

built the famous "hanging gardens," which were artificial hills built in the form of immense terraces and covered with luxuriant shrubs and flowers. During this brief period of her later supremacy Babylon attained, in the highest degree, all the luxury and pomp peculiar to Oriental civilization. But Babylon the Great finally fell before the rising power of Persia (538 B. C.), which absorbed all the countries of western Asia.

The Assyrio-Babylonian Civilization.—We have seen that the Tigris-Euphrates valley was the seat of three successive empires,—early Babylonia, Assyria and later Babylonia. But in their culture these empires may be looked upon as presenting three successive phases of one and the same civilization. The early Babylonians had developed a form of religion, science, and art which showed the evidence of intellectual growth and a certain degree of refinement. The Assyrians took up the culture of the Babylonians, and impressed upon it a political and imperial stamp, such as was naturally derived from a great and conquering people. And this imperial character was transferred back to Babylon with the establishment of the later empire. So the culture which was finally developed in the Mesopotamian valley was a mingling of Babylonian and Assyrian elements.

From this brief review we can see that the Tigris-Euphrates valley was one of the great centres of ancient civilization. By its commercial and political relations its culture was extended to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The religious ideas of its people became the common property of the East. Their progress in certain branches of science, especially in astronomy, formed a contribution to the intellectual development of the ancient world. Their skill in some of the industrial arts, such as weaving and the cutting of intaglios, has scarcely been equalled by modern nations. Their political organization formed the basis of the later imperial systems of the East, which were afterwards transferred to Europe under the later Roman empire.