

CHAPTER III

ASSYRIA AND LATER BABYLONIA

I. ASSYRIA, THE FIRST WORLD EMPIRE

The Rise of Assyria.—We are now brought to a new period in Oriental history, in which all the previous nations of the East—not only the Phœnicians and the Hebrews, but also the Babylonians and the Egyptians—lose their independence, and become parts of one great world empire. The people who established this empire were the Assyrians. They belonged to the Semitic race, like the Babylonians, and dwelt in the upper part of the Tigris-Euphrates, or Mesopotamian, valley. In the rugged climate of the north they developed a hardy and warlike character. The Assyrians have been compared to the Romans as a military and conquering people. They cultivated the arts of war, having well organized bodies of infantry, cavalry, and war chariots.

The centre of Assyrian power was at first the city of Assur; this was a colony of Babylonia situated on the upper Tigris River and the seat of the worship of the god Assur. The city obtained its independence from Babylonia, and gave the name "Assyria" to the whole surrounding country. After a time, the Assyrian capital was transferred from Assur to Nineveh (by Shalmane'ser I, 1320 B. C.); and this new capital became the permanent seat of the empire. The external history of Assyria is a history of almost continual wars, resulting in the partial success of the Assyrian arms under the first empire, and the final triumph of the Assyrian power under the second empire.

The First Assyrian Empire (1120-745 B. C.).—The founder of the first Assyrian empire was the great warrior king of Nineveh, Tiglath-Pile'ser I (1120 B. C.), who subdued the surrounding cities, and carried his arms to the west until