

THE FIRST MOVING PICTURE—“THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL”

New Light Shed On Scriptural Incident Recalls That Daniel, First To Interpret Belshazzar's Doom, Was First To Understand the Moving Picture.

BY RENE BACHE.
WAR was the theme of the first "moving" picture. It was the picture that foretold the capture of the city of Babylon; and recently certain historical literature, inscribed on cylinders of baked clay and dug out of ruins in that neighborhood, has shed new light upon that most picturesque happening recorded in Scripture.

This moving picture, viewed by a large assemblage of spectators, showed a hand in the act of writing on the wall. The wall was that of Belshazzar's banquet-hall, in which a great feast was in progress.

In the "movies" nowadays is often shown a hand in the act of writing—just as happened at Belshazzar's feast. But the words written are intelligible, being intended to be explanatory of the photograph.

In the case at Babylon it was quite different. Says the Bible narrative: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote upon the plaster of the wall of the palace. But nobody could read the writing."

Thus it came about that Belshazzar was obliged to send for Daniel, a Jewish captive, who translated the writing on the wall, and explained that it signified the imminent destruction of the city by the Persians and Medes, who were even then besieging the metropolis of Babylon.

Now, the Bible makes no mention of Belshazzar except in connection with this incident of the moving picture and the feast, which was abruptly terminated by the eruption of the enemy's troops into the banquet hall.

But a good deal of information about him has recently been obtained from other sources—notably from clay tablets dug out of the ruins of Ur, which was the birthplace of Abraham, and one of the most ancient cities of Babylon.

There is material on the subject also in the early Rabbinical writings of the Jews. The Talmud itself yields a few facts. Herodotus and Josephus, the two greatest of ancient historians, both speak of the feast of Belshazzar. When all the data are pieced together, a remarkably vivid idea is presented of the condition of affairs in Babylon, both inside and outside the royal palace, on that fateful night.

One should realize, to begin with, that Babylon was a city of 2,000,000 inhabitants. It was built in the form of a square, 15 miles on a side, and was entirely surrounded by a wall of brick 150 feet high and 37 feet wide. Along the top of this wall six four-horse chariots could be driven abreast.

Outside was a ditch or moat of corresponding width and depth, the clay dug from which had been used to build the wall. Through the middle of the city flowed the river Euphrates, its banks similarly walled. The streets, running parallel across the town, opened on the river by 25 gates of brass, which were let fall at night like so many portcullises. In the daytime ferries carried passengers and freight to and fro across the stream.

The city being thus fortifiably defended and supplied with enough provisions to last for 70 years, it is not surprising that Belshazzar should

have felt perfectly safe against attack by the besieging armies. It was doubtless his over-confidence that brought disaster. The feast in the palace was merely part of a celebration of a general festival by the entire population, which was so engaged in merrymaking that Cyrus was able, by the adoption of an extraordinary stratagem, to march his army into the town unobserved.

Cyrus was King of Persia. He was bent on conquest and when he had overthrown Croesus, all of Asia Minor fell into his hands. His next move was obviously southward to Babylon. Nevertheless, the Babylonians made no special preparations for defense, and their monarch, as soon as it became apparent that a siege was imminent, fled, leaving the command of the army and the governorship of the city to Belshazzar.

Belshazzar was not King of Babylon. Nor was he the son of Nebuchadnezzar. On this latter point the author of the book of Daniel (in which the description is given of the feast and the moving picture), was, in the opinion of modern Bible critics, undoubtedly mistaken. Nebuchadnezzar's son, who succeeded him on the throne, was Evil-Merodach. He was assassinated, and the rulership was taken by the chief conspirator. Then came another king, who was followed in due course by Nabonidus.

It was Nabonidus who was king at the time of the downfall of Babylon. He was no warrior, and not much of a monarch. He was what would be called in these days a perfectly desolate old gentleman, his special fondness being antiquarian research. Also, he built many temples. The actual management and control of military and most other affairs he seems to have handed over to Belshazzar, who, according to the testimony of ancient Hebrew writers, was a most tyrannical oppressor of the captive Jews.

Refusal by the Jews to pay tribute gave rise, in 597 B. C., to a war which terminated with the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, great numbers of the inhabitants of that city being thereupon carried off to Babylon as slaves. Jeremiah prophesied (Jer. xxxix, 10), that the period of their exile in that country would not exceed 70 years. As stated in the Rabbinical writings, Belshazzar made a little calculation on the subject, and reckoning that Nebuchadnezzar had reigned 42 years, and counting subsequent reigns, drew the conclusion that the time was up.

"Jeremiah must be wrong," he said, "for the limit of time has been reached, and since the Jews have not yet returned to their native land, they probably will not go back there any more." Emboldened by the calculation, he made impious use of the sacred vessels stolen from the Temple of Jerusalem at a feast, where sounds of revelry mingled with hymns to the heathen gods. It was on this occasion that the moving picture of a hand-writing on the wall appeared before the eyes of the awe-struck banqueters, the scene resembling with the entrance of the troops of Cyrus and the death of the sacrilegious governor.

The proper basis for reckoning was not from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, but from the date of the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. This was where Belshazzar made his mistake.

According to one account, in the Rab-

binical writings, Belshazzar was greatly alarmed by the mysterious moving picture, and, fearing lest some one in disguise enter the palace with intent to assassinate him, gave orders to his guards to play any person who might attempt to enter that night, even though he should claim to be the governor himself. Later, he left the palace unobserved, and when he returned, the guards killed him.

The Babylonians left behind them an immense quantity of writings, which, being made in burned clay, could not easily be destroyed. Their books and records of all sorts were clay tablets, which their libraries were stored, not on shelves, but in jars. Such tablets were fresh and moist when inscribed with a stylus, the butt end of which was blunt and flat, to serve as an eraser. Afterwards they were baked.

Vast numbers of these tablets have been dug out of the ruined cities of that ancient people, and, as a result, more is known today about Babylon than about any European country 1000 years back.

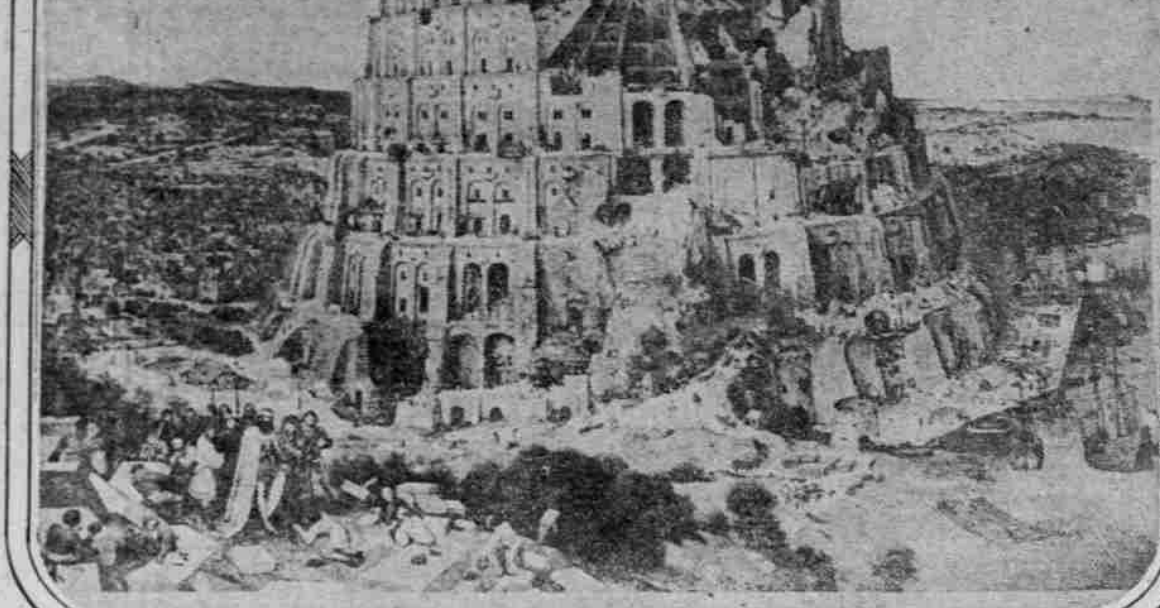
The city stood on an immense plain of clay, which was the only available building material, no stone of any kind being at hand. It was therefore of brick that all the palaces and temples were constructed. But these and other great structures were of sun-dried clay, with burned brick for facing only; and the consequence was that, however magnificent and expensive they might be, they always tumbled down within a century at most.

The famous Tower of Babel was rebuilt at least once by Nebuchadnezzar. It was only 160 feet high, but it gained impressiveness to the eye from the fact that it was built on a great platform of earth. There were no mountains or other very elevated objects with which to compare it, and so, to the Babylonians it seemed exceedingly lofty. The Tower had seven stories, and on top of it was an observatory for star-gazing purposes.

The Babylonians were the earliest astronomers. It is believed that they invented the telescope; and their records show that they maintained the earliest weather bureau, making daily reports and forecasts. The Tower of Babel was filled with statues of the gods and other treasures, being in effect a temple and royal museum combined. The priests in charge of it attended to the business of star-gazing, the chief object of which was to observe and record signs and portents that were supposed to give warning of coming events.

The astonishing public works executed by the Kings of Babylon were accomplished by the labor of tens of thousands of slaves toiling under merciless drivers. One of the most remarkable of these undertakings was a gigantic engineering project, by which, to facilitate the building of the river walls, the Euphrates was drained into an artificial reservoir 160 miles in circumference, outside the city. The bed of the river was incidentally paved with brick. Then the stream was turned back into its proper channel, and the reservoir was thereafter maintained for purposes of irrigation.

Cyrus, realizing that the city was well-nigh impregnable to assault, hit upon the expedient of cutting off the flow of the river and turning it again into the reservoir. This he was able to accomplish from outside the walls, at night, while the people were celebrating their festival. Having done



The Tower of Babel

great center of wealth and luxury. The early Hebrew writers describe it as the fate and that of Babylon.

BRITAIN'S WAR FLEET AS COMPARED TO KAISER'S

THE "man-on-the-street" in America is frequently heard inquiring the whereabouts of the British fleet and criticizing it for not accomplishing more. Such criticism is based on a profound misunderstanding of the naval situation.

Just where the British fleet is none but members of the British Admiralty can say, but it is doing its work well. The starvation of Germany has been proved practically impossible, but the starvation of Great Britain might almost have been accomplished by this time had England's fleet been crushed in September. But every day a stream of bread and beef is poured into England from across the seas, and nothing is heard of German warships of any kind except submarines.

The effectiveness of the submarine has, of course, been the greatest surprise of the war at sea thus far, but it is wrong to assume, as many people are assuming, that the submarine has made the battleship obsolete. Far from it. Take all her dreadnoughts from Great Britain and give her five or six submarines for each of them and prepare to write this to England's career as a great sea power.

The exploits of Germany's submarines have been so dramatic that we are inclined to overestimate the value of their services. In warships England has lost by submarines only a fraction of the number of vessels that she has built since the destruction of enemy merchantmen, the Frankfurter Zeitung of June 6 published a list of 111 such vessels sunk by German undersea craft since the promulgation of the maritime war zone on February 18.

Some of these were French and Russian, yet were they all British they would constitute an almost insignificant part of the grand total of the

as an abode of wholesale dissipation and immorality, but it may be that they were prejudiced.

According to the Bible account, on the fateful occasion here described, "Belshazzar made a great feast to 1000 of his lords. He commanded his slaves to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the Temple which was in Jerusalem; that his princes, his wives and his concubines might drink."

"They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

It was in the midst of this performance, while the sacred vessels were being used for a profane purpose by Belshazzar and his guests, that the moving picture appeared of a hand-writing on the wall. Whereupon "Belshazzar's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other."

Nobody could tell what the writing meant, and so, calling in his astrologers and soothsayers, he offered great rewards to anybody who would read it. Finally Daniel was summoned, and he construed it as follows:

"Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin—'God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it.'"

"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

"Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

At the very time when Daniel was interpreting the writing, Cyrus must have been entering the city with his troops. And the Bible, concluding the story, says: "In that night was Belshazzar slain."

The moving picture had announced his fate and that of Babylon.

TRYING TO GET HURT.

Popular amusements have been running with furious speed toward the depths of filth and shame. The public has been unconcerned except to join, in greater and greater numbers, in the frivolities or to read with milder or greater interest of the doings of "Tangoland" and the cabaret. Life after life, home after home, has been swept into the vortex. It has been matter for humor, for the shrugging of shoulders, of contempt for those who still hold "old-fashioned" views. But suddenly the public is told that girls are being robbed, and led to suspect that some are being lured first to pleasure and then to slavery. Then the public acts.

Already life is quieter at night along Broadway. Detectives are on the watch. Officials are alert.

But why not stop sooner? Why not realize that where sin is going on someone is surely being hurt? Why not turn aside from the life that means harm and hurt to the life that means health and happiness and hope? The Bible does well to make sin and folly one. There is always that inevitable "at last." "At last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." "Be sure your sin will find you out." The only kind of pleasure to take is the pleasure that has no poison in it. The only way to avoid the sting of sin is to let sin itself alone.—Christian Herald.

HANDLING TWELVE BILLION POSTAGE STAMPS WITHOUT AN ERROR

Uncle Sam's Stamp Packing Department, in Charge of Miss Margaret Kerfoot, Boasts of No Mistakes. Woman Chief Tells of Careful Work.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Aug. 20.—Twelve billion stamps. This is the size of last year's stamp business handled by the bureau of engraving and printing. Quite a large order, you say? Well, rather, the largest ever.

Yet the size of the order is not the most important thing about it. Not at all. The amazing feature is this: the entire work of drawing the stamps, balancing the separate orders and shipping them was carried on under the supervision of a woman, and, thanks to this woman's efficiency, without a single discrepancy.

Miss Margaret Kerfoot, chief of the division which fills and ships orders to the 60,000 postoffices throughout this country, is the efficient woman in the case.

She has been working in the bureau of engraving and printing for 22 years and though the figures of last year's stamp output and her record-breaking infallibility are startling enough to deserve special mention, she may, nevertheless, be found any day in her huge basement office of the bureau's new building on the Speedway, filling stamp orders with a remarkable aversion to error. This year's record, as well as last's, it may be said, has not been marred by a mistake.

Her record for perfection is a matter of pride, not only to herself, but also to Director Ralph of the bureau, who praises her in this wise: "Twelve billion stamps form a shipment of size impossible to conceive. It is stupendous—shall I say?—and yet the separate orders, numbering many thousands, were made up and shipped without a single mistake in any of the accounts. Take any mail-order house or dry goods store in the country,

which conducts small business in comparison with Uncle Sam, and should, therefore, have relatively less opportunity for error, and see if it can approach our record."

"You'll not find such a record anywhere. It is one of which we are justifiably very proud. Miss Kerfoot is the managing of a division which works without error, and I say this because I know she is too modest to say it herself."

Then down to Miss Kerfoot's office went the interviewer. She was found in a large shipping-room, full of workers and with a warehouse atmosphere, and she was asked to tell about the great shipment of stamps, numbering 12,000,000, which she is now sending out, mainly to accommodate the crowds at San Francisco, who are swelling the mails by sending postcards and letters to the home folk, giving news of the exposition.

"This, our latest order," said Miss Kerfoot, "which goes out in the morning, is worth \$1,312,415. It will be distributed among 124 postoffices in the country, but the largest part of the order goes to San Francisco, where there is a special demand for the Panama stamps."

"Orders come to us every day and we pack a daily average of 25,000,000 stamps, though we have been known to pack as many as 300,000,000 in a single day. These numbers include coil stamps for the slot machines, books of stamps, as well as the regular sheets of different denominations."

"If you want to follow the machinery of my department and understand fully what part it plays in the work of the bureau of engraving and printing, you must know that we attend simply to that end of the system which has charge of filling orders for postage stamps and sending them to the postoffice to be delivered over the country."

"The orders, themselves, come to the office of the Third Assistant Postmaster-General, where they are assembled, made out and sent down to experts, counters then counts out enough and draw from the deposit vault as many stamps of each denomination as I find may be required."



"I take the order," explained Miss Kerfoot, "and subdivide it into states and individual postoffices. One of my experts sits at a desk and counts out stamps from those I have drawn to fill each separate order. An expert verifies the count. In this way,

after all of the individual orders are filled, I have one way of knowing that my accounts are correct, for if the supply is accurately drawn each order will be exactly filled and no extra stamps will be left over."

"In order to guard against theft while the stamps are en route to their destinations, we take precautions in packing them which make it impossible to molest a single stamp without detection. We stitch the sheets together and staple them on the edges, so that no sheet may be torn away without leaving a perforated border of damaging evidence behind it. This is a safeguard for the bureau, because the evidence would show that the theft had been made after the order left our department."

"These stitched sheets are bound together and tied into packages, which are wrapped and stamped on the outside with the address they are being sent to. Packages vary in size. The largest that may be sent separately contains 200,000 stamps. All above this number in any individual order are sent in additional packages."

"Then the largest part of the work is out of the way," Miss Kerfoot went on to say. "The packages are put in electric trucks and sent to the city postoffice, where they are registered—for all these stamps are delivered as registered mail—and pouched for shipment directly to the individual postmasters."

"My own responsibility, besides being chief of the department with 25 counters, verifiers and packers under me, consists of drawing the stamps from the vaults and balancing the orders. Of course, I am also responsible for the accuracy of every order."

Miss Kerfoot exhibited with pride the splendidly equipped room where she and her staff carry on their work. At long tables, running parallel on opposite sides of the room, alongside large, open windows, the work is done; with counters and verifiers sitting on one side and packers, standing on the other, with multitudes of packages for the new order piled high before them. She then led the way into the deposit

vault where the reserve stamps are stored, awaiting distribution. She reminded the interviewer that they were standing in the presence of postage stamps worth an immense fortune.

It seems to her most fitting, says Miss Kerfoot, that the packing department should be located in the basement, for the bureau is so arranged that the work of printing begins on the top floor and the intermediate steps of gumming and finishing bring the stamps finally down to her basement retreat where the distribution takes place.

To turn the attention from the stamps to Miss Kerfoot, herself, is an exercise that brings its own reward, for she is that type of American woman who represents the new element in 20th century civilization—efficient femininity.

She may be best described by the colloquial expression as being "all business." But, withal, she has the energetic manner of one who works hard yet manages to have a good time out of it. To see her in her department she seems to be "one of the fellows." Her merry eye may be depended upon for cheer and her countenance is ever lighted with enthusiasm.

"During the time I have been in the bureau," she stated, when at last pressed upon to talk about herself, "I have seen the stamp output more than double itself. This means that I have been here a long time. In fact, I say that I have grown up with the department. My first work here was that of an apprentice's assistant and I have held nearly all of the positions over which I now have supervision."

"I love the work. I feel an actual affection for every postage stamp that I draw from the vault. Nothing in my private life ever comes between me and my work and when I am getting out of one of these very large orders I think about it all of the time."

Therupon the interviewer reminded

her that the most estimable sense of responsibility is begotten by a strong esprit du corps—and then departed.

Friends of Your Husband.

Youth's Companion.
You do not quite like them, although you may loyally try your best. You may say, "I don't like them," and that is enough; I don't exactly see what it is he likes, but he likes them." Generally speaking, the friends he has made since your marriage appear more tolerable than the older ones—perhaps the influence of your taste has something to do with that. Still it does seem odd that at best you do not quite like them.

The reason is that they give your husband something that you cannot give him. You may dispute it, you may deny it, you may shut your eyes to it. You usually assign reasons quite different. Frank—well, it must be admitted that Frank is not quite tidy. Henry, of course, is most amiable, but he does talk intolerably loud. You say that those are the reasons, and you think that they are; but the real reason is that your husband feels a certain ease and freedom with his boyhood friends that he does not feel with you. They like his old clothes, they like his slang, they like his offhand manner; you do not. And to be with them is as comfortable to him as it is to wear the old clothes.

Vacuum Street Cleaning.

Indianapolis News.
Difficulties in the construction of a vacuum cleaner for street work have been overcome, according to a statement in a recent issue of a technical magazine. The machine loosens and breaks up the dirt on the street, picks it up by suction and deposits it in a receptacle carried at the rear of the apparatus. The lower ends of the suction pipes are made of flexible material so as to allow for irregularities in the surface of the road and the pipes at the side of the truck are so made that they are not injured by striking the street curb. One engine supplies power for both propulsion and cleaning. The brushes and suction pipes are easily raised and lowered from the driver's seat and can be varied in pressure and speed to suit the character of the street. The machine, if practicable, should go a long way toward solving the difficulties of street cleaning.