

MONDAY, JUNE 22ND, 1857.

JAMES HENTHORN TODD, D. D., PRESIDENT,
in the Chair.

THE President communicated the following paper by the Rev. Edward Hincks, on the Personal Pronouns in their most ancient forms:—

“ I have treated of the personal pronouns in a paper read before the British Association in 1852, and more fully in a paper read before the Royal Irish Academy on the 26th of June, 1854, and printed in the twenty-third volume of the Transactions. Further researches have confirmed to their fullest extent all that I stated in the latter paper; but they have also enabled me to go further back into the history of these pronouns, so as to explain the forms in which they appear in the Hebrew future, as it is called, and in the four Assyrian tenses, which I mentioned at the close of my last paper as denoting transient action.

“ The Assyrian pronoun of the first person singular is *anáku*, corresponding to the Hebrew *anóki*; and this is in reality, as I stated, a verb *an* combined with the true pronoun *áku* or *óki*. I have observed, however, that wherever the long *o* occurs in Hebrew, a contraction has taken place.* It represents *awa* or *ahwa*; the two vowels being separated by a sound similar to that represented by the Æolic digamma, and which ceased to be expressed in the later Assyrian, and in Hebrew, where a contraction did not take place, precisely as it ceased to be expressed in classical Greek. This digamma originally commenced the pronoun of the first person singu-

* So in the feminine plural. The Hebrew *ót*, is in Assyrian *úhwat*, with the case-ending. For example, the genitive is—m. s. *danni*, f. s. *dannáti*, m. p. *dannúti*, f. p. *dannáhwati*.

lar, which was *hwáku* at a more ancient period than *áku*. It also commenced the first person singular of all these tenses of verbs which had preformatives. The preformative of this person is *hwa* before a consonant, and the simple digamma before a vowel. Thus, 'I burned,' which in the later Assyrian was simply *ásrup*, was originally *hwásrup*. 'I sat,' which was in late Assyrian *úsib*, was originally *hwúsib*. This was probably pronounced in the same manner as the third person *yúsib*, 'he sat.' At any rate these two forms were represented alike to the eye, whether they were distinguished or not to the ear. The interchange of the sounds *hw* and *y* was not confined to the preformatives. The affix of the first person singular, which was originally *hwa*, was written *ya* in most Assyrian inscriptions of late date. It is true that in the great majority of instances where it is so written it is preceded by *i*; but the fact that the affix had become *ya* is shown by the abbreviated form which we meet with when a consonant precedes it. 'My father,' without the case-ending, is written *abi*, as well as *aba*. The former could not be a contraction from *abhwa*, but necessarily supposes a form *abya*. In the Semitic languages previously known, *i* is almost universal. The Ethiopic, however, has *ya*; and this is occasionally used in Arabic. None of these go back to the primitive form with the digamma.

"A question now arises,—Is this *hwa*, which was, as we have seen, at the same time the preformative of the first person singular in verbs, and the affix of the same person after nouns, in the most ancient period of the Assyrian language, an abbreviation of *hwáku*, the most ancient form of the independent pronoun. At the first glance, one would be tempted to say,—'Of course; can it be doubted?' And if we had merely the Assyrian and other Semitic languages, and the Indo-European languages, to guide us in our investigations, it would, I grant, be unnatural to doubt it. We have, however, other grounds on which we can form an opinion. We

can go back to a more ancient language than any of those that I have mentioned; and, looking to it, I have no hesitation in answering the above question by,—‘Certainly not.’ The form *hwa* is the more ancient; and *hwaku*, the common parent of the Indo-European, Semitic, and Egyptian forms, is a derivative from this. We are enabled to analyze it by means of the bilingual tablets in the British Museum, which contain words and sentences in a peculiar language, with their interpretations in Assyrian. This peculiar language may be called Accadian—a name which can cause no ambiguity, and which has been suggested by Sir Henry Rawlinson, who, however, describes it as a Hamitic language, cognate to the Egyptian, which it certainly is not. It might be called with great propriety Chaldean, because it was used to a great extent in the astronomical tablets, which all authorities agree in ascribing to the Chaldeans; only that the name Chaldean is unfortunately preoccupied to designate the language in which parts of the books of Ezra and Daniel are written, which was a Semitic dialect. The Accadian language was derived from the common parent of the Indo-European and Semitic languages; and by comparing its forms with those of these languages, we may recover some portions of the primitive language of mankind. Now the Accadian forms of the pronoun of the first person are *mun* for the independent pronoun, or nominative, and *mu* for the affix ‘my.’ The *n* which is added to the nominative appears also in the nominative *in* ‘he,’ as compared with *i*, the Semitic preformative, which again appears as the root of the Latin *is*, *s* being a case-ending, and of *hic*, i. e. *hi-ce*, ‘he here.’ It is also the German *er*, *r* being a case-ending; and it is our own *he*. It is indeed very curious how like an Assyrian word sometimes is to its exact English equivalent. Compare, for example, *i-pruch* with its equivalent, ‘he broke.’ The roots are cognate; as appears still more clearly in the verbal noun, *pirich*, ‘a breach;’ and the pronouns are all but identical. In Accadian the pronoun

would be *in* prefixed to the verb; but I am unable to say what this verbal root would be. It has been out of my power to see more than a very small proportion of the bilingual tablets in the Museum. It appears from what has been said that the *n* at the end of the Accadian *mun*, 'I,' is, like that at the end of *in*, 'he,' a termination peculiar to the Accadian language. The radical part of the pronoun is *mu*. The passage of the digamma into *m* is admitted by all who have treated of it in Greek. The Assyrians constantly confounded the sounds of *w* and *m*; and in Hebrew the digamma was represented by ם when it did not disappear in ן, or pass into ן. Of the last change there are instances that cannot be questioned. It has been often remarked that ן is the Greek *Φοῖν-ος*, the Latin *vin-um*, our own 'wine.' In like manner, ם, 'a sea,' was *hwam*. The old Assyrian form was *hwámat*; see § 14 of my former paper on the Pronouns, where the feminine form of similar words is noted. As for ן, it is the most frequent representative of the digamma. It represents it in every case where it is a preformative; and in most cases, if not in every case, where it is a radical. The conversion of the digamma into ם is most remarkable in the word for 'water.' The primitive word was *hwa*, which sound was expressed by a character intended to represent *falling rain*, ם. More commonly this word was doubled, giving *hwa . hwa*. In Hebrew we have *mó* for *mahwa*, and also *may-* and *mám-*; the first digamma being always converted into *m*; while the second was sometimes contracted in the manner already described; sometimes changed into *y*, and sometimes into *m*. The Hebrew generally expressed this as a plural; and the primitive *hwa-hwa* is, in fact, a plural. The Indo-European nations generally adopted the double form for the noun; as in the Gothic *ahwa*, the Latin *aqua*, &c.; while the simple form was used for the verb 'to wet' and its derivatives—*ῥ-ω*, *ῥ-δωρ*, *u-dus*, to *we-t*, *wa-ter*, &c. In *amnis* the second digamma is converted into an *m*. In *avon*, *awen*, &c., we have

more ancient forms of this derived noun than the Latin, the second digamma being here retained. I believe the former of the two digammas was always dropped in those Indo-European forms which adopted the redoubled primitive, though retained when the simple primitive was used.

“To return from this digression. It appears pretty evident that either *hwa* or *hwu* was the primitive form of the pronoun of the first person singular; but a new question arises—what was the *ku* which appears in combination with this in all the Semitic and Indo-European languages? This question is, I think, capable of being answered in a most satisfactory manner. In the Accadian language *ku* is a post-position, equivalent to the Assyrian preposition *ana*, originally *hwana*. It signified ‘to’ or ‘for,’ or, in fact, ‘here,’ as *ad* in *adsum*. *Hwá-ku* was then ‘I here;’ this *ku* was etymologically connected with the Latin *cis*, *citra*, and with the *c* in *hic*, which is, as I have already stated, *hi-ce*, ‘he here;’ a similar form to *hwá-ku*, but of much more recent origin.

“This being settled, there are two reasons why *hwu*, and not *hwa*, is to be regarded as the primitive form. In the first place *hwa* was the primitive word for ‘water,’ and we cannot suppose that ‘water’ and ‘I’ were expressed by the same word. This would be in the highest degree improbable. Secondly, if *hwa* were the primitive form, no good reason could be given for its having been converted into *hwu*, from which the Accadian *mu* must have been derived; whereas *hwu* might easily pass into *hwa* (long *u*, as in *bull*, into the natural vowel *a*, as in *America*) when shortened for the preformative and the affix,—neither of which takes the accent, and both of which occasionally drop the vowel altogether, as in *hwu-sib*, where the *u* is radical; and *abi* for *abya*, and that for *abhwa*—instances that have been already given. It is true that this does not account for the form *hwáku*, where the *a* is long and has the accent. That may, however, be accounted for on a different principle. The Accadians had the very opposite

feeling to what the Turks and Tartars now have as to the repetition of vowels. The latter assimilate vowels to others in the same word, but the Accadians made them different when they would naturally be similar. The Accadians usually terminated their adjectives in *a*; but they changed the *a* into another vowel, when the vowel of the first syllable was *a*, followed by but a single consonant. They said *jida*, *gula*, and even *danga*, but they said *qadu*, in place of *qada*. On a like principle the primitive people converted *hwu-ku* into *hwáku* when they combined the two words into one.

“The progressive changes in the pronoun of the first person singular are, then, these :—

“The primitive form was HWU, ‘I,’

from which came HWA-KU, for *hwu-ku*, ‘I here.’

“From the former of these is immediately derived the Accadian affix *mu*; which, with a final nasal, became the nominative singular *mun*. From these the different Ugrian forms are derivable.

“From the same *hwu* is derived, by shortening or omitting the final vowel, the Semitic preformative and affix; of which the forms first in use were *hwă* and *hw’*, softened into *yă* and *ă*, and into *i*, *a*, or a mere nullity.

“From the same *hwu* are again derived the various forms of the oblique cases of the singular pronoun in all the Indo-European languages, the personal endings in all the tenses and numbers of verbs, and several dual and plural forms of the pronoun, both in the nominative and in the oblique cases. These it is unnecessary to develop.

“From the latter form, in the primitive language, we have, by dropping the digamma, AKU, the parent form of all the Indo-European nominatives. The consonant is preserved in Gothic, changed into *g* in the classical languages, and into *sh* or *z* in Lithuanian and Slavonic. The first vowel has degenerated into *i* in all the Gothic and Teutonic forms; *a* is preserved in the other families, for the classical *e* is only a

modification of it. The final *u* is preserved in the classical languages alone. The Perso-Sanskrit forms are of far later date than those of the European languages, and appear to be derived from the Slavonic; a final nasal being added, apparently in imitation of the Ugrian *n*.

“The Semitic forms are likewise derived from *hwáku*; their common parent being *hwan-hwáku*, properly *adsum*, as I showed in my former paper. The double addition in the so-called Semitic languages of a prefix and a suffix, of which the meanings are almost identical, is very remarkable. It is clear that the suffix was first added; and that, when the prefix was added, the two syllables which followed it were considered as one word, the meaning of the suffix being no longer recollected. This can only be accounted for either by supposing an extremely long interval between the addition of the suffix and that of the equivalent prefix, or by supposing a miraculous confusion to have taken place in the views of the people with respect to language in the interval between these two additions having been made. I have observed facts indicative of such an occurrence, which are easily explained by the admission of its having existed, and scarcely, if at all, to be accounted for on any other supposition,—but I must forbear stating them at present. The study of these bilingual tablets cannot fail to throw great light on the early history of languages; but it would be rash to draw inductions from what has yet become known to me. As to the pronoun of the first person singular, I am satisfied that I am well informed as to the facts, but not so as to the other pronouns. Here, therefore, I must close what I have to say.

“EDWARD HINCKS.

“*Killyleagh, June 18, 1857.*”

Sir William R. Hamilton read a paper on a certain harmonic property of the envelope of the chord connecting two corresponding points of the Hessian of a cubic cone.
