

and of Lydia west of the Halys River. Lydia was the first to be conquered. Her energetic king, Crœsus, who had now under his control all of Asia Minor west of the Halys, assumed the part of defender of western Asia. He is said to have consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi and to have received the response that "if he crossed the Halys he would destroy a great empire." Not thinking that this prophecy might apply to his own empire, and not to that of Cyrus, he crossed the river, and after an indecisive battle retreated into his own territory. Without delay Cyrus invaded Lydia and captured the capital city Sardis. Asia Minor now became a part of the Persian empire.

Conquest of Babylonia and Egypt.—After the conquest of Lydia, Cyrus turned his attention to his next great rival, Babylonia. With the fall of Babylon (538 B. C.), this empire also became a part of his dominions. It is to the credit of Cyrus that he permitted the Jews, who had been held in captivity since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, to return to their home in Jerusalem. After the death of Cyrus, his son Cambyses (529-522 B. C.) extended the Persian authority over Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Egypt. But an army sent into Ethiopia perished in the sands of the desert; and an expedition planned against Carthage failed, because the Phœnician sailors refused to serve against their kinsfolk. The rule of Cambyses was oppressive and often cruel, and was marked by frequent revolts in different parts of the empire.

Conquests in Europe under Darius.—The insurrections which attended the death of Cambyses were quelled by Darius (521-484 B. C.), who was, next to Cyrus, the greatest king of Persia. He has a special interest for us, because he was the first to extend the Persian authority into Europe—which fact paved the way for the subsequent invasion of Greece. The purpose of Darius in entering Europe was, according to Herodotus, to send an expedition against the barbarous Scythians. So far as the Scythians were concerned, this expedition proved a failure. But on his return to Asia Darius left in Europe an army which subdued Thracæ the Greek cities to the north of the Ægean Sea,