

from the sparse primitive Negro population in the central forest region of Africa.

The Persian Gulf extended very far to the north of its present head, and combined with the Syrian desert, to cut off the Semitic peoples from the eastern areas; while on the other hand the south of Arabia, much more fertile than it is to-day, may have reached across what is now the Gulf of Aden towards Abyssinia and Somaliland. The Mediterranean and Red Sea during the Pluvial Age may even have been fertile valleys containing a string of fresh-water lakes. The Himalayas and the higher and vaster massif of Central Asia and the northward extension of the Bay of Bengal up to the present Ganges valley divided off the Dravidians from the Mongolians, the canoe was the chief link between Dravidian and Southern Mongol, and the Gobi system of seas and lakes which presently became the Gobi desert, and the great system of mountain chains which follow one another across Asia from the centre to the north-east, split the Mongolian races into the Chinese and the Ural-Altaiic language groups.

Bering Strait, when this came into existence, before or after the Pluvial Period, isolated the Amer-Indians.

We are not suggesting here, be it noted, that these ancient separations were absolute separations, but that they were effectual enough at least to prevent any great intermixture of blood or any great intermixture of speech in those days of man's social beginnings. There was, nevertheless, some amount of meeting and exchange even then, some drift of knowledge that spread the crude patterns and use of various implements, and the seeds of a primitive agriculture about the world. Presently canoes and then ships appeared to increase this agricultural and trade propaganda.

## § 8

### *A Possible Primitive Language Group.*

The fundamental tongues of these nine main language groups we have noted were not by any means all the human speech beginnings of the Neolithic Age. They are the latest languages, the survivors, which have ousted their more primitive predecessors. There may have been other, and possibly many other, ineffective centres of speech which were afterwards overrun by the speakers of still surviving tongues, and of elementary languages which faded out. We find strange little patches of speech still in the world which do not seem to be connected with any other language about them.

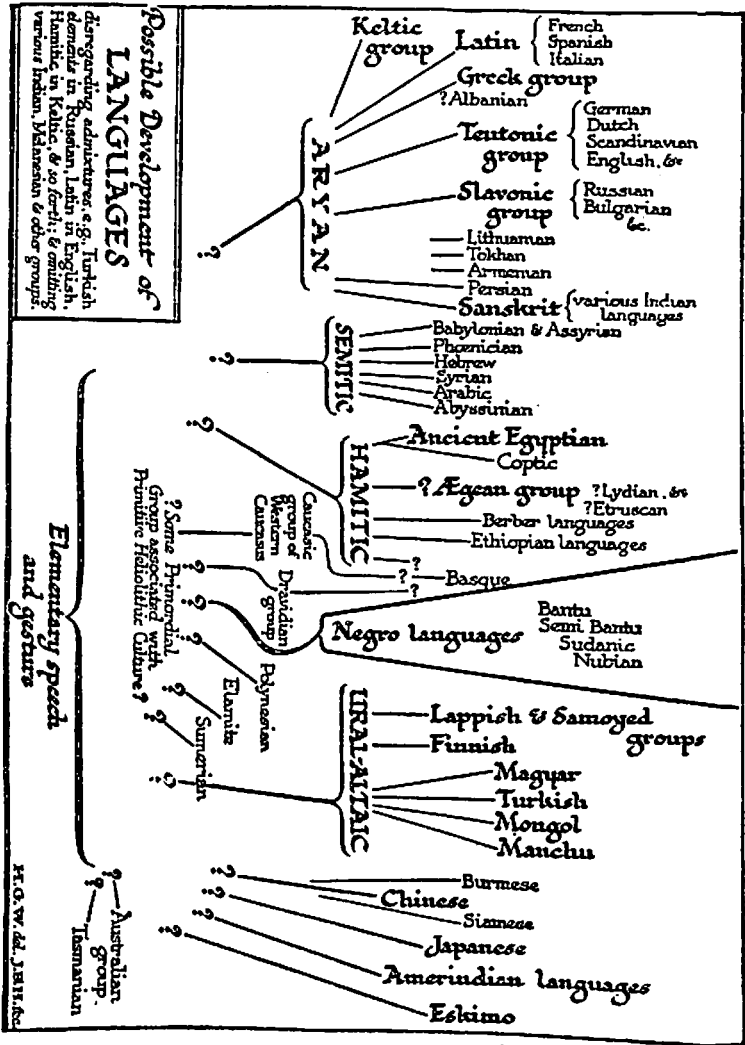
Sometimes, however, an exhaustive inquiry seems to affiliate these disconnected patches, seems to open out to us tantalizing glimpses of some simpler, wider and more fundamental and universal form of human speech. One language group that has been keenly discussed is the Basque group of dialects. The Basques live now on the north and south slopes of the Pyrenees; they number perhaps 600,000 altogether in Europe, and to this day they are a very sturdy and independent-spirited people. Their language, as it exists to-day, is a fully developed one. But it is developed upon lines absolutely different from those of the Aryan languages about it.

Basque newspapers have been published in the Argentine and in the United States to supply groups of prosperous emigrants. The earliest "French" settlers in Canada were Basque, and Basque names are frequent among the French Canadians to this day. Ancient remains point to a much wider distribution of the Basque speech and people over Spain.

For a long time this Basque language was a profound perplexity to scholars, and its structural character led to the suggestion that it might be related to some Amer-Indian tongue. A. H. Keane, in *Man Past and Present*, assembles reasons for linking it—though remotely—with the Berber language of North Africa, and through the Berber with the general body of Hamitic languages; but this relationship is questioned by other philologists. They find Basque more akin to certain similarly stranded vestiges of speech found in the Caucasian Mountains, and they are disposed to regard it as a last surviving member, much changed and specialized, of a once very widely extended group of pre-Hamitic languages, otherwise extinct, spoken chiefly by peoples of that brunet Mediterranean race which once occupied most of western and southern Europe and western Asia. They think it may have been very closely related to the Dravidian of India and the languages of the peoples with the heliolithic culture who spread eastward through the East Indies to Polynesia and beyond.

It is quite possible that over western and southern Europe language groups extended eight or ten thousand years ago that have completely vanished before Aryan tongues. Later on we shall note, in passing, the possibility of three lost language groups represented by (1) Ancient Cretan, Lydian, and the like (though these may have belonged, says Sir Harry H. Johnston, to the "Basque Caucasian-Dravidian [!] group"), (2) Sumerian, and (3) Elamite.

The suggestion has been made—it is a mere guess—that



ancient Sumerian may have been a linking language between the early Basque-Caucasian and early Mongolian groups. If this is true, then we have in this "Basque-Caucasian-Dravidian-Sumerian-proto-Mongolian" group a still more ancient and more ancestral system of speech than the fundamental Hamitic. We have something more like the linguistic "missing-link," something more like an ancestral language than anything else we can imagine at the present time. It may have been related to the Aryan and Semitic and Hamitic languages much as the primitive lizards of later Palæozoic times were related to the Mammals, Birds and Dinosaurs respectively.

## § 9

*Some Isolated Languages.*

The Hottentot language is said to have affinities with the Hamitic tongues, from which it is separated by the whole breadth of Bantu-speaking Central Africa. A Hottentot-like language with Bushman affinities is still spoken in equatorial East Africa, and this strengthens the idea that the whole of East Africa was once Hamitic-speaking.

The Bantu languages and peoples spread, in comparatively recent times, from some centre of origin in West Central Africa and cut off the Hottentots from the Hamitic peoples. But it is at least equally probable that the Hottentot is a separate language group.

Among other remote and isolated little patches of language are the Papuan speech of New Guinea and the native Australian.

The now extinct Tasmanian language is but little known. What we do know of it is in support of what we have guessed about the comparative speechlessness of Palæolithic man.

We may quote a passage from Hutchinson's *Living Races of Mankind* upon this matter:—

"The language of the natives is irretrievably lost, only imperfect indications of its structure and a small proportion of its words having been preserved. In the absence of sibilants and some other features, their dialects resembled the Australian, but were of ruder, of less developed structure, and so imperfect that, according to Joseph Milligan, our best authority on the subject, they observed no settled order or arrangement of words in the construction of their sentences, but conveyed in a supplementary fashion by tone, manner, and gesture those modifications of meaning which we express by mood, tense, number, etc.

“Abstract terms were rare; for every variety of gum-tree or wattle-tree there was a name, but no word for ‘tree’ in general, nor for qualities such as hard, soft, warm, cold, long, short, round, etc. Anything hard was ‘like a stone,’ anything round ‘like the moon,’ and so on, usually suiting the action to the word and confirming by some sign the meaning to be understood.”

## BOOK III

# THE FIRST CIVILIZATIONS

## CHAPTER 13

### THE EARLY EMPIRES

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| § 1. <i>Early Cultivators and Early Nomads.</i> | § 2E. <i>The Chaldean Empire.</i>                 |
| § 2A. <i>The Sumerians.</i>                     | § 3. <i>The Early History of Egypt.</i>           |
| § 2B. <i>The Empire of Sargon the First.</i>    | § 4. <i>The Early Civilization of India.</i>      |
| § 2C. <i>The Empire of Hammurabi.</i>           | § 5. <i>The Early History of China.</i>           |
| § 2D. <i>The Assyrians and Their Empire.</i>    | § 6. <i>While the Civilizations were Growing.</i> |
|   | § 7. <i>The Legend of Atlantis.</i>               |

#### § 1 .

**W**E will now resume and expand what has been said already in the preceding chapters about the coming of agriculture. Its onset marks a profound change in human conditions. It developed slowly and with much variation in human life during several thousand years between, at earliest, twenty thousand years ago and, at latest, eight thousand years ago.

Before that time man was a comparatively rare animal. He was a wandering, implement-using beast of prey, a savage. He lived in small communities; his speech was probably still largely undeveloped. His only possessions were portable possessions. His whole life was spent in a food hunt, and he alternated between long stretches of hunger and spells of plenty and repletion. He followed animals as they followed their food and the seasons. He was free and needy and his life was incessantly dangerous.

Then began this business of deliberate food-growing and of food preservation. He began to herd the beasts he had hunted and to heed where he found the seeds and roots and fruits that supplemented his meat. His hunter's prowlings were restricted

by the grazing of his half-domesticated cattle and by his expectation of crops where he had sown. His implements multiplied. By eight thousand years ago man had become in some regions an extremely numerous animal. No ape or other kindred animal had ever been numerous before him. He had made houses and acquired possessions; in the place of a mere food hunt he had settled down to regular periodic work to get food. He stored food. Labour had begun for him. From meals that were happy finds and adventures, he had achieved meal-times. He had ceased to be a haphazard animal and he had become an economic animal.

He is the only mammal that has become an economic animal. There has never been any other economic mammal. Beavers build and store, the squirrel hoards, and dogs bury their bones, but we must go to the ants and bees before we come to other living creatures that associate in communities and work regularly to prepare and store and share out food and shelter.

Before settlement there was exertion, anxiety and need in human life, but there was no systematic labour. Work there was in the life of the later Palæolithic men, but it was occasional and usually interesting work. Implements had to be made from time to time, but probably they were made by those who had to use them. Skins had to be scraped. Food had to be hunted for. Someone had to look after the fire; it was a serious nuisance to have it go out, and it is supposed by some authorities that special people were appointed for that responsibility, and that the vestal virgins with their sacred fire were a survival of the primitive fire-minders. But in the hunting stage of mankind there was no steady, regular toil of the sort that we refer to as labour.

Most of the troublesome work that had to be done was probably put upon the women. Primitive man had no chivalry. When the little human group shifted its ground the women and girls carried such gear as there was, while the men went unencumbered with the weapons, ready for any eventuality. The care of the children fell entirely on the women.

It has been suggested that women began agriculture. This is highly probable. The collection of seed and vegetable food-stuffs fell on them, while the men were away hunting. It was the women who may have observed that grain grew at the old camping-places, who may have first consciously scattered grain as an offering to some local god with the idea of its being returned later a hundredfold. The earliest stage of agriculture was a snatch crop. Men, still largely pastoral, may have sowed

and returned later to reap. It may be that the close association of human sacrifice with sowing may be dated from the days of such snatch crops left to grow and ripen: a man may have been slaughtered and left behind to watch over the crop.

The earliest agriculture was almost certainly a patch agriculture, a cultivation of little garden patches by hand—probably by women's hands. It was an accessory food supply. Probably it only became more important under very exceptional conditions.

It is easy to imagine that men noticed very early the advantage of sowing upon periodically flooded lands. They cast their bread upon the water and found that it was returned to them very abundantly. Elliot Smith thinks that systematic agriculture as a staple undertaking rather than a side activity began in Egypt, and certainly no country is so obviously adapted to teach men the art of sowing in due season. At first, perhaps, the systematic sowing was done in flooded lands. It was a pretty easy step from that to assisted floods, that is to say to irrigation.

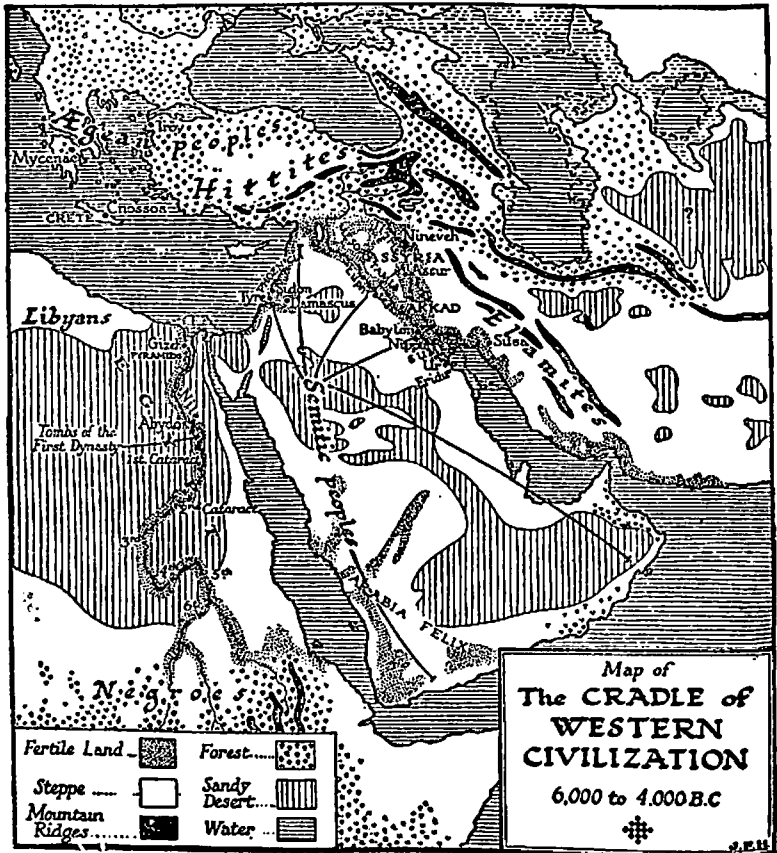
Cultivation is not civilization. The growing of wheat had spread to the Atlantic and to the Pacific coast with the distribution of the Neolithic culture by, perhaps, 15,000 or 10,000 B.C., before the beginnings of civilization. Civilization is something more than the occasional seasonal growing of wheat. It is the settlement of men upon an area continuously cultivated and possessed, who live in buildings continuously inhabited, with a common rule and a common city or citadel.

The first condition necessary to a real settling down of Neolithic men, as distinguished from a mere temporary settlement among abundant food, was of course a trustworthy all-the-year-round supply of water, fodder for their animals, food for themselves, and building materials for their homes. There had to be everything they could need at any season, and no want that would tempt them to wander further. This was a possible state of affairs, no doubt, in many European and Asiatic valleys; and in many such valleys, as in the case of the Swiss lake-dwellings, men settled from a very early date indeed; but nowhere, of any countries now known to us, were these favourable conditions found upon such a scale, and nowhere did they hold good so surely year in and year out as in Egypt and in the country between the upper waters of the Euphrates and Tigris and the Persian Gulf.

Here was a constant water supply under enduring sunlight; trustworthy harvests year by year; in Mesopotamia wheat



yielded, says Herodotus, two hundredfold to the sower; Pliny says that it was cut twice and afterwards yielded good fodder for sheep; there were abundant palms and many sorts of fruits; and as for building material, in Egypt there was clay and



easily worked stone, and in Mesopotamia a clay that becomes a brick in the sunshine.

In such countries men would cease to wander, and settle down almost unawares; they would multiply and discover themselves numerous, and by their numbers safe from any casual assailant. They multiplied, producing a denser human population than the earth had ever known before; their houses became more substantial, wild beasts were exterminated over

great areas, the security of life increased so that ordinary men went about in the towns and fields without encumbering themselves with weapons, and among themselves, at least, they became peaceful peoples. Men took root as man had never taken root before.

Mesopotamia and Egypt were the most favourable countries for the first permanent settling-down of man. We give a map here of these countries as they were about six or seven thousand years ago. The Red Sea valleys and the valleys of the eastern Mediterranean were already flooded by that time, but the coasts of Arabia, and particularly the south-west corner of Arabia, were far more fertile than they have since become, and the Red Sea flowed by an open channel into the Mediterranean, and the Persian Gulf extended much further northward than it does at the present time.

Now, while in the great river valleys men were taking root and multiplying, in the less fertile and more seasonal lands outside these favoured areas, in the forests of Europe, the Arabian deserts and the seasonal pastures of Central Asia, there was developing a thinner, more active population of peoples of a quite divergent type, the primitive nomadic peoples. In contrast with the settled folk, the agriculturists, these nomads lived freely and dangerously. They were in comparison lean and hungry men. Their herding was still blended with hunting; they fought constantly for their pastures against hostile families. The discoveries in the elaboration of implements and the use of metals made by the settled peoples spread to them and improved their weapons. They followed the settled folk from Neolithic phase to Bronze phase. They became more warlike with better arms, and more capable of rapid movements with the improvement of their transport.

One must not think of a nomadic stage as a predecessor of a settled stage in human affairs. To begin with, man was a slow drifter, following food. Then one sort of men began to settle down, and another sort became more distinctly nomadic. The settled sort began to rely more and more upon grain for food; the nomad began to make a greater use of milk for food. The two ways of life specialized in opposite directions.

It was inevitable that nomad folk and the settled folk should clash, and that nomads should seem hard barbarians to the settled peoples, and the settled peoples soft and effeminate and very good plunder to the nomad peoples. Along the fringes of the developing civilizations there must have been a constant raiding and bickering between hardy nomad tribes and mountain

tribes, and the more numerous and less warlike peoples in the towns and villages.

For the most part this was a mere raiding of the borders. The settled folk had the weight of numbers on their side; the herdsmen might raid and loot, but they could not stay. That kind of mutual friction might go on for many generations. But ever and again we find some leader or some tribe, amidst the disorder of free and independent nomads, powerful enough to force a sort of unity upon its kindred tribes, and then woe betide the nearest civilization. Down pour the united nomads on the unwarlike, unarmed plains, and there ensues a war of conquest. Instead of carrying off the booty, the conquerors settle down on the conquered land, which becomes all booty for them; the villagers and townsmen are reduced to servitude and tribute-paying, they become hewers of wood and drawers of water, and the leaders of the nomads become kings and princes, masters and aristocrats. They, too, settle down, they learn many of the arts and refinements of the conquered, they cease to be lean and hungry, but for many generations they retain traces of their old nomadic habits, they hunt and indulge in open-air sports, they drive and race chariots, they regard work, especially agricultural work, as the lot of an inferior race and class.

This in a thousand variations has been one of the main stories in history for the last seventy centuries or more. In the first history that we can clearly decipher we find already in all the civilized regions a distinction between a non-working ruler class and the working mass of the population. And we find, too, that after some generations the aristocrat, having settled down, begins to respect the arts and refinements and law-abidingness of settlement, and to lose something of his original hardihood. He intermarries, he patches up a sort of toleration between conqueror and conquered; he exchanges religious ideas and learns the lessons upon which soil and climate insist. He becomes a part of the civilization he has captured. And as he does so, events gather toward a fresh invasion by the free adventurers of the outer world.

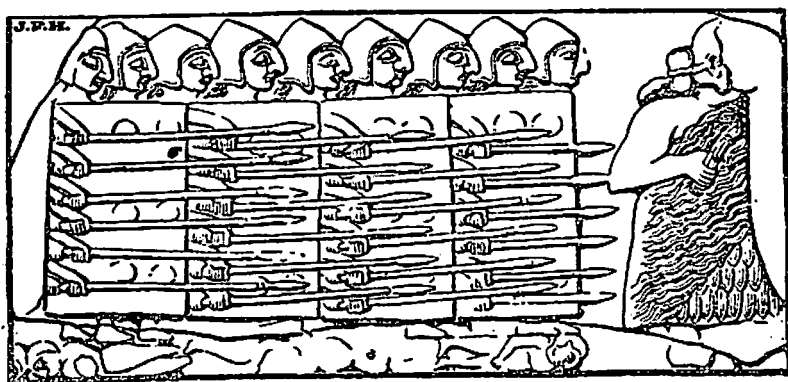
We will now give a bald statement of the names and successions of the early civilizations in Western Asia (§§ 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, and 2E) and the parallel development in Egypt (§ 3). Perhaps we ought to give the Egyptian beginning first. There is a fine controversy between those who would put Western Asia before Egypt in the order of time and those to whom Egypt is the birthplace of all civilization. It is a controversy

from which the present writer abstains. It will then be convenient to glance at the contemporary state of affairs in India, China, and America. Necessarily this will be a recital of names, but we will give as few as possible, and the reader who brings little or no previous knowledge to this portion will find all that follows much clearer if he gives these sections a reasonably close attention and compares with the map on p. 160 and the diagram at the end of Book III, p. 250.

## § 2A

*The Sumerians.*

The alternation of settlement, nomadic conquest, refinement, fresh conquest, refinement, which is characteristic of this phase of human history, is particularly to be noted in the region of the Euphrates and Tigris, which lay open in every direction



*A very early Sumerian stone carving showing Sumerian warriors in phalanx*

to great areas which are not arid enough to be complete deserts, but which were not fertile enough to support civilized populations. Perhaps the earliest people to form real cities in this part of the world, or, indeed, in any part of the world, were a people called the Sumerians. They were probably brunets of Iberian or Dravidian affinities. They used a kind of writing which they scratched upon clay, and their language has been deciphered. It was a language more like the unclassified Caucasian language groups than any others that now exist. These languages may be connected with Basque, and may represent what was once a wide-spread primitive language group extending from Spain and Western Europe to Eastern India, and reaching southwards to Central Africa.

Excavations conducted at Eridu by Captain R. Campbell Thompson during the First World War revealed an early Neolithic agricultural stage, before the invention of writing or the use of bronze, beneath the earliest Sumerian foundations. The crops of the pre-Sumerians were cut by sickles of earthenware.

The Sumerians shaved their heads and wore simple tunic-like garments of wool. They settled first on the lower courses of the great river and not very far from the Persian Gulf, which in those days ran up for a hundred and thirty miles and more beyond its present head. Sayce, in *Babylonian and Assyrian Life*, estimates that in 6,500 B.C. Eridu was on the sea-coast. The Sumerians fertilized their fields by letting water run through irrigation trenches, and they gradually became very skilful hydraulic engineers; they had cattle, asses, sheep, and goats, but no horses; their collections of mud huts grew into towns, and their religion raised up tower-like temple buildings.

Clay, dried in the sun, was a very great fact in the lives of these people. This lower country of the Euphrates-Tigris valleys had little or no stone. They built of brick, they made pottery and earthenware images, and they drew and presently wrote upon thin tile-like cakes of clay. They do not seem to have had paper or to have used parchment. Their books and memoranda, even their letters, were potsherds.

At Nippur they built a great tower of brick to their chief god, El-lil (Enlil), the memory of which is supposed to be preserved in the story of the Tower of Babel. They seem to have been divided up into city states, which warred among themselves and maintained for many centuries their military capacity. Their soldiers carried long spears and shields, and fought in close formation. Sumerians conquered Sumerians. Sumer remained unconquered by any stranger race for a very long period of time indeed. They developed their civilization, their writing, and their shipping, through a period that may be twice as long as the whole period from the Christian era to the present time. Then slowly they gave way before the Semitic peoples.

The first of all known empires was that founded by the high priest of the god of the Sumerian city of Erech. It reached, says an inscription at Nippur, from the Lower (Persian Gulf) to the Upper (Mediterranean or Red?) Sea. Among the mud-heaps of the Euphrates-Tigris valley the record of that vast period of history, that first half of the Age of Cultivation, is buried. There flourished the first temples and the first priest-rulers that we know of among mankind.

Traces of Sumerian trade, and perhaps of Sumerian settlement, have been found in North-west India, but it is still uncertain whether the Sumerians reached India overland or by the sea. Probably it was by sea. They may have been quite nearly related in race and culture to the peoples then inhabiting the Ganges valley.

## § 2a

*The Empire of Sargon the First.*

Upon the western edge of this country appeared nomadic tribes of Semitic-speaking peoples who traded, raided, and fought with the Sumerians for many generations. Then arose at last a great leader among these Semites, Sargon (2,750 B.C.), who united them, and not only conquered the Sumerians, but extended his rule from beyond the Persian Gulf on the east to the Mediterranean on the west. His own people were called the Akkadians and his empire is called the Sumerian Akkadian empire. It endured for over two hundred years.

From the time of Sargon I until the fourth and third centuries B.C., a period of over two thousand years, the Semitic peoples were in the ascendant throughout all the near east. But though the Semites conquered and gave a king to the Sumerian cities, it was the Sumerian civilization which prevailed over the simpler Semitic culture. The newcomers learnt the Sumerian writing (the "cuneiform" writing) and the Sumerian language; they set up no Semitic writing of their own. The Sumerian language became for these barbarians the language of knowledge and power, as Latin was the language of knowledge and power among the barbaric peoples of the Middle Ages in Europe. This Sumerian learning had a very great vitality. It was destined to survive through a long series of conquests and changes that now began in the valley of the two rivers.

## § 2c

*The Empire of Hammurabi.*

As the people of the Sumerian Akkadian empire lost their political and military vigour, fresh inundations of a warlike people, the Elamites, began from the east, while from the west came the Semitic Amorites, pinching the Sumerian Akkadian empire between them. The Elamites were of unknown language and race, "neither Sumerians nor Semites," says Sayce. Their

central city was Susa. Their archæology is still largely an unworked mine. They are believed by some, says Sir H. H. Johnston, to have been negroid in type. There is a strong negroid strain in the modern people of Elam. The Amorites, on the other hand, were of the same stock as Abraham and the later Hebrews. The Amorites settled in what was at first a small up-river town, named Babylon; and after a hundred years of warfare became masters of all Mesopotamia under a great king, Hammurabi (2,100 B.C.), who founded the first Babylonian empire.

Again came peace and security and a decline in aggressive prowess, and in another hundred years fresh nomads were invading Babylonia, bringing with them the horse and the war chariot, and setting up their own king in Babylon. These were the Kassites.

### § 2D

#### *The Assyrians and Their Empire.*

Higher up the Tigris, above the clay lands and with easy supplies of workable stone, a Semitic people, the Assyrians, while the Sumerians were still unconquered by the Semites, were settling about a number of cities of which Assur and Nineveh were the chief. Their peculiar physiognomy, the long nose and thick lips, was very like that of the commoner type of Polish Jew to-day. They wore great beards and ringleted long hair, tall caps and long robes. They were constantly engaged in mutual raiding with the Hittites to the west; they were conquered by Sargon I, and became free again; a certain Tushratta, King of Mitanni, to the north-west, captured and held their capital, Nineveh, for a time; they intrigued with Egypt against Babylon and were in the pay of Egypt; they developed the military art to a very high pitch, and became mighty raiders and exacters of tribute; and at last, adopting the horse and the war chariot, they settled accounts for a time with the Hittites, and then, under Tiglath Pileser I, conquered Babylon for themselves (about 1,100 B.C.). But their hold on the lower, older and more civilized land was not secure, and Nineveh, the Semitic stone city, as distinguished from Babylon, the Semitic brick city, remained their capital. For many centuries power swayed between Nineveh and Babylon, and sometimes it was an Assyrian and sometimes a Babylonian who claimed to be "king of the world."

For four centuries Assyria was restrained from expansion towards Egypt by a fresh northward thrust and settlement of

another group of Semitic peoples, the Arameans, whose chief city was Damascus, and whose descendants are the Syrians of to-day. (There is, we may note, no connection whatever between the words Assyrian and Syrian. It is an accidental similarity.) Across these Syrians the Assyrian kings fought for power and expansion south-westward. In 745 B.C. arose another Tiglath Pileser, Tiglath Pileser III, the Tiglath Pileser of the Bible (II Kings xv, 29, and xvi, 7 *et seq.*). He not only directed the transfer of the Israelites to Media (the "Lost Ten Tribes" whose ultimate fate has exercised so many curious minds), but he conquered and ruled Babylon, so founding what historians know as the New Assyrian Empire. His son, Shalmaneser IV (II Kings xvii, 3,) died during the siege of Samaria and was succeeded by a usurper, who, no doubt to flatter Babylonian susceptibilities, took the ancient Akkadian Sumerian name of Sargon—Sargon II. He seems to have armed the Assyrian forces for the first time with iron weapons. It was probably Sargon II who actually carried out the deportation of the Ten Tribes that Tiglath Pileser III had ordered.



Assyrian warrior  
(Bas-relief from the palace of Sargon II)

Such shiftings-about of population became a very distinctive part of the political methods of the Assyrian new empire. Whole nations who were difficult to control in their native country would be shifted *en masse* to unaccustomed regions and amidst strange neighbours, where their only hope of survival would lie in obedience to the supreme power.

Sargon's son, Sennacherib, led the Assyrian hosts to the borders of Egypt. There Sennacherib's army was smitten by a pestilence, a disaster described in the nineteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings:—

“And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred



fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh."

To be murdered by his sons.

Sennacherib's grandson, Assurbanipal (called by the Greeks Sardanapalus), did succeed in conquering and for a time holding Lower Egypt.

### § 2E

#### *The Chaldean Empire.*

The Assyrian Empire lasted only a hundred and fifty years after Sargon II. Fresh nomadic Semites coming from the south-east, the Chaldeans, assisted by two Aryan-speaking peoples from the north, the Medes and Persians, combined against it, and took Nineveh in 606 B.C. This is the first appearance of the Aryan-speaking peoples in this history. They drift down out of the northern and north-western plains and forests, a hardy war-like group of tribes. Some pass south-eastward into India, taking with them a dialect of Aryan that developed into Sanscrit; others turn back upon the old civilizations. Hitherto the nomadic conquerors of the agricultural lands have been Elamites and Semites; now it is the Aryans who for half a dozen centuries take on the conquering rôle. The Elamites fade out of history.

The Chaldean Empire, with its capital at Babylon (Second Babylonian Empire), lasted under Nebuchadnezzar the Great (Nebuchadnezzar II) and his successors until 538 B.C., when it collapsed before the attack of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian power. . . .

So the story goes on. In 330 B.C., as we shall tell later in some detail, a Greek conqueror, Alexander the Great, is looking on the murdered body of the last of the Persian rulers.

The story of the Tigris and Euphrates civilizations, of which thus far we have given only the bare outline, is a story of conquest following after conquest, and each conquest replaces old rulers and ruling classes by new: races like the Sumerian and the Elamite are swallowed up, their languages vanish, they interbreed and are lost; the Assyrian melts away into Chaldean and Syrian, the Hittites lose distinction, the Semites who swallowed up the Sumerians give place to rulers of these new Aryan tribes from the north. Medes and Persians appear in the place of the Elamites, and the (Aryan) Persian language

dominates the empire until the Aryan Greek ousts it from official life.

Meanwhile the plough does its work year by year, the harvests are gathered, the builders build as they are told, the tradesmen work and acquire fresh devices; the knowledge of writing spreads; novel things, the horse and wheeled vehicles and iron, are introduced and become part of the permanent inheritance of mankind; the volume of trade upon sea and desert increases, men's ideas widen and knowledge grows. There are set-backs, massacres, pestilence; but the story is, on the whole, one of enlargement. For four thousand years this new thing, civilization, which had set its root into the soil of the two rivers, grew as a tree grows; now losing a limb, now stripped by a storm, but always growing and resuming its growth. It changed its dominant race; it changed its language, but it remained essentially the same development. After four thousand years the warriors and conquerors were still going to and fro over this growing thing they did not understand, but men had by that time (330 B.C.) got iron, horses, writing and computation, money, a far greater variety of foods and textiles, a far wider knowledge of their world than the old Sumerians.

The time that elapsed between the empire of Sargon I and the conquest of Babylon by Alexander the Great was as long, be it noted, at the least estimate, as the time from Alexander the Great to the present day. And before the time of Sargon I men had been settled in the Sumerian land, living in towns, worshipping in temples, following an orderly agricultural life in an organized community, for at least as long again. "Eridu, Lagash, Ur, Isin, Larsa, have already an immemorial past when first they appear in history."

One of the most difficult things for both the writer and student of history is to sustain the sense of these time-intervals and prevent these ages becoming shortened by perspective in his imagination. Half the duration of human civilization and the keys to all its chief institutions are to be found *before* Sargon I. Moreover, the reader cannot too often compare the scale of the dates in these latter fuller pages of man's history with the succession of countless generations to which the time diagrams already given bear witness. The time diagram given at the end of Book III, p. 250, indicates the broad intervals in this succession of the first empires in Asia.

## § 3

*The Early History of Egypt.*

Parallel with the ancient beginnings of civilization in Sumeria, a similar process was going on in Egypt. It is still a matter of dispute which was the more ancient of these two beginnings or how far they had a common origin or derived one from the other.

The story of the Nile valley from the dawn of its traceable history until the time of Alexander the Great is not very dissimilar from that of Babylonia; but while Babylonia lay open on every side to invasion, Egypt was protected by desert to the west and by desert and sea to the east, while to the south she had only negro peoples. Consequently her history is less broken by the invasions of strange races than is the history of Assyria and Babylon, and until towards the eighth century B.C., when she fell under an Ethiopian dynasty, whenever a conqueror did come into her story, he came in from Asia by way of the Isthmus of Suez.

The Stone Age remains in Egypt are of very uncertain date; there are Palæolithic and then Neolithic remains. It is not certain whether the Neolithic pastoral people who left those remains were the direct ancestors of the later Egyptians. In many respects they differed entirely from their successors. They buried their dead, but before they buried them they cut up the bodies and apparently ate portions of the flesh. They seem to have done this out of a feeling of reverence for the departed; the dead were "eaten with honour," according to the phrase of Sir Flinders Petrie. It may have been that the survivors hoped to retain thereby some vestige of the strength and virtue that had died. Traces of similar savage customs have been found in the long barrows that were scattered over Western Europe before the spreading of the Aryan peoples, and they have pervaded negro Africa, where they are only dying out at the present time.

About 5,000 B.C., or earlier, the traces of these primitive peoples cease, and the true Egyptians appear on the scene. The former people were hut builders and at a comparatively low stage of Neolithic culture; the latter were already a civilized Neolithic people—they used brick and wood buildings instead of their predecessors' hovels, and they were working stone. Very soon they passed into the Bronze Age. They possessed a system of picture-writing almost as developed as the contemporary writing of the Sumerians, but quite different in

character. Possibly there was an irruption from Southern Arabia by way of Aden of a fresh people, who came into Upper Egypt and descended slowly towards the delta of the Nile. Dr. Wallis Budge writes of them as "conquerors from the East." But their gods and their ways, like their picture-writing, were very different indeed from the Sumerian. One of the earliest known figures of a deity is that of a hippopotamus goddess, and so very distinctively African.

The clay of the Nile is not so fine and plastic as the Sumerian clay, and the Egyptians made no use of it for writing. But they early resorted to strips of the papyrus reed fastened together, from whose name is derived our word "paper." Assyrian writing was done with a style or stamp fashioned to make a wedge-shaped impression; Egyptian with a brush. To that we owe the far greater expressiveness of the latter.

The broad outline of the history of Egypt is simpler than the history of Mesopotamia. It has long been the custom to divide the rulers of Egypt into a succession of Dynasties, and in speaking of the periods of Egyptian history it is usual to speak of the first, fourth, fourteenth, and so on, Dynasty. The Egyptians were ultimately conquered by the Persians after their establishment in Babylon; and when finally Egypt fell to Alexander the Great, in 332 B.C., it was Dynasty XXXI that came to an end.

In that long history of over 4,000 years—a much longer period than that between the career of Alexander the Great and the present day—certain broad phases of development may be noted here. There was a phase known as the "old kingdom," which began with the consolidation of the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms by Menes, and culminated in the IVth Dynasty; this dynasty marks a period of wealth and splendour, and its monarchs were obsessed by such a passion for making monuments for themselves as no men have ever before or since had a chance to display and gratify. It was Cheops (3,733 B.C., Wallis Budge) and Chephren and Mycerinus of this IVth Dynasty who raised the vast piles of the great and the second and the third pyramids at Gizeh. The Great Pyramid is 450 feet high and its sides are 700 feet long. It is calculated (says Wallis Budge) to weigh 4,883,000 tons. All this stone was lugged into place chiefly by human muscle. These unmeaning sepulchral piles of an almost incredible vastness, erected in an age when engineering science had scarcely begun, exhausted the resource of Egypt through three long reigns, and left her wasted as if by a war.