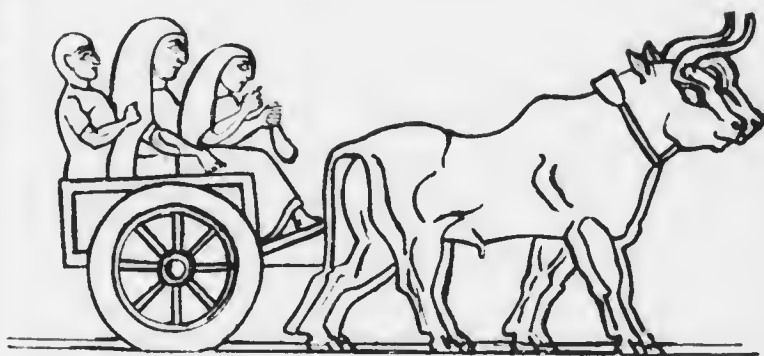


master of all the other kingdoms and forced them to pay tribute to him, thus founding the first Babylonian or Chaldean Empire. His successors maintained this supremacy until the sixteenth century. Chaldea was then invaded by the Cushites, an Eastern tribe of warriors and plunderers, and remained under their yoke until the thirteenth century when it was conquered by the Assyrians.



Captive woman and children.

An inscription kept in the museum of the Louvre, dates back to the king Khammurabi who styles himself the king of Bab-ili. This inscription tells of a canal built by the king himself, the "Nahar-Khammurabi," a blessing to the men of Bab-ili. "I have changed the desert plains into well-watered fields; I have given them fertility and abundance; I have made of them a dwelling-place of happiness."

Assyria. — Legends. — Greek legends dwelt at length on the conquests of Ninus, king of Nineveh, who had formed a vast empire comprising all the regions extending from the Indus to the Mediterranean. They related the wonders of the reign of his widow, Semiramis, who had founded Babylon on a still grander scale than Nineveh. She had a bridge constructed over the Euphrates, at the extremities of which were built two immense palaces, joined by a covered passage, under the river. Legends also told of the shameful, slothful lives of the successors of Semiramis. They related at length the effeminate life of Sardanapalus. He dressed in a woman's gown, covered his face with paint and handled the distaff and spindle. When he saw that Nineveh was about to fall into the hands of the Medes, he had himself burned with his treasures.