

HOME & SCHOOL

The Fall of Babylon.
 The city of Babylon was the most famous of ancient times. It is said to have been built upon the site of the tower of Babel, whose abortive structure became one of the monuments of the future city.

Babylon owed its chief greatness to Nebuchadnezzar, who describes it as "the great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom of my power, and for the honour of my majesty."

The Euphrates traversed the city from north to south. From each of the twenty-five gates on each side ran a broad street to the opposite gate, dividing the city into 625 squares, each about 2½ miles in circumference. The river bank on each side was guarded by a wall with gateways at the foot of each street, and steps leading down to the river. The usual means of crossing was by boats; but a single bridge was thrown over. This consisted of stone piers sunk in the bed of the stream, connected by wooden platforms, which were removed at night. It is said, but apparently on no good authority, that there was also a tunnel under the bed of the river. The famous hanging-gardens do not seem to have attracted the attention of Herodotus. According to other writers, these were built by Nebuchadnezzar to gratify his wife, Amyitis, a native of Media, who longed

for something in this flat country to remind her of her mountain home. They consisted of an artificial mountain, 400 feet on each side, rising by successive terraces to a height which overtopped the walls of the city.

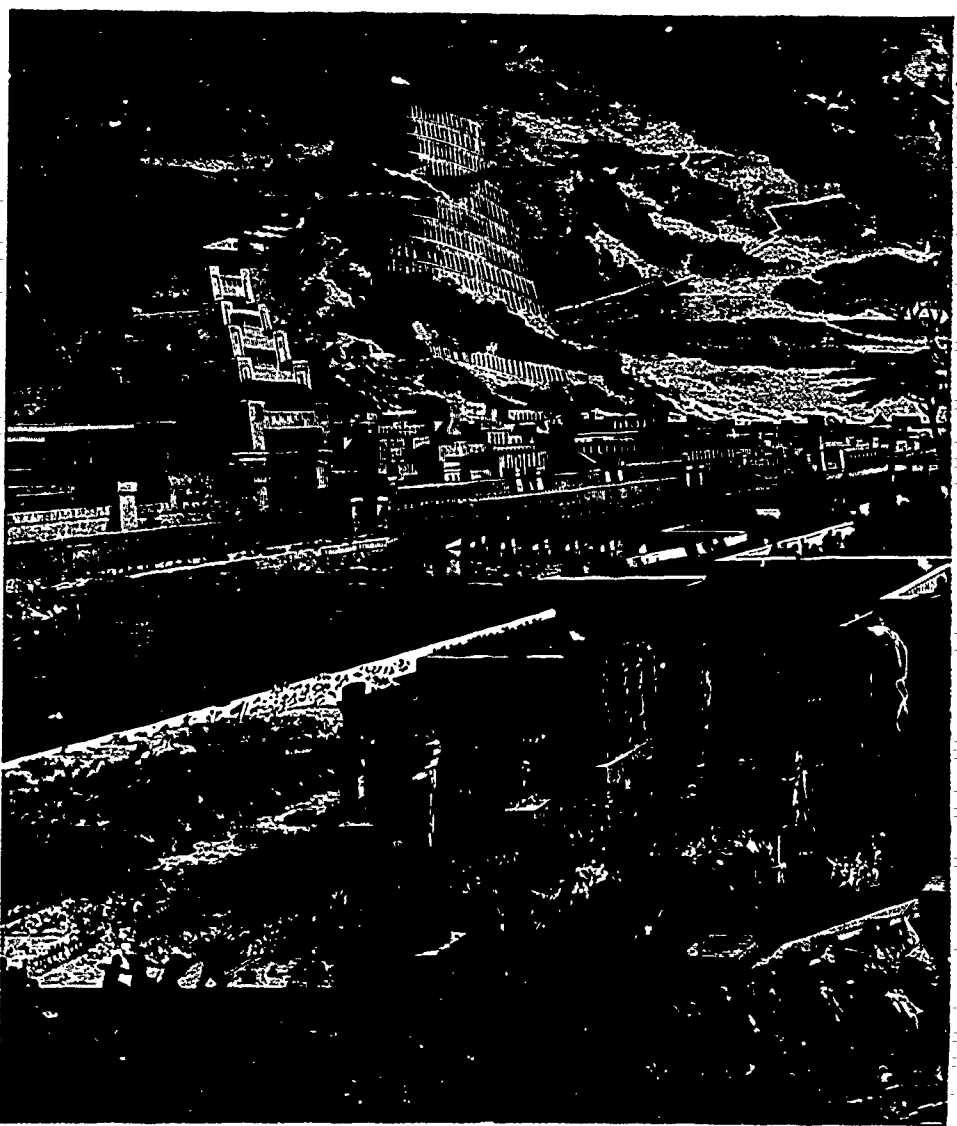
Upon this solid pavement earth was heaped, some of the piles being hollow, so as to afford depth for the roots of the largest trees. Water was drawn

formed to check the threatening power of Persia. This brought upon him the invasion by Cyrus. Having associated with himself in the government his

The city was provisioned for a long siege, and the strength of its walls defied direct assault. It was taken only by the stratagem of diverting the

river from its course, and marching in through its dry bed. Zenophon says that Cyrus drained the bed by two new cuttings of his own, from a point above the city to another below it. If we suppose that the river was not the Euphrates itself, but a bayou or side-branch, shallower than the river, the whole operation becomes perfectly comprehensible. He had only to dam up the mouth of the bayou above the city, and deepen the channel below by which it re-entered the Euphrates. In an hour after cutting away the bulkhead below, the channel would be dry. This was done in the dead of night. It was a complete surprise. So confident were the besieged in the impregnability of their outer defences, that they neglected to close the water gates which fronted the river at the foot of each street, and Belshazzar and his court passed the night in revelry. When morning dawned the inner defences had all fallen into the hands of the besiegers (B.C. 538).

The artist has, in the engraving, endeavoured to picture the horrors of that fatal night described so vividly in the fifth chapter of Daniel—the tower of Babel—the stately architecture, the rolling flames and smoko, the blazing altars, the flying multitudes, the invading Medes, the futile defence. In the following poem Byron has vividly paraphrased the Biblical account of that night of terror and affright:—



THE FALL OF BABYLON.

from the river to irrigate these gardens, which thus presented to the eye the appearance of a mountain clothed in verdure.

The last successor of Nebuchadnezzar, Naponadius, joined the league

son, Belshazzar, Naponadius, leaving him in command of Babylon, advanced to meet Cyrus. Being defeated in the field, he threw himself into Borsippa, while Cyrus advanced to the siege of Babylon.

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