

prise, I beheld a carpet suspended from the balcony, with a great printed bill fixed upon it, announcing that a sale was about to take place within. "Good heavens, I exclaimed, "what can have become of Warrend!" I leaped from my cab, and without waiting to make enquiry, ran my eyes over the catalogue that was suspended from the door-post, and instinctively they fell upon this expressive line—"By order of the executors of the late Spencer Warrender, Esq." Poor Warrender, then, was dead! I entered the house, which, when I left it last, was the scene of mirth and rejoicing—and now all was confusion. Death had been there, and these were the results.—Upon a mahogany sideboard, six flat-irons and a foot-pan were displayed, and a lady's dressing-table was graced with a set of large decanters, one small ditto, one tea-urn, and a mouse-trap. There stood a harp with three whole strings, and a guitar that was broken—its music now was mute. Carefully laid out upon the surface of a four-post bedstead was the best blue and gold dessert service, and a feather-bed and bolsters slumbered peacefully in the recesses of a book case. There was a long table in the centre of the room, around which were placed sundry old ladies, each provided with a pencil and a little book, like so many shorthand writers, and who, ever and anon, cast about certain wistful glances, first at the empty plates and dishes, and decanters, and then at the long table before them, as if they should very much like to see each of the said articles fulfilling its useful vocation, just at that particular moment. My eyes fell upon a female domestic in deep mourning, and approaching her, I asked if Mrs. Warrender was well. The woman stared at me for a moment, and then exclaimed, "Bless you, sir, Mrs. Warrender has been dead these two years." So the pair whom I had left young, happy, and in the possession of every blessing this world could give—had both been summoned to that bourne from which no traveller returns! It seemed to me but a few days since I had left them in health, and yet the beautiful and lovely Emmeline had been dead two years, and the "effects" of poor Spencer were now to be disposed of for the benefit of the heir-at-law! I turned from the scene and drove leisurely home, full of strange thoughts—"a sadder but a better man."

MEMOIRS OF FEMALE SOVEREIGNS.

BY MRS. JAMESON.

—'Tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble lives in content,
Than to be perched up in a glistening grief,
And wear a golden sorrow.—*Shakespeare.*

SEMIRAMIS.

Semiramis, queen of Assyria, is the first female sovereign upon record who ever held undivided empire. All the accounts which have come down to us concerning this celebrated queen are mixed up with so much exaggeration, absurdity, and mythological fiction, that she may be considered partly a fabulous and partly an historical personage. As beheld through the long lapse of ages, and in the dim distance of primeval time, with all her gorgeous and Babylonish associations around her, Semiramis appears to our fancy rather as a colossal emblem of female sovereignty overshadowing the east, than as a real and distinct individual; yet, that such a woman did once exist is more than probable, and her name has been repeated from age to age, till it has become so illustrious, and her exploits and character so frequently alluded to in history, in poetry, and in the arts, that it is obviously necessary to be acquainted with the traditions respecting her; though quite unnecessary to give implicit credit to the relation of events resting on such a vague, remote, and doubtful testimony, that, if it be difficult to believe, it is impossible to confute them. The time at which Semiramis lived is a matter of dispute; and the authorities vary so extravagantly that we are tempted to exclaim, with Bryant, "What credit can possibly be given to the history of a person, the period of whose existence cannot be ascertained within one thousand five hundred years?" Yet, so universal a celebrity must surely have had some foundation in truth.

According to Rollin, Semiramis flourished about nineteen hundred and fifty years before the Christian era, that is, about four hundred years after the flood, and nearly about the time of Abraham. Other chronologists, with far more probability, place her reign about six hundred years later; thus making her nearly contemporary with Gideon, judge of Israel, and Theseus, king of Athens.

She was born at Ascalon, in Syria, and was the wife of Menones, one of the generals of Ninus, king of Assyria. At the siege of Bactria, whither she accompanied her husband, she distinguished herself by her prudence and courage, and through her sagacity the city was at length taken after a protracted siege. She discovered a weak part in the fortifications, and led some soldiers up a by-path by night, by which means the walls were scaled, and the city entered. Ninus, struck with her wisdom and her charms, entreated her husband to resign Semiramis to him, offering his daughter, the Princess Sosana, in exchange, and threatening to put out the eyes of the husband if he refused. Menones, seeing the king resolved on his purpose, and the lady in all probability nothing loath, and unable to determine between the alternatives presented to him—the loss of his eyes, or the loss of his wife—hung himself in a fit of jealousy and despair, and Ninus immediately afterward married his widow. Semiramis became the mother of a son named Ninias, and the king, dying soon afterward, bequeathed to her the govern-

ment of his empire during the minority of his son. We have another version of this part of the story of Semiramis, which has afforded a fine subject for poets and satirists.

She was twenty years of age when she assumed the reins of empire, and resolved to immortalize her name by magnificent monuments and mighty enterprises. She is said to have founded the city of Babylon, or at least to have adorned it with such prodigious and splendid works that they ranked amongst the wonders of the world. When we read the accounts of the "Great Babylon," of its walls and brazen gates, its temples, bridges, and hanging gardens, we should be inclined to treat the whole as a magnificent piece of poetry, if the stupendous monuments of human art and labour still remaining in India and Upper Egypt did not render credible the most extravagant of these descriptions, and prove on what a gigantic scale the ancients worked for immortality. We are also told that among the edifices erected by her was a mausoleum to the memory of the king, her husband, adjoining the great tower of Babel, and adorned with statues of massive gold. When Semiramis had completed the adornment of her capital by the most wonderful works of art, she undertook a progress through her vast empire, and everywhere left behind her glorious memorials of her power and her benevolence. It seems to have been an article of faith among all the writers of antiquity, that Assyria had never been so great and so prosperous as under the dominion of this extraordinary woman. She built enormous aqueducts, connected the various cities by roads and causeways, in the construction of which she levelled hills and filled up valleys; and she was careful, like the imperial conqueror of modern times, to inscribe her name and the praises of her own munificence on all the monuments of her greatness. In one of these inscriptions she gives her own genealogy, in a long list of celestial progenitors; which shows that, like some other monarchs of the antique time, she had the weakness to disown her plebeian origin, and wished to lay claim to a divine and fictitious parentage.

"My father was Jupiter Belus,
My grandfather, Babylonian Saturn;
My great-grandfather, Ethiopian Saturn;
My great-grandfather's father, Egyptian Saturn;
And my great-grandfather's grandfather,
Phoenix Caelus Ogyges."

After reading the high-sounding catalogue of grandfathers and great-grandfathers, it is amusing to recollect that Semiramis has left posterity in some doubt whether she herself ever had a real existence, and may not be, after all, as imaginary a personage as any of her shadowy, heaven-sprung ancestors.

There is another of the inscriptions of Semiramis, which is in a much finer spirit.

"Nature bestowed on me the form of a woman; my actions have surpassed those of the most valiant of men. I ruled the empire of Ninus, which stretched eastward as far as the river Hyphann, southward to the land of incense and of myrrh, and northward to the country of the Scythians and the Sogdians. Before me no Assyrian had seen the great sea. I beheld with my own eyes four seas, and their shores acknowledged my power. I constrained the mighty rivers to flow according to my will, and I led their waters to fertile lands that had been before barren and without inhabitants. I raised impregnable towers; I constructed paved roads in ways hitherto untrodden but by the beasts of the forest; and in the midst of these mighty works I found time for pleasure and friendship."

We are told that Semiramis was extremely active and vigilant in the administration of her affairs. One morning, as she was dressing, information was brought to her that a rebellion had broken out in the city; she immediately rushed forth, half-attired, her hair floating in disorder, appeased the tumultuous populace by her presence and her eloquence, and then returned to finish her toilette.

Not satisfied with being the founder of mighty cities, and sovereign over the greatest empire of the earth, Semiramis was ambitious of military renown. She subdued the Medes, the Persians, the Libyans, and the Ethiopians, and afterwards determined to invade India. She is the first monarch on record who penetrated beyond the Indus, for the expedition of Bacchus is evidently fabulous. The amount of her army appears to us absolutely incredible. She is said to have assembled three millions of foot-soldiers and five hundred thousand cavalry; and as the strength of the Indians consisted principally in the numbers of their elephants, she caused many thousand camels to be disguised and caparisoned like elephants of war, in hopes of deceiving and terrifying the enemy by this stratagem. Another historian informs us that she constructed machines in the shape of elephants, and that these machines were moved by some mechanical contrivance, which was worked by a single man in the interior of each. The Indian king or chief, whose name was Stabrobates, hearing of the stupendous armament which was moving against him, sent an ambassador to Semiramis, demanding who and what she was? and why, without provocation, she was come to invade his dominions? To these very reasonable inquiries the Assyrian queen haughtily replied, "Go to your king, and tell him I will myself inform him who I am, and why I am come hither." Then rushing onwards at the head of her swarming battalions, she passed the river Indus in spite of all opposition, and advanced far into the country, the people flying before her unresisting, and apparently vanquished. But having thus insidiously led her on till she was surrounded by hostile bands, and beyond the

reach of assistance from her own dominions, the Indian monarch suddenly attacked her, overwhelmed her mock elephants by the power and weight of his real ones, and completely routed her troops, who fled in all directions. The queen herself was wounded, and only saved by the swiftness of her Arabian steed, which bore her across the Indus; and she returned to her kingdom with scarce a third of her vast army.

We are not informed whether the disasters of this war cured Semiramis of her passion for military glory; and all the researches of antiquarians have not enabled us to distinguish the vague and poetical from the true, or at least the probable events in the remainder of her story. We have no account of the state of manners and morals during her reign, and of the progress of civilization we can only judge by the great works imputed to her. Among the various accounts of her death the following is the most probable:—An oracle had foretold that Semiramis should reign until her son Ninias conspired against her; and after her return from her Indian expedition she discovered that Ninias had been plotting her destruction. She immediately called to mind the words of the oracle, and, without attempting to resist his designs, abdicated the throne at once, and retired from the world; or, according to others, she was put to death by her son, after a reign of forty-two years. The Assyrians paid her divine honors under the form of a pigeon.

From Addison's Travels in the East.

ASKELON.

More than two thousand years ago the prophet Zephaniah foretells that "Ashkelon shall be a desolation." It was then a strong and populous city; two centuries back, when Sandys visited it, a Turkish garrison was still maintained: that has been since withdrawn, and not a single habitation is now left.

Descending into the hollow, we wandered amidst masses of masonry, heaps of stone, and heaps of rubbish. Here and there we perceived the mutilated shafts of grey granite columns, and some broken pillars of coarse marble. The foundations of walls and the ruins of houses encumbered the ground at every footstep, and the remains of gardens and of courts, once attached to the domestic habitations of the city, were plainly distinguishable on all sides. Near the centre of these ruins we observed some fragments of the red Thebaic granite, and some small pieces of blue terra cotta.

These confused heaps present a scene of thorough desolation; not a single column is erect, nor a single shaft entire. The capitals are all broken, buried or carried away, and the order of the architecture cannot be distinguished.

An excavation was made some years back by Lady Hestor Stanhope, or, as one of my guides informed me, by the pasha, with the hope of discovering buried treasures. An apartment, which is now again nearly overwhelmed by the loose stones and sand, was found a few feet below the surface. It is arched, and appears to have been a corridor or gallery, leading to an ancient bath.

We wandered down to the sea shore, and crossed over shattered masses of wall, which once formed the defences of the town towards the sea. Ashkelon was the principal maritime town in Philistia; now not the vestige of a port is traceable. A wild, solitary and naked coast, stretches far away on either side, and no safe refuge for the ships is now anywhere to be distinguished. The walls along the sea-shore present a strange scene of ruin; they appear to have been overthrown by some engine of tremendous power, and lie scattered in huge fragments along the shore, mixed with columns and broken pillars, which are wedged in among them. The stones are bound together by a cement worked up with marine shells and beach, and this cement sometimes forms nearly one half of the solid mass of masonry.

We ascend the sandy eminence crowned by the ruin, and examined the broken and solitary walls of the tottering edifice. It appears to have been a christian convent, and was the last inhabited dwelling on the spot. A few monks here sheltered themselves amidst the ruins of the once-populous town. They were often visited by the surrounding Arab shepherds, to whom they offered charity and dispensed medicines, and the shelter of the convent was often hospitably extended to the wayworn traveller and the humble pilgrim. For a long time they struggled against the genius of desolation which brooded over the place: they cultivated a little garden below, and subsisted on the charity of distant brethren. Their resources, however, at last diminished—the support from abroad was withdrawn—the building was gradually allowed to go to ruin; some of the monks sought refuge in other establishments, and the last of the inhabitants of Ashkelon—the last member of this little religious community—was laid in his sandy grave many a year back.

By the side of the convent is a deep well of excellent water, which once supplied the inmates of the establishment, and just beyond the well we enjoyed an excellent view of the strange and wild scene of desolation which the surrounding landscapes presents to the eye. On one side extended the wide expanse of the blue Mediterranean, and the solitary and sandy shore, and on the other the shapeless ruins of the town. The sea broke with violence upon the base of the hill, and the waves surged and murmured between several granite columns which lay prostrate in the water, and among large fragments of stone scattered on the beach. Over the extensive hollow, where once stood the city, fantastic mounds of sand and confused heaps of stone and masses of masonry alone met the eye.