

The populations of the fatherland of Abraham : a short account of the populations which came into contact with the Jews, and used the Cuneiform system of writing / by G. Bertin.

Contributors

Bertin, Georges, 1848-1891.

Publication/Creation

London : Goldridge & Co., 1893.

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Dec. 1899.

THE
POPULATIONS
OF
THE FATHERLAND
OF
ABRAHAM.

A short account of the Populations which came into contact with the
Jews, and used the Cuneiform system of writing.

BY

THE LATE G. BERTIN, M.R.A.S.

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London:

W. G. B. ALDRIDGE & Co., HAMPSTEAD.

1893.

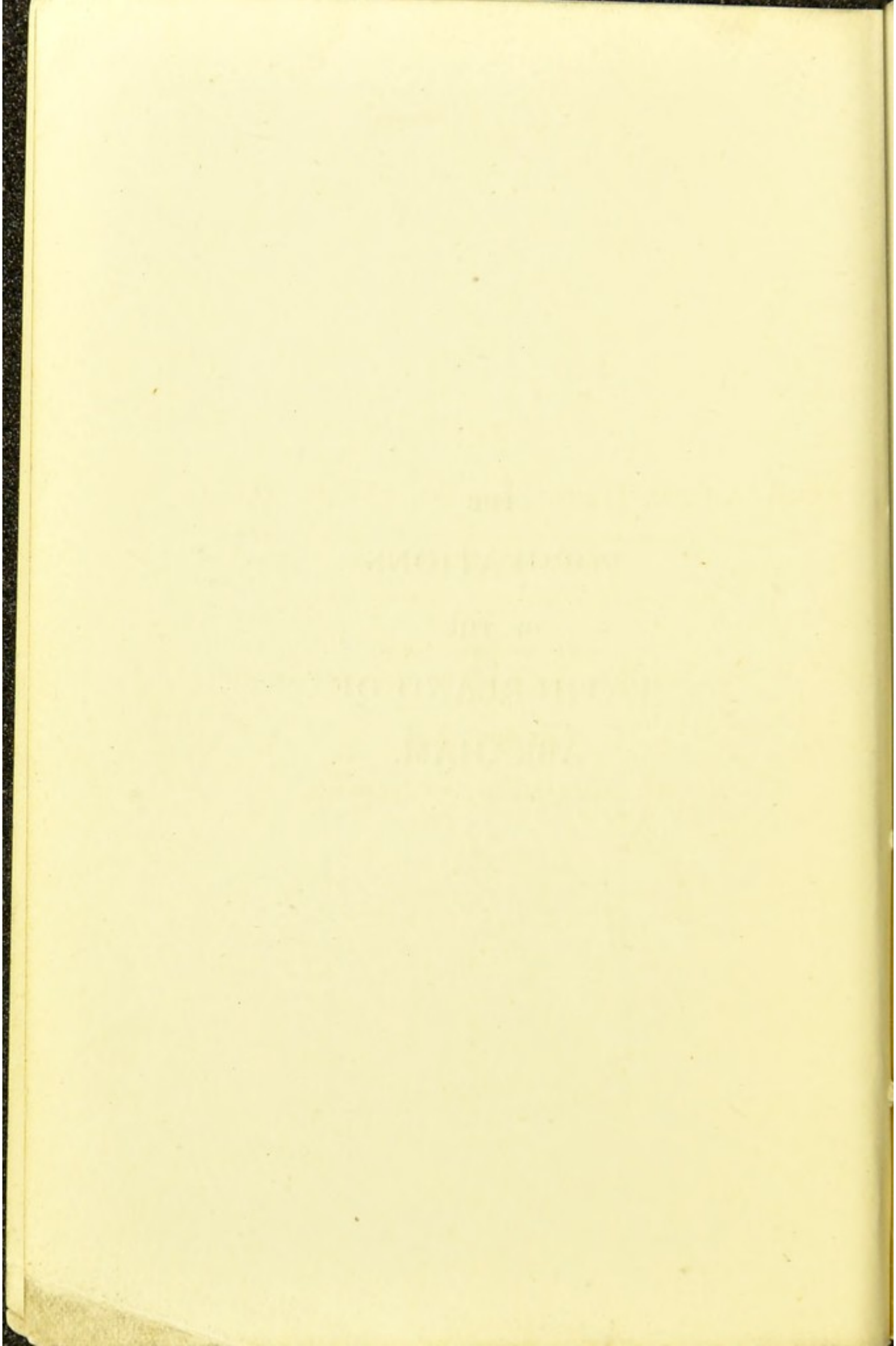
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THE
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FATHERLAND OF
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To

SIR AUSTEN HENRY LAYARD, G.C.B., D.C.L.,

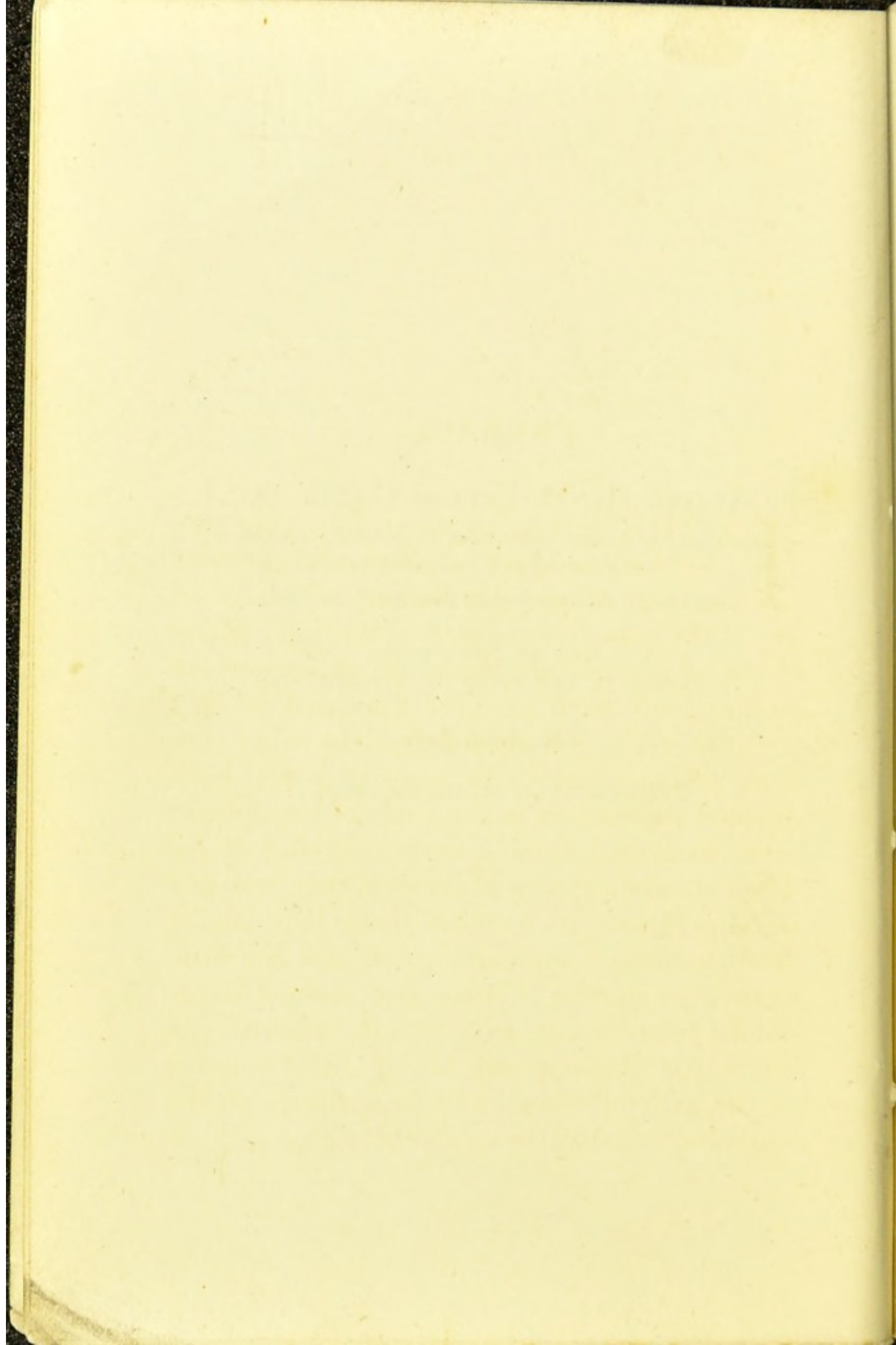
*Corresponding Member of the Institut de France—Académie
des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres;*

Author of "Nineveh and Its Remains," &c., &c.,

ONE OF THE FIRST
PIONEERS IN THE FIELD OF ASSYRIOLOGY,

This Small Book

IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

IN THESE few pages it has been my intention to give a short and popular account of the populations which made use of the cuneiform system of writing. Many of the statements are the result of my private studies, and have not yet appeared in any scientific work. I am indebted to many eminent scholars, who, for several years have devoted themselves to the study of the difficult texts recovered from Assyria and Babylonia. Their names are so well known that it would be superfluous to mention them here, and a small tribute on my part, would add but little to their reputation. It has also seemed to me not to be necessary to give any references in notes, for these would be of little interest to the general reader, and superfluous to the specialist. I shall, however, be happy to give,

privately, information to anyone applying to me.

The first idea of this small work was suggested to me by the numerous questions which I have heard people ask. What do we learn from the cuneiform inscriptions? What were the people who wrote with the cuneiform characters? What was their political and social constitution? And I have done my best to answer these questions.

The few pages of introduction will, I think, justify the title I have chosen; and we must not forget that in England Assyriology is generally considered as a branch of Biblical study on account of the light which the cuneiform documents have thrown on Jewish history, and of the many statements in the Bible which they elucidate. The Hittites have been placed in an appendix because the whole of the book had been written when an unexpected discovery brought to light Hittite inscriptions written in cuneiform characters. If this little book has no other effect than to inspire a few with a desire for more knowledge of the cuneiform documents, and to swell the ranks of the Assyriologists, it will not have been written in vain.

G. BERTIN.

INTRODUCTION.

IF ASSYRIOLOGY has attracted so much attention and fascinated so many, it is because every new discovery in this field of research seems to throw a new light on some part or other of the Bible.

Babylon was always regarded by the Jews as the primitive home of their race. From Babylon came Abraham, and Abraham is the real founder of the Jewish race; he would not have willingly emigrated from the land of his fathers, if it had not been by special order from his God. The persecutions he was subjected to had religion for origin; the Akkadians, when they invaded Babylonia, brought with them their religious ideas, based on the worship or propitiation of evil spirits, and as a consequence, the burning of the dead. This last custom seems to have been specially repugnant to Abraham, and to all true believers, and it was, no doubt, the sore point which gave rise to the conflict. According to Oriental traditions, Nimrod was then King of Babylon, and Nimrod is no other than the god Merodach, who symbolizes the idol-worshippers. Nimrod,

being neither able to move the faith of Abraham, nor to make him bow down before, or sacrifice to, the evil spirits, threw him into a fiery furnace, as did Nebuchadnezzar with Daniel's friends.

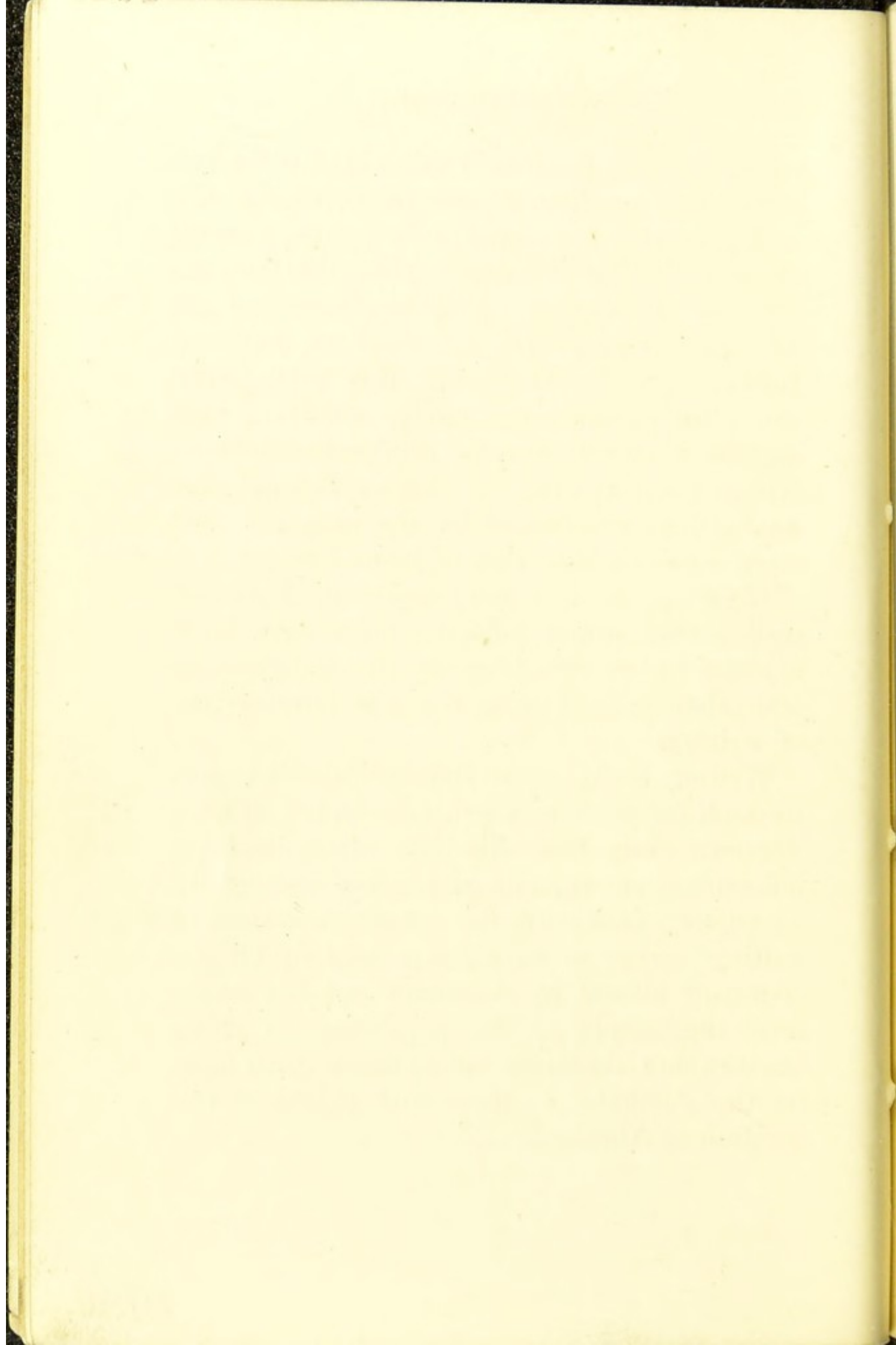
What rendered the ordeal more terrible was that this furnace was one of those used for the burning of the dead,—nevertheless Abraham came unharmed out of it. Nimrod's heart was more hardened than that of Nebuchadnezzar, and the persecutions continued. Haran, where he fled with Sarah, was still too near, for Nimrod's Empire extended as far as Assur. What proves that the flight of Abraham was necessary to his safety, and that he escaped only through the warning given by God, is that the words used are similar to those addressed to the followers of Moses, "I am the Lord who took you out of the land of Egypt;" so it is said to Abraham, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees." (Gen. xv. 7).

The children of Abraham in their wanderings never forgot that Babylonia was the cradle of their race, and never severed their connection with their kindred who stayed there; Abraham himself was most anxious that his son should marry a wife from "his

country and his kindred" (xxiv. 4). Even when constituted a nation, in spite of their long stay in Egypt, the Jews always had more leaning towards the Babylonians. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Judaism flourished at Babylon; it was in the schools there that neo-Judaism was developed, and this gave to the nation the strength and vitality exhibited during the fanatical struggle of the Seleucidian Kings; for it was the Babylonian Talmud that was always considered as the standard, and more orthodox than that of Jerusalem.

If we take all this into consideration, we can realise what strong influence must have been exercised over the Jews by the Babylonians and other nations using the cuneiform system of writing.

Writing is the great channel of ideas; it is through the system of writing adopted all over Western Asia that Babylon maintained its influence even when its power was waning. By a curious coincidence, the cuneiform system of writing seems to have been used in all the countries visited by Abraham and his ancestors, the survey of the population of those lands cannot, therefore, fail to throw great light on the manners, customs, and habits of the children of Abraham.



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

PRE-HISTORICAL PERIOD:

- Circa 7,500—Semitic invasion. Pre-Akkadian dynasty of 30 kings (?). Age of the early omen tablets only known from later copies.
- „ 7,000—Akkadian invasion. First Akkadian dynasty of 50 kings. Introduction of cremation. Probable time of Abraham's emigration. No documents left for certain.

HEROIC PERIOD:

- Circa 6,255—Kassite Dynasty, 40 kings.
- „ 5,655—Sumerian „ 35 „
- „ 5,130—2nd Akkadian dynasty, 20 kings.
- „ 4,830—2nd Sumerian „ 9 „
- „ 4,695—3rd Akkadian „ 30 „
- „ 4,245—2nd Kassite „ 15 „

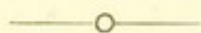
The Heroic period is that during which the Sumero-Akkadian literature flourished, and poems and incantations were produced. As only papyrus was used they are known but from later copies.

HISTORICAL PERIOD:

- Circa 4,020—Semitic renaissance. Semitic dynasty of 110 kings. During this dynasty clay was adopted as writing material instead of papyrus, and bricks instead of wood for building material. It was the age of commentators. Syllabaries were written, and the old poems explained. A few documents of this period are extant, but they are mostly known by later copies.

- circa 2,371—Supremacy of Babylon. Dynasty of 11 Kings. From this period the contracts tablets are numerous, and we have a few inscriptions.
- „ 2,077—Sisku dynasty of 11 at Babylon.
- „ 1,709—Kassite invasion, and dynasty of 36 Kings called Kassites. From 1,610 to 1,270 struggle of the Assyrian Kings against Babylon, and supremacy of Nineveh interrupted for a time by the Egyptian conquest. Many Ninevite Documents.
- „ 1,130—Pase dynasty of 11 Kings
- „ 1,060—Tamtim dynasty of 3 Kings.
- „ 1,038—Bazi dynasty of 3 Kings.
- „ 1,018—Temporary Elamite conquest for 6 years.
- „ 1,012—Assyro-Babylonian dynasty of 17 Kings. Struggle of Nineveh and Babylon. Assyrian supremacy.
- „ 732—Second Assyro-Babylonian dynasty. In 607 fall of Nineveh. Supremacy of Babylon.
- „ 538—Persian conquest of Cyrus. Introduction of Mazdeism. Slow reappearance of Magianism.
- „ 331—Greek conquest of Alexander.
- „ 312—Seleucus. Introduction of Greek astronomical science.

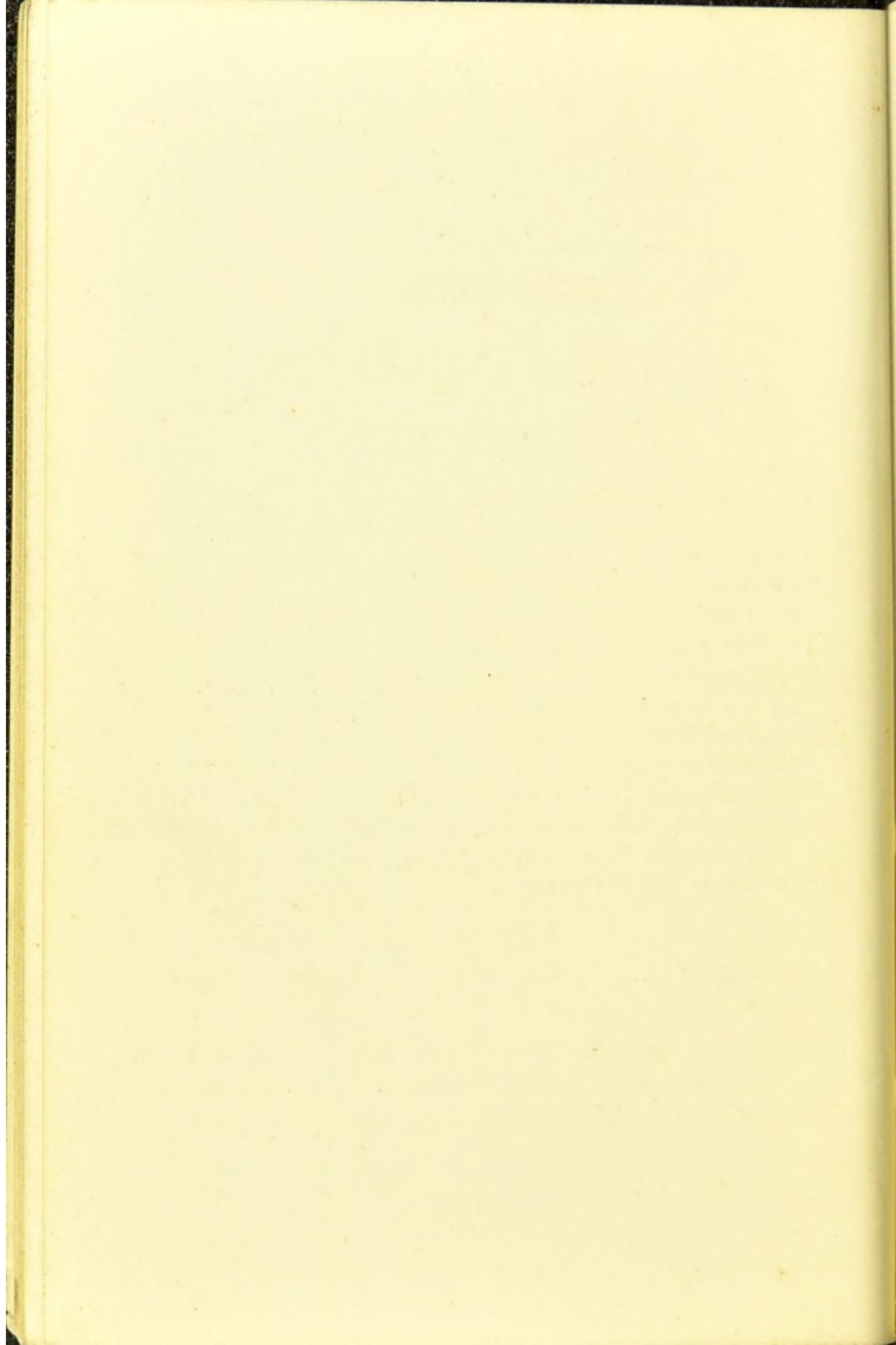
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THE
POPULATIONS
OF THE FATHERLAND
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ABRAHAM

THE AKKADIANS.

THE AKKADIANS formed the non-Semitic population of Babylonia which the ancient records show us living side by side with the Semites during the earliest historical period. The name is not, however, a national one, for the people called themselves *Uri*, that is, (with our terminology) *Urians*, a name which means, in their language, 'the Strong ones'. This name was, after the custom of the Semitic population, translated by them into *Akkad*, and as Assyriologists first became acquainted with this non-Semitic population through Assyrian inscriptions, the term Akkadians has been generally adopted.

Judging principally from their language, but also from the little we know of their physical type, the Akkadians belonged to the Turanian race; that is, to that human family from which sprang the Ugro-Altaic and Turco-Tartar races, but their characteristics were strongly modified by the infusion of Semitic and other blood.

Before invading Babylonia they inhabited the mountainous region to the North-East of Mesopotamia. Being divided into a number of small tribes, each having its own chief, they had no common action. The desire of plunder attracted them, no doubt, into Babylonia; it is even possible that they invaded the country under the leadership of a chief like Attila, who may have given, for a short time, a kind of homogeneity to all the tribes, whose thoughts were probably bent on the one object of plunder; but it is more likely that they came into Mesopotamia in small bands, lending, here and there (like the Anglo-Saxons when they invaded Britain) their services as mercenaries to the petty Semitic kings, who seem to have been always at war among themselves. There were probably many adventurers, some, no doubt, of great military talent; but there were no great generals or conquerors like Alexander or Tamerlane, the object of the Akkadians apparently being, not

to create a great empire in Babylonia, but to establish themselves and draw the wealth of the country. The petty Semitic Kings were, one by one, replaced by Akkadian chiefs or *Patesi*, as they called themselves. This word *Patesi* is generally translated by "viceroy", but it means really ruler.

Most of these *Patesi* ruled over one city only, but the fortune of war sometimes brought several towns under the same authority. In this case there was no attempt to form a homogeneous kingdom; the conquerer contented himself with taking the title of Great *Patesi*, and receiving the homage and tribute of the conquered or lesser *Patesi*. These latter were left comparatively independent as long as they paid tribute, and contributed also, no doubt, a certain military contingent to help the suzerain in his wars. So they built palaces and temples, and in their inscriptions attributed all their power to the favour of their own god, seldom mentioning even the name of the Great *Patesi* under whom they ruled. Very little is known of this period of Babylonian history, for it is so mixed with fable that as yet we cannot tell which part is history and which is fiction. A few facts have, nevertheless, come to our knowledge, but they are so disconnected, that it is impossible to

determine their position in the order of events.

It has been said that nations without history have had a peaceful and happy life, but this is not the case with the Akkadians, for, if they have no history, it is simply because no documents have come down to us, and we know, from the changes of dynasties in the list of early kings, that they were in constant conflict with the Kassites, who often succeeded in imposing their yoke upon Babylonia. Beyond this fact no echo of the battles which must have been fought in Mesopotamia has reached us.

The religion of the Akkadians is known to us only from the poems and hymns, which were written when they had already become so closely united with the Semites that they formed a mixed population, and it is therefore considerably altered. It is possible, however, to recognise its principles, for it is so peculiar and the development of this particular religious conception is so different from that of the Semites—or at least from that of the Semites of Mesopotamia—that even when the two populations were amalgamated and when the two religions had been fused into one complicated system by the poets and the mythographers, the various elements of which it was composed were still distinct.

The ground of the Akkadian religion was an

animism in its lowest form, such as we find only among the savage tribes of North-Western America and Central Africa. For the Akkadians, everything was animated—stars, rivers, mountains, trees, stones. The spirits who resided in these could go forth and often exercised their power to torment mankind. The Akkadians believed that there were crowds of spirits ready to hurt them, diseases and accidents of every kind, in fact, everything which brought them pain or trouble was, in their minds, the work of some spirit. Though they did not worship these evil spirits, they had a great respect for them, and always tried to propitiate them; and to avoid their action they had recourse to incantations and amulets. The Akkadian religion was in fact, nothing else but magic, without any idea of one or many supreme beings having supernatural power and governing the world. This was the primitive foundation, but it is probable that some reformer or prophet built on it, even before the contact with the Semites, some higher religious conception. At any rate, when the Akkadians accepted or assimilated the gods or religion of the Semites, the evil spirits were thrown into the background. The Semites, though polytheists, had a higher religious conception in accordance with their higher civili-

was? sation. The fusion of the two religions produced that which was current when the poems and hymns impressed on clay tablets, found in Babylonia, were written. It is uncertain, however, whether the new religion which arose from this combination were ever systematized; as in the case of the Greek mythology, each poet seems to have had his own religious conception and his own system as to the rank, character and importance of each god. But in practise magic had always a great importance and formed part, it would seem, of the duties of religious people.

When the Akkadians invaded Babylonia they were mere barbarians and half nomads, they accepted the civilisation of the Semites, but, on their own side, contributed very little to it. They brought with them, however, the horse, previously unknown to the Semites, and to them also may be due a greater skill in the working of metals. But their most precious contribution was their new turn of mind and their brilliant imagination. Without the infusion of this new blood, the Semitic civilisation of Babylonia would have been utterly barren. The Akkadian *Patesi*, who before the conquest of Babylonia, used to live in miserable huts, became eager to build palaces; they who used to invoke their gods or spirits in the gloom of night in some

retired place or in the thickest forest, were seduced by the magnificent temples dedicated by the Semites to Bel, Nebo, Tasmit, and all the circle of the Babylonian pantheon, and everywhere their ambition was to build similar or even greater and more magnificent monuments. They used to lead an obscure life, their past deeds fading away as the years rolled on, and they were therefore fascinated by the art of writing possessed by the Semites, and the cuneiform writing (or the style which preceded it—for we have no contemporaneous records of this early period) was adapted to their language, and poets and historians were called to their courts to sing the praises of these kings and heroes.

One of the most curious facts, as yet overlooked by students, is, that we find in the laws of the Akkadians not only the principles, but even some of the very statements which form the base of old Roman law. This is interesting because many of our own laws have their origin in the Roman code. These Akkadian laws, or rather precepts, as they were considered by the primitive legislators, were divided into sections, one tablet treating of the family duties, another of all the questions concerning agriculture, etc. The Akkadians were not traders,

commerce seems to have been always in the hands of the Semites.

The Akkadian language has a high philological interest, because it takes us back to a period of the development of speech, which has been entirely forgotten. Any traces of this period, which may have remained in the other languages, have, in fact, escaped the notice of the philologist, or have been wrongly explained. Akkadian is considered as an agglutinative language—that is, a language in which the various elements used in compounding words or expressions have retained their own individuality—but it has suffered from phonetic decay to such an extent that most of the words have become monosyllabic. This process of wearing down, which took place no doubt before the invasion of Babylonia, was continued whilst there, for many of the words borrowed by the Semites give us, in Assyrian, the archaic form, though they appear in the Akkadian texts under a more decayed one. The words are not built up by means of suffixes, the great majority, when they are not what we call primitive, are compound expressions. The verb is incorporating—that is, the verbal form contains in itself pronouns representing the various elements of the sentence, but there is this pecu-

liarity, that the syntactical order of the sentence is not the same as in the incorporation. For instance, 'the man gave his daughter in marriage to his friend' would be in Akkadian: 'to the friend his the man in marriage the daughter his *so - her - him - to - he - gave*'—the verbal form giving a *résumé* of the whole sentence. This difference of syntactical order of the sentence and of the verbal form is supposed to be due to Semitic influence. The most striking feature, however, of Akkadian grammar, is the almost complete absence of personal pronouns. There are, indeed, special forms used to express the emphatic personal pronouns, but only when isolated. In the verbal forms pronouns of relation (as they might be called) are used, and the first, the second or the third person may be represented in the verbal incorporation by the same pronoun, according to the relation or the importance of one person to the other in the sentence. It is very much as if, instead of using pronouns in English, we used the demonstratives 'this' and 'that': *I gave it to thee* would be *this give this to that*, but this expression might mean *thou gavest it to him* or *he gave it to him*. But what adds still more to the possible errors of translators, is that the genders are not distinguished in Akkadian, and that the plural is

very seldom expressed in the verbal incorporation.

With such a language, it would seem, at first thought, that a high literary development would be impossible, but the splendid literature of the Akkadians proves that there is no language which, in the hands of real poets, may not become an instrument for the creation of literary masterpieces.

One of the great difficulties in the literary history of the languages of Babylonia is to determine to which population or language such or such a poem belongs. During what may be called the mixed period, when the Akkadians had accepted and adopted the primitive Semitic civilisation, the authors used to write in the two languages, as happened in England after the Norman conquest. Besides this, the poets drew indiscriminately from the legends and traditions of the two populations, and a poem, written in Akkadian, may be founded entirely on Semitic legends, just as a Semitic poem may be grounded upon an Akkadian tradition. Furthermore, many Akkadian poems—or compositions regarded as such—are known to us only from Semitic translations. Some critics, however, may say that what we suppose to be the Semitic translation is really

the original. The poem of the creation, for instance, which covered at least twelve tablets, seems to relate purely Semitic traditions, and contains too many points in common with the Egyptian legends from the book of the dead, to have been derived from an Akkadian source. The same may be said of the great poem of Gisdubar, the Babylonian Hercules. The poem about the god Zû is also of doubtful origin, we possess only a Semitic version, but as it reminds us in many points of the legend of Prometheus, it is probably non-Semitic, though it may nevertheless, be an Akkadian legend worked out by a Semitic poet.

There is, however, a literature which has the stamp of Akkadian conception too strongly marked to permit its character to be doubted—we mean the poems treating of the evil spirits. No doubt the belief in evil spirits is found everywhere among populations still uncivilised, but magic, as it has been called, was specially developed by the Akkadians, and to the Akkadian element is to be traced everything of that nature in the Semitic religion. The poem of Ura, the god of pestilence, describing the havoc made by disease, though it is one of those known to us from a Semitic version only, must have been inspired by the Akkadian turn of mind.

Outside these poems of doubtful origin, all the Akkadian literature is religious. We have hymns which were recited in the temples at certain hours or on certain occasions, but the greater part of what has come down to us consists of incantations. The subjects referred to in these compositions are innumerable. There are incantations for every kind of disease. One class gives medical prescriptions side by side with a poetical appeal to the gods. This class, however, is not numerous, for among the Babylonians the spell was the great remedy. The poet often rises to very high poetry when he invokes the gods of fire, of water, &c.; or when he describes the misdeeds of the evil spirits, coursing through the atmosphere, and disturbing the order of nature.

A very interesting part of Akkadian literature is that which treats of precepts (for such they are rather than laws) for the conduct of citizens. These precepts may have been drawn up by a very ancient king, or by his order, to serve as a philosophic basis for legislation. Man was considered under the three principal aspects. One tablet exposes the duties and rights of man as a citizen and member of a family. It tells him what he is to do in childhood as well as in manhood, and how he is to

behave towards his relatives and his servants. Another speaks of the relations of the agriculturist towards the landowner and how the land is to be cultivated. Yet another speaks of commercial transactions, but the text of this is very mutilated. These precepts have a great importance, because they seem to have been the basis of the Babylonian legal statutes. We possess also from the Akkadians a collection of proverbs illustrating, so to say, the moral side of these people. This does not appear to have been the work of one writer, for the style and the expressions evidently belong to various epochs, and it is therefore very likely a work of compilation, written at a later date, in which the wisdom of the ancients is given by means of quotations; and for this very reason is most important, on account of the archaisms it has preserved.

As for the historical literature, we have very few specimens, though many more, no doubt, still lie buried in Mesopotamia. The inscriptions of Ur-Bau, Gudea, and other early kings, are mere dedications of temples, always couched in the same terms. One or two longer ones are more explicit, but historical indications are wanting. The bilingual inscriptions of Hammurabi, in Akkadian and Semitic Babylonian,

are, no doubt, the work of learned scribes, as Akkadian was very likely a dead language when they were written, used only as Latin was in the middle ages. In the private contracts of the same period Akkadian is also used, but may really be regarded as an ideogrammatic writing—when a clause presents any difficulty, the scribe uses Semitic Babylonian.

There is a custom of the Akkadians which requires special notice, and that is the way in which they disposed of the dead. In this they, like all other nations, were guided by religious principles. The Egyptians, for instance, who believed in the individual and bodily resurrection, were most careful to preserve as intact as possible the corpses of their relatives. The Akkadians, at least originally, were pre-eminently materialists, the body in their eyes being, the most important part of the human being. Though the conception does not appear to have been very clearly realised, they seem to have believed that the soul had still after death a certain connection with the body, if this body were therefore left, when life was extinct, exposed to attacks of all sorts, the soul would feel it and, as the belief was also that the evil spirits could not manifest themselves but by assuming

some material envelope, the human corpse would be chosen by preference, and under these forms the evil spirits would persecute the living. The Akkadians therefore having, as object the annihilation of the body, adopted cremation; and as they attributed to fire a purifying power, to burn the body was to purify the soul of all the unclean contacts of its material envelope. The ashes or a few charred bones were not preserved as among the Greeks, but the bodies were burnt in furnaces till all traces had disappeared. For this purpose large furnaces were kept always burning, as we see by the account in the book of Daniel, and 'the burning fiery furnace' was one of those used for the cremation of the corpses. There were always some therefore near at hand, and if it were not for this custom we might be surprised that the Babylonian king chose this strange manner of punishing the three young Jews. Abraham was, according to the eastern tradition, treated in the same way by Nimrod. The constant burning of these furnaces, and the horrible odour of burnt flesh with which they filled the air, must indeed have rendered the land of Babylon an abomination to the Jewish mind. This was, no doubt, one of the things which caused the emigration of the puritan Abraham

from Ur of the Chaldees, his native place.

This custom of cremation was probably in force among the Akkadians previous to their invasion of Mesopotamia, as it is one of the natural outcomes of their peculiar religious conception; the Babylonian Semites adopted it with many other superstitions. It is from this centre that the custom spread, with the Babylonian and Assyrian civilisation, into Asia Minor, and thence into Greece, assuming, however, in each country, a different aspect, according to the religious concept of each population.





THE SUMERIANS.

SUMER was the name given by the Babylonians to a population akin to the Akkadians, which inhabited the Southern part of Babylonia, near the Persian Gulf, and along the Arabian desert. This name, which means frontier-land, and answers to the English 'marches' of the feudal period, was, no doubt, the translation of the Akkadian equivalent expression. The national name, however, we do not know, and we are therefore obliged to call this people, from the Semitic translation, 'Sumerians'. They were not, properly speaking, descended from the Akkadians, but seem to have been a branch of the

same race. Judging from the phonetic peculiarities which distinguish their dialect from that of the Akkadians, they were probably to a greater extent impregnated with the Semitic element, (which must have been more powerful in the region they inhabited) for it is likely that, at the time of the Akkadian invasion, a great part of the primitive Semitic population took refuge at first in the district bordering the Persian Gulf.

The Sumerians appear to have played an important part in prehistoric times. When the Akkadians had, to a great extent, identified themselves with the Babylonians, they had to struggle against the Kassites. These wild tribes often succeeded in subjecting them, and it was on these occasions that the Sumerians came forward. Twice did the Sumerians repulse the Kassites, and found dynasties in Babylon; but in their struggles, they also, like the Akkadians, were (so to say) worn out, and the Semitic element came again to the front. The Babylonians, however, always preserved a great respect for them, for the Akkadians were, in their eyes, the civilisers and the literary people *par excellence*, whilst the Sumerians became, for them, the representatives of Babylonian independence. In fact, they were

the national champions, and for this reason they are mentioned first in the inscriptions, the rulers of the later period always calling themselves kings of '*Sumer* and Akkad.'

The Sumerians do not appear to have had any originality. In politics they continued the system introduced by the Akkadians, and this explains why they did not found any lasting empire, capable of resisting the repeated attacks of the Kassites. They were a military population, it is true, but they had not that spirit of organisation, which made the greatness of the Ninevite empire; so that, after having crushed the Kassites in battle, they knew not how to take advantage of their success, and thus always gave the Kassites time to repair their losses, and renew their attacks.

Not only in politics, but also in religion, did the Sumerians walk in the steps of the Akkadians. It may, however, have been during this rule that many of the gods of the Semites were introduced among, or assimilated with, those of their pantheon, but no reform seems to have been attempted. If they developed the religious conception of the Akkadians at all, it was on its worse side. The worship of evil spirits—magic, in fact—took a greater development; the number of the already numerous spirits

believed to inhabit all the elements was still more increased. The misdeeds of these imaginary beings seem to have been classified, and incantations and spells devised for every kind of trouble or pain, attributed, by these early inhabitants of Mesopotamia, to their agency.

We know very little of the Sumerian period, and less still of what influences may be attributed to it with certainty. The only thing that can be said is, that if the Akkadians had a strong and lasting influence on the Semites by their literature, the Sumerians seem to have had a stronger political influence and to have exercised it more directly and impressed it more deeply. This is well illustrated by the fact, that most of the words borrowed by the Semites were taken in their Sumerian, and not in their Akkadian form.

The Akkadian texts are written, to a great extent, by means of ideograms, and when the Sumerians came into power they accepted the whole of the previous Akkadian literature; and as they had merely to read the ideograms with the Sumerian pronunciation, could do so without even having to translate the works. This was no doubt a great advantage, but it had, however, a very bad effect on the purely Sumerian literature. Having the Akkadian poems

before them, the Sumerian authors did not even attempt to follow, much less surpass them, and Sumerian literature was therefore doomed to play only a secondary part. The special development given to the religious conception gave also a peculiar character to the literature; the religion having degenerated into simple liturgy, in ceremonial often absurd. We must not, therefore, be surprised to find that all that has come down to us of the Sumerian literature consists of incantations, litanies, and the like. Even in the incantations the poets or priests seem to have followed a certain fast line in the arrangement of the pieces,—there is, in short, no originality. Their poems are imitations more or less successful of the Akkadian incantations. There is, perhaps, however, more regularity, and therefore more monotony in the Sumerian incantations. They are divided into three parts: the first is a poetic but often realistic description of the disease or trouble which the spell has to remove, then follows the prayer or appeal to some god to come and send away the evil spirit, and the piece finishes with a litany and some prescription which constitutes the remedy. In the first part, the poet has sometimes brilliant and even vivid descriptions, and in the second he gives also some very

poetic pieces, but seldom does he rise above common-place utterances.

Though Akkadian was always considered as the religious and official language, and was, no doubt, the tongue exclusively spoken by the clergy, and also adopted by the rulers in their official inscriptions; and though the Sumerian incantations which have come down to us were probably only meant for the illiterate, the important political part played by the Sumerians in the early history of Babylonia gave them, in the eyes of following generations, a high place—so much so, indeed, that at a date so late as that of Samas-sum-ukin, the Saosduchinos of the Greeks, the king had a Bilingual inscription written in Sumerian and Semitic Babylonian. Sumerian was, however, at that time, a language which had been dead for several centuries. That this was the case is easily seen from the ungrammatical expressions used by the court-scribe of the city of Sepharvaim where the document was found.



THE KASSITES.

A FEW WORDS must be said about the Kassites, though they have left no inscription written in their own language, and but little is known of them as a nation. The Kassites, however, played an important part all through the history of Babylonia, until the time of the second Ninevite Empire. They called themselves Kassi, and are probably the same as the Cossœans of the Greeks. At a later period the Greeks, and (misled by them) several modern scholars, tried, simply on account of the similarity of the names, to assimilate them with the Kushites of the Bible and of the Egyptian monuments, though they are

neither Semites nor Hamites. They belong to the same race as the Akkadians and Sumerians, but form, with the Elamites, a special branch, and for this reason they have often been confounded by the classics, and even sometimes on the Babylonian monuments, with them. So little is known of their language and so similar are the proper names to those of the Elamites, that it is difficult in many cases to say whether such and such a king is a Kassite or an Elamite. The two people probably formed, at a certain period, one single nation, the Kassites being the more northern group.

In the pre-historic period the Akkadians and Sumerians were in constant conflict with certain Kassite tribes, who, coming from their mountain-home on the North-East of Babylonia, fell on the more civilised countries, no doubt with the object of plunder. That they were often successful, is proved by the fact, that in those remote ages, several dynasties of Kassite kings ruled over Babylon. It was under these repeated attacks, and through this constant struggle, that the Akkadians and Sumerians were worn out, and disappeared, being, in fact, annihilated. The Semites seem to have been the only race who could resist the Kassites; it is to the Semites that the Sumerians

owed their ability to hold their ground for a time against the wild Kassite tribes. But even in the historical period, when the Semites had taken the lead and ruled over Babylon, the Kassites still continued their attacks, and a long dynasty of their kings ruled over the country. It required, in fact, all the military strength and organisation of the almost pure Semitic Ninevites to break for ever the Kassite power, and this was done only after an obstinate struggle.

The Kassites seem never to have been anything but mere adventurers. Their object was either plunder, or conquest in order to obtain regular tribute—they never established a really national Kassite dynasty, because they always adopted the language of the conquered population. For these reasons, it is, in some cases, difficult to decide whether we have a Kassite dynasty or not. Thus Hammurabi is a Kassite name, but it is probable that the ruler who bore it was a Semite named after an old king of this name. The Kassite dynasty which gave a long series of kings to Babylon about the XVIIth. century B. C. is no exception to the rule: one of the most powerful of these kings, Agu-kak-rime, had his inscriptions written in Semitic Babylonian, calling himself,

however, 'king of Kassî and Akkadî,' as well as 'king of the broad land of Babylon.'

As they adopted the language of the conquered population, the Kassites adopted all the institutions, and also, perhaps the religion as well. Thus we see Agu-kak-rime glorifying himself for having repaired the temple of Marduk. It is, however, probable that they brought with them new superstitions. The country of the Kassites was contiguous to that of the Medes, and it is no doubt through them that the Babylonians heard about Mithra, whose name appears in a list of names of the Sun-god drawn up at a very early period.

The language of the Kassites is known to us only from a short list of words, and the analysis of the proper names. From these data, we can see that it belongs to the same family of speech as Akkadian and Sumerian, but is nearer to Elamite or Susian. Its principal characteristic seems to be a greater amount of phonetic decay, and a tendency to abbreviation by dropping the weak consonants.



THE BABYLONIANS.

WE ADOPT THIS NAME to designate the Semitic population inhabiting Babylonia. The name of Semites, taken from that of Shem, son of Noah, is not a national name, but has been generally adopted and is understood by all; and for this reason it is preferable to retain it to designate the whole race. The Semites appear to have primitively inhabited the neighbourhood of Abyssinia, and to have gone down the Nile valley and settled for some time in Arabia Felix, and it is only in this locality that they acquired the strong characteristics which make them a well defined race. The Semites first

spread through Palestine and Syria, and a strong body of them crossed the Euphrates and peopled the whole of Assyria and Babylonia from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian Gulf.

This Semitic horde had no bonds of union except their common language. When in Mesopotamia, instead of forming a strong and compact empire, they were divided into numerous small kingdoms, ill-organized to resist any foreign attack, so that when the Akkadians invaded the country they had an easy conquest.

Recent studies show that, when the Semites entered Mesopotamia, they brought with them the first elements of civilisation and a kind of writing. The latter they either borrowed from Egypt, when it was still in the pictorial stage, or invented during their stay in Palestine, but the first alternative is more likely, though there is not, as yet, enough evidence to prove it beyond doubt. Their entering Mesopotamia can hardly be called a conquest, for the populations they met there were still in a savage state, and were easily subdued. Their settlement may therefore be regarded as the beginning of civilisation in this region.

The Semites, as has just been said, were, at

the time of the Akkadian invasion, divided into numerous small kingdoms having no common tie; and we have seen that the Akkadians, accepting almost entirely their civilisation, were in time assimilated. There must, however, have been a period of conflict, but the resistance of the Semites was soon overcome, and the bitterness engendered thereby forgotten during the long contest with the Kassites. The Semites, in fact, identified themselves so much with their masters, the Akkadians and the Sumerians, that these were, in course of time, considered as the real national representatives—the former being looked on as the first civilisers, and the initiators of all sciences and arts; and the latter, who had often successfully resisted the Kassites, as the great military champions of Babylonian independence. There was nevertheless an old tradition, dating back no doubt from the short period of the Semitic resistance to the Akkadian invasions, which predicted the return of a kind of Messianic king who would re-establish the Semitic supremacy, and found a great Empire. Sargon of Agadé, who ruled about 3,800 years B. C., claimed to be this king. This is the time of what may be called the first Semitic renaissance. The Akkadian and Sumerian popula-

tions were worn out, so to say, by their long struggle with the Kassites, so that the Semitic element easily came again to the front. From the time of this Semitic renaissance—that is, from the time of Sargon of Agadé, it might be said that the Sumero-Akkadian population had ceased to exist.

The Semites of Babylonia continued their struggle with the Kassites and the Elamites, but with no greater success than the Akkadians and Sumerians, for they often had to accept foreign rulers, and it was a Kassite dynasty which had possession of the throne of Babylon, when the Assyrians or Ninevites first entered on the scene. In these new comers the Babylonians found adversaries more formidable still than the Kassites, for these at least never reduced Babylon to the inferior condition of a province: when they subdued it, they made of it their royal residence, and adopted the language, the uses, and the customs, of their subjects—in fact, identified themselves as much as possible with them. It was not so, however, with the Ninevite kings—Babylon was treated by them only as the other provincial towns. Everything was done for Nineveh and the glory of Assur, the national god. Babylon, always subdued

by the Assyrians, but always dissatisfied with this secondary position, revolted as soon as the Ninevite armies were engaged elsewhere, or when the Assyrian Empire got into difficulties. It is, in fact, difficult to fix the time when the first Babylonian Empire ceased, for until the last day of the Assyrian monarchy Babylon had her own native kings, who ruled sometimes only a few months, between two Assyrian conquests. The fall of Nineveh, however, left Babylon mistress of Western Asia—the Kassites and the Elamites had been annihilated, the Egyptians and the people of Syria crushed and too much weakened to become dangerous, and the Medes and the Persians were busy elsewhere. The Second Babylonian Empire could therefore develop its resources in peace. This was, in fact, the most brilliant period of the Babylonian supremacy, personified in the prominent figure of Nabuchanazzar the Great. It may be also called the period of the second Semitic renaissance, for the Babylonians at that time took enthusiastically to archæological researches. But this brilliant development was, in fact, the foreboder of coming collapse. The Persians, after having subdued all Western Asia, marched to Babylon, and took it almost without resis-

tance. This was the last of the Semitic supremacy for many centuries. After the Persians, came the Greeks, and after the Greeks the Romans; it is only when fanaticism awoke the children of the desert, that the Semites again took the lead, and even then it was only for a time, for the Turks soon put an end to this new Semitic Empire.

The political organisation of the Semites was always the same; each town had, at first, its own king, and when a warrior conquered other towns, they were merely incorporated into his empire without having anything changed. It was, in fact, the principle of feudalism. This same system was maintained to the last days of the Babylonian Empire; each province preserved, therefore, its autonomy, but the king was all-powerful, his will was law, and he could install or dismiss the provincial governor or tributary king according to his caprice.

It is difficult to extract the really Semitic element from the complicated and hybrid religious system adopted, during the historical period, by the Babylonians, as it is shown to us by the inscriptions. At the time of the Akkadian invasion, however, the Babylonian Semites seem to have been at just about the same stage of development as that from which

the people of Syria never emerged. Each town had its own national god, and as the kingdoms increased only at the expense of the others, the gods of the conquered cities were admitted into the pantheon as secondary divinities; though, in certain cases, through fashion or habit, some of the gods were still held in great favour, and had a high rank attributed to them. Bel, for instance, who must have been at one time the great god of the Semites, and who was the local god of Nippur, was, in the course of time, assimilated with Merodach, and sometimes even confounded with him.

It has been supposed, though with very little ground, that at the time of Sargon of Agadé there was a kind of religious reform, and also a kind of systematization of the pantheon. If such a reform took place, it was but local, and did not survive the Empire of Sargon. In the inscriptions of the first and second Babylonian Empires, the lists of the gods do not present any rational arrangement, and it must have been as difficult for the Babylonians as it was for the Greeks and Romans, to form an idea of the hierarchy of their gods. Not only were the deities innumerable, but often the reputation of a temple or shrine gave pre-eminence to a god, who was looked

upon as the deity presiding exclusively over the temple or shrine in question, so that the god came to be specially associated with it, and to a certain extent distinguished from the same god worshipped in another place. This is how the existence of an Ishtar of Arbela and an Ishtar of Babylon is to be explained. A curious instance of fashion in the matter of worship may be cited in the case of Sin, the Moon-god. This divinity appears to be one of the earliest of the pantheon, his worship was afterwards long neglected, but on the eve of their final overthrow, like a man who, on his death-bed, suddenly remembers the creed of his childhood, the Babylonians turned suddenly to the long-forgotten god, and, by numerous presents to his temple and pompous ceremonies, tried to atone for their neglect.

As already stated, the Semites brought into Mesopotamia with them the first elements of civilisation, and among other things, the art of writing. Their system, which, most likely, had not yet emerged from the pictorial stage, had not, it would seem, at the time of its introduction into Mesopotamia, attained complete development, for many characters appear to have been added in this new country. This pictorial style of writing was, at first, inscribed

upon papyrus. Later, however, clay was adopted as writing-material, and the lines of the hieroglyphs were changed, in consequence of the use of a wooden stilus, into wedges. The wedge-formed characters, thus obtained, were imitated afterwards on stone, thus giving birth to the cuneiform signs we know so well. This must have happened at a very early period, for the characters of the oldest inscriptions, those of Sargon and Ur-Bau, have already assumed the form of groups of wedges. The earlier documents, which were no doubt written on papyrus, are most likely lost to us for ever.

Among the fine arts, architecture is the most interesting, on account of the special character of its development. From the general arrangement of the edifices, it is evident that the first buildings—those of the pre-Akkadian Semites, and perhaps also of the more primitive population—which the Semites found on the shores of the Persian Gulf, were made of wood, the palm-tree being used almost exclusively. Clay moulded into bricks being afterwards adopted, the architects imitated the earlier constructions, and never shook off the old conventional style; their buildings, though enlarged, being always on the same pattern. Plastic art, also, was fixed according to a

conventional style. The early sculptures are, no doubt, more roughly done, but the progress of the art is only visible in the details. It is, however, remarkable, that among the seals and engraved gems the most ancient show already great skill on the part of the artist, and that those of a more recent period seem to indicate a decay of the art.

Commerce has always been one of the favorite vocations of the Semites, and we may believe that this was the case even at the earliest period. As soon as private documents appear—that is, at the time of Hammurabi, we find commerce already in the hands of the Semitic population. There is no document, however, showing how far this commerce extended. In early days it might have reached as far as Syria and Egypt on the West; but in other directions the Babylonian Empire was surrounded by uncivilised and wild tribes with whom but little trade could be done. As the Babylonian Empire extended, the area of her commerce was enlarged, but it was always confined on the West on account of the sea, for the Babylonians were never a maritime nation.

Agriculture, which was even more to their taste than commerce, was as far advanced as it

could be in ancient times. The configuration of Mesopotamia being favorable to a system of irrigation, the Babylonians seem to have made great use of canals, which brought the fertilising waters of the two great rivers through the plains. Several of their kings regarded the construction of canals as a glorious accomplishment, for Babylonia, not having a river like the Nile, fertilizing of itself the cultivated land, the construction of canals was of the utmost importance.

As among all nations of antiquity, the progress of industry was nil, for the slaves were the machines used by manufacturers in all branches. Some were brought up as blacksmiths, others as masons—in short, in every branch of industry and trade. Large slave-owners used to have certain trades taught to their slaves, whom they afterwards lent out on hire. This system was carried to a very great development. Some slaves were even brought up as scribes, sculptors, ivory-carvers, etc. The slave-market was principally supplied by wars, but slaves were reared and brought up by owners, just as horses are in our days; and this class was the most valuable, for it contained the most accomplished slaves. As in Rome, freemen also could become slaves, for if they

were unable to pay their debts, they became the property of their creditors.

In the Babylonian social organisation caste, as it is understood in India, did not exist, but the inhabitants of the land were divided into classes. The king was all-powerful; under him were the great functionaries to whom he deputed his power; after these came the magistracy and the clergy. The last-named formed, by their moral influence, a powerful class; but in no branch of this hierarchy were the functions hereditary. With the above-named the large land-owners formed what might be called the higher classes. The lower classes were the traders, shopkeepers, small agriculturists, and freemen, who carried on trade (partly in the hands of the slaves) as smiths, sculptors, etc. The scribes also, though they were highly esteemed, must be placed in the lower class. Between the freemen and the slaves was another class, similar to the serfs of the middle ages. This class was numerous in the agricultural districts. They cultivated the ground and had to pay a certain percentage of the crops to the landowners, the latter in some cases finding the seeds and the implements. It is probable that the same system was applied, in the towns, to the small retail dealers,

the shopkeeper being merely an agent or manager who sold to the customers the goods placed in the shop by his master.

The Babylonian language belongs to the Semitic family, and is, therefore, closely connected with Hebrew, Chaldee, etc. During the many centuries it was spoken and written on the banks of the Euphrates, it does not appear to have altered much. The reason of this curious fact is to be found partly in the character of the language itself (which, through the trilaterism, had attained, even before the literary age, an artificial systemization, which crystalized it to a certain extent), but is also partly due to the early period at which it was fixed by the standard works which were always, in later times, looked on by the Babylonians as the models to be imitated. The Babylonian language has, however, several evident marks of archaism. The biliteral roots—that is, the roots having as base two consonants—are very numerous, but, to bring them into harmony with the trilateral system, they are treated as weak roots—that is, as roots having a *radical vowel*. The quadrilateral roots are also not so numerous as in Arabic, or even as in Hebrew. There is one point of the highest importance, which Babylonian has revealed, and that is

the existence of consonantal case-endings at an early period in the Semitic tongues. These have been preserved only in the pronouns, and are in general use only in the earliest historical inscriptions. The use of the cases, in reality formed by postpositions, was not in the genius of the Semitic tongues, and they were therefore neglected, and, little by little, disappeared in Babylonian, as they also disappeared in the other dialects, before their literary periods. In all other respects, Babylonian follows the same lines as the remaining Semitic tongues—it developed voices in the verb by means of prefixes, secondary forms by the insertion of *t* and a particular tertiary form by the insertion of *tan*. The masculine and feminine is distinguished in the second and third persons, though in the inscriptions this distinction is not always carried out. As in the other Semitic tongues, there are only two genders, and the feminine form is often used as a kind of neuter. As to the position of Babylonian among the Semitic tongues, it is nearest to Hebrew, though it seems to have influenced all, and Syriac, which is perhaps the most decayed dialect, has preserved many forms and idioms borrowed at Babylon. Ethiopic has in many cases a strange agreement with Babylonian, but this may be

explained by the fact that what is archaism in Babylonian is due, in Ethiopic, to a new contact with the populations of Abyssinia, the prehistoric home of the Semites. The clearness of the vowels, which gives such great value to Babylonian, and which makes it the Italian of the Semitic tongues, is most likely principally due to its system of writing, in which the vowels must be expressed.

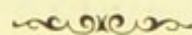
The history of the Babylonian language may be divided roughly into five periods. The first is the pre-Akkadian period, the order of the sentence then being probably the same as in Hebrew and Arabic. To this age we may attribute some of the omen texts, and also a few poems, such as that of the Creation, which, in this case, must have been retouched at a later time. The second, or co-Akkadian period, is the golden age of the literature, but the language was strongly affected by the influence of Akkadian, which disturbed its syntax, and from which words were borrowed wholesale. The third period or Semitic renaissance begins with Sargon of Agadé, when there is a tendency to purify the language from the non-Semitic elements. Then comes the historical period (the IVth.), which begins with Hammurabi, and extends to the second Babylonian Empire.

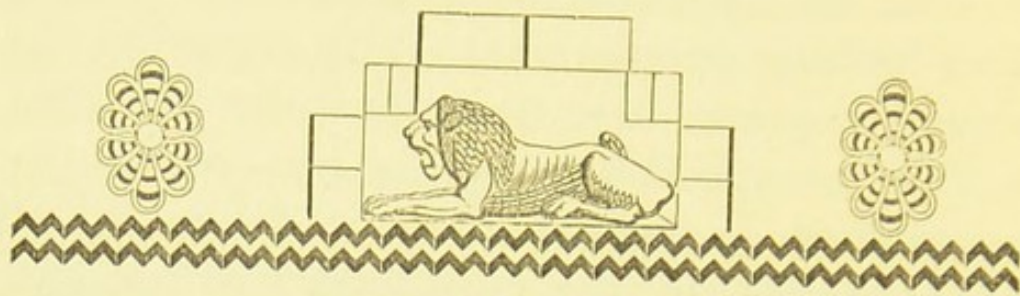
During the fifth period, which extends to the fall of Babylon, the language remained the same, but there is a greater tendency to borrow from the old language of Akkad, and we find also, in many documents, traces of Aramaic influence. During the time of the Persian and Greek rulers, the language remains the same—we can hardly point to a Persian, and much less to a Greek word.

Though, as already remarked, it is difficult to decide with certainty if a poem belong to the Akkadians or the Semites, yet the very character of the poem and the proper names of the personages introduced seem to make it evident, that the great Epic of Gisdubar is the work of a Semitic poet. This hero has been identified with Nimrod, though we believe this identification to be erroneous. Gisdubar probably had a real existence, but, like many great historical kings, such as Alexander, Cyrus, and others, he has been changed into a mythical hero. A great warrior, and champion of Babylonian independence, he has been identified with the Sun, and his actions made to correspond more or less with the various stations of that luminary. The poem of the Creation is also probably Semitic. It is the same account, but extended and amplified, as

we find in Egyptian, Phœnician, and among other Semitic populations. With regard to the fables, they are, it is now generally admitted, an African speciality, and, for this reason, we are inclined to believe that the fables, which are preserved in the cuneiform writings (all, moreover, written in Babylonian) are Semitic. No language ever has two consecutive literary periods, and Babylonian, being no exception to the rule, seems, after the extraordinary rich literature which distinguished the co-Akkadian period, when a large number of masterpieces and standard works were produced, to have been suddenly struck with sterility. During the periods which followed we have historical records, votive inscriptions, private letters, &c., &c.; but no poem or any other work of imagination.

Before concluding, it may be noted that the Babylonians, who, before the Akkadian invasion, used, like the other Semitic nations, to bury their dead, adopted cremation, and retained it even during the rule of the Persian kings.





THE ASSYRIANS.

THE Assyrians take their name from the city Assur, the old capital of their Empire. It is generally admitted that this was a Babylonian Colony, their first rulers bearing the Babylonian title of Patesi. It is certain that the Assyrians received their civilisation from Babylon, but they may have adopted the old name used by the Akkadian rulers of Mesopotamia, without being a tributary state. The Semitic element was strong in Assyria, and was always the predominating one. The Capital of this Semitic Empire was, at an early date, transferred from the city of Assur to that of Nineveh, more conveniently

situated, though the old city always maintained its claim, just as Moscow considers itself to be the metropolis of the Russian empire, notwithstanding that the Tzar resides at St. Petersburg. Being an eminently warlike nation, the Assyrians, as soon as they had established their supremacy over the surrounding tribes became dangerous neighbours for the Babylonian Empire, and during the Kassite dynasty we see the Assyrian kings already making the law in Babylon. The earliest records of Assyrian history show us all the efforts of the nation absorbed in subduing the populations on the North and East, interrupted by expeditions against Babylon. From the reign of Shalmaneser II., the Ninevite kings made up their minds to conquer Syria, and came therefore into contact with the Jews. The most formidable enemies, however, which the Assyrians met with, were the Kassites and the Elamites—the former, who had struggled so long with the Akkadians, the Sumerians, and the Babylonians, were reduced first; but the resistance of the Elamites was more obstinate—indeed, it may be said that the last years of the Ninevite Empire were almost completely occupied with wars against Elam. Tired of this ever renewed struggle, Assurbanipal decided to annihilate

the Elamite Empire, and succeeded after several most sanguinary campaigns, the country being, in the end, wasted, and the inhabitants exterminated. In this struggle Assyria seems, however, to have become exhausted, and did not survive the extinction of her enemy many years.

The political organisation of Assyria was the same as that of Babylonia. It was an unlimited despotism with a feudal organisation, but the provincial princes or governors were, perhaps, under the more direct power of the king. This feudal system was the sore point of the Assyrian Empire, keeping the country in a state of continual conflict with the surrounding nations, and finally causing its dissolution. The Ninevite kings, when they had made any new conquest, either maintained the former ruler as tributary, or gave a new king to the conquered district. In the latter case the new king, though possibly a Ninevite, soon identified himself with his subjects and raised the standard of revolt.

The religion of the Assyrians was the same as that of the Babylonians. Their national god, however, was Assur, whom they identified with an old divinity mentioned in the legend of the creation, and placed at the head of the

Pantheon. As they had adopted the old Akkadian and Babylonian literature, so they accepted also the legends and divinities with the superstitions and the ceremonial. The Assyrians, however, were more religious than the Babylonians. When the Ninevite kings go to war, it is always in the name of their god Assur; and after the victory their first care is to offer presents to the temples. If there was any tendency to monotheism in the Assyrian religion, this was due to the autocratic form of the Government. They called upon Assur as their principal deity, and the king was, to a certain extent identified with him, but the other gods were also invoked. On the eve of a battle we see Assurbanipal praying to Ishtar of Arbela, and another king, Assurnasirpal, says that he invoked the 65,000 great gods of heaven and earth.

The Assyrians seem to have borrowed everything from Babylonia. Their architecture, for instance, is a copy of that of the Babylonians. Like them, they constructed their temples, palaces, and city-walls of brick, notwithstanding that stone is plentiful in the country; but they probably made less use of enamelled brick for sculptures, the walls of their palaces being covered with alabaster

slabs instead. The favorable geographical situation of Nineveh made this town a great centre of commerce, and it became the place of transit between Syria and Mesopotamia.

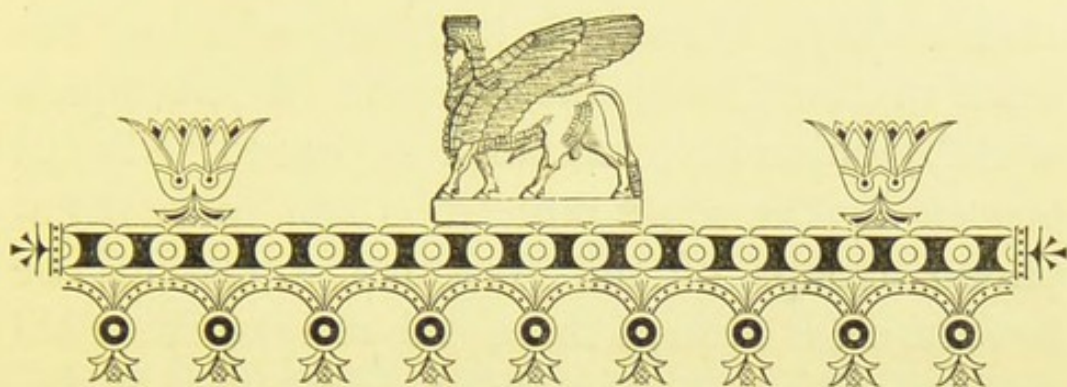
As to the social organisation in Nineveh and Assyria, it seems to have been very much the same as in Babylonia, the Assyrians received from Babylon their civilisation, and also the foundation of their laws. This legal foundation, as we have seen, rests on precepts written in Akkadian, and attributed to the Akkadians as the civilisers of the country. The most important legal document is a tablet containing precepts relating to private life and family duties, and has been preserved to us through a Ninevite copy, taken from an old Babylonian one. Ninevite society was, therefore, probably divided like that of Babylonia, most likely with the same distinction of classes. The religious element, however, was, perhaps, neither so influential nor so powerful—no doubt because the despotic king had himself absorbed, (so to say) all the power. Nevertheless, the king was not out of the reach of religious prescriptions, and had to conform to certain rules, though we doubt whether the Ninevite kings regarded themselves as bound by them, and did not find, in many cases, excuses to

avoid the restrictions put to their conduct or even to their caprice.

The Assyrian language (that is to say, the Ninevite dialect) differs very little from the Babylonian of the historical period. This, however, is only what might be expected, when it is borne in mind that the Assyrians had as standard works the same poets as the Babylonians, and that they copied all the literary productions of Babylonia. The language has, however, a much stronger Semitic character. In many cases it shakes off the Akkadian influence and the sentence becomes freer—sometimes, even, the tendency is to bring the syntactical order back to the same arrangement as is preserved in Hebrew and Arabic. There is also in the language a tendency to systematize the grammatical forms in accordance with the Semitic turn of mind—a change which might, if Nineveh had not been reduced to ruins, have developed a real dialect.

Ninevite literature is very limited, and consists exclusively of official records written by the court scribes, and official inscriptions carved on the palace-walls and floors. These compositions are monotonous and tedious, they give always the same formulæ, and the same expressions—there is, in fact, no attempt at

literary production or elegance in style and variety in the arrangement of the materials. The scribes, in the narratives of the kings' wars, enumerate minutely, but in the most tedious way, the number of cities captured, the number of enemies killed or taken prisoners, the amount of tribute given—but that is all. These accounts are a strange contrast to the vivid and dramatic descriptions given by the Egyptian scribes of the doings of the Pharaohs. The other Assyrian documents, the reports to the kings from their political agents, their astrologers, or other officials, have no pretention to be literary works, nor have also the private letters. The Assyrians had, however, a taste for literature, but, like the Babylonians, they were satisfied with the old standard works of the co-Akkadian period. To them we owe the greater part of our knowledge of this old poetry, for they had accumulated numerous copies in their libraries, and the Ninevite kings employed many scribes, who were constantly occupied in transcribing into modern characters the old Akkadian and Babylonian literary productions, preserved in the Southern cities, and it is chiefly these Ninevite copies which have been recovered by the explorers.



CHALDÆANS.

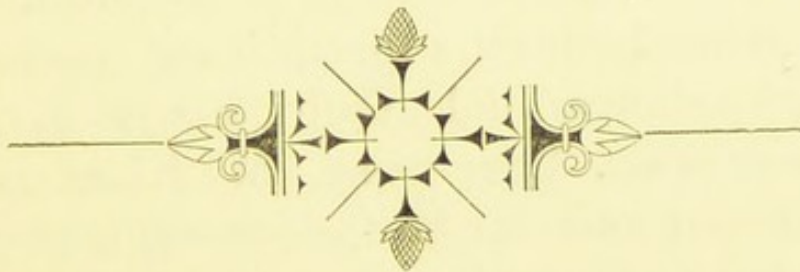
Though the Chaldæans have not left any inscriptions in their own dialect, they, nevertheless, deserve a place here, on account of the important political part they played during the last period of the Assyrian Empire. The Chaldæans, whose name appears in the inscriptions under the form of *Kaldu*, formed a powerful tribe on the shore of the Persian Gulf, and are mentioned at an early date. It was they who formed, no doubt, the backbone of the Babylonian armies, but they took a leading part only during the reign of the Ninevite king Sargon. At that time, the Babylonians had been crushed, and all resistance seemed

to have broken down, when a man of a remarkable ability, Merodach-Baladan, who, at the head of the Chaldæans, became the champion of Babylonian independance, appeared. Always beaten by the more numerous and more disciplined troupes of the Assyrian monarchs, he nevertheless always managed to take the field again, seizing and making good use of the slightest opportunity. Merodoch-Baladan died an exile in Elam, but the struggle was continued by his children until the last days of Nineveh. After the fall of the Assyrian Empire, the Chaldæans did not lose their influence, which they appear to have maintained as late as the time of the Persian and Greek dynasties.

From the proper names of the Chaldæans it is shown that they spoke the dialect preserved in the book of Daniel, and from those names also we see that they had the same religion as the Babylonians.

It is necessary here to contradict what has been often said about the supposed astrological speciality and sacerdotal functions of the Chaldæans. Some authors have gone so far as to make of them a kind of religious hereditary caste like the Levites among the Jews. All these are errors propagated by the Greek and Latin classics. This is not the place to discuss

the point, but we can say that the inscriptions prove that the Chaldæans were to be found in all trades and professions, and that the priests and astrologers were not exclusively drawn from the Chaldæan tribe. The confusion arises from the fact that at a late date some magicians took the name of *Kaldu*, which means in Akkadian 'doer of great things', but they never formed a cast or a tribe.





ELAMITES.

THE Elamites may be regarded as one of the oldest nations of Western Asia. Already in the pre-historic period, as tradition shows, did their kings over-run Mesopotamia. The name of Elam is not the national one, for in the inscriptions of its rulers, it is called *Anzan*, and in some of the oldest inscriptions, one of these rulers calls himself "Sutruk-Nankhunta, King of Anzan, the Susian." From this it appears that the Elamites called themselves Susians from the name of the capital, Susa. The name Elam is the Semitic translation of the Akkadian name *Nim*, meaning "highland" or "mountain,"

Judging from their language, and from their general type as given by the monuments, the Elamites belonged to the same race as the Akkadians, and were really the Southern branch of the Kassites. It is, in fact, sometimes difficult to detect, in the case of some of the names, whether we have a Kassite or an Elamite. Like the Kassites, the Elamites were perpetually at war with the small kingdoms of Babylonia; but with this difference, that the Kassites had for principal object plunder, though sometimes a successful adventurer founded a Kassite dynasty in Babylonia. The Elamites, however, being better organised at home, and forming in fact a powerful nation, subdued Babylonia to make of it a tributary province. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the Babylonians had a greater hatred for the Elamites. The Kassite kings ruling in Babylon were always "Babylonized," so to say, very soon, and also forgot even their first nationality, but the Elamites could not be considered but as foreigners. The struggle between the Elamites and the Babylonians continued till the appearance of the Assyrians on the political scene. The Susian kings had enough foresight to perceive that the new comers would become the masters of Western Asia and from

that moment their policy was to maintain an independant Babylonian kingdom as a kind of barrier between them and the Assyrians. All the revolts of Babylon during the reigns of the last Assyrian kings were fomented by the Elamites. Assurbanipal understood this so well, that he resolved to put a stop to it by the extinction of the Susian Empire. He brought all the might of his empire against the Susian kingdom, and after a most sanguinary campaign, destroyed it so completely that it never rose again. When, after the fall of Nineveh, a new kingdom arose in Elam, the Elamites had forgotten their past glory—it was, in fact, a new nation; the old one had died, leaving only ruins and monuments without meaning for the new Elamites.

The Elamite monarchy, like all those of which we have already spoken, was a feudal empire; but the ties, which united the great vassals to the king residing at Susa, were still looser than in the kingdom of Babylon. It was as much a federation as a kingdom—the great vassals followed the Susian king only so far as they found it in their interest to do so. The Kassites of the North had no homogeneity at all. They formed no nation, but were only an agglomeration of independent tribes

speaking the same language. The Elamites had made only one step further towards the formation of a nationality. Susa, perhaps on account of its civilisation and its geographical position, was recognised as the leader of this disconnected empire; but it is very doubtful if this ancient civilisation ever extended into the provinces of the Empire, and this explains how it could be so easily forgotten.

As it might be expected, the religion of the Elamites was much the same as that of the Akkadian. There was, perhaps, less magic in it. What, however, besides the want of documents, makes it difficult to determine anything with certainty, is the adoption by the Elamites of several Semitic gods. They seem to have had a divine hierarchy, the national god of Susa being, of course, placed at the head. One of the peculiarities of the worship was the mystery which surrounded the images of the gods. In an impenetrable forest were these images preserved, and only the heads of the priesthood could enter the holy of holies. The association of the temple and the forest is characteristic, and appears already in the earliest legends mentioning the Elamites. It has been supposed, and not without some reason, that there were in Elam two religions; the old

national religion, full of superstitions, and based principally on terror, followed by the people; and another higher religion borrowed from Babylon and followed by the king and the higher class. But so little is known on the subject that it is impossible to make any distinction and to say if such or such a god belong to the one or the other.

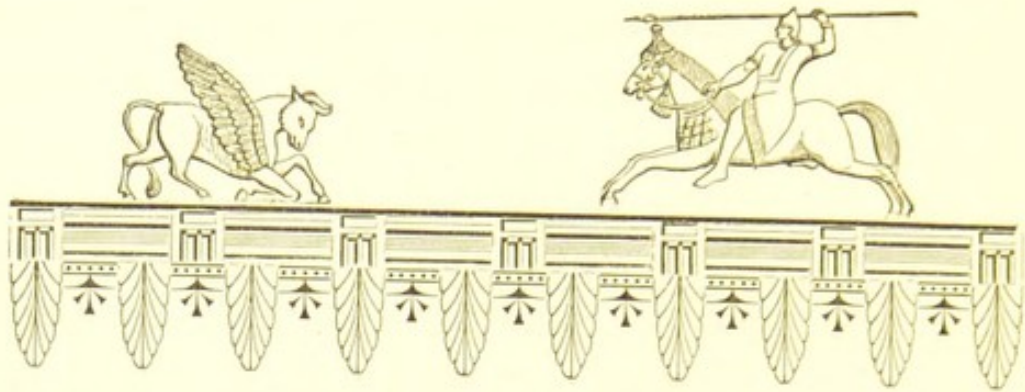
Elam, or rather Susa, received its civilisation from Babylon; its writing and syllabary, its architecture, and other arts have a Babylonian stamp; though the Elamites, like the Ninevites, had stone, yet they copied, like them also, the brick-monuments of Southern Mesopotamia. Too little, however, is known to enable one to say if they acquired even a weak national characteristic like the Assyrians. On account of their geographical position, they always pressed to the West, and, as they could not teach the Babylonians anything, they borrowed from them, but never gave anything in exchange. The Elamite Empire was exclusively a feudal military power, and when it was annihilated, the Babylonian kings never even thought of acquiring so useful a country, which was then occupied by the Medic tribes.

The language of the Susian kings' inscriptions, which we call Elamite or Susian, is

related to Akkadian and Sumerian, and still closer to the Medic. Its grammar shows that that it has been much less influenced by the Semites of Babylon, and it also has the vagueness of all tongues still unfixed by literature. The verbal forms are still in that stage in which they may be treated as simple nominal compounds. One of the most interesting peculiarities is the position of the adjective, which is often placed before the noun, just as it was in Akkadian before that language became influenced by the Semitic population of Mesopotamia.

As to the literature of Elam, nothing has come down to us except a few inscriptions of its kings, which always repeat the same formulæ. Though we may suppose that the Elamite priests sang, in their temples, hymns in praise of their gods, yet these, most likely, were never written down, and were dead for ever when Assurbanipal destroyed the temples, and exterminated the population.





VANNITES OR HALDIANS.

THE populations inhabiting the country to the North of Assyria, the Nairi of the Ninevite inscriptions, all belonged to the same race, and were divided into many small kingdoms, only one of which adopted the cuneiform writing, borrowed, with a few modifications, from Nineveh. This kingdom was that of Biaina, transcribed as *Man* in Assyrian. This word is preserved in the modern name of the lake Van, and, for this reason, has been preserved by the Assyriologists. Though the rulers called themselves kings of the land of Van, their national name was Haldians, and appears to have been taken

from that of their god Haldis, just as the Assyrians took theirs from that of their god Assur. Judging from their language, and from the representations on the Assyrian monuments, the Haldians seem to be of the same race as the Kassites and the Elamites, and would therefore be related also to the Akkadians and Sumerians. This is what we should expect from the general distribution of the populations in Western Asia, for the Semites of Babylonia and Assyria were surrounded on the East and North by Turanians. These populations of Nairi were in constant conflict with the Assyrians, but, warlike and fond of their independance, when once subdued they took advantage of the first opportunity to shake off the yoke. The Assyrian armies often invaded and wasted their country. The kingdom of Van was at last finally subdued by Assurbanipal, and it never rose again; the population, decimated by centuries of sanguinary wars, was replaced by the Aryans, who pressed on from the East and West, and, when the fall of Nineveh was brought about by the Medes, the whole land had become Aryanised. The new-comers soon forgot their former migrations, and the Armenians, as they were afterwards called, attributed a high antiquity

to their monarchy, giving even a long list of Aryan kings, supposed to have ruled over Armenia from the time of the legendary Ninus to the Greek conquest.

The Vannic kingdom was also a despotic monarchy, and the smaller kingdoms, reduced by its kings, were made nearly tributary, as in Elam, so that there was no compact organisation. During the Assyrian wars, we see the tributary provinces pass, one by one, under the rule of Nineveh, till the kingdom of Van is reduced to its capital, and a small tract of land around it.

The religion of the Haldians was also similar to that of the other populations of the same race. Each town had its own god, and this god became the supreme deity, when the town became the seat of a kingdom. As always happens, the change of dynasty and the fortune of war, brought different gods, at different times, to the head of the pantheon. From a survey of the inscriptions, it appears that there was an attempt at a systemisation; but so little is known, that it is difficult to get a clear idea of the hierarchy.

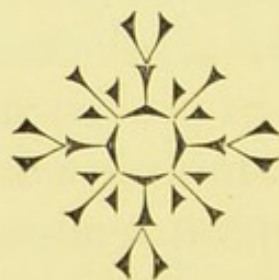
The Haldians borrowed all their civilisation from Nineveh, just as the Ninevites did from Babylon. Not only the art of writing, but also

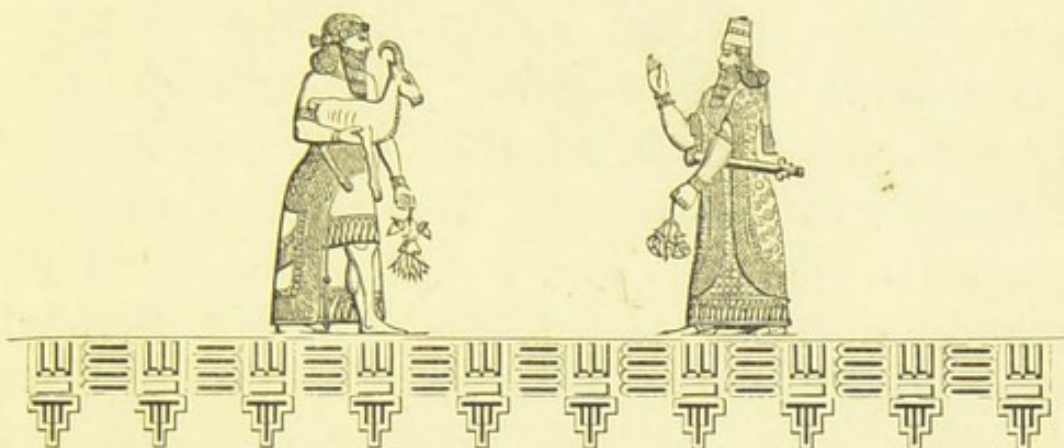
their system of construction (as far, at least, as can be judged from the ruins) came from their southern neighbours. There is, however, a certain originality in Vannic art. The kings of Van seem to be the first who had cuneiform inscriptions carved on the polished surface of large rocks, and it is, no doubt, the Vannic rock-inscriptions which gave to Darius (as has been already suggested) the idea of having his large inscription carved on the rock of Behistun.

Much has been said, especially when little was known, about the language of the Vannic inscriptions. Some scholars tried to find an Armenian dialect, others a Semitic one, and at last it has been connected with the Georgian language, still spoken in the Caucasus. An examination of the texts published, leaves, however, little doubt of its being akin to the other Turanian languages of the same region: Kassite, Elamite, etc. What has been taken for flexions in the nouns, are postpositions, exactly as in Akkadian. The language of the Haldians has, besides, all the characteristics of this linguistic group—it has no genders, forms the plural by means of a suffix or omits it altogether, has a great tendency to agglutinate several words, especially nouns and adjectives;

and, as far as the few inscriptions we possess enable us to judge, has the same uncertainty with regard to the forms of the verbs as we notice in Elamite.

The kingdom of Van had hardly time to produce a literature. At first its kings not only borrowed the writing from Nineveh, but had their inscriptions written in Assyrian, and when they adopted the national tongue, they never tried to reform the syllabary so as to adapt it to the new language—on the contrary, they kept the ideograms, of which they made even greater use than the Assyrians. They not only servilely used the Ninevite syllabary, but also copied the formulæ of the Ninevite inscriptions. There is, in fact, hardly any originality in the Vannic inscriptions; they give, in the same tedious way as the Assyrian official records, the names of the captured cities, and the list of prisoners and booty taken, without any attempt at literary ornament.





AMARDIANS OR APIRIANS.

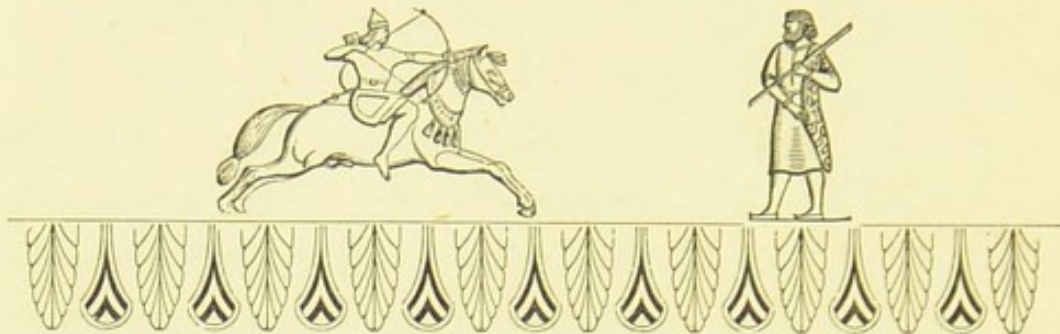
AFTER the final conquest, or rather, the destruction, of Elam by the Assyrians, the land was completely wasted, and all the inhabitants killed or carried into captivity. The Ninevite monarch, who, according to the political rule of his empire, used to replace the conquered people by colonies taken from other parts of his dominions, departed, in this case, from the usual tradition, and after having wasted Elam, and destroyed its population, went away leaving a desert behind him. New tribes now came to occupy this land, still covered with ruins, but the new-comers knew nothing of the ancient glory of Elam. They

were the Apirians, called, by the Greeks, Amardians or Mardians. This new population was, however, of the same race as the Elamites and Kassites. The weakness of the Assyrian Empire in its last years, and the disorganisation which followed its fall, enabled the new kingdom to develop, but it appears to have fallen, shortly after, first under the dominion of the Persians, and then of the rising empire of the Medes, though its kings may have preserved a kind of semi-independence. It would appear that it is among these populations that Cyrus was brought up, and ruled first under the suzerainty of Astyages, raising, later on (as will be seen when we come to treat of the Medes), the standard of revolt against him.

Very little is known about the Apirians, they never formed a powerful empire, and would not have left any trace behind them if they had not, in consequence of the nearness of Babylon, borrowed the cuneiform writing. The sculptures, which accompany the royal inscriptions, show clearly that Babylonian influence was felt deeply by the Apirians—their very costumes seem to be borrowed, to some extent, from Babylon. The Apirian religion, however, is still uncontaminated by the

invasion of foreign gods, and it was very likely related to the national worship of the old Elamite Empire. One peculiarity is worth mentioning; the Elamites, as gathered from a few passages in the Bible, were renowned for their musical accomplishments, and on the basreliefs figures, among the Elamite prisoners, a row of harpists; on the Apirian monuments we again see a representation of harpists and other instrument players, as if music played an important part in the social life of this people.

The Apirian language was closely related to that of Elam, but it shows a general tendency to softening, like that of a more cultured population, which has been influenced by foreign civilisation. An Elamite dialect, it has still the character of uncertainty in the verbal forms, like most languages without literature. It is probable that Apirian national life was too short, and perhaps, also, too agitated by continual wars to give time for literary pursuits. To this population, however, is due the invention of a special syllabary, taken from that of Babylon, but simplified. It is with this syllabary that the Apirian kings had their inscriptions written. The only two inscriptions we know of, have been found in the plain of Mal-Amir, and were carved to commemorate the construction of a temple.



MEDES.

ONE of the most disputed problems has been to decide who were the Medes, or the people who brought about the end of the Assyrian Empire. As, before the decyphering of the cuneiform inscriptions, no populations but Semitic or Aryan were known in Western Asia, it was generally accepted that the Medes were near relatives of the Persians, and a branch of the Turanian family; but the progress of the science soon showed the existance of a powerful Turanian element, and, little by little, the unsuspected fact of the long rule of several Turanian empires was brought to light. It was discovered that

the Akkadians and Sumerians had ruled for centuries over Babylonia; that the Elamites and the Kassites held out for a long period in their mountain-fastnesses; and, lastly, that the populations inhabiting the vast land of Media were Turanians before the expansion of the Aryans westwards.

The Medes were, therefore, of the same race as the Kassites, the Elamites, and the Apirians, and nearest akin to the last. The Aryan tribes, pressing on all round Media, penetrated, little by little, and in many districts superseded the Turanians. Media was at all times divided into many small kingdoms, and, at the period of the Assyrian conquest in these regions, we already see some of the kingdoms ruled by Aryan dynasties. The bulk of the population was primitively Turanian, but at the time of the fall of Nineveh, it had become Aryan. In some parts the Turanian language was maintained even by Aryan rulers, who wished to keep it as a mark of antiquity; and also, perhaps, to conciliate the Turanian element of their subjects. The Turanian language, known to us from the Behistun inscription, was probably that spoken at the court of Astyages, though the dynasty on the throne of Media was probably of Aryan descent. Cyax-

ares, the real founder of this empire, brought under his sceptre not only all the populations of Media, but also those of Elam and Persia. The end of this short-lived empire was brought about in a very unexpected way, by the revolt of Cyrus. Cyrus, the grand-son of Astyages, had been made governor or king of Anzan or Elam. Whatever were his reasons—whether for revenge (if we may believe the romantic story of Herodotos), or for mere ambition, he raised the standard of revolt against Astyages. He appears to have carried with him not only the Elamites, but also the Persians and the very soldiers of Astyages—the Medes, in fact, seem to have hailed him as a deliverer. Though Cyrus was a Persian by birth, his education had made of him a Mede or Elamite, and he adopted the language and the customs of his Apirian subjects. This explains the great importance given to the Medic inscription on the rock of Behistun.

The short life of the Medic Empire founded by Cyaxares, gives an idea of what might often have taken place in Media. A warlike chief sometimes succeeded in gathering under his power the various tribes; but once dead, the supremacy was seldom maintained by his

successors, and a new chief raised his particular tribe to the leading position. There never was, it would seem, any attempt at a reform of organisation among these Turanian tribes, to counteract the want of unity. The fall of Astyages and the accession of Cyrus was an ordinary event in the eyes of the Medes. As long as the tribal rights were respected, they easily accepted a new king, who was, in fact, only the chief leader, like Agamemnon among the Greeks before Troy. Cyrus was a great conqueror, but, either on account of policy, or for the sake of tradition, always respected the rights, religion, and customs of the new populations which were brought under his sway.

The religion of the Medes has a great historical importance. The Turanian population of Media appears to have accepted, at a very early period, but under a modified form, Zoroastrianism. It was not the severe monotheism of Darius, but a dualism full of superstitions, in which the spirits or genii played an important part. A great many of the practices mentioned in the Zend-Avesta, must be traced back to the Medes. Media appears, in fact, to have been the home of magianism. It is a most characteristic fact, that the revolt against Cambyses, who may have had leanings towards

the orthodox and puritan Zoroastrianism of Persia proper, was led by a Magian, of Aryan race, and supported by the population of Media. The Magianism of Media had, no doubt, monotheism as its basis, but the part played by the spirits was so important, that monotheism was, so to say, obliterated by superstitious beliefs and practices.

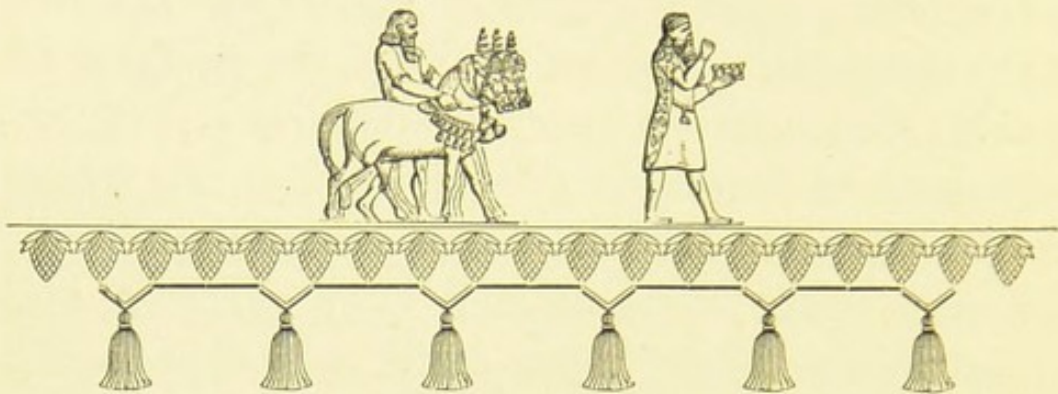
If we may trust the reports of the classics, Assyrian and Babylonian civilisation had, at an early date, penetrated into Media. That Ecbatana continued to exist, proves that the Medes were not mere barbarians. No trace, however, of their civilisation is left—or, rather, has been yet discovered. There are reasons to believe that writing was in use, though the absence of positive evidence, and the adaptation of the Elamite syllabary by the Medes would speak against it. After all, it is possible that the Magians preserved the religious traditions orally, as did the Aryans in India.

Media must have been a country of many languages, for, besides the primitive Turanian population, and the Aryans who had penetrated from the East, a great many people had been imported into the Western districts by the Assyrians. These colonies had been drawn from Armenia and Syria, but principally from

the latter, and were therefore chiefly composed of Semites. At the time of Cyrus and Darius the influence of these various languages on each other was as yet inconsiderable, the inscription of Behistun containing but few words which are not Medic. As a language, Medic became more systematised than Apirian, and the words acquired more stability, but it is still evident that it did not become fixed by any literature. Like the Kassite, the Elamite and the Apirian, the Medic language is strongly agglutinative, and it has more flexibility than Akkadian and Sumerian.

Nothing of this language has come down to us besides the Behistun and other trilingual inscriptions of the Persian kings.





PERSIANS.

THE Persians inhabited the mountainous region at the South-East of Elam. They were, until the conquest of Cyaxares, divided into several tribes, jealous of their independence, and constantly fighting among themselves. The Medic king was satisfied with a nominal submission, and acknowledged the Achaemedian kings, then holding the sovereignty over the Persian tribes, as tributary. As one of these kings was son-in-law of Astyages, and as he was himself of Aryan descent, the Persians did not, especially after the accession of Cyrus, consider themselves as tributaries, but rather as the

ruling race; and even in time regarded Cyaxares as the founder of the Persian Monarchy. When Cyrus appeared, everything seemed to have been prepared for the rapid rising of the Persian power: the Assyrian Empire had been broken up by the Medes; the Babylonian Kingdom had no stability, and owed its apparent greatness only to the destruction of Nineveh; the warlike tribes of Nairi or Armenia had been partly destroyed by the Assyrian armies and the population had been partly replaced by Aryans; Syria and Egypt had exhausted their strength in their struggle with Nineveh and Babylon. Cyrus easily overran, in a few years, the whole of Western Asia, and his conciliatory policy caused him, in many cases, to be received as a liberator. The fame and position of Babylon made him choose this town as his capital, though he never forsook Susa, his first capital in Elam. Cambyses, son and successor of Cyrus, seems to have departed from the conciliatory policy of his father. We may trace this change to two different influences. Residing in Babylon, Cambyses was soon brought to adopt the arrogant despotism of the Babylonian kings; and he seems also to have been led to adopt the puritan doctrines of the

orthodox Zoroastrians of Persia proper. When he was called into Egypt, there was therefore a general rising. His death made the matter worse, as his rightful successor was Darius, who was more orthodox still. The revolt spread everywhere, especially after the death of the Magian Gomates, who, assuming the name of Bardia, the deceased son of Cyrus, had resumed the conciliatory policy of his supposed father, and by so doing, secured the support of the greater part of the empire. Darius, on the contrary, would not admit any transaction. All the nations who had accepted the mild rule of Cyrus, would not acknowledge the severe and stiff domination of the orthodox Darius. Everywhere, even in Elam, competitors appeared, who appealed to the national pride to reject the Persian intruder. It is only after many years of conflict, and with the help of the old Persian generals, that Darius succeeded in putting down these many revolts, and to prevent their recurrence, he had to change completely the very constitution of the empire. This change no doubt secured peace in the Persian Monarchy, but it seems to have stamped out of its population all vitality: at the time of the Assyrian Empire, the retreat of the ten thousand led by Xenophon would

have been impossible. After two centuries of domination in Asia, the Persian Empire fell, almost without resistance, under the blows of Alexander. Cyrus was a great warrior, but no legislator, and he made therefore no attempt to reform the loose feudal organisation of his empire. Each new province added by conquest, preserved its own government and its own customs. The general revolt, which took Darius years to put down, made him feel the great defect of the feudal system, and caused him to recast the whole organisation of the Persian Empire. The kingdom was divided into satrapies, or provinces, whose governors were nominated by the king, and who had no authority over the troops, but only an administrative power. Near each satrap was an inspector, whose duties were to report to the king about the conduct of the satrap, and the state of the province. The troops were distributed over the empire in camps, but the military divisions were more numerous than the satrapies, and did not correspond with them. It is easy to see that the principal object of Darius was to separate the administrative and the military powers, so as to prevent the revolts so frequent under the old system. Under the successors of Darius, the

satrapies again usurped, little by little, the military power, and towards the end of the Persian Empire, the organisation had become again practically feudal, the satrapies being in some cases even hereditary

Religion has played an important part in the destiny of the Persian Empire. The inhabitants of Persia proper were Zoroastrians, or rather what might be called Auramazdians—that is, strict monotheist worshippers of Auramazda. Cyrus, brought up at the Medic Court, and tributary king of Elam, had, in a great measure, departed from the orthodox doctrine, and had accepted the hybrid Mazdeism of the Medes. This is, no doubt, one of the causes of his conciliatory spirit, and, when he was in Babylon, he did not mind being called priest of E-sagil and E-zida, the two great temples of this town. Cambyses, brought up under Persian influence, had a great tendency to Persian puritanism, which probably caused discontent among his heterodox subjects of Media and Elam, and this brought about the rising under the Magian. The accession of Darius to the throne, was the triumph of orthodoxy, and must have contributed to render his success more difficult. Magianism, officially beaten, still remained

powerful among the people, and knew how to make alliance with the national religion of Babylonia, in accepting some of its gods. Little by little, its influence grew higher and higher, and after a few reigns we see the Magians again powerful at the court of the kings. The consequences of this were fatal to Persian orthodoxy, for, banished from the court, though it may still have been the creed of a few puritans in Persia, it had no longer the sanction of the crown, and must have perished in the dissolution of the empire, brought about by the Greek conquest. For these reasons, it is natural to suppose that Mazdeism, as it is known to us by the Zend-Avesta, was elaborated during this period, and is far from the pure and stern monotheism of Darius. With the decay of orthodoxy came the decay of the true Persian influence; the court was invaded by Medes and Susians. Babylon, the political capital, always retained the foremost place, but Ecbatana and Susa became the favourite royal residences. Persepolis was relegated to the rank of a purely religious town, and became the burial ground of the kings.

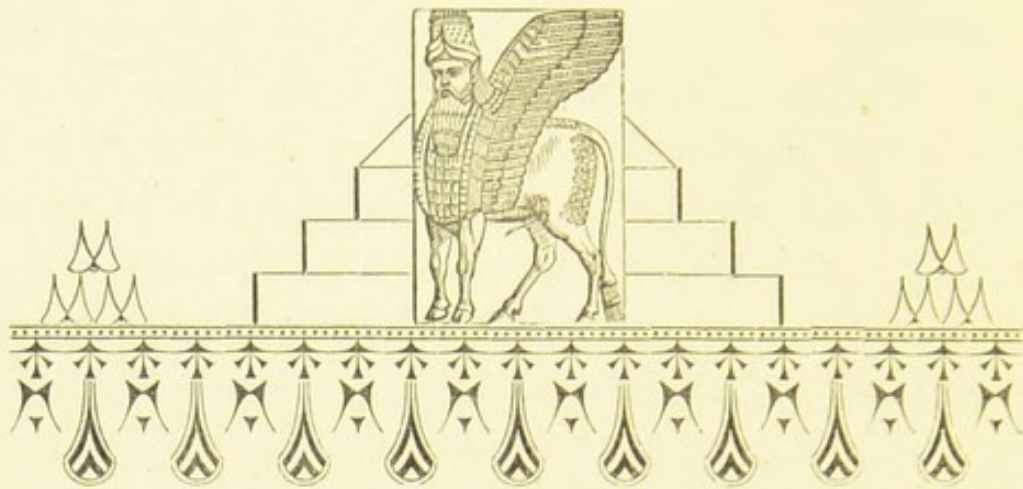
Before the conquest of Mesopotamia, the Persians had already adopted, indirectly

through the Medes, the Babylonian civilisation. When the seat of the empire was placed on the Euphrates, the Persians were thoroughly Babylonised; they adopted not only the laws and customs, but also the language of the Babylonians. The empire was Persian in name only, for it was in fact the continuation of that of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Persian language has a high philological importance. It is thoroughly Aryan, and gives forms which are considered older than those found in Sanscrit. It also shows a nearer relation to Greek than we should have been led to expect. This language is more systematised and more complicated than any of those which had appeared in Western Asia, except the Semitic tongues, and would make us inclined to believe that it had passed through a literary period. This literature, if it ever existed, may have been exclusively religious, and may have consisted of some of the books of the Zend-Avesta under a different form, and no doubt worded very differently from those we possess now. It is also probable that this literature was oral, like that of the Aryans of India, and was preserved by the priests, and handed down in the religious schools. At any rate, nothing exists which might

with certainty be attributed to this period.

If no purely literary works have come down to us, we have at least the great historical inscriptions of Darius, and the less important inscriptions of his successors. The Persian syllabary, used exclusively to write the inscriptions in the Persian language, was devised, it appears, under Cyrus, out of the Cuneiform syllabary of Babylonia, but does not seem to have been much used previous to the reign of Darius, as the only inscription before the time of this monarch, is one like that on the supposed tomb of Cyrus. This syllabary, which was nearly alphabetic, was a great step in advance of the Babylonian, but the old one was of too old a standing to allow the new one, however perfect it might have been, to supersede it. All the royal inscriptions are trilingual—the Persian, as the official language, occupies the first place, the second is given to the Medic, as being the language of the founder of the kingdom, and Babylonian occupies the third place. It is hardly necessary to remark, that in the official inscriptions there is no pretention to literary merit. There is, however, more elegance than is to be found in the official inscriptions of Elam or Van.



SUKHITES, SUHITES,
MARITES, LULUBITES, ARAMÆANS,
PHŒNICIANS & KAPPODOKIANS.

THE Cuneiform inscriptions give the names of a few other populations and languages, about which, however, but little is known.

The Sukhite and the Suhite, spoken by populations bearing these names, are known only from a few words given by the Babylonian scribes in their lists. Judging from these, they were dialects of Akkadian. As for the populations themselves, they seem never to have passed the nomadic and depredatory stage—the stage in which the Akkadians were when they invaded Babylonia. Nothing is known of them but their incursions for

plundering purposes, and they cease to be spoken of after the second Babylonian Empire.

The Marite, a few words of which are given in a list, is most likely the language of Palestine or Southern Syria.

Of the Lulubite, of which we have only one word, nothing is known; some have supposed that it was the language of a population which they are inclined to identify with the ancestors of the Lulum now inhabiting the North-Eastern Coast of the Persian Gulf. There is, however, nothing to support their supposition except the similitude of names.

The Aramæans, known in the cuneiform documents by the name of *Aramu*, are more often spoken of, though they never played an important political part. They inhabited the Northern region of Mesopotamia, part of Assyria and Northern Syria, were composed of an unmixed Semitic population, and formed perhaps the bulk of the armies, which resisted so long the Assyrian kings in their conquest of Syria. The first conquest of Syria left no opening to the Aramæans for a political career, and they seem, besides, to have contented themselves with serving foreign masters. They accepted the Persians as they had accepted the yoke of the Second Babylonian Empire. After

the fall of Darius, they accepted in like manner the Greek rulers, and, after these, the Romans. Satisfied with the peace secured to them by their foreign rulers, the higher classes gave themselves up to the study of literature, and, the newly rising Christianity being favorable to a new literary development, Aramæan, under the name of Syriac, became the language of the Christian populations of Western Asia. But as the writing of Babylon was too much associated with paganism to be adopted, a modification of the Hebrew alphabet was preferred. Unhappily for the purity of the Semitic language, it was invaded by Greek words—a strange and new spectacle, for this would never have been thought possible after the experience of Babylonism, which had resisted the introduction of Persian and Greek words during two long dynasties.

The Phœnicians, those great traders of olden times, penetrated also as far as Nineveh and Babylon. The Phœnician cities had developed, besides their maritime traffic, a large trade by means of caravans extending far away inland. These routs, crossing Northern Syria, went through Nineveh to Babylon, and perhaps farther. The Phœnicians possessed an alphabet more convenient than the Babylonian

syllabary, and their practical mind prevented them from giving it up. It is customary to give the name of Phœnicians to all the traders who, in ancient times, came from Syria. There is good reason, however, to believe that many of them were really Phœnicians, even when the documents they have left are not written in the Phœnician dialect; for, as is well known, traders everywhere try to aadpt themselves to the state of things in the countries with which they deal. Caravans leaving Phœnicia for Nineveh had to pass through a conuntry where Aramæan was spoken, and no doubt adopted this dialect as a kind of *lingua franca*. When they made a contract with Ninevites or Babylonians, it was, of course, written in cuneiform characters, but they often added also their names, and sometimes the amount of the contract, &c., in their own style of writing. This is the origin of the Phœnician, or rather, Aramæic inscriptions, found at Nineveh and Babylon, on some of the tablets.

The name of Kappadokian has been given to the language of a few tablets (written in cuneiform characters, but still untranslated) because they were found in or near the region called Kappadokia in ancient times. The Kappadokians appear to have spoken an

Aryan language, perhaps connected with Armenian, but nothing certain can be said before more documents are found. The characters found on the Kappadokian tablets are derived not from the modern forms of the cuneiform signs, but from the old Babylonian style. It would seem, therefore, that it was in use at an early period, but it cannot be said that the language of the tablets found in this region is as old as the syllabary with which it was written.





GREEKS AND PARTHIANS.

WHEN the Greeks, under the leadership of Alexander, made the conquest of the Persian Empire, they were not barbarians—on the contrary, they had attained a comparatively high degree of civilisation, but this civilisation, though it proceeded originally and indirectly from Babylonia, had a character totally different, and on many points even antagonistic. These two civilisations could not amalgamate, and there seems to have been a tacit understanding to keep the two modes of life distinct. In the Empire of the Seleucidæ, there was, in fact, two distinct populations, and, so to say, two distinct nations.

The Greek monarchs, surrounded by their Greek courtiers, lived outside the Semitic or Babylonian movement and life, and never, as it would seem, learnt the language of their Asiatic subjects. The Babylonians, on the other hand, kept, as far as possible, to themselves; but political necessities obliged them to learn Greek, and through this study they acquired much of the scientific knowledge of the Greeks. The conservative spirit of the Babylonian scribes, however, never permitted any Greek words to come into their compositions.

As we may imagine, the king had more sympathy for the Greek population than for the Babylonian, and his ambition seems to have been to create a thoroughly Greek empire in Asia. This prompted the foundation of Seleucia. To give more importance to the new town, and to weaken its rival, a large portion of the inhabitants of Babylon were transported into it. As to government, the Greek kings followed the policy of the Persians, and preserved the same form of administration. This favoured also the preservation of the old Babylonian institutions, notwithstanding the secondary rank to which the ancient metropolis was reduced.

As the Greeks were accustomed to identify their own divinities with those of other nations, their polytheism, also, was not hostile to the Babylonian religion. Bel-Merodach was considered as Zeus, Ea as Chronos, Ishtar as Venus, and so forth. The Babylonians were not, therefore, troubled in the performance of their religious ceremonies, and under the Seleucidæ we see, from the tablets found at Babylon, that the temples still received tributes and offerings. It is probable that the Jews would have enjoyed the same privilege, if their own intolerance had not roused the anger of their foreign masters.

Nothing appears to have been changed in Babylon—trade and commerce went on as before, the contracts were still written on clay tablets in cuneiform characters, and in the Babylonian language. We only see a larger number of Greek proper names, and a greater use of signets impressed, instead of the old fashioned cylinders rolled on the clay. In astronomy Greek intercourse worked a complete revolution. Formerly the Babylonian observers were satisfied with registering merely astronomical events, but the Greeks brought to them a notion of the regular motion of the planets, and a correct knowledge of the

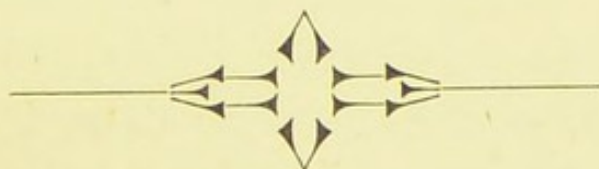
recurrence of eclipses. This must have been a terrible blow to the Babylonian system of astronomical omens. From this time, therefore, we must not be surprised not to find so many omen-tablets. Most of the tablets of this class which have come down to us, are real astronomical observations, giving the phases and appearance of the moon, calculations about the motion of the planets, etc. This revolution in astronomical science induced the scribes to adopt, in their computations, a new system of reckoning from the accession of Seleucus, (the era of the Seleucidæ) and it was used even in private contracts.

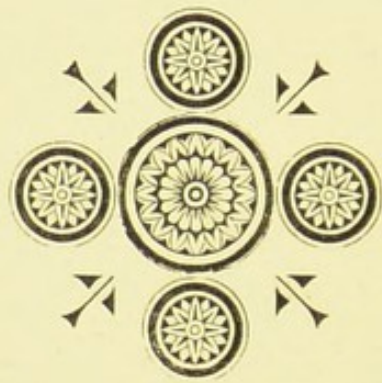
As above remarked, the Greeks never learnt Babylonian. The language of the cuneiform inscriptions of this period is therefore purely Semitic. The Babylonians themselves learnt Greek (as we might have known from the instance of Berosus), praised their Greek masters, and wrote their history in the Babylonian language. We possess a Cylinder of the period of Antiochus, in which the scribe took the trouble to write in what may be called the ornamental archaic style. There are a few other historical texts, but we can see from the decreasing number of inscriptions, that the decay of the Babylonian influence had began.

When the Parthians took possession of Babylonia, nothing was changed, the old metropolis was left to itself. The ceremonies in the temples were still performed before a constantly diminishing congregation. Little by little, the temples were neglected and shared the fate of the ruined palaces. The population became scarcer and scarcer. A few contracts still bear witness of a certain amount of commercial life, but the end was near.

Babylon with its massive brick buildings, with its innumerable host of gods, with its cumbersome system of cuneiform writing, was a town of the past, and could no more exist in the new state of things than the monsters of the prediluvian period could live at the present time.

The use of Syriac, and the Syriac alphabet, took the place of Babylonian and its complicated syllabary; and the progress of Christianity, bringing a new current of ideas, effaced the last vestiges of the old civilisation.







THE HITTITES.

UNTIL lately, very little was known of this population besides what is mentioned in the Bible. But after Egyptian and Babylonian records had added to our knowledge, progress was rapid. Now, the doubtful existence of an Hittite Empire, or rather, confederacy, which held Syria, and resisted the Pharoahs of Egypt, as well as the king of Nineveh, has become a fact. Some progress has been made in the decipherment of the Hittite inscriptions, and, lastly, documents in this language, written in cuneiform script, have been found, and dispel all doubts as to the character of the population. Their

history cannot yet be written, but we can at least say what they were.

The name of Hittite was given, at various epochs, to non-Semitic populations inhabiting Syria. Though the name appears to be national, and has an etymology similar to that of the German national name *Deutsch*, *entire*, *complete*, it was not adopted by all the tribes, but only by a few of them. That is why (though, as we know by the Babylonian records, the Hittites dwelt in Syria at the time of Thothmes) this name is not mentioned in the Egyptian annals of that period, no doubt because the Hittite tribe at the head of the confederacy was known under another name.

The Hittites belonged to the same race as the Akkadians, and in fact, seem to have come with them from the Medic provinces at the time of the invasion of Babylonia. The invaders covered all Western Asia as far as the door of Egypt, and penetrated into Asia Minor. They were then mere barbarians, whose object was nothing but plunder. But, little by little, they perceived that it was more to their interest to settle down than to plunder, and formed many little kingdoms or republics, admitting, to a certain extent, concourse with the subdued population. They themselves were

in a minority, so that such concourse was a matter of necessity. In Syria the configuration of the country favours the formation of small principalities, and their maintainance against powerful neighbours. For many centuries after their invasion, the Hittites, divided into many small states, often at war with each other, resisted foreign attacks. The temporary conquests, such as those of Sargon of Agadé or Kudur-Lagamar affected their power but little—the conqueror having once turned his back, they resumed their hold on the country, the open region alone, sometimes, remained tributary for a few years.

Though the Hittites and other populations of Syria had no political bonds, they used often to combine, like the Greeks, either to resist foreign invasion, or to undertake a plundering expedition. It is probably one of these expeditions which ended in the conquest of Lower-Egypt and the establishment of the Hittites on the Nile, and it explains the mixed character of the invading army, though the Semitic element preponderated as in Syria itself.

The conquest of Egypt had a great influence on the whole history of Western Asia, for the national war, ending in the expulsion of the Hyksos, seems to have awakened in the

Egyptians a spirit of conquest, and from that time Egyptian warriors periodically overran Western Asia. The Hittites were the greatest sufferers, in vain they called to arms all the populations around them, Hittite or otherwise—even those of Asia Minor, they could not resist the well drilled troops of the Pharaohs. Soon after the Egyptian conquest of Syria, a new power rose in the East, the Assyrian Empire. Henceforth the Hittites, with all the rest of Syria, were incessantly trampled upon by the one or the other, now paying tribute to the King of Egypt, now accepting the supremacy of Nineveh; now calling the help of the Egyptian armies against the Assyrians, now fighting in the ranks of the Ninevites. It is only when the temporary decay or exhaustion of the two powerful Empires give some years of respite to Western Asia, that small kingdoms can develop and shine for a while like that of Jerusalem or Damascus.

During the second Ninevite Empire the fate of the Hittites was sealed; they made a gallant resistance, but when finally crushed they were almost annihilated. Their name still remained for a while, but the real Hittite population had disappeared, to be replaced by more or less pure Semites.

The Hittite communities were, no doubt, at first, governed by a military chief, whose power was limited by the wishes of the soldiers, but as, in most cases, they were obliged to accept or even solicit the co-operation of the conquered, a kind of constitution was formed taking into account the inhabitants of the land. These inhabitants were mostly Semitic, and their social organisation was generally patriarchal, that is, government by Elders. Agriculture and commerce being the two great sources of revenue, these also gave a greater influence to the civil element. All this contributed largely to give to the government a more liberal form than in Babylonia, for, through their Elders, who were voters rather than councillors (as was merely the case in Babylonia and Assyria), they had means to obtain redress. Many a time it happened in Syria that the people, impatient of the hard rule of their king, overthrew him and elected a popular chief. It may therefore be said that in some cases the government was really democratic.

Little is as yet known about the religion of the Hittites. They were in too small a minority to impose their creed on the population, and appear rather to have always adopted the gods of the conquered. As has been noticed

about the Pre-Akkadian Semites of Babylonia, the primitive Semitic religion had as base tribal worship, one particular god being considered as the patron of the tribe. The cult of evil-spirits was, however, introduced, but it was never raised to the rank of religion. As among the primitive Akkadians, people consulted the sorcerer, as we see in the case of David, but it was in secret, and sorcery was publicly condemned both by law and morality. Though each tribe and each state had its special god, which was considered as the supreme god, on certain occasions foreign gods were appealed to. So on several occasions a Hittite king sent to Egypt to ask for the loan of the image of a god, and the Hittite chiefs often sent offerings to the Babylonian and Assyrian gods. In these cases, however, policy may have prompted the act.

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the people, the system of village community which was in force nearly everywhere in Syria appears to have prevailed in spite of various changes of rule, and this is quite natural; as the patriarchal constitution was preserved, commerce also was greatly extended; as there were no great rivers, like the Tigris and Euphrates, which could be used as natural channels

for transport, all goods were carried by means of caravans. The horse was brought into Western Asia by the Akkadians, and into Syria no doubt by the Hittites. The latter appear to have always preserved a kind of speciality in horse trading, as we see from the Bible. It is also from Hittite countries that the Assyrians appear to have imported their horses. The system of caravans was the source of a large revenue for the various petty Hittite kings, for each caravan had to pay tolls and tribute when passing through each territory.

In fine Art the Hittites had no originality. Placed between the two great centres of civilisation, Egypt and Babylonia, they felt the influence of both at various periods. The Southern regions were naturally more under Egyptian influence, and all the remains found there prove it. Babylon, before the rise of the Ninevite Empire, brought into Syria many works of art, which were copied and imitated by the Hittites. When the victorious armies of the Assyrian kings made the region tributary, the Hittites followed the Assyrians, and imitated their architecture and sculptures. The Ninevites, copying the Babylonians, had adopted the system of brick-construction, their

sculptured slabs being placed along the walls, though their country possessed enough stone to build the whole in stone. The Hittites did the same, the excavations lately made showing that they copied servilely their Ninevite masters. There is the same arrangement, the same brick walls covered with sculptured slabs. The treatment of the sculptures shows also strong Ninevite influence, the very type of the figures are as much Assyrian as Hittite.

As yet none of the Hittite literature has been recovered, and it is to be presumed that there never was any. The inscriptions already deciphered are purely dedicatory. This must not surprise us, for the Hittites were never well enough organised to pass through a literary period. The Babylonians, and the Assyrians also, do not appear to have produced any real literary works after the Sumero-Akkadian period, and the Hittites were in much worse circumstances, for they were a small minority, and their Semitic subjects were too much given to commerce to feel any taste for literature.

The Hittites, however, possessed a special system of writing. It had not been invented by them, but was, no doubt, in use in Syria at the time of their invasion, and had probably

been brought from Egypt by the primitive Semites. This script has been called Hittite, and we may as well preserve this name, as the language employed was also Hittite. This writing consisted, like Egyptian, of hieroglyphs, and, except in a few inscriptions, remained in the pictorial stage. As in Egyptian and Akkadian, use is made of determinatives and phonetic complements, though perhaps to a lesser extent. This system of writing was preserved to a comparatively late date, but when the Semites, expelled from Egypt, brought their alphabet, which we call Phœnician, Hittite could not long withstand the competition, as the Phœnician alphabet, for all practical purposes, offered so many advantages, and possessed such superiority over the hieroglyphic system, that it was generally adopted for commercial transactions. The Hittites, besides, never attained sufficient political importance to exercise much influence outside their own country. Babylonia, on the contrary, carried its system of writing as far as Kilikia and Asia Minor, the cuneiform syllabary being adopted in many countries, and the Babylonian language becoming the *lingua franca* of all Western Asia. The Hittites did as the others, they wrote in Babylonian to foreign princes,

and, in the few cases we know of, when they used their own language, the syllabary is that of Babylon, not their own.

The Hittite language was closely allied to Akkadian and Sumerian; not only is the vocabulary the same for a great many words, but the grammar is, to a great extent, also the same. Gender and number are seldom indicated, except in exceptional cases; words appear, in fact, to express an abstract notion, as in Chinese, and carry, of course, the idea of plurality just as abstract nouns do. As in Akkadian, the verb is incorporative, and verbal forms are built up by means of prefixes and infixes; words are, besides, essentially agglutinative, and, as in Akkadian, there are sometimes doubts as to whether a group is to be considered as a single compound word or as a sentence. Too little, however, is as yet known, and too few texts have been recovered, to enable us to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Hittite language.

The Hittites have left but few remains, and as we find neither tombs nor funeral urns, we may suppose that they practised cremation like the Akkadians—that is, the burning of the dead till nothing was left, and did not preserve the ashes. The primitive Semites buried their

dead, and the Hittites were never strong enough to make them give up this practice. There was, besides, Egyptian influence, always powerful in Northern Syria, which kept it up. We even see, from the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar, that, in Phœnicia an imitation of embalming was used for kings, and wealthy people at least. But it is probable that where the Hittite element was strong, cremation was practised until the disappearance of the race, either by extermination in the wars with Assyria, or by absorption by the Semitic majority.



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