

River; (2) the later Babylonian empire, which, with the aid of the Medes, had been formed from the dissolution of the empire of Assyria, and which extended from the Tigris River to the shores of the Mediterranean; (3) the Lydian empire, which covered the western part of Asia Minor from the Halys River almost to the Ægean Sea, on the coasts of which had grown up a number of Greek cities; and (4) Egypt, which had recovered its independence under Psammetichus and occupied its original territory in the valley of the Nile. We are now to see how these different countries became absorbed into the one great world empire of Persia.

Rise of Persia under Cyrus (558-529 B. C.).—Persia had been a small province in the Median empire situated on the Persian Gulf. About the middle of the sixth century B. C. a prince, whom we know as Cyrus the Great, revolted from Media and succeeded in reducing that state to his own authority. Many stories are told about the birth and early life of this great man; but they are largely mythical, and need not be rehearsed. His chief significance for us is in the fact that he created the most powerful empire that the world had yet seen, and established a policy which was destined to bring Asia into conflict with Europe. The growth of this empire resulted from the conquests made by three kings—Cyrus, its founder, and his successors, Cambyses and Darius.



BAS-RELIEF OF CYRUS

Conquest of Lydia.—With the overthrow of the Median empire, Cyrus proceeded to extend his kingdom to the west. This required the conquest of Babylonia west of the Tigris,