

Babylonian Agriculture.

The Greek writers regarded Babylonia as the real El Dorado of agriculture. Herodotus tells us "It rains very little in the land of the Assyrians and what nourishes the roots of the plants is as follows: The water of the river irrigates the seed and causes the plant to grow, not that the river comes over upon the field itself as in Egypt but it is worked by means of hand work and by pumps..... This land is best adapted of all lands to grains. It has absolutely no trees. No fig trees nor vineyards, no olive trees, but for grain it is so well adapted that as a rule it bears 200 fold and occasionally even 300 fold. The wheat and barley leaves are easily four fingers wide and the millet and sesame grow as high as trees. Further I do not wish to say for I know that whoever has not been in Babylon will not believe me if I tell the truth about the things." Strabo the geographer, speaks similarly here. Theophrast (about 300 B.C.) gives much lower figures although his figures have to do only with the wheat and barley. He says "In Babylon, regularly the grain is cut twice, and for the third time the sheep are driven upon it. When it is not well cultivated it bears 50 fold, when well cultivated it can bear 100 fold. The principle of working the fields consists in keeping the water upon it as long as possible. When the earth has become thick it must be hoed well. Weeds do not grow up there like they do in Egypt because the land is so much better." Barrossus tells us (about 280 B.C.) that in his country wheat and barley and a small grain which he names $\omega\lambda\pi\sigma\varsigma$ and sesame grow." Now we shall see what relation the native records bear to these wonderful stories.

The Babylonians showed the high value which they placed on the agricultural life in the circumstances that according to their idea it was of divine origin. The god Ninurta was its protector "His name the plants unanimously called to become king of them". Another form of his