

what parts seemed to him to be certain, and what parts seemed to be obscure. When the interpretations were opened, it was found that the four scholars had agreed in marking essentially the same things as quite clear, and on these their interpretations were just about identical. They also agreed as to the sections marked obscure, and on these their interpretations varied. This agreement was accepted as proof that the decipherment had been successful, and that the key to the reading of ancient Babylonian was at hand. Soon bas-reliefs were found in the palaces of Assyrian kings, picturing events in the lives of these monarchs, with an inscription underneath. Reading the inscription without ever seeing the picture, and then comparing the writing with the picture, it was quite apparent that the method of interpretation was indeed correct, and that the complex cuneiform system had really been deciphered. Still later additional bilingual texts were found.

2. The Cuneiform Writing.

As mentioned above cuneiform writing is writing in wedge-shaped characters. This came about because a stylus, which looks ~~a little~~ like a small screwdriver, was pressed into a clay tablet, with one end pressed slightly deeper than the other, so as to make a wedge-shaped mark. By combinations of these marks many different types of signs could be made. Cuneiform writing, like the hieroglyphics, originally began with pictures; however, in most cases the resemblance to the original picture soon disappeared, because of the unsuitability of this type of marking for making recognizable likenesses, and in time it was no longer remembered that the sign had ever stood for a particular picture. Originally cuneiform was written from top to bottom; soon, however, for greater convenience in writing, the tablet was turned sideways to the left, so that the signs now went horizontally from left to right, instead of vertically from top to bottom. This made them look