

THE ANCIENT WORLD

THE ANCIENT WORLD

by

Albert Malet

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

ITHACA, NEW YORK

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ISBN: 978-1-63334-139-5

Yesterday's Classics, LLC
PO Box 339
Ithaca, NY 14851

PREFACE

I HAVE used *L'Antiquité*, by Albert Malet, as a work of reference in teaching the Middle Forms of the Park School, Preston, and the First year Frœbel Students at the Maria Grey Training College.

I have known many history teachers deterred from the teaching of World History by the lack of suitable text-books, and I have made this translation of a book written to meet the requirements of French secondary schools, in the hope that it will fill a long-felt want, by providing a book for the first year's work.

I wish to express my thanks to Miss Alice M. Stoneman, Head Mistress of the Park School, Preston, who first brought the book to my notice, and who kindly allowed me to make use of the translation she had already begun, and to Mrs. Jehanne Russell, whose advice and encouragement have helped me throughout.

PHYLLIS WOODHAM SMITH

Maria Grey Training College

June 1920

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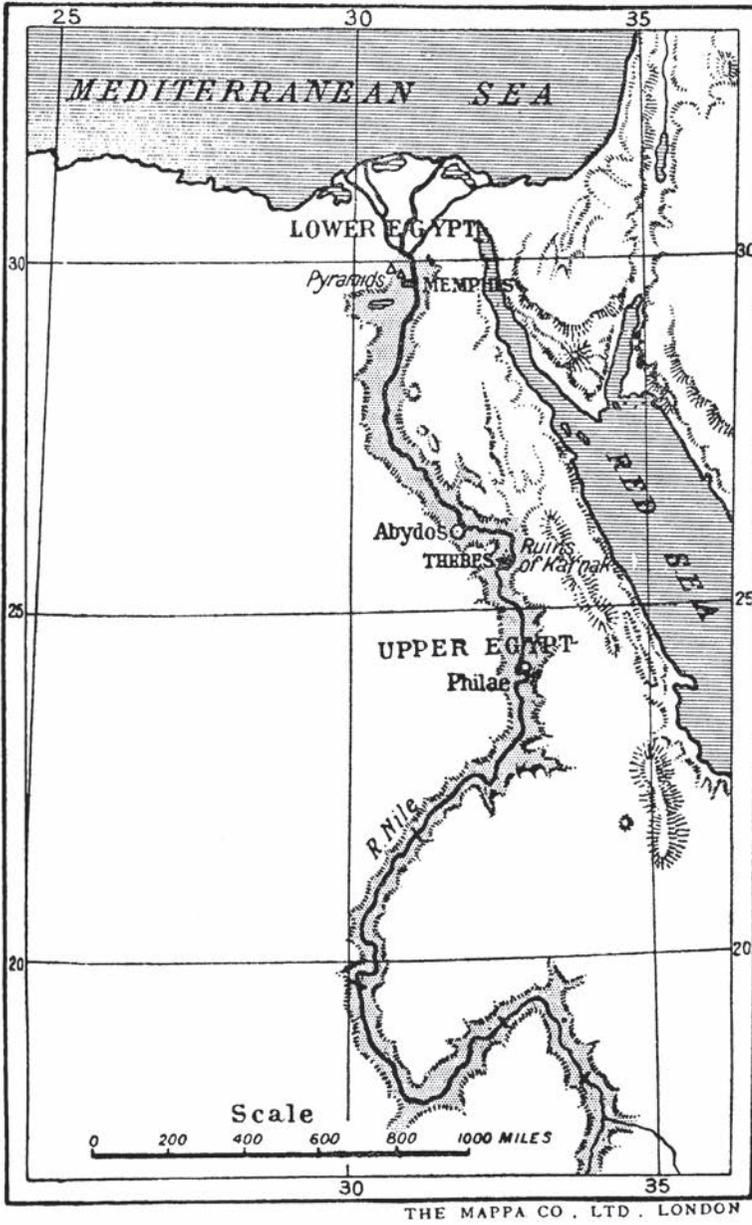


Figure 1 – The Egypt of the Pharaohs

CHAPTER I

EGYPT

EGYPT lies at the north-east corner of Africa, quite close to Asia, to which it is joined by the isthmus of Suez. The Mediterranean and the Red Sea bound it on the north and east; on the south and west it is surrounded by the desert. In these parts rain seldom falls; the rainfall of a century is less than the rainfall of London for one year. So, for lack of water, Egypt would be nothing but a desert, a vast plain barren of all vegetation, if the Nile did not flow through it. In the middle of the plain is a long, narrow channel; its sides rise steeply, and, seen from below, look like ranges of mountains; on the west rises the Libyan range, on the east the Arabian range. The Nile, coming from the Sahara, passes over six cataracts and then enters between these walls; its course is from south to north, carrying on an average 13,000 cubic metres of water per second, which is five times as much as the Seine at flood. It overflows its banks each year from June to December; the soil becomes fertile wherever its waters spread. This led the ancients to say that Egypt is “the gift of the Nile.” The river has made an oasis more than 500 miles in length, but of a width varying only from

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five to thirty miles. This valley is about as long as from the north of Scotland to the south of England.

Towards the north, near Cairo, the channel widens, and its walls divide into the form of a V. They outline an angle which was formerly a gulf of the Mediterranean. Here the Nile has deposited its alluvial soil, which has accumulated for thousands of years; it has made a piece of land which grows continually and advances yearly almost a yard into the sea.

In this land, the arms of the river and the coast form a triangle like the Δ of the Greek alphabet (Δ delta inverted): hence the land is called the Delta, which was the name given it by the ancients. The valley of the Nile forms Upper Egypt, the plain of the Delta is called Lower Egypt.

The rising of the Nile and the regularity with which this rising took place astonished the Egyptians, because they did not know the sources of the river, the Victoria and Albert Nyanza, immense equatorial lakes of which the Nile is the outlet, and because they did not know of the immense rainfall which occurs regularly in the upper part of its course and forms huge tributaries: on the left bank the Bah-rel-Ghazel, with its vast marshes; on the right the Sobat, the Blue Nile and the Atbara, rising in the volcanic rocks of Abyssinia. So the Egyptians regarded the river as a god, because it overflowed its banks although no rain had fallen on the land. This god descended from heaven and appeared to man between Elephantine and the island of Philæ, near the cataract of Syene. He rose there from two bottomless abysses, and his overflow was due to the tears of Isis weeping for

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her husband, and from this came the fertilising power of the water.

It was only in the nineteenth century that the 3500 miles of the course of the Nile were entirely explored, and the phenomenon was fully explained.

In the month of June the Nile is reduced to half its width; it flows, sky blue in colour, between banks of black mud. Vegetation is everywhere scorched by the desert wind blowing from the south. Then the Nile begins to rise; it loses its blue colour and becomes green and brackish. The green colour is due to the rubbish swept down from the marshes of Bahr-el-Ghazel. Some days pass and the Nile still increases in volume, and once more changes its colour. Its waters are now full of red mud, which does not prevent them from being fresh and fit for drinking. The river seems to be made of blood. About July 15 the dams which hold in the river are opened, the water spreads over the fields and deposits its fertile mud. The whole valley between the two ranges is now only a sheet of dirty water, which shimmers in the sun, and from the water rise like islands the villages, surrounded with palm trees, and the black causeways which connect village with village. Till the months of August and September the flood is at its height; from then till December the river returns little by little to its bed. Now is the moment to sow the seed, and four months later comes the harvest. These different phases in the life of the Nile and of Egypt were characterised by the Arabian conqueror Amru in these words: "Egypt," he said, "is in succession a mud field, a sea of fresh water and a flower garden."

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The rising of the Nile is the festival of the joy of Nature. The country revives, men and animals arouse themselves from their torpor, life is newborn everywhere. An old hymn in honour of the god Nile celebrates this new birth in the following words: "Hail, O Nile, who hast appeared on this earth and cometh in peace to give life to Egypt. Thou waterest the earth everywhere, God of the Seeds, Lord of the Fishes, Creator of the Corn, Producer of the Barley. . . . He rises, the earth is filled with joy, every belly rejoices, every living being has received its food, he creates all good things, Lord of all fair and dainty cates. He makes the grass to sprout for the cattle, he prepares sacrifices for each god. He takes possession of the land that he may fill the marts and crowd the granaries and prepare abundance for the poor."

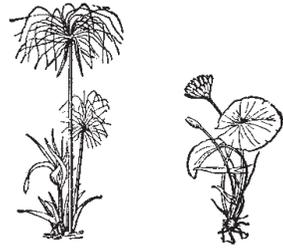
The entire area of land suitable for habitation is about equal to the area of Belgium, while the total area of Egypt is almost as large as that of France. On this little space live to-day nearly eleven million men, and in ancient times the number was not less.

So large a population can be supported by the extraordinary fertility of the mud deposited by the river. The seed is scattered broadcast on to this mud without any previous work, and the animals are driven into the fields to tread the grain into the earth. In this way the soil produces different crops: wheat, barley, dhura, millet; and leguminous plants such as lupines, beans, chickpeas, and lentils. Where water cannot naturally come it is raised by hand, and so it is possible to cultivate gardens and orchards planted with apricot

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and fig trees, on which vines also grow. Trees are rare: in some districts sycamores are found; everywhere the palm tree yields its dates and scanty shade.

Oxen, sheep, goats and large flocks of geese are bred on the farms. The horse is a mark of wealth, and is imported from Asia. The Nile feeds swarms of aquatic birds and fish. Its characteristic animals are the crocodile and the hippopotamus; its characteristic plants, the papyrus, whose bark



Papyrus Lotus

Figure 2

was used for paper, and the lotus, whose fruit was edible and whose flower supplied to artists, architects, workers in jewels and sculptors many suggestions for decoration and ornaments.

There is much discussion about the origin of the Egyptians. The most competent Egyptologists, including Maspero, regard them as a people of mixed nationality, with a predominating Semitic strain. In that case the Egyptians would have come from Asia, although the Greeks thought they came from Africa, from the south or Ethiopia. The statues which have been found in the tombs, the men sculptured on the bas-reliefs or the monuments, show that the Egyptians of antiquity resemble the fellahs or peasants of to-day. When Mariette discovered one of the most celebrated Egyptian statues, his workmen thought they recognised one of their countrymen, and called it Shekh-al-Balad, the Chief of the Village. The Egyptians were generally

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tall, the lower part of the body was thin, with narrow thighs and thin legs; but their shoulders were broad, high and thick, their arms slim, while their feet and



*Figure 3 — Peasant of
Modern Egypt*

hands were long and fine. They had low foreheads, short noses, large eyes and thick lips. The general expression of the face was gentle.

The gentleness of their face was reproduced in their character. Generally speaking the Egyptians were patient, hard-working, obedient, improvident and superstitious. They

had strong natural affections. Woman, contrary to the general custom of the East, was held in high respect. She went out freely, with her face unveiled; she managed her house and was mistress in it. Respect and love for a man's mother was held as the first and most sacred of duties.

Their manners were simple. The common people lived sparsely, principally on cakes of millet, baked in the ashes. They lived in poor houses, square in shape and built of bricks, which were made of mud and chopped straw dried in the sun. The houses were low, with flat roofs made of palm leaves. The houses of the rich were more comfortable and were like modern Arabs' houses. The only openings were on the inner court.

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The costume is known to us from wall paintings and bas-reliefs. Men of high rank wore a pleated petticoat called “calasiris” and a tunic with sleeves. The common people wore nothing but a piece of stuff tied round the waist and reaching as far as the middle of the leg. This was called a loin-cloth. The women wore a long, narrow dress supported by braces. The children wore no garments. The foot covering was generally a piece of leather attached to the foot by two thongs, one going round the ankle, the other passing between the toes. All the people painted the skin round the eyes with black antimony to soften the glare and to avoid ophthalmia. Rich people wore long, plaited wigs to protect them from the sun.

The Nile has determined the life of the Egyptians. Coming into Egypt in wandering tribes, they were obliged to defend themselves from the river floods by united effort. They grouped their houses on the higher ground and built dams. To get food they began to sow the mud of the river. So they formed the habit of cultivating the earth and living in societies. Villages and towns grew up along the banks. Small states, called Nomes, were organised. The Nomes grouped themselves little by little into two large states, corresponding to the two natural divisions of Egypt: Lower Egypt in the north, near the sea, with a capital, Memphis, and Upper Egypt in the south, farther from the sea, with a capital, Thebes. In the end the two states united, and the chiefs of the Nomes became the vassals of Pharaoh, the king of a united Egypt. According to tradition, this union was the work of Menes. He was the first king of the human

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race, but the kingship had a divine character: Pharaoh was the son of God.

From the time of Menes to the conquest of Egypt by the Persians, that is, from 5000-525 B.C., Egypt had twenty-six dynasties or families of kings. The first ten dynasties reigned at Memphis, the ten following at Thebes. The power then passed to the priest-kings of Napata in Ethiopia, still further south.

Then ensued a time of anarchy: Egypt was broken up into divisions, and unity was only restored by the princes of the 26th dynasty, who reigned at Sais. This long period was entirely concerned with internal events. The Egyptians only left their country to make sundry expeditions towards the Euphrates. In return they experienced the invasion of the Hyksos, or shepherds, who came from the deserts beyond the isthmus of Suez in the time of the Empire of Memphis, and the invasion of the Assyrians in the time of the Empire of Napata (671 B.C.). Finally the Persians overthrew the 26th dynasty (525 B.C.).

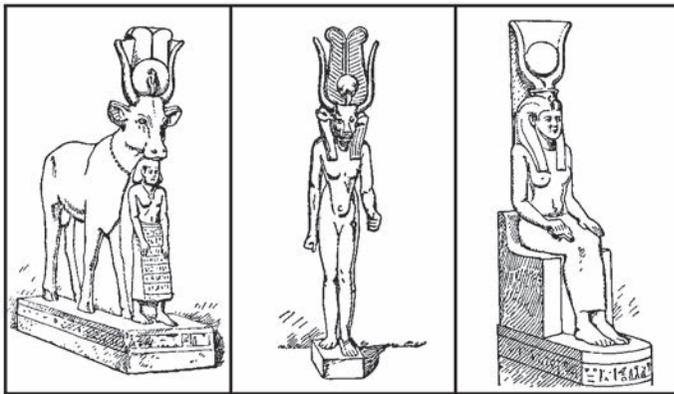
The Egyptians were a hard-working and peaceful race and were naturally prone to worship. Herodotus says they were the most religious of men. They deified all the forces of Nature and all the mysteries of life. They had three forms of worship, namely, the worship of local deities, the worship of the Great Gods, and the worship of the dead.

(1) In every province, the Nile, the earth, the sky, and especially the sun, were regarded as persons and worshipped as gods. These gods were men, more perfect

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and more powerful than other men, but subject to the same needs, obliged to eat, to drink, to wear clothes. On the other hand, they were as eternal as the things they represented. Often they inhabited the bodies of animals; for example, the God Ptah at Memphis lived in the body of an ox, the ox Apis. From this followed the worship of sacred animals. The Egyptians came to represent the gods as beings with the bodies of men and the heads of animals. Each god had a wife and a child, and these formed a trinity, such as Osiris, Isis and Horus at Abydos.

(2) When the smaller princes became the vassals of Pharaoh, the gods of their towns became the vassals of the god of the capital city. So there arose the worship of the Great Gods. These Great Gods were personifications of the sun as he appears at different times of the day.



*Figure 4 — (1) Isis and the Cow, Hathor.
(2) Isis Hathor.
(3) Isis.*

*(First Isis and the Cow; next Isis with the head of a Cow;
lastly Isis with the horns of a Cow.)*

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The most famous were: Horus, who was the rising sun, now regarded as a child, now as a youthful warrior, the conqueror of Set or Typhoon, the god of darkness; Osiris, the setting sun, who was slain by Set, lamented and restored to life by his wife Isis, the moon, and avenged by his son Horus (the fact of his death made him god of the dead); Rā, the father of Pharaoh, the sun in full strength; Amon, god of Thebes, the sun which rules Egypt; Hathor, the sun in its beauty, who was the goddess of the arts.

These gods, surrounded by inferior gods, wandered in their boats on the waters of heaven, which the Egyptians regarded as an immense river, a limitless Nile. They built temples, sumptuous homes on earth for these gods.

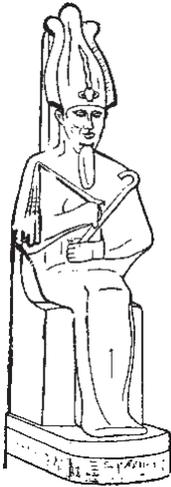
(3) There was another group of gods, the gods of the dead; these were Osiris, Thot, Anubis. The realm of the dead was a monarchy, as was that of heaven and earth, and Osiris was king of it. The dead, subjects of Osiris, became in their turn gods of a kind and received worship.

Like all primitive nations, the Egyptians spoke in symbols; they made the lotus the emblem of purity, because this plant grows in the middle of the stream, safe from defiling contact with the mud. The beetle was the image of God creating the world, because each day it could be seen making the ball of earth out of which it fashioned its dwelling. The gods made their journeys in a golden boat, because the boat was the only means of conveyance in early times in a country where the Nile

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was the only line of communication between village and village. The solar gods were represented with horns surrounding a disc and often with the head of a cow. These signs represented the rising of the sun. As a matter of fact, the morning star shines between the slopes of the Arabian range like a globe between two horns.

The Egyptians had many Nature myths; the best



*Figure 5 — Osiris,
Draped as a Mummy*

known is that of Osiris. Osiris, who was married to his sister Isis, was king of the Nile valley. After giving laws to his own country, he wished to travel all over the world to teach men the arts of peace. On his return, he was assassinated by his enemy, Typhoon or Set, who cut his body into pieces and scattered his limbs through the valley. Isis in tears began to search for her husband; she collected the limbs and embalmed them with the help of the gods Thot and Anubis,

and this was the first mummy. Her son Horus attacked Typhoon, put him in chains and sent him back to his mother, who pardoned him. Osiris was avenged, but Horus was obliged unceasingly to repeat the struggle against his enemy. Let us translate this myth: the sun (Osiris) rises on Egypt; he pursues his course; at the end of his course he seems at first confined, and then destroyed, by the darkness of night (Typhoon); another heavenly body appears and gives light to men, the

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moon (Isis); she seems to wander in the night until the moment when the rising sun (Horus) scatters the darkness. Later this myth passed from the sphere of Nature to that of morals, and became an allegory of the struggle between good and evil.

The Egyptians did not believe that a man's existence ended at death. When the last breath had been breathed, the Double or soul escaped from the body, and this continued to live as long as the body did not fall into decay. So they took great precautions to preserve the body, to embalm it and transform it into a mummy. The soul had the same needs as the body of flesh and bones. It required a place to live in; so they built it a tomb, and placed in it furniture and food. They also put by the side of the mummy portraits of the dead man, and statues made in his likeness, so that the Double might have a body in which to take up its abode. The mummy and the tomb were prepared so as to last for ever, and the greatest care was taken to track down thieves who profaned the tombs.

Eventually this life of the Double under the earth took on a purer meaning. The belief arose that the Double appeared before Osiris and underwent a solemn trial, in which the god Thot weighed the souls in the Balance of Truth. Souls which were pure rejoined Osiris in the Field of Peace, but only after certain transformations and purifications; the other souls were punished and destroyed.

The tombs were built above the line which marked the rising of the Nile, where the dryness of the earth

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has preserved them for long ages. The kingdom of the dead was supposed to begin where the valley of the Nile ended, for the Nile was called the River of Life. But the living, though separated from the dead in reality, were continually with them in thought. The Egyptians were most careful to render funeral honours to their ancestors and to assure the payment of such honours to themselves. A man would have his tomb built during his lifetime, and the Pyramids, which were royal tombs, are monumental examples of this practice.

Herodotus describes the way in which the Egyptians made the body into a mummy and assured its preservation, which was a necessary condition to secure the life of the Double. He says: "There are in every town professional embalmers; when the relatives of the dead man bring the corpse, they show the bearers various models of corpses, made in wood and painted so as to resemble Nature. The most perfect is said to be after the manner of the god Osiris. When the relations have agreed to the price, they depart; the embalmer works in his own house.

"The mode of embalming, according to the most perfect process, is the following: They take first a crooked piece of iron, and with it draw out the brain through the nostrils, thus getting rid of a portion, while the skull is cleared of the rest by rinsing with drugs; next they make a cut along the flank . . . and take out the whole contents of the abdomen, which they then cleanse, washing it thoroughly with palm wine, and again frequently with an infusion of pounded aromatics.

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After this they fill the cavity with the purest bruised myrrh, with cassia, and every other sort of spicery except frankincense, and sew up the opening. Then the body is placed in natrum (subcarbonate of soda) for seventy days, and covered entirely over.”

At the end of seventy days, the parched body, almost reduced to skin and bones, was wrapped in linen bandages plastered with gum. It was then enclosed in three winding-sheets and in a red cloth fixed by bands running lengthwise and across. The mummy was then placed in a double wooden coffin, which almost reproduced the shape of the body, and at the head was carved the portrait of the dead man.

The respect of the Egyptians for their dead, their religious beliefs, their care in preserving the body, have made it possible for us to know accurately and in great detail the customs, occupations, art and religion of the ancient Egyptians. In the past and in the present, scholars have only to remove the sand which has slowly covered their temples and their tombs. On the columns of the temples, covered with figures and hieroglyphics, can be deciphered the mysteries of their religion, the rites of worship and the boastful dedications of the kings. Near each ancient town, and especially in the neighbourhood of Memphis and of Thebes, the numerous tombs form a veritable city of the dead. To-day we can enter these mortuary chambers, which are often hidden in a labyrinth of passages. Near the mummies we find the ordinary possessions of the dead person: men’s arms and tools, women’s jewels, children’s toys, the books of the learned, statues and portraits of

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the dead, the little models and images of the protecting gods—in short, the thousand objects which adorn the Egyptian galleries of our museums. On the walls of the tombs were painted the scenes of daily life: labourers in the fields, kings and priests and ceremonies, soldiers drilling and workmen at work, and so fresh are the paintings that the past ages live again before our eyes.

We can look also into the soul of this nation by reading the Book of the Dead, which lies near each mummy, ready for it to read in its defence on the Day of Judgment before Osiris, the great judge of souls. In it we read: “I have not lied in the court of law. I have not been idle. I have not believed heresy. I have not committed sacrilege. I have not taken land by fraud. I have made no one weep. I have not killed. I have not stolen the wrappings nor the food of the dead. I have not opened a dyke. I have not taken the milk from the mouth of babes. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure.”

CHAPTER II

EGYPTIAN SOCIETY

AMONG the Egyptians the priests and warriors formed two privileged classes. The priests were charged with the performance of the rites, and the administration of the possessions of the gods; they were also learned men and had magical powers.

They maintained their powerful position through their control of the temple treasures, the knowledge they possessed and kept secret, and the authority due to the respect and terror they inspired. They were bound by certain rules of life: they might not touch anything defiled, they must wear linen garments, have their heads shaved and fast often.

The warriors consisted of families living on lands granted by the king. They were obliged, at risk of confiscation, to answer every summons to arms. Their children were specially educated in the camps. The backbone of the army was the infantry, divided into two classes: the one armed with a spear and a battle-axe, the other with a bow and a dagger. Their defensive armour consisted of a round helmet, a coat of mail and a shield. There was also, but later in their history, a body of war

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chariots. Herodotus tells us that in his time the warrior class included 400,000 men. The later Pharaohs also employed foreign mercenaries.

The traders were like the Eastern traders of to-day: they sold in little shops the articles which they had made themselves with the help of their workmen. Their most famous merchandise consisted of glass, jewellery, fabrics and embroidered skins.

The workmen practised all the crafts we know. They formed guilds according to their occupations, like those of the workmen of the Middle Ages. Clad only in a loin-cloth, they worked in workshops or yards under the direction of a foreman, who managed them with a rod in his hand. Some



Figure 6 — A Carpenter

trades, like that of the weavers, were regulated by royal regulations. The workers were paid in kind, that is to say, in foodstuffs. When everything had been eaten too quickly, strikes occurred. Those who were employed in embalming the dead were treated as impure, and were obliged to live in the suburbs.

The peasants ploughed their land with a wooden plough without wheels, such as a fellah uses to-day, and they cut the crops with a sickle. Methods of irrigation were known to them. They had great difficulty in paying their taxes, and the revenue collectors often had them beaten.

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In Egyptian society there was one class which had marked characteristics and played a most influential part: these were the scribes. The scribe was a man who had studied, who knew how to read, to write and to keep accounts. Consequently he was indispensable and acted as the eye and right hand of his master. It was the scribes who received the taxes, who acted as foremen in the workyards, who recruited soldiers and supplied their weapons. The scribe was to be found everywhere: in the service of a rich individual, in the tradesman's shop, as well as in the farms and palaces of the Pharaohs. He was a foreman or an engineer, an architect or a tax collector, a priest or a general, according to his abilities, his success in examinations or his good luck.

He went about accompanied by negroes carrying rods made from the palm trees, to enforce his commands. He was generally puffed up with his own importance, and convinced that no one could stand comparison with him: like the mandarin in modern China, he looked on the rest of the world as contemptible and far inferior to himself. He ridiculed the blacksmith, always at the door of his furnace, the stonemason, always bending his back till it ached, the barber, who asked for business from door to door, the weaver, the dyer, whose fingers smelt of rotten fish, and the shoemaker, with his poor stock of health. "I have considered all manual labour," said a scribe to his son, "and truly there is not one superior to literature. Therefore I am making you love literature as your mother; and I am instilling its beauties in your head. Literature is more important than all the crafts: he who sets himself to draw profit from it

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from childhood, is honoured.” So the Egyptians, like the Chinese, made great sacrifices to enable their children to pass the examinations of the scribes.

The scribe was the chief agent of the king. The King of Egypt, or Pharaoh, was considered to be the son of Rā, the sun-god, and was himself a god. So he received worship, and temples were built in which his worship was performed, as was done afterwards at Rome to the emperors who reigned during the first centuries of our era. On the monuments the image of the king was adorned with the attributes of the gods: the solar disc between the two horns and the sacred hawk, the symbol of the god Horus. The royal emblem was a sphinx, which symbolised strength and wisdom. The royal headdress was a kind of mitre, symbolising the union of the two kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt; it was made by the union of two headdresses: one, red and low, was the crown of Lower Egypt; the other, white and like a cotton cap, was the crown of Upper Egypt. A golden serpent surrounded the lower part, with its head covering in front of the cap.

The king lived in his palace surrounded by his officers and crowds of servants—men to brush away flies and to carry umbrellas, guards of the royal treasure, commanders of the bodyguards, stewards of the palace, treasurers, equerries, librarians, musicians, stewards of his granaries, flocks and so forth. When he went out, he was generally surrounded by a magnificent following. He was borne on a throne, supported on a dais carried by twelve men; his servants burnt incense before him

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and waved great fans. On the Nile, the royal galley was a blaze of gold.

This king, an absolute monarch because he was the son of God, lord of the land and life of his subjects, was himself a slave to etiquette, that is to say to a rule of life which determined the employment of his time and fixed his occupations for the whole of the day. It was no idle life he led: he had to make himself acquainted each morning with all the reports sent to him by his governors.



Figure 7 — Rameses II in His War Chariot

Among the kings there was one who was specially celebrated, Rameses II, who reigned at Thebes for sixty-seven years in the fourteenth century before Christ. The Greeks called him Sesestris, and they represented him as the wisest of the kings and assigned to him everything that was great in Egyptian history; for the Greeks were apt to summarise the history of a people in the history of

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one man. Rameses was not the mighty conqueror which legend described, but he was the typical Egyptian king, warrior, administrator and builder. He laid waste Syria and Ethiopia, he completed the great temple of Amen at Thebes, he excavated the underground temples at Abû-Simbel. But his flatterers wished to add to his real works, and on the monuments which he had restored they erased the names of the true founders and put that of Rameses in their place.



Figure 8 — Rameses II (the head of his mummy)

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The wars of the Egyptian kings were always defensive wars or raids for plunder. Only two of them, Thothmes and Rameses, kings of Thebes, sought to extend their empire to the Euphrates. Wars were undertaken in two directions. At one time the kings ascended the Nile and subdued the negro tribes; at another they crossed the isthmus of Suez and made their way into Palestine and Syria, or went south to Arabia and Sinai. They had also to drive back the Bedouin of the Libyan Desert and the pirates of the Mediterranean. The conquered nations paid tribute, and the negro and Asiatic prisoners were employed on their great buildings. Often the kings enrolled the warriors over whom they had triumphed in their army.

Egypt was divided into provinces or nomes, having a governor appointed by the king at their head. He was assisted by numerous officials, who encouraged agriculture and commerce, and saw that justice was administered and the taxes collected in the name of the king. In this way the king reigned supreme; it was he who made the laws, administered justice and ensured prosperity by means of works of public utility, for example, the repair and maintenance of the dykes and canals. The glory of Menes was that he made a dam at Memphis; of Amenemhat III that he excavated Lake Moëris; that of Necho that he re-cut the old canal which joined the Nile to the Red Sea. A king endeavoured to make his name live in history by two methods: by building temples for his favourite gods and by building a tomb for himself. The temples at Luxor and at Abû-Simbel were built by Rameses II, and their

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walls proclaim his fame. The Pyramids are tombs of the ancient kings of Memphis, Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinos.

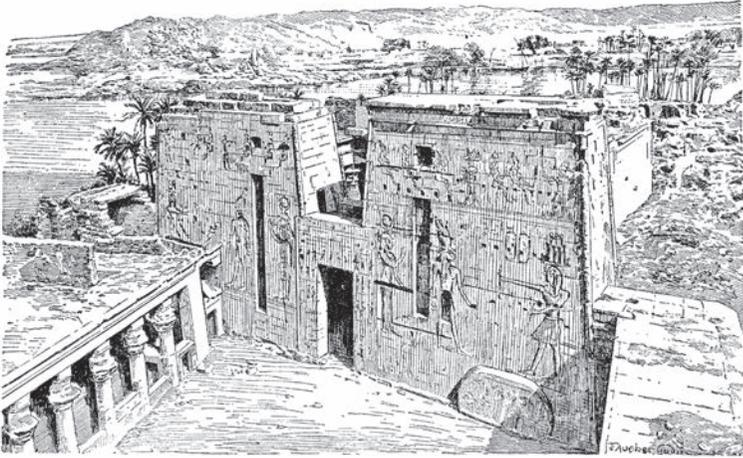


Figure 9 — One of the Pylons of a Temple at Philæ

Architecture was the great national art of the Egyptians. Sculptors and painters were only assistants to the architects. In building the temples and the tombs they used limestone, sandstone and the red or blue granite of the mountains; brick was used for walls and houses. They discovered the vault, the pillar and the aisle, and they carried to a high degree of perfection the art of massing stones together. This skill and the dryness of the climate explain why so many ancient monuments still exist along the Nile valley.

Egyptian temples were remarkable for their size and solidity. They were of two kinds, for some were built in the open air and others were excavated from the rock, but the internal arrangements were the same.



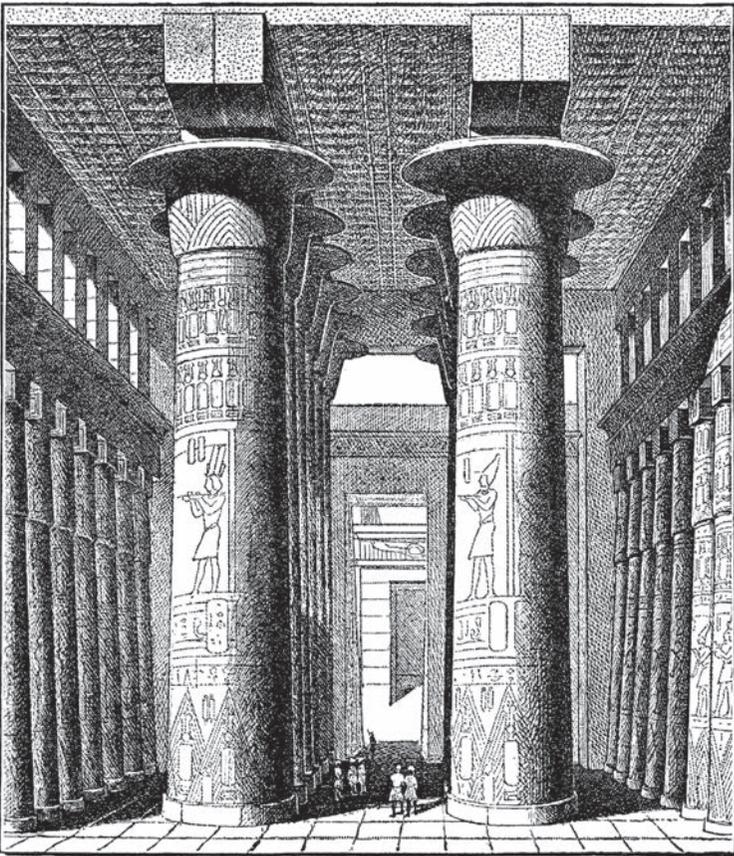
Figure 10 — The Central Aisle of the Hypostyle at Luxor

The most celebrated are the ruined temples at Karnak and Luxor, on the site of ancient Thebes, the temples on the island of Philæ, in almost complete preservation, and the underground temples at Abû-Simbel. The Labyrinth, which was so highly praised by the Greeks, was probably a temple built near Lake Mœris.

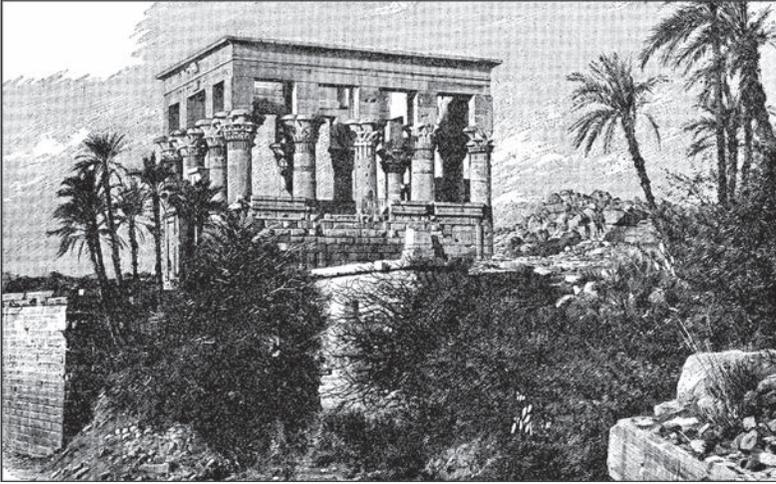
A temple was both the estate and the home of the god. It was surrounded by a great brick wall, which enclosed a whole population engaged in the service of

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the god. Within were dwellings for the priests and their servants, workshops, domestic offices and gardens in which were kept animals to be used for sacrifice. The temple proper was in the centre of the estate, within a second enclosing wall. The approach to it was by a flagged roadway adorned on each side by a row of sphinxes. The entrance was a huge building called a Pylon, composed of a massive doorway with a tower



*Figure 11 — The Original Appearance
of the Interior of a Hypostyle*



*Figure 12 — The “Little Temple” at Philæ,
with Lotus-Carved Capitals*

each side, built like flat-topped pyramids, covered with carvings and inscriptions. In front of the Pylon two obelisks or needle-shaped pillars of solid granite stood on a pedestal. Before the Pylon colossal statues of the kings by whom the temple were built were arranged at intervals. Beyond the Pylon was an open court with a colonnade through which processions could pass; behind this court was a great hall where the public were admitted only on certain days. This was the Hypostyle, or Hall of Columns. In this there were three aisles; the central one, higher than the others, led to the Hall of Revelation. There it was that the priests, the kings and certain other privileged persons could see the god when the priests bore him from the sanctuary in his sacred boat or ark.

The temple ended in a dark chamber, called the

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Room of the Mystery, or the Shrine, and it was there that the statue of the god was placed.

The halls were built on different levels, so that the lighting became gradually dimmer. The roofs formed flat terraces. The walls and columns were covered with inscriptions and coloured carvings, which represented on the inside the god and his ceremonies and offerings, and on the outside the king and his battles.

The temples were of huge dimensions, especially that of Amen at Luxor. The Pylon was 147 feet high and 383 wide. The Hypostyle was 170 feet long and 329 wide. The columns of the central aisle are still standing, 62 feet high, 36 feet in circumference and measuring 77 feet round the capitals. The solidity of the construction is wonderful, and even in ruins this temple arouses the admiration of mankind.

From the Egyptians' belief in life continued in the tomb arose a special funerary architecture. This architecture included three principal types: the pyramids, the mastabas, or flat-topped pyramids, and the rock-hewn tombs. In the rock-hewn tombs the entrance to the tomb was marked by an opening cut in the solid rock, called a "false door." In all the tombs the chamber where the bodies lay was far from the entrance, at the end of a succession of passages and pits constructed to baffle thieves. So the monumental part was only the outside of the tomb.

When Memphis was the capital, the kings had pyramids of stone on a square base built for their tombs. The four angles of the base represented the four

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points of the compass, and the top of the pyramid was supposed to touch the sky. Three of these pyramids were remarkable for their size: they were built by the kings Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinos, Pharaohs of the 4th dynasty. The largest pyramid, that of Cheops, was 480 feet high, and is still one of the highest buildings in the world, being now 460 feet high.

The surface was covered with white blocks of stone, polished and placed cleverly on one another without any cement. The blocks of stone which were used in the building were brought by water from the quarries in the Arabian mountains. To raise these blocks they built great inclined planes of earth, which they afterwards removed. Inside and hidden away were the series of passages and rooms which form an Egyptian tomb. The pyramids were built by means of forced labour imposed on the subjects of the Pharaoh. So the Egyptians long retained a hateful recollection of that epoch, and we can realise their sufferings when we think of the enormous mass of stone they had to handle. In the Great Pyramid alone there are 960,000 cubic feet of stone.

Statues adorned the front of their buildings or decorated their temples and tombs. The forms of the statues were stiff and the limbs were carved close to the body, because the stone in which they worked was very hard and difficult to work with the bronze tools which they used. The larger the statue, the less free were the limbs, and some attempt to represent movement was only to be found in the little statues in the tombs, which were carved in soft stone. The statues can be divided

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into three classes: the colossi, the decorative and the funereal statues.

Seated statues of the gods, about 70 feet high, were placed with their backs to the Pylons or doors of the temples. To this class belong the Colossi, called the Colossi of Memnon. Other colossi were the sphinxes, crouching lions with men's heads, emblems of the god Rā, which were placed in the roadways leading to the temples. The most ancient and most famous of the sphinxes, the Great Sphinx of Gizah, near the Pyramids, is a carved rock: it is 150 feet long and 70 feet high.

Our museums are full of decorative statues. They represent kings and gods in their sacred positions with their attributes. They differ widely in height and material: some are made of bronze.

The funereal statues are most interesting, because they are portraits. They were put in the tomb for the Double of the dead man to dwell in, and represent the man in familiar attitudes with life-like exactness. The finest is that of the seated scribe now in the Louvre.



Figure 13 — The Seated Scribe

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The walls and columns of the temples were adorned with carved pictures representing scenes in the life of the gods or the kings; these are called bas-reliefs. There were three kinds: in one kind people were drawn in simple line on the stone, in others the forms were stamped like letters of a seal, in others they were carved in relief. All the details of feature and dress and all sorts of accessories were painted. The drawing was childish: while the body faced the spectator, the face was often in profile and there was no perspective.

Painting was not a separate art. First of all men painted walls, statues and bas-reliefs. Later they painted frescoes, that is, scenes from everyday life on a surface covered with plaster, which were like bas-reliefs without carving. The artists drew only the outlines, and filled them in with flat and conventional colouring.

The colours were bright, and, as the artists had an eye for detail, and carefully reproduced what they saw, these mural paintings, which are very common in the tombs, are among the most precious materials for picturing the life of ancient Egypt.

Writing seems to have been originally a decoration subordinate to architecture. The first signs were graven pictures. Then these pictures acquired the value of words, syllables and letters. So the first system of writing arose, and the letters were called hieroglyphs, or sacred letters, being used for inscriptions on the monuments. In ordinary life men used the hieroglyphic letters in forms which were more and more abbreviated, so that first there was hieroglyphic writing and then demotic

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or popular writing, and from this the Phœnicians derived their alphabet. The key to the hieroglyphs was discovered in 1822 by Champollion, a Frenchman, and he was the founder of Egyptology, or the science of deciphering and translating the inscriptions on the Egyptian monuments.

During Napoleon's expedition into Egypt in 1798 an officer discovered on a stone near Rosetta an inscription engraved in three scripts, hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek. An Englishman, Thomas Young, recognised in the cartouches of the inscription the name of Ptolemy. Champollion did more. He saw that each of the signs of this sort of riddle had a value. He separated the name of Ptolemy.

Next, with the aid of these signs he tried to decipher other cartouches, and he made out in succession the names of Berenice, Cleopatra and Alexander. He obtained a sort of rudimentary alphabet. He finally proved that there was a likeness between the grammatical forms of the language of the hieroglyphs and those of Coptic or Modern Egyptian. So he was able by the help of the alphabet he had made not only to read the writings, but also to translate them.

The Egyptians displayed their luxury especially in jewellery, which was remarkable for the fine quality of the workmanship, such as the breastplates which covered the breast and the necklaces which were literally collars of precious stones and metals. The common use of perfumes gave rise to many accessories, such as vases and spoons, which were often true works of art. To

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make these the craftsmen drew ideas from the natural forms of plants, animals and mankind. Numerous ideas in decoration were borrowed from the papyrus, the lotus and the beetle. Our modern jewellers often try to reproduce the designs of the Egyptian craftsmen, and from this we can judge the development of industrial art and the refinement of civilisation in Egypt.

The position of foreigners in Egypt was like that of Europeans in China in the nineteenth century. The foreigner who insisted was allowed to enter the country, but he was treated with contempt as a barbarian. The Phœnicians were the first to come. They gained permission to trade freely, and they carried Egyptian trinkets all over the Mediterranean. Then in their turn the Greeks arrived, at first as pirates, then as soldiers. The Pharaohs of the Delta used them to strengthen their army, to remodel their equipment and methods, and with their help regained their prestige and authority. Henceforth they gave their confidence to these foreigners, whom the common people regarded as impure; but they did not allow them to live among their people. In all important towns they gave them separate districts in which they lived and carried on their business. In Memphis there were Greek and Latin quarters. The Greeks had also their own separate ports, such as Naucratus. Their influence extended only over the upper classes, and even after the conquests of Alexander the Great, the common people, although they submitted to the conqueror, yet continued to show themselves hostile to all ideas and customs coming from the outer world.

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As in ancient times, so to-day, Egypt continues to be the favourite country for traders, for travellers and for conquerors. Lying as it were at the junction of Europe, Asia and Africa, Egypt is the natural link between East and West. In commerce Egypt is the road to India; from the military point of view she is the key of the world; to the student and the historian she offers traces of the oldest of our civilisations. Greek adventurers and Phœnician traders sought their fortune there, as successfully as European speculators of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have sought theirs. Both Alexander and Napoleon tried to make themselves masters of the Nile before attempting the conquest of the East. The most famous wise men of Greece, Pythagoras and Herodotus, went to learn wisdom from the priests of Memphis and of Thebes. It was at Alexandria after the Greek conquest that the civilisations of the ancient East and of Greece became fused so as to give thereafter to the Romans, when masters of the world, a universal civilisation.

The value of modern Egypt seems to have been doubled by the cutting of the Suez Canal; but Pharaoh Necho of the 26th dynasty had already made a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea.

CHAPTER III

CHALDÆA AND ASSYRIA

WHILE the Egyptians on the banks of the Nile were inventing architecture, government and morality, the Chaldæo-Assyrians on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates were originating methods of warfare and discovering the sciences which are based on calculation.

The Euphrates, about 1600 miles long, and the Tigris, 1100 miles long, both rise in narrow and deep gorges in the highlands of Armenia. After bending, the Euphrates towards the Mediterranean and Syria, and the Tigris towards Persia, they flow nearer one another, and form a huge plain half the size of France, called Mesopotamia, a word meaning the part "between two rivers." Their streams unite and enter the Persian Gulf under the name of Shatt-el-Arab. In the time of the Chaldæans the mouths of the two rivers were separated by a marshy district. But the earth brought down by the rivers has filled the gulf to a distance of 120 miles.

The area watered by these rivers is altogether as large as that of France.

Mesopotamia, almost a desert to-day, in earlier times supported millions of men. The soil is very fertile,

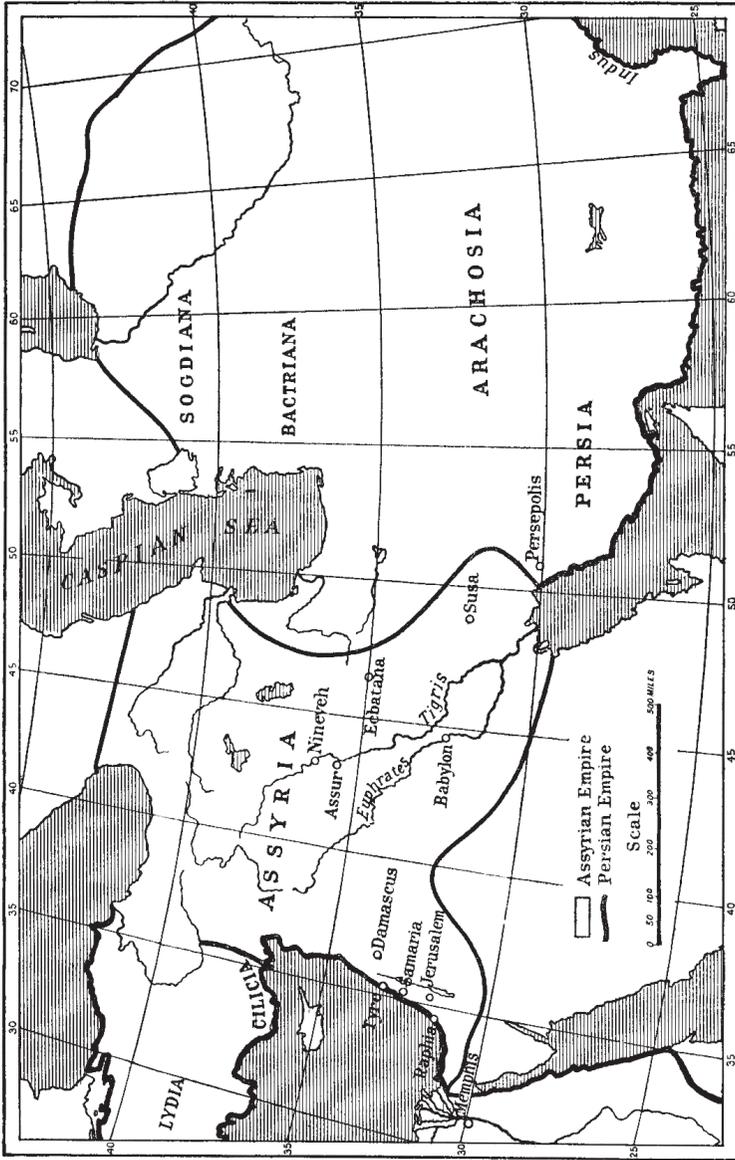


Figure 14 — The Assyrian and Persian Empires

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corn grows there naturally, and in well-watered places three crops can be gathered in a year. There are few kinds of trees, but the palm tree grows everywhere and serves many purposes.

The climate is very warm in the summer, but cold in the winter, owing to the northerly winds which come with icy blasts from the plateau of Armenia. The nature of the soil made the natives ingenious; the climate prevented enervation.

The first inhabitants of the country were the Chaldæans. They settled near the mouths of the two rivers, and seem to have lived a peaceful life, digging canals for irrigation, and building towns where they formed governments and developed their religion and science. As the population increased, they moved northwards along the Tigris, and settled in the mountainous district which commands its left bank. Thus they formed the kingdom of Assyria, the Kurdistan of to-day. The Assyrians, settled now in a country rougher and less fertile, sought to live at the expense of their neighbours, and became a nation of conquerors: war was their chief occupation. So, in the Chaldæo-Assyrian civilisation, the arts of war were the work of the Assyrians, the arts of peace were the work of the Chaldæans.

The history of Chaldæa and of Assyria can be divided into five periods: (1) the history of Lower Chaldæa; (2) that of the First Babylonian Empire; (3) that of Ashur; (4) that of Nineveh; (5) that of the Second or Great Babylonian Empire. It is noteworthy

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that the centre of the Chaldæo-Assyrian power and civilisation moved continuously from south to north, following the course of the two rivers.

In the first period, Lower Chaldæa was peopled with a series of towns, of which the one best known to us is Lagash: here have been discovered the palace and statue of its King Gudea. It was by no means an important state, but Chaldæan civilisation spread far and wide, and reached the borders of the Mediterranean, as is proved by the likeness between the Story of the Flood in the Chaldæan legends and the record in the Bible.

During the second period, the towns and states on the banks of the Euphrates grouped themselves round Babylon, which became the capital of the Chaldæans. Its kings, the most famous of whom was Hammurabi, the author of the oldest known code of laws, undertook the construction of canals, and the plain between the two rivers became a veritable granary.

Then, during the third period, Assyria, colonised by the Chaldæans, assumed in its turn the supremacy over all the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates. The kings who ruled at Ashur and Calah began to make themselves formidable to their neighbours by making war a regular system of plunder and conquest.

Assyria reached the zenith of its power during the fourth period, under the kings of Nineveh, chief of whom were Sargon, Sennacherib and Ashur-banipal. They conquered all the country bordering on the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea, as well as Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. But Nineveh had roused deep

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feelings of hatred against herself in the minds of many races. An alliance of the Babylonians and the Medes overthrew the Assyrian Empire; its capital was taken and rased to the ground in 626.

The kings of Babylon during the fifth period inherited the Assyrian power, but their rule lasted but a little while. Babylon, extended and adorned by King Nebuchadnezzar, became a sort of fairy city, and kept this character even after the Persians took possession of it in 538.



Figure 15 — Kurds of To-day

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The histories of the Greeks, the Bible, the inscriptions and the carvings, all represent the Assyrians as a wild and cruel race, whose chief occupation was making war. The Assyrians had strong bodies, with marked muscles; their noses were hooked, their eyes large and their lips thick. They had long hair and curly beards. The expression of their faces was strong, but animal. They considered their own god to be the master of the world, and foreigners were infidels and traitors. So they massacred them without pity. This fierceness survives to-day in the Kurds who inhabit the land of ancient Assyria, and the Armenian massacres have repeated in our own days the atrocities committed in olden times by the people of Nineveh and Babylon.

Their costume consisted sometimes of a large tunic with short sleeves, sometimes of long robes. Generally these garments were embroidered and fringed. In addition, an Assyrian wrapped himself in a great woollen cloak, also fringed. In the town he wore sandals, in war high-laced boots. The usual head-dress was a peaked felt hat. The use of jewels, perfumes and paint was widely spread.

The houses were square buildings of baked bricks. They were covered with flat tops, on which were little square towers or cupolas. Windows were rare, and generally daylight entered the houses by the doors.

Before the discoveries of the archæologists who have given us the names and deeds of the Assyrian kings precisely, almost our only knowledge of their history came from the accounts in the Bible and the

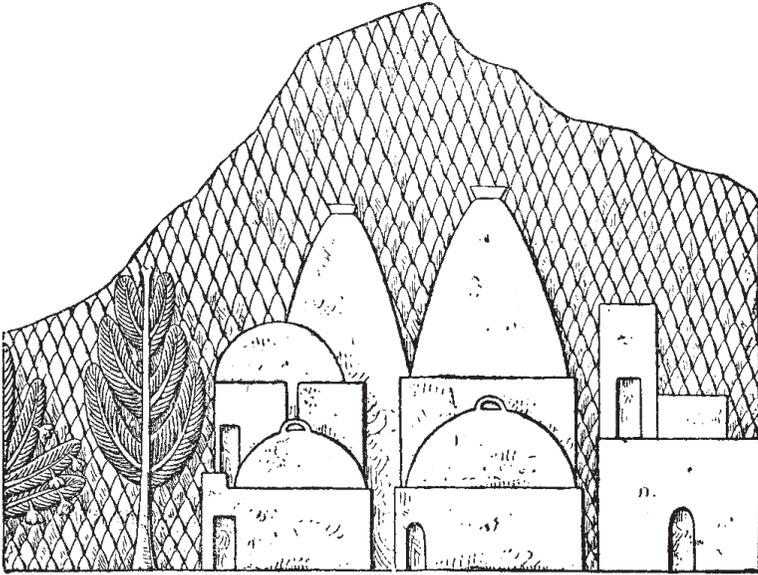


Figure 16 — Early Assyrian Houses (from a bas-relief)

Greek histories. There we find mentioned as celebrated, Nimrod, the great hunter; Ninus, the Conqueror; Semiramis, the queen who built such great structures; Sardanapalus, the voluptuary who devoted himself to self-indulgence.

These people of the legends include among them all the principal characteristics of the Assyrian monarchs.

The king, who was the servant of his god, was also at the same time his representative. For this reason, he was absolute master of his subjects, and other kings had to pay homage to him in person and to his master the god. Those who refused such homage were traitors worthy of every sort of punishment. The king made war on such and himself led the expedition. When he was victorious, he gave thanks to his god and dedicated

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monuments to him, on which he inscribed in pompous style the list of his victories.

The principal care of each Assyrian king was to build a town and a palace, just as each Pharaoh was careful to build a tomb. Often the king was satisfied with transforming the town in which he lived. In this way, Nineveh was the work of Sennacherib, and Babylon that of Nebuchadnezzar. From Nineveh have been obtained a large number of objects exhibited in the Assyrian galleries of the British Museum. The king also superintended the making of canals and the keeping of them in good condition, and used in these works the captives he had taken in war.

The king practised a miniature warfare in his great hunts. In Assyria were found the wild bull or auroch, the lion and the wild ass. These were the king's quarry, and he hunted with his pack of hounds, shooting them with arrows from his chariot. The hunting expedition

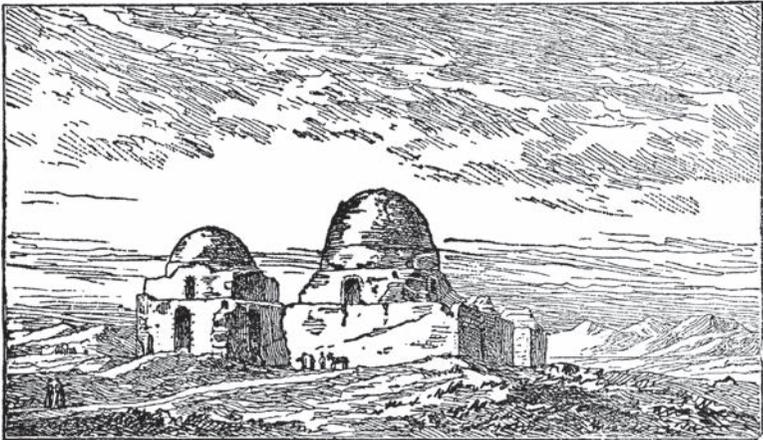


Figure 17 — Modern Assyrian Houses

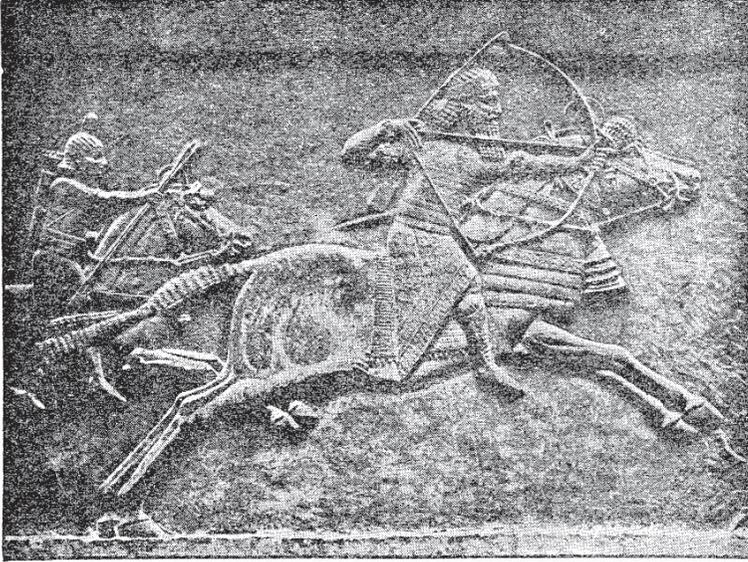


Figure 18 — King Ashur-bani-pal at the Hunt



Figure 19 — Ashur-bani-pal Lion-Hunting on Foot



*Figure 20 — Departure of Assyrian Troops
from the Camp*

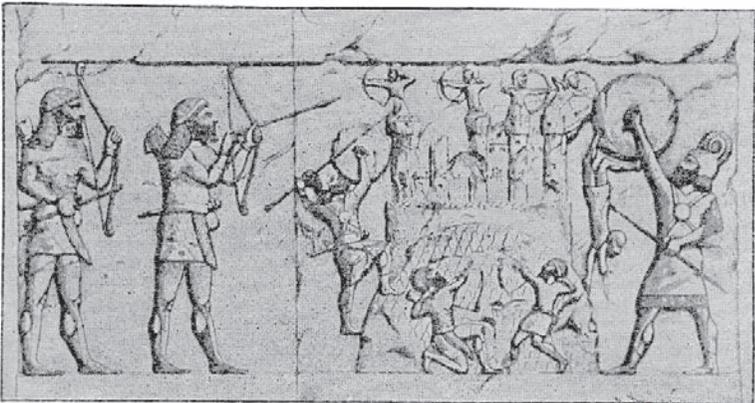


Figure 21 — Assyrian Archers and Pikemen

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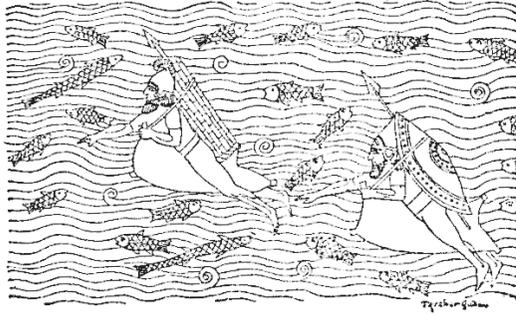
was celebrated like a victory in war. "I, Ashur-bani-pal, king of armies, king of the land of Ashur," runs one inscription, "I have killed two lions; I have bent against them the mighty bow of Ishtar, goddess of battles; I have made over them an offering and libation of wine."

When the king was neither fighting nor hunting, he passed his time in feasts and festivals in his palace. It was the revel after the conflict. The carvings show him clad in an embroidered robe, wearing a tiara on his head and covered with jewels. Around him his courtiers, his slaves, his wives are watching to anticipate his slightest wish. It is difficult to recognise the rude warrior in this idol which is shaded by a parasol. It often happened that the princes grew slack in this luxury, and their indulgence caused the loss of their empire.

In the spring of each year, the king of Assyria set out in battle array to exact tribute from his revolted subjects or to make new conquests. The soldiers were numerous, for all the Assyrians were obliged to serve in the army. The army was organised and equipped not only to fight in line, but to take the enemy by surprise and to besiege the towns where they could take refuge. The Assyrians were the first to use cavalry and to know the art of besieging.

The infantry consisted of pikemen and archers, all armed with a short sword. The soldiers wore a long leather tunic covered with metal scales, closely-fitting breeches, laced boots, and a pointed cap. They carried large shields. Each man had a leather skin which he inflated when necessary and used as a raft for crossing streams.

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*Figure 22 — Assyrian Soldiers Crossing a River
(from a bas-relief)*

The horsemen were mounted on small strong horses and were divided into lancers and archers. Not only did they take part in battles, but they were used for scouting, for making long detours, cutting the enemy's lines of communication, destroying his crops, and sowing terror in advance of the main army. On these expeditions they also took light-armed foot-soldiers, who rode behind them on their saddles. They also invented cavalry operations at a great distance, which are called in modern warfare raids.

They had also a chariot corps; each chariot carried three men, and they were used to charge in line. To take the towns they had corps of skilled engineers, who knew how to dig trenches and mines, to breach walls by means of the battering-ram, to raise siege towers, to riddle the walls, and to make an assault by ladders. The town of Tyre, being built on an island, was the only one which succeeded in resisting their science of the siege.

The inscriptions relate in horrible detail the long series of massacres and devastations of which Assyrian

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expeditions consisted and which form their history.

Sometimes the Assyrians ascended the Tigris and attacked the tribes of Armenia or of Media; sometimes they came down the Euphrates and conquered the Chaldæans and the kings of Elam and Susiana. Then they went by way of the valley of the Euphrates to Syria, and, marching by the coast, reached Egypt. They penetrated even the deserts of Arabia. Weak nations yielded without a struggle. Others formed mutual alliances and they had to be overcome in battles and sieges. All were conquered by the dread Assyrian warriors.



Figure 23 — Assyrian Troops Using a Battering-Ram

It is noteworthy that each king, in his turn, undertook the same campaigns as his predecessors. The chronicles of the victories of Tiglath Pileser, king

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of Ashur, or those of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, contain the same names, and the reason of this is that the large majority of the wars were undertaken against revolting tributaries. After a victory, the Assyrians did not occupy the conquered country. They allowed the people to keep their organisation and their own kings; they only exacted a regular tribute. When the nations had forgotten the hardships of the conquest, or when the authority of the Assyrian king was weak, they tried to free themselves from his yoke by refusing the tribute. Then they had to be conquered afresh. Occasionally the royal princes, called governors of the large towns, took up arms against the king in order to win the throne for themselves; this was done by the brother of Ashurbanipal at Babylon. Finally, palace revolutions and assassinations of the kings were frequent, and always gave an opportunity for revolt.

The Assyrian Empire was then truly, to use the Biblical metaphor, “an image with feet of clay.” It was

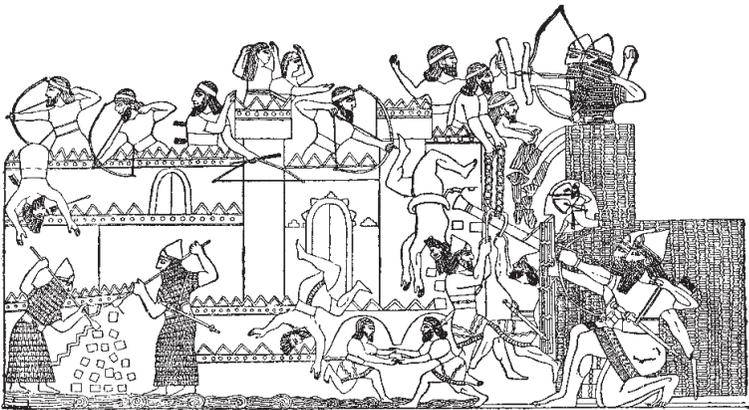


Figure 24 — A Siege (from a bas-relief)

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always crumbling away and changing its masters, but always re-fashioning itself with surprising ease. It was the hand of the conqueror alone which produced unity.

The Assyrians showed no pity to those they conquered. They inflicted on them frightful tortures: they put out eyes, cut off noses, ears and lips, and tore out beard and nails, or impaled and flayed their victims alive. They raised trophies composed of severed heads; they flung the corpses to the wild beasts. The kings made boast of their cruelty: "I slew one out of every two," said Ashur-bani-pal, "and I have led off those who survived as slaves. I built a pyramid before the gate of the town; I had some of the leaders of the revolt flayed alive and I stretched their skins on the pyramid. Others were bricked up alive, others were impaled along the ramparts. I had many flayed before my face; I carpeted the walls with their skins; I made crowns of their heads and garlands of their corpses. Over their ruins I smile; in the glutting of my wrath I find my satisfaction."

The country was systematically laid waste. Trees were cut down, crops destroyed, towns rased to the ground; the cattle were driven away by the conqueror. The gold, the silver and all articles of value were divided between the king and his warriors. The inhabitants who had not been killed were carried off in a body to Assyria, where they were made to work at the king's buildings. The most celebrated of these transportations was that of the Jews. Settled by Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon, they remained there for seventy years, till the conquest of Cyrus.

The Assyrian towns, crammed with the spoils of the

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vanquished, were towns of luxury and pleasure. Early in their history, industry and commerce developed. Their methods of manufacture persist to-day in the pottery of the Persians, the arms of Damascus and the embroideries and carpets of the East. Their fashion of building in brick made them excellent potters, and they discovered all the secrets of decorating and glazing bricks. Their embroidered stuffs, which the Greeks called "needle-paintings," were in demand throughout the whole of the ancient world. They were skilful engravers, making decorative panels of metal, arms and jewels and goldsmith's work.

Assyrian merchants travelled far afield for their wares: iron and precious woods came from Armenia, purple from Phœnicia, woven stuffs and precious stones from India, glass and ornaments from Egypt. On the Euphrates and Tigris the merchants had regular fleets which went far out in the Persian Gulf. A perfect network of caravan routes put them in touch with central Asia and the Mediterranean.

It is no wonder that the wealth of these cities became a proverb. The warriors of Nineveh and Babylon refreshed themselves after their conquests with feasts and all sorts of enjoyment. They were as famous for their self-indulgence as for their cruelty.

Of all the Chaldæo-Assyrian towns, Babylon was the most important and has the longest history. Founded in the early years of Chaldæa, Babylon survived all the sieges and attacks of the kings of Nineveh. Nebuchadnezzar made it the greatest city of Asia. The Persians, and later the Greeks, respected it.

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For long years Babylon cast on the world the glamour of a civilisation refined to the point of corruption.

The great importance of Babylon and its long duration are due to its excellent position. It was built on the lower part of the Euphrates, at the heart of the most fertile lands of that time. It was the centre of the Chaldæan world and the home of its science. By the Euphrates, communication was open to the Persian Gulf and Syria. It commanded also the great trade route which passes from Eastern Europe and Asia Minor to India. It also dominated the roads to Egypt, to Armenia and to Persia. All the international trade of the ancient world passed by its walls. When, under the Assyrian Empire, Babylon reached its supreme height, its political power increased its natural pre-eminence; its wealth, the fruit alike of war and science, knew no bounds.

The labour of its captive population resulted in making Babylon "the Queen of Asia." The Greeks never speak of the city without admiration. It was surrounded by a square wall twenty-seven miles in circumference, enclosing a space a little larger than that of Bradford. The brick wall, plastered with bitumen mortar, was about 820 feet high and eighty wide; there were ranged on the wall 150 square watch-towers, and there were 100 gates with folding doors of bronze. The Euphrates flowed through the city between two quays, built of brick, and united by a stone bridge. This immense enclosure was not entirely populated, but contained gardens and fields, and formed a fortified camp where the inhabitants could live in time of siege.

CHALDÆA AND ASSYRIA

The streets intersected at right angles and led up to the royal quarter or king's palace, whose ruins cover thirty-five acres. Near the palace rose the Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the world. They were high terraces built on piles of masonry, where were grown at great expense rare trees of huge dimensions. The city was adorned by eight temples magnificently rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar. The wealth accumulated in this capital was so great that in order to ward off the invasions of the Medes, the king had the plain of the Euphrates barred off by a great wall. A motley crowd of soldiers, captives, pilgrims and traders, collected from all the corners of the Asiatic world, filled the streets, above which rose the temple of the god Marduk, lord and protector of Nebuchadnezzar and his city.

The Chaldæo-Assyrians owed their wealth to war, manufactures and commerce, but not to these only. They were also skilful agriculturists. Chaldæa, an alluvial plain like the Delta of the Nile, was very fertile, but subject to inundation from the rivers, while, on the other hand, Mesopotamia only yielded rich crops under irrigation. The Chaldæans knew how to make canals and construct irrigation works. The Tigris was united to the Euphrates by a canal, from which branched numerous smaller canals cutting one another at right angles. The plain was like an immense chessboard, and we can still trace the banks of earth. As in Egypt, the labourer was helped by the engineer and agriculture was a branch of science. It was a point of honour with the kings to maintain the canals and increase their number. One of them, Hammurabi, was able to say, "I

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have changed the desert plains to watered lands; I have given them fertility and abundance; I have made them a fair place of habitation.”

Among the ancients, commerce, which dealt almost exclusively with luxuries, owing to the difficulties of transport, did not unite nations as it does to-day. On the whole, the normal form of intercourse between them was war. It was in a long succession of wars that the two civilisations of the Nile and of the Euphrates found their meeting-point. These wars fell into three periods.

In the first the petty kingships of the Euphrates submitted to the sovereignty of the conquering Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty. The Egyptian invasion developed the war-like instincts of the Chaldæans.

Later in history, when the kings of Nineveh had become powerful, the Egyptians, panic-stricken, roused against them their allies of Syria and of Israel. These allies were defeated, and the fall of Damascus and of Samaria decided Sabaco, Pharaoh of Napata, to intervene in person; but his army was annihilated at Raphia by Sargon, in the eighth century B.C. The successors of Sargon penetrated Egypt, took Thebes and drove back the Ethiopians.

After the fall of Nineveh, the Pharaoh of the Delta once more took the offensive in Asia. Necho invaded Palestine and Syria, but he was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Karkemish (604 B.C.), and Egypt lost all her influence in Asia. Then the two rival states were conquered by the Persians and together submitted to the yoke of Cambyses.