

of Babylon his capital, and laboured for the welfare of his people. He constructed dikes to prevent the overflow of the Euphrates, and built a network of canals to irrigate the arid lands. The most remarkable monument of this king is the "Code of Hammurabi," which has been but recently discovered, and is regarded as the oldest code of laws in the world. During this most prosperous period of its history, the early Babylonian empire was not devoted to the arts of war so much as to the arts of peace. The people were more active in subduing nature than in conquering their neighbours; and hence we find that they made great progress in the development of a civilized life.

Babylonian Civilization.—The civilization of the Babylonians was based upon the character of their soil, which was made fertile by the waters of the Euphrates. They were primarily a pastoral and agricultural people, grazing their flocks and herds upon the natural pastures of the valley, or raising by artificial means the grains and fruits necessary for food. They dug canals to irrigate the outlying fields. In the absence of stone and timber they built their houses of clay which became hardened in the sun. They soon learned to manufacture bricks burned in the kiln, from which they constructed their more important buildings. They also used clay as a material upon which to write, using for this purpose a three-cornered stylus. This instrument impressed upon the moistened clay a wedge-shaped mark—such wedge-shaped characters being called "cuneiform" from *cuneus*, a wedge. The clay tablets, thus inscribed with cuneiform characters, were baked in a peculiar way, making them almost indestructible. Thousands of these tablets have been unearthed, revealing the thought and spirit of this ancient people.



AN INSCRIPTION IN
CUNEIFORM