

long process of growth. The earliest writing was in the form of pictures to represent material objects, and then in the form of symbols to represent abstract ideas. The Egyptians made great progress by using signs to represent syllables, and afterwards to represent elementary sounds. It was reserved for the Phœnicians, however, to develop a true phonetic alphabet, in which the chief elementary sounds were represented by separated and well-defined characters. This alphabet was adopted by many peoples, especially by the Greeks, who gave it to the Romans, by whom it was given to modern nations. Thus the Phœnicians, by the development of commerce and the invention of a true phonetic alphabet, and also by their diffusion of Oriental culture over the Mediterranean coasts, must be regarded as one of the most important of ancient nations.

II. JUDEA AND THE HEBREWS

The Hebrew Nation.—Not far from Phœnicia in Palestine there grew up another Semitic nation, which was in many respects different from every other Oriental people. This was the Hebrew nation. Having no great river like that of the Egyptians and that of the Babylonians, and not taking to the sea like the Phœnicians, they did not attain distinction in the industrial or commercial arts. Their greatness did not depend upon art or science, or upon their capacity for political organization. Yet they have perhaps done for civilization as much as any other people of the East, for they became the moral and religious teachers of the world.

Periods of Jewish History.—No other ancient nation possessed so complete a record as did the Hebrews of the way in which a people has passed from the primitive to the civilized stage. From these records, we learn that their ancestor, Abram, was a Babylonian, that he came (about 2000 B. C.) from Ur, a "city of the Chaldees," that he visited Egypt, and finally settled in Jude'a. His descendants, in the time of a famine, took refuge in Egypt, and became subject to the Shepherd Kings, who assigned to them a home in lower Egypt (Goshen). Being oppressed by a king of a subse-