

The Tower of Babel.

The Stroock lectureship was founded in connection with the Jewish Institute of Religion to provide the students with an annual lecture on some branch of the Science of Judaism by a distinguished non-Jewish scholar. The founders thus affirmed their faith in the cultivation of the Science of Judaism in its broadest and most impartial sense, and at the same time wished to free the students from all sense of bias in their work. And most fittingly the great scholar Hugo Gressmann was chosen to inaugurate the lectureship. Philological penetration, textual criticism, and source analysis has been replaced by historic-comparative speculation, literary-aesthetic appraisal, and psychological appreciation. The Old Testament has come to deal not so much with dates, persons, and phenomena, as with epochs, milieus, movements.

Of this change Gressmann himself is a foremost representative and his works cover the whole field of Biblical archaeology. In the present book he endeavours to elucidate the world import of Babylonian culture, of which the Tower of Babel stands as the symbol. There is a certain school of scientific anti-Semites who desire to minimise the originality of the O.T. and who assert that the ancient Jews borrowed their culture from others and notably from Babylon. We read with interest therefore all that Mr. Gressmann has to say as to the wealth of Babylonian culture. We will assume that he has made out his case that the pre-historic myths of Israel do in fact derive from Babylon. But our author himself is the first to admit that whatever Israel may have derived from others, it always adapted its borrowings to its own genius, and what it took is not more significant than what it has omitted to take. Achad Ha'am has indeed

pointed out that Israel, like other nations, has always given and taken in the world of culture, that it has enriched itself by transforming its borrowings in terms of its own inherited idealism. Other writers have argued that ancient Israel borrowed not a little from Egypt. We know to-day that the great world of antiquity was to a large extent an international unity. Israel was part of a great whole, giving and taking as it has ever done since. It may be true, as Mr Gressmann says, that Babylon produced its own Psalmists and Prophets, but, as our author finely says, "Higher than the Tower of Babel towered Mount Zion."

Archaeologists will no doubt lay bare more of the secrets of the past. But one thing is quite certain. Whatever Israel may have borrowed from its neighbours, its own genius was *sui generis*, unique, and the civilised will always go to the Scripture of Israel and not to the sacred writings of other nations to find the "true waters of Salvation," the living fountain of religious inspiration. Hugo Gressmann's last work is a monument of learning and literary felicity, and it will be read with much interest by a wide circle of readers.

M.I.C.

By Hugo Gressmann. *The first Stroock Lecture.* Jewish Institute of Religion Press. New York.

FLORENCE AUSTRAL.

Great interest is being taken in musical circles throughout South Africa at the arrival of Madame Florence Austral, the gifted and world-famous dramatic soprano. This artist is due to give concerts at the City Hall in Johannesburg, on September 7th, 9th, 11th and 14th. Her husband, John Amadio, the renowned flautist, will participate in her programme and Mr. A. Nils Nelson will perform at the piano. A distinguished gathering can be anticipated at the opening concert of this artist in Johannesburg. Florence Austral has a melodious voice in which there is beauty in an unusual range—a voice that can be tuned down to the finest pianissimo or make rafters ring with the glory of its power.

Announcement.

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