

Very naturally many people were skeptical as to the methods which were being used in working out this language. They said it was impossible on the face of it that a great people like the Assyrians and Babylonians could have used such a language and such a system of writing in which one sign might have so many possible meanings.

In 1857 an opportunity came to put the matter to a test. A new historical inscription had just come into the hands of the British Museum. Four fine lithographic copies of this inscription were made and they were given to four scholars who happened to be in London at the time. One of these was Henry Rollinson, another was Edward Hincks, an Irishman who had done great work on the decipherment. A third was J. Oppert, a Frenchman and the fourth was H. Fox Talbot, an Englishman. Each of them was given a copy of this inscription with the request that he work independently and present the result of his work. On the same day, all four translations were opened. It was found that all four agreed substantially from beginning to end. The places which one marked as uncertain were apt to be the same places that the others had difficulty, but all agreed in working out the main details of this inscription as being a historical account of the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I. who reigned at about 1100 B.C. This agreement was regarded by most people as establishing the correctness of the method of decipherment. New confidence was given to the translators of the Babylonian writing and more faith was placed in the facts about ancient Babylonia which were being gathered from the many inscriptions that were dug up in Mesopotamia.

Since that time, other means of checking the correctness of their interpretation of the Babylonian writing and language have come to light. For instance, we find many such cases as the following - - An Assyrian Relief, picturing a man holding a lion by the ear