

by throwing off the yoke of the Assyrians, to whom they had been subject. Fighting for existence against the continual encroachments of Assyria on the west and of the barbarous Scythians on the north, they not only maintained their national life, but developed the military strength which enabled them to conquer their neighbours and to establish an empire.

The Median Empire ; Cyaxares.—The founder, and in fact the only great ruler, of the Median empire was Cyax'ares (625-585 B. C.). He organized the scattered tribes of the country and completed the work begun by previous princes. His military ability is shown by the fact that he formed his army into regular divisions, each made up of those who were armed with the same kind of weapons. He first drove back the barbarians who were pressing upon his kingdom from the north, and delivered western Asia from these invaders. He then formed an alliance with the king of Babylonia, as the result of which Nineveh was destroyed and the empire of Assyria was overthrown. While Nebuchadnezzar was ruling in splendour at Babylon, Cyaxares was extending his dominions. He invaded Asia Minor and pushed his arms to the river Halys, which became the dividing line between his empire and that of Lydia. The Median empire, though extensive in its territory, was the shortest-lived of all the great Oriental monarchies. Its chief significance lies in the fact that it prepared the way for the greater empire of the Persians.

II. PERSIA, THE SECOND WORLD EMPIRE

The East before the Persian Conquests.—At the death of Cyaxares in the beginning of the sixth century (585 B. C.), there were four principal nations of the Oriental world, which we should keep in mind if we would understand the growth of the Persian empire. These were: (1) the Median empire, which had been built up by the prince Cyaxares, and which extended to the Halys River on the west, to the Caspian Sea on the north, to the Persian Gulf on the south, and to an indefinite boundary line on the east towards the Indus