

of ideas in the form of pictures, then advancing to the use of symbolic signs, and at last to the use of a phonetic alphabet such as we use to-day. Finally these ancient peoples acquired great ability, if not taste, in the art of building, beginning with huts made of sticks or clay, and passing to the use of brick among the Babylonians, and stone among the Egyptians.

The Course of Oriental History.—Our review of the Oriental world will enable us to distinguish certain periods, or successive stages, which mark the course of its historical development. We may briefly characterize these periods as follows:

- (1) During the first period the rudiments of civilization appeared in two separate and independent centres,—Babylonia and Egypt,—each having a peculiar culture of its own, and each being unaffected, so far as we know, by any influences derived from the other (about 5000-3800 B. C.).
- (2) The second period is the time of the Babylonian ascendancy, when Babylonia extended its authority to the Mediterranean coast, and its culture to the lands of Syria (about 3800-1600 B. C.).
- (3) Then followed the period of the Egyptian ascendancy, when the authority of Egypt superseded that of Babylonia in the Syrian lands and the Egyptian culture became extended to this territory (about 1600-1100 B. C.).
- (4) With the decline of the Egyptian power, we come to the period of Syrian independence, which continued for two centuries, during which time the influence of Phœnicia became predominant over the Mediterranean coasts, and the Hebrew kingdom reached its height under David and Solomon (about 1100-900 B. C.).
- (5) This was followed by the ascendancy of Assyria as the first world empire, bringing under its control all the previously mentioned countries of the East,—Babylonia, Egypt, Phœnicia, and Judea,—the period of the Assyrian ascendancy closing with the independence of Egypt and the division of the remaining territory between the short-lived empires of later Babylonia and Media (about 900-550 B. C.).