemed to the Hebrew spies to be as giants, while they themselves were but 'as grasshoppers' by the side of them (Num. xiii. 33). After the Israelitish invasion remnants of the Anakim were left in Gaza and Gath and Ashkelon (Joshua xi. 22), and in the time of David Goliath of Gath and his gigantic family were objects of dread to their neighbours (2 Sam. xxi. 15-22).

It is clear, then, that the Amorites of Canaan belonged to the same white race as the Libyans of Northern Africa, and like them preferred the mountains to the hot plains and valleys below. The Libyans themselves belonged to a race which can be traced through the peninsula of Spain and the western side of France into the British Isles. Now it is curious that wherever this particular branch of the white race has extended it has been accompanied by a particular form of cromlech, or sepulchral chamber built of large uncut stones. The stones are placed upright in the ground and covered over with other large slabs, the whole chamber being subsequently concealed under a tumulus of small stones or earth. Not unfrequently the entrance to the cromlech is approached by a sort of corridor. These cromlechs are found in Britain, in France, in Spain, in Northern Africa, and in Palestine, more especially on the eastern side of the Jordan, and the skulls that have been exhumed from them are skulls of men of the dolichocephalic or long-headed type.

It has been necessary to enter at this length into what has been discovered concerning the Amorites by recent research, in order to show how carefully they should be distinguished from the Hittites with whom they afterwards intermingled. They must have been in possession of Palestine long before the Hittites arrived there. They extended over a much wider area, since there are no traces of the Hittites at Shechem or on the eastern side of the Jordan, where the Amorites established two powerful kingdoms; while the earliest mention of the Amorites in the Bible (Gen. xiv. 7) describes them as dwelling at Hazezon-tamar, or En-gedi, on the shores of the Dead Sea, where no Hittites are ever known to have settled. The Hittite colony in Palestine, moreover, was confined to a small district in the mountains of Judah: their strength lay far away in the north, where the Amorites were comparatively weak. It is true that Kadesh on the Orontes was in the hands of the Hittites; but it is also true that it was 'in the land of the Amorites,' and this implies that they were its original occupants. We must regard the Amorites as the earlier population, among a part of whom the Hittites in later days settled and intermarried. At what epoch that event first took place we are still unable to say.