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THE COSMOLOGY OF THE SUMERIANS

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THE COSMOLOGY OF THE SUMERIANS.¹

ACCORDING to the Sumerian conception the earth as a WORLD-EDIFICE consisted of THREE PARTS :

- (1) The heavenly ocean or AN.
- (2) The terrestrial ocean or KI.
- (3) The רקיע *raqi'a*² or LIL, which stands between the AN and KI.

These three parts were assigned to *the first triad or raht* of the Sumerian pantheon, i. e., to Anu, Ea, Bel. To these as such belongs the *world-edifice*.

As there existed a heavenly and a terrestrial ocean, so the 'LIL or רקיע was considered also under a double aspect :

(a) As a heavenly רקיע or AN = shamû, שמים (*shamaim*) or "heaven."

(b) As a terrestrial רקיע or KI = irtsitu, ארץ (*arets*) or "earth."

The former keeps back the heavenly and the latter the terrestrial ocean.

This latter consideration gives us the so-called TWOFOLD division of the earth as WORLD-EDIFICE. According to this it consisted :

(1) Of the *upper* world, which is AN-ta = elish, i. e., above: *the heavenly world*;

(2) Of the *lower* world, which is KI-ta = shaplish, i. e., below: *the terrestrial world*.³

¹ The present article consists of the additions to the article of Dr. Radau promised in the last *Monist* (p. 625).

² Translated in the authorised version "firmament."

³ This twofold division is mentioned by Diodorus II. 30, translated in Winckler,

The heavenly firmament or רקיע appears in and is of the form of a "half-circle" or better "plate"—and as the heavenly is only the reflex of the terrestrial, this latter was considered to be the other half of the circle as a whole, i. e., of the firmament רקיע as such. And if the firmament רקיע be round then the heavenly and terrestrial ocean must have the same shape.

The world-edifice is inhabited. The inhabitants which dwell either *in* or *within* the רקיע are ZU, UD, Innanna, Nin-Girsu. Thus they had to become necessarily his, i. e., LIL's children. LIL thus becomes not only the LUGAL or "king," but also the AB-BA or "father" of the gods. ZU, UD, Innanna are the moon, sun, morning or evening-star. Thus we find that even according to Gen. i. 14 the stars are put ברקיע השמים, i. e., in the firmament of the heavens. Each one of these stars has his abode and special sphere not only in the terrestrial¹ but also in the heavenly רקיע. When they are in the latter they are visible, but when in the former they become invisible. The *road* they had to travel when in the heavenly רקיע was marked out for them by the so-called zodiac, which was called in later times *shupuk shamé*,² i. e., "the dam of heaven."

The functions of the stars, especially those of the two great luminaries are according to Gen. i. 14, 15 threefold :

- (1) להאיר עלי הארץ³
 (2) להבדיל בין היום ובין הלילה⁴
 (3) והיו לאהרן ולמועדים ולמים ולשנים⁵

"Himmels- und Weltenbild der Babylonier" (*Der alte Orient*, III.), p. 62, with these words: "Von diesen beobachten die Hälfte (sc. of the 36 gods) die *überirdischen*, die andere Hälfte die *unterirdischen Stätten*, indem sie über das bei den *Menschen* und den *Göttern* geschehende gleichzeitig wachten."

¹The abode of UD, e. g., is Ud-unug-^{ki}, i. e., "Shamash-abode" or Larsa; that of ZU or Uru: Uru-unug-^{ki}-ma, i. e., Nannar (or Sin)-abode = Ur; that of Innanna: Innanna-ab-^{ki} (or also to be read: Innanna-unug-^{ki}) etc., etc.

²See Winckler, *l. c.*, p. 62 ff.

³To give light upon the earth. Gen. i. 15.

⁴To divide between the day and between the night. Gen. i. 14.

⁵To be for signs. This expresses the *astrologic* signification of the stars.

⁶And for seasons and for days and years. On the course of the stars, especially on that of the sun and moon the *calendar* is based.

No. 2, i. e., "the dividing between the day and the night" is done by the *sun*. He divides what we call "day" into *two equal halves*—but this he does only on *two days* during the whole year, i. e., at the vernal and the autumnal *equinox*. Where the sun rises on these two days is the *East* and where he sets is the *West*. On these two days it takes therefore just as many hours for the sun to travel over the heavenly as over the earthly רָקִיעַ, or in other words: the sun is just as many hours visible as he is invisible. East and West becomes thus the two points in the רָקִיעַ as a whole where the earthly and the heavenly *touch*, i. e., East and West divide the רָקִיעַ and thus also the whole world-edifice into *two equal halves*: into the upper or heavenly and into the lower or terrestrial world. The East of the terrestrial world is however at the same time the West of the heavenly and *vice versa*, for when the sun rises for the "earth" he sets for the "heaven."

The "*nether world*" or *Hades* was considered to lie in the South, i. e., under that point of the "earth" or terrestrial רָקִיעַ where the sun stands at noon during the equinox. Also the upper world has a Hades which likewise was considered to be in the South, i. e., under the same point of the "*heaven*" or heavenly רָקִיעַ indicated by the sun at noon during the equinox. We would get thus in the world-edifice as a whole two points for East, West, and South! The opposite of the South is the *North*. If we would prolong the two points indicating the South towards the North they would (1) meet in *one and the same* point of the line which connects the East and the West or which divides the world-edifice into the upper and lower world, (2) divide the lower as well as the upper world again into two equal halves. *The point* where they meet is the *North*. The North becomes thus not only the centre of the רָקִיעַ, which, as we saw, was considered to be a circle, but also that of the whole world-edifice. Here in this North, in this centre "*dwelt the gods*," there also the "*mountain of the gods*," "*der Götterberg*" was situated.

Now we understand the *name* for the *North*. In Assyrian it is called ishtânu or iltânu, i. e., "*the only one*"—thus called in contradistinction to all the other points, of each of which we have *two*.

There is only *one North* in the world-edifice, this North is the same for the heavenly as for the terrestrial world. In Sumerian the North has the name IM-SI-DI, which Delitzsch¹ translates by "*gerade Richtung*," i. e., all the radii of the great periphery of "heaven and earth" are directed towards it as the centre.²

If sun, moon, and the stars are *in* the רִקְיעַ, to what god has to be assigned the region around the centre of the world-edifice, i. e., the space between "heaven and earth"?

Speaking from our present standpoint the space between "heaven and earth" is filled out by the air—hence we might be inclined to assign that region to the "god of the air" to the "*Herrn der Luft*." But there does not seem to exist—either in Hebrew, or in Assyrian, or in Sumerian—a word for "air," at least no such word is known to me. The Hebrew רוּחַ does not mean "air," but "wind, spirit, breath." The Sumerian LIL is = the Assyrian zaqîqu, i. e., "wind, storm," and IM is = shâru, which again means "wind." This latter word gives us the right solution. So far we were able to assign all gods to a special sphere or function in the world edifice. One god, however, remained to whom no such sphere has been assigned as yet, and this is Nin-Gir-su or Rammân. He is, as we have seen above, not a star, but the "god of storm, rain, thunder, lightning, and clouds," and must therefore necessarily belong to the region between the heavenly and the terrestrial רִקְיעַ! With this, of course, agrees also Gudea's description of Nin-Gir-su = Rammân, who is said as regards his RI-BA to be like *heaven and earth*! Rammân, the thunderer, fills all the space between heaven and earth and thus reaches from the lower to the upper "firmament." To this space must, of course, also be assigned the seven sons of Nin-Gir-su. They too have as the "seven winds" their abode between heaven and earth.

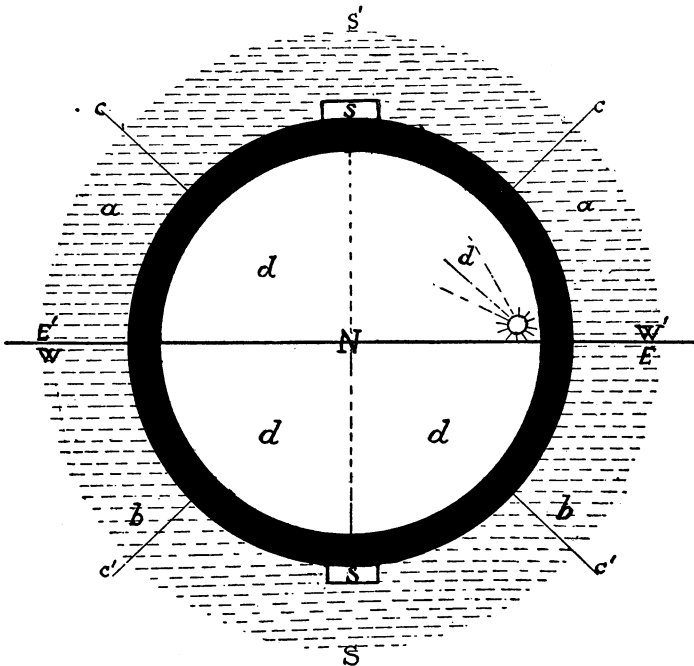
We are thus able to draw the subjoined picture³ of the Sumer-

¹ H. W. B. p. 152.

² See also the E-pa e-ub-7-na! Ub = kibratu, "*Weltgegend, -richtung*," i. e., "the temple of the seven regions." Gudea, Statue D, ii, 11. (K. B., iii¹, p. 50.)

³ For another picture see Jensen, *Kosmologie der Babylonier*, Anhang, Tafel III.

ian world-edifice. (See the explanations given underneath). This picture explains also the following points :



(a) Heavenly ocean: AN, Anu; (b) Terrestrial ocean: KI, Ea; (c) Heavenly רִקִיעַ: an = שָׁמַיִם, shamû or heaven; (c') Terrestrial רִקִיעַ: ki = אֶרֶץ, irtsitu or earth; (c + c') The domain of LIL or Bel. On this רִקִיעַ is to be found the shupuk shamê, i. e., the road which the sun, the moon, etc., had to travel; (d) the domain of Nin-Gir-su = Rammân; (E', W', S') the heavenly world; (E, W, S) the terrestrial world; (E) East of the earth = (W') West of the heaven; (E, W) divide the world edifice into two equal halves, and signify the East and West where the sun rises and sets at the equinox; (N) North, the centre of the world edifice; (S, S') the terrestrial and the heavenly Hades.

1. God EN-LIL or Bel is called very often the “*lugal-kur-kur*.” Kur may mean either “the mountain” (shadû) or “the land” (mâtu). Lugal-kur-kur might thus be translated either by “*king of the mountains*” or “*king of the lands*.” Both translations are possible. If the former translation be accepted, “the mountains” would be the *two halves* of the רִקִיעַ. The upper רִקִיעַ or “*heaven*” as well as the lower רִקִיעַ or “*earth*” appear as a mountain

when looked upon from the *North* or *center* of the whole world edifice! Lugal-kur-kur, when taken in this sense, would mean literally “*king of the TWO mountains.*”

The priestly tradition, commonly abbreviated *P*, informs us (in Genesis xi. 31) that Abraham and his wife and Lot came with Terah his father from *Ur of the Chaldees*. This Ur was, as we know now, one of the chief Babylonian cities in early times, it being especially celebrated on account of its temple dedicated to the moon-god, i. e., to EN-ZU or Uru-ki, the first-born of EN-LIL or Bel. It is generally supposed that Terah together with his son Abraham worshipped or were followers of this very moon-god, because they stopped on their way to Canaan in *Harran*, where there was another celebrated temple of the moon-god. This view, no doubt, is true of Terah, for it ought to be remembered that *he* it is who leaves Ur and goes to Harran, simply taking with him his son Abraham. Terah, therefore, and not Abraham, puts himself again under the protection of his old god while in Harran! From another place, however, we know whom *Abraham* worshipped. In Exodus vi. 2, 3—which also belongs to *P*—we read:

“And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jahveh: and I appeared unto *Abraham*, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name Jahveh I was not known to them.”

From this passage we learn that the *same* god appeared unto Abraham as well as unto Moses, but unto the latter under a different *name*. The name had been changed, it is true, at the time of Moses, but the *essence* of that god was and remained the same! Who, then, was this אֱלֹהִים, El Shaddai?

The common translation “lord or god almighty” is simply based upon the LXX. παντοκράτωρ and the Vulg. “omnipotens,” and is as such merely a guess. Two explanations seem possible.

1. Shaddai is derived either from the root shadad (שָׁדַד), “to be dense, to be or to make tight,” or

2. It comes from shadah (שָׁדָה), “to be high,” from which we have the Assyrian shadû, “mountain.”

If No. 1 be accepted, shadad would be a synonym of raqa' (רָקַע) from which we get the raqî'a, i. e., something which is or is made

dense, tight,—hence our word firmament! The *ai* at the end represents the old dual ending indicating that there are two firmaments. El shaddai would mean according to this explanation: the god (el) of the two (ai) firmaments or raqī'as. The god of the two firmaments, i. e., of heaven and of earth, is EN-LIL or Bel. Abraham would thus become a worshipper of Bel, the father of the moon-god Sin.

The second etymology, however, seems to be much better and has already been given by Delitzsch¹ who, however, translates El shaddai on the basis of the Assyrian *ilu shadû'a* by "god is my mountain." This translation I do not think can be maintained. The *ai* at the end of Shaddai must be taken again for the old dual ending, which occurs, e. g., in Shalmaneser II.: "the camels *sha shu-na-ai* tsi-ri-shi-na, i. e., whose back is *double*." The double *d* stands for *dj*, i. e., the *j* assimilated itself to the *d*.² El Shaddai would thus become "the god of the two mountains," i. e., the *lugal-kur-kur* or EN-LIL, who was the god of the upper and the lower mountain or heaven and earth. El Shaddai accordingly means "god of heaven and earth," or *lugal-an-ki*. Thus even according to this etymology the El Shaddai of the patriarchs is the EN-LIL of the Sumerians. Above we have seen that even יהוה was = EN-LIL, because both when they appear are accompanied by a prime-minister or angel—יהוה by his מלאך and EN-LIL by his *ur-sag lig-ga* ^{dingir} Nin-Gir-su,—i. e., they appear always under thunder and lightning and surrounded by clouds. The statement of P, therefore, that יהוה appeared unto the patriarchs only under *another* NAME,³ viz., El Shaddai, remaining however the same god as

¹ *The Hebrew Language*, p. 48.

² For such a *retrogressive* assimilation of the *j* comp. among others *bunju* = *bunnu* = *bûnu*: *zimju* = *zimmu* = *zîmu*. Such a word as *shaddû*, given by Del. H. W. B. p. 642 does not exist. The writing SHAD-di-e, etc., ought to be transcribed by *shadê* ^{di-e}, i. e., *shadû* plus two phonetic complements.

³ Whether יהוה was a name taken from the Kenites or not, would not affect our argument. I myself would see in יהוה simply another name for "rock," i. e., יהוה = "he who is, was, and will be," the "rock" that will not pass away nor change. Comp. here the proper name צור־ישי׳ "my rock is Shaddai," the KUR-

before, is thus shown to be fully justified. El Shaddai is thus proved to be an Assyrian name which translates simply the Sumerian "lugal-kur-kur" or "lugal-an-ki"! Abraham coming from Ur where the Sumerian pantheon was fully developed and known becomes thus a worshipper of Bel or EN-LIL the lugal-kur-kur!

The title lugal-kur-kur however is translated in the later Semitic Babylonian inscriptions always by *bél mâtâti*,¹ "lord of the lands." If this transcription and translation be correct, then the idea expressed here would be that Bel as the *firmament* embraces all the "lands" on the terrestrial as well as on the heavenly רקיע—for the "lands" are situated IN the רקיע.

2. The dominion of Bel is sometimes spoken of as a *char-sag kalam-ma* or *shad mâtâti* as "the mountain of the lands," and Bel himself is called KUR-GAL² or *shadû rabû*, i. e., "the great mountain." Bel is the god of the רקיע, which רקיע is, as we saw, a *circle* or a *mountain*. In this mountain or circle as a whole the "lands of heaven and earth" are situated. Bel becomes thus not only "the great mountain" or "circle," the רקיע, but also the "mountain of the lands."

3. Later inscriptions speak of a so-called "mountain of the rise of the sun" and of a "mountain of the setting of the sun," which mountains lie in the East and West respectively. The earth being considered as the *lower* half of the great circle called רקיע is, of course, at its extremities, i. e., in the East and West *higher* than on any other part. The earth seems to be always *higher* at the horizon than where we stand.

4. The earth as world-edifice in the form of a circle or better globe³ explains the whole system of the Sumerian reckoning, according to which the circle was divided into 360 degrees, the year into 360 days, etc., etc.

GAL (the great rock) and the *char sag kalam-ma* (the mountain of the lands) of the Sumerians, and see below.

¹ See e. g. Shalmaneser II. Obelisk, l. 3: ilubêl KUR-KUR. Or should we transcribe here also "shadai"?

² See Jensen, K. B. III¹. p. 16, note 3, and E. B. H. p. 65, note 1.

³ Consisting of two halves or plates—the upper being put or resting upon the lower.

5. It removes all the difficulties which Winckler still finds in his conception of the Babylonian cosmology.¹

* * *

A few minor points may be added by way of a postscript:²

A strange difference is to be found between the Biblical account of the creation and the Sumerian theogony. According to the latter Sin or EN-ZU, the moon-god, is the *firstborn* of EN-LIL, and hence *precedes* Shamash or UD the sun-god. In Gen. i. 16 on the other hand Shamash is called "the *greater* light,"³ while Sin is named "the *lesser* light,"⁴ thus the former apparently precedes the latter.

What is the reason for this?

Winckler⁵ confesses: "Das babylonische Pantheon stellt nicht den Sonnengott, sondern den Mondgott an die Spitze—*warum, ist noch unklar.*" The reason is this: As the chaos preceded the cosmos, as the darkness the light, thus the *night* preceded the day, and Sin⁶ being "he who governs the night," must necessarily

¹See Winckler, "Himmels- und Weltenbild der Babylonier," *Der alte Orient*, III. (1901) pp. 59-65.

² See editorial note in last *Monist*, p. 625.

³ דמאור הגרול.

דמאור הקטן.

⁵ "Himmels- und Weltenbild," etc., p. 65.

⁶Sin precedes Shamash also in the old Arabian pantheon. Our investigation enables us to identify that pantheon with the second triad or raḥṭ of the Sumerians. Wadd, Sín, 'Amm, Haubas—all names for the Sumerian EN-ZU or Uru-ki, the moon-god, have been correctly identified. The same is true of Athtar and Shams—the former is the ^{dingir}Innanna, the morning or evening-star, the latter ^{dingir}UD, the sun—with the difference, however, that Athtar has become a masculine and Shams a feminine. Even in later Semitic *Babylonian* inscription Ishtar as "the morning-star" was, as was pointed out above, p. 39, considered to be a masculine deity. If the old Arabian pantheon represents the gods of the second triad or raḥṭ of the Sumerians, then an-Karich, Chaul, Anbâj, and Almâqu-hû must be Nin-Gir-su or Rammân. Hommel, *Die südarabischen Altertümer des Wiener Hofmuseums*, p. 28 ff., identified them either with *Nebo*, because (1) "Anbâj" is a broken plural of Nabiju, which stands for the older Nabi'u; (2) Chaul = חול "Phoenix" ("der ja vom Weihrauchlande, Hadhramôt, her nach Aegypten fliegt, also ein richtiger מלאך oder Götterbote ist"), or with the "Sternenheer" = Almâqu-hû. With regard to an-Karich he is in doubt, thinks however, that this god is "wohl auch" = *Nebo*.

Above we have seen that Nin-Gir-su is the ur-sag of EN-LIL,—hence a מלאך or *minister*, just as Chaul = חול is. Chaul is here the *minister* of Sin, because Sin is the chief-god, who was even in Assyrian times identified with Bêl (see above p. 50) hence might also have an ur-sag! But it is not necessary at all to identify Chaul with the bird Phoenix (see Job xxix. 18 and Herodotus ii. 73); the signification which the root חול gives on hand, is a much better one. חול or also חיל is used in Jerem. xxiii. 19; xxx. 23 of the *storm* and has the signification: *wirbelnd losbrechen hernieder auf etwas* (c. על). See Gesenius-Buhl *sub voce*. Even in Assyrian we have a root חיל with the signification "beben, erbeben," and a chîlu

precede Shamash, who governs the day. This is also the reason why in early times the "day" consisted of "night and day"—accepted even by P: "there was evening and there was morning, the . . . day." This latter, no doubt, is a relic of the Sumerian conception of the day—for among the Sumerians Sin was the *father of Shamash*. The precedence of Shamash represents thus a later stage: it shows P lived at a time when Shamash had been put before Sin. But if the day began with the evening or night, then the *year* must have begun with the *winter*, and the *beginning* of the year could not have been the 21st of March (the 1st Nisan) but must have been the 21st of September (the 1st Tishri). This month Tishri, which signifies "beginning," corresponds, as was shown in E. B. H. p. 295, to the month Ezen^{dingir} Ba-u, which was still at the time of Gudea (about 3300 B. C.) the *first month of the year*.¹ According to another nomenclature Tishri corre-

or *Hochflut*, see Del. H. W. B. pp. 274, 275. The god Chaul would become thus the "god of the *stormflood!*" and might be read Châwil.

Almâqu-hû—thus read by Hommel—is derived from the root לִמַּק "to destroy," "to beat." Rammân as the god of *lightning* destroys the wicked. I would like to see in this word a surname of Rammân and read "*almaqu-hû*," i. e., "his (sc. Sin's) chief destroyer or warrior = ur-sag lig-ga. To this explanation fits also an-Karich from the root כָּרַח, Del. H. W. B. p. 352, b: "in Not bringen."

Anbâj too is not a broken plural of Nabiju = Nabi'u—why should there be a *plural* for the name of a god, seeing that this god is only a shajûm?—but also an *relative form* (like *almaqu-hû!*) from the root נָבַח and has to be read = *anbaju*. נָבַח I would like to take in the sense of נָבַח, Del. H. W. B. p. 442, b. "*hervorsprudeln, hervorquellen*," from which we get the namba'u, "*Quell, Wasserquell*," and the imbû'u, "vegetation," and especially nib'u "*Spross, Fruchtertrag u. dergl.*" Rammân would thus become as the "god of rain" he who *PRODUCES vegetation*—hence he is called by Shalmanesser II., Obelisk, l. 7: [𒀭]Ramm]ân gish-ru shû-tu-ru bêl che-gal-li, i. e., the strong one, the powerful, the lord of the *abundance or riches* (sc. of the fields). With this agrees quite wonderfully also the name *ur-dingir Nin-Gir-su*, which name is not only that of an early Babylonian *patesi* (see E. B. H. p. 441 for references), but which also is translated in the bilingual texts by *ikkaru* or *farmer, husbandman, Landmann, Ackerbauer, Landwirt*, see Del. H. W. B. p. 58 *sub voce*. *Ur-dingir Nin-Gir-su* literally translated would mean the "dog or servant of Nin-Gir-su." But Nin-Gir-su = Rammân who as the god of rain is also the god of *fertility!* And what is more natural than that the farmer should be called "the servant or dog of the god of fertility"? This latter name not only proves that our identification of Nin-Gir-su = Rammân is correct, but also that *anbaju may—nay, must,—have this signification here.*

With this then is proven the *Babylonian* origin of the old Arabic pantheon, which was accepted at a time when Sin had become identified with Bel (above p. 50). That the Babylonians indeed influenced the ancient Arabians is proved by the fact that even Semitic Babylonian *words* are found in old Arabic inscription, as e. g. לִבְתָּ = libittu, לָבָן = labânu (this latter is found in one of the oldest hadhramotic inscriptions from Obne), מִשְׁחָנוּ = mushkênu, צֶנֶק = sunqu, see Winckler, M. V. A. G., 1901, 4, p. 70.

¹ Gudea, Statue E. V. 1, 2; G. III. 5, 6: ud zag-mu ezen^{dingir} Ba-u "on the New Year's day, the festival of Ba-u."

sponds to the month A-ki-it, which means "New-Year's festival." Tishri is also = the Canaanitish אֲתִנַּיִם which again was the first month,¹ and Tishri is still the New-Year's month of the Jews of to-day. The present Jewish New-Year's month thus goes back to the most ancient times : to the time of the Sumerians.

The creation of Nin-Gir-su = Rammân, the god of thunder, lightnings, rain, storm, and clouds has been omitted by P! The reason is apparent. He did not fit into P's formula. It was impossible to say : And Elohim said : "Let there be thunderings, lightnings, storms, etc. . . . and there were. And Elohim saw that *they were good!*" "Good" lightnings, storms, etc. cause quite a "good" deal of havoc. Thus not wishing to imply that the Creator might have destroyed something of what he created—P left out the creation of the storm and lightning altogether.

H. RADAU.

WATERLOO, ILL.

¹ 1 Kings viii. 2. E. B. H. p. 298.