

THE ORIENT

CHAPTER I

EARLY BABYLONIA AND EGYPT

I. THE EARLY BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

Meaning of History.—We may perhaps define history in the briefest way by saying that it is the record of human progress. The study of history enables us to see how the world in which we live to-day has come to be what it is. By this study we learn that the ideas, the customs, and the institutions which we possess in the present, have grown out of what men already possessed in the past. Hence we study the ages which have gone before us, in order that we may understand the age in which we live. It has been said that "to know what man is we must know what man *has been*." History, therefore, in the broadest sense of the word, deals with the progress of mankind—the successive stages of human development. We must not think that it is only a story of wars and battles; it is rather a record of the steps by which men have advanced from barbarism to civilization—by which they have been raised from a lower to a higher plane of existence.

The First Centres of Civilization.—In beginning our study of ancient history, we may ask, In what part of the world did men first rise from barbarism to a civilized life—in other words, where did civilization first appear? We cannot answer this question with certainty. We may be quite sure, however, that it was either in Babylonia in the lower Euphrates valley, or in Egypt in the valley of the Nile. It has long been supposed that Egypt was the oldest civilized