AN ASTRONOMICAL OR ASTROLOGICAL TABLET FROM BABYLON.

As is well known, the British Museum possesses a large class of tablets which have been, as yet, but little studied. There are many reasons to account for this, and probably the principal are, that they are unattractive, difficult to copy, still more difficult to read, and unpromising even if it were likely that a satisfactory rendering could be obtained. And here I may remark, that I make no pretension whatever myself to be able to translate these difficult texts. Like others, I have "ought shy" of them, and should not venture to bring one forward now, were I not of opinion that it is of greater value than the majority of its class; and that it might, perseverance, when published, fall into thoroughly competent hands, and that a ray of light might be thrown into a very dark corner of Assyriology.

The text in question is inscribed on an oblong tablet, about 4½ in. by 8 in. The obverse has four columns of writing, mainly consisting of numbers, divided into about seventeen paragraphs or sections, separated from each other by ruled lines. The top and side are considerably damaged, slightly injuring the imperfect first section of the second column, destroying the whole of the first section and part of the second section of the third column, and the greater part of the fourth column, of which one, the remains of 2 lines are all that are left. The reverse, however, is almost perfect, and has 22 lines of writing which exceed the whole tablet; and are not divided into columns. The writing on the reverse is divided into six sections, of which the last is the most important.

The subject of the obverse is difficult to determine—al I can do is to give extracts of the more evident points, sufficient to indicate the probable nature of the contents, leaving it for others more competent than myself to complete the work.

The text begins with a line which formerly extended across the tablet, but which is partially incomplete by the break the next line—the first line of the first column—begins.

What is left reads "The 7th year of Cambyses, 21. The first line, the first line of the first column—begins..."
It will be seen from the above that in the first column the months follow on in order, and in the second and third columns this system is continued, and we have א-ב (Abu, Ab); ח-ת (Usha, Elia); ה-ט (Tevius, Tuvir); and ב (Arusahaan, Marchusvan). Leaving out the last section, and going to the third column, we find the section for ג-ד (Kinaiten, Kinage) last, and that for ה-ט (Tevius, Tuvir) first, and ג (Adaru, Adar) next follow in order; and at the end of the second and third columns we have the section treating of ד-ה (Adaru meder or mamar=Veadar) divided and placed thus probably in order not to begin the fourth column with the last of the list of months. The fourth column, which is written on the very edge of the tablet, sometimes extending almost to the reverse, probably contains additional information as to certain months. The last paragraph, as will be seen, begins with the character ג which I have transcribed as, but which may be intended for Adar (Adar) the name of the month in the corresponding section in the Forcing column.

As for the characters and numbers (other than the names of the months) it is difficult to give any certain indications as to their signification. ד means "to fill," "to destroy," "to stretch out," also apparently "grey," "dull," "dusk"; 6 (which may also be read 6) means "eye," "front or before," and "to see" or "to appear"; can be homin possibly means "according to the road;" the meanings of א are "be" or "that," "stone," and "to answer," "to mean," "night," or "dark;" means "ihnion," "command," "voice," "bricks," and is used, in Akkadian, to express a certain pronoun and some interrogatives; א means "to destroy," "to set, of the sun," also 6 means "in," and as means "of" or "from," also "to make," also. For all the possible significations of the above-mentioned characters, however, we have not space here.

I append herewith a complete transcription of the above, and shall be glad to answer any questions as to possible improved transcriptions and readings of the characters, which are not always certain even for the numbers, usually clear in Babylonian and Assyrian texts.
An Astronomical or Astrastronomical

Transcription of the Original:

Sattu šešitu Nānu-ba-ziia-

Nšannu 1 dir 40 Št Šālu 30 16 (1)
insa ša īmarra na 14 11 30
mi 13 dir in 9 me mi 15 130 (1)
10 150 En 15 11
mi 15 dir ša 20 mi 16 7 30
14 ša 40 na 27 20 140
27 dir in 15

Aaru šar 20
15 11 ša
mi 14 1 na
14 1 1 mi
mi 14 14 30 mi
28 15

Simannu 20 18 20
mi 14 9 30 na mi 14 7 90 mi
14 4 ša
mi 15 5 mi
mi 15 12 mi
15 5 20

27 21

Arab-šannu 20 19 40
mi 16 15 mi
16 15 mi
16 14 mi
16 13 me
14 12 mi
12 30

As noted above, the inscription on the reverse is divided into 6 sections. The first four refer to certain months and years, and as the scribe thought that there might be another year, he has written each, on the edge of the tablet, the character "seventh year." The first paragraph refers to the month Kusin (Sug-me-ger or Sug-me-ger generally read Sán-e-ger), and mentions the month Eblu (which is followed by the month Ebil, which is followed by the month Eshar). In the 4th line the characters "year 6" and "year 7" are followed by the year 7. After this we have "Eblu 4" and "Eblu 5" and "Eblu 6" for the years from 6 onwards.
Adar, in the 7th year of Cambyses, is mentioned in connection with it. 
Nisan 15," in the 8th year, it is also mentioned in the last line of this paragraph.

The third paragraph refers to a star represented by the characters 
= =, the months and days being "Elul 3," "Tisri 15," "Ve-Adar," 
appearantly, and "Ab 26" of the 8th year.

The fourth paragraph refers to the stars ---. --, Moadab dar 
midower, the months and days being "Tyfwa 26," "Elul 13," "Ve-Adar," 
and "Ab 17" in the 8th year. The 9th year is also mentioned in 
connection with "Tyfwa 3," and the word "king."

The fifth paragraph apparently refers wholly to the 7th year, and most of 
to the month Tisri, the name of this month occurring at the beginning of 
the seven lines of which the paragraph is composed. The first line 
of the paragraph contains the number "58," and refers to (the star) 
= e. of (Ge-stou); the second line contains the number 29, and refers to 
Sa-ba-ne-gur; the third has the number 29, and mentions Dilbat or Dilma. 
(= a); the fourth has the number 29 and refers to = E. E (see 
the third paragraph) and = E. E. (Sa-ba-ne-gur); the fifth line 
contains the number 11, and mentions Moidab-dar-dilma (compare 
paragraph 4 of the reverse), and mentions also Sa-ba-ne-gur; the sixth line 
of the fifth paragraph mentions "Marcheswan 7" in conjunction with 
= E. E. and = E. E. (Dilbat or Dilma); and the seventh refers to 
"Tebot 5" in conjunction with = E. E. and Dilbat or Dilma.

With the sixth and last paragraph we have something more interesting 
and certain, namely, a reference to two eclipses of the moon which 
took place in the 7th year of Cambyses. I give here a transcription 
and translation of the whole paragraph:--

19. Šattu šilatu, Dous, maša Ur-šiš, ešur šinnintu kašu šamum uku
20. Sin arruh ināsad ša ili šumma šamum uku
21. Tebetu, maša Ur-šiš šind bar kašu, šamum ša ili šiš
22. Sin arruh ināsad ša šamum a šamum uš triši uku
23. "3rd year. Tammus, night 14, 18 hours darkness was caused,
24. an eclipse darkened Sin, which was partial, to the moon a horn it made.
25. Tebet, night 14, 23 hours, darkness to the light of the moon.
26. An eclipse darkened Sin, which a station, and a horn in the midst caused."

The above interesting notice is of great value, not only for the statement 
as to the eclipses, but also on account of our having here for the first time, 
the Assyrian word for "moon," štuk, E. E. (štu, ši, oblique case), 
the Hebrew ṣmēn, as distinguished from the mooned (šmēn, or šmnēn), 
also mentioned in the above extract.\n