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**A History of Art in Chaldæa &  
Assyria, v. 1**

Georges Perrot

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# A HISTORY

OF

ART IN CHALDÆA & ASSYRIA

FROM THE FRENCH

OF

GEORGES PERROT,

PROFESSOR IN THE FACULTY OF LETTERS, PARIS; MEMBER  
OF THE INSTITUTE,

AND

CHARLES CHIPIEZ.

ILLUSTRATED WITH FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY-TWO EN-  
GRAVINGS IN THE TEXT

AND FIFTEEN STEEL AND COLOURED PLATES.

*IN TWO VOLUMES. – VOL. I.*

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

WALTER ARMSTRONG, B.A., Oxon.,

AUTHOR OF "ALFRED STEVENS," ETC.



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## **PREFACE.**

[Pg v] In face of the cordial reception given to the first two volumes of MM. Perrot and Chipiez's History of Ancient Art, any words of introduction from me to this second instalment would be presumptuous. On my own part, however, I may be allowed to express my gratitude for the approval vouchsafed to my humble share in the introduction of the History of Art in Ancient Egypt to a new public, and to hope that nothing may be found in the following pages to change that approval into blame.

W. A.

*October 10, 1883.*

# A HISTORY OF ART

IN

CHALDÆA AND ASSYRIA

## CHAPTER I.

### THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHALDÆO-ASSYRIAN CIVILIZATION.

#### § 1. — *Situation and Boundaries of Chaldæa and Assyria.*

[Pg 1] The primitive civilization of Chaldæa, like that of Egypt, was cradled in the lower districts of a great alluvial basin, in which the soil was stolen from the sea by long continued deposits of river mud. In the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, as in that of the Nile, it was in the great plains near the ocean that the inhabitants first emerged from barbarism and organized a civil life. As the ages passed away, this culture slowly mounted the streams, and, as Memphis was older by many centuries than Thebes, in dignity if not in actual existence, so Ur and Larsam were older than Babylon, and Babylon than Nineveh. The manners and beliefs, the arts and the written characters of Egypt were carried into the farthest recesses of Ethiopia, partly by commerce but still more by military invasion; so too Chaldaic civilization made itself felt at vast distances from its birthplace, even in the cold valleys and snowy plateaux of Armenia, in districts which are separated by ten degrees of latitude from the burning shores where the fish god Oannes showed himself to the rude fathers of the race, and taught them "such things as contribute [Pg 2] to the softening of life." [1] In Egypt progressive development took place from north to south, while in Chaldæa its direction was reversed. The apparent contrast is, however, but a resemblance the more. The orientation, if such a term may be used, of the two basins, is in opposite directions, but in each the spread of religion with its rites and symbols, of written characters with their adaptation to different languages, and of all those arts and processes which, when

taken together, make up what we call civilization, advanced from the seaboard to the river springs.

In these two countries the conscience of man seems to have been first awakened to his innate power of bettering his own condition by well directed observation, by the elaboration of laws, and by forethought for the future. Between Egypt on the one hand, and Chaldæa with that Assyria which was no more than its offshoot and prolongation, on the other, there are strong analogies, as will be clearly seen in the course of our study, but there are also differences that are not less appreciable. Professor Rawlinson shows this very clearly in a page of descriptive geography which he will allow us to quote as it stands. It will not be the last of our borrowings from his excellent work, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, a book that has done so much to popularize the discoveries of modern scholars. [2]

"The broad belt of desert which traverses the eastern hemisphere, in a general direction from west to east (or, speaking more exactly, of W.S.W. to N.E.E.) reaching from the Atlantic on the one hand nearly to the Yellow Sea on the other, is interrupted about its centre by a strip of rich vegetation, which at once breaks the continuity of the arid region, and serves also to mark the point where the desert changes its character from that of a plain at a low level to that of an elevated plateau or table-land. West of the favoured district, the Arabian and African wastes are seas of land seldom raised much above, often sinking below the level of the ocean; while east of the same, in Persia, Kerman, Seistan, Chinese Tartary, and Mongolia, the desert consists of a series of plateaux, [Pg 3] having from 3,000 to nearly 10,000 feet of elevation. The green and fertile region which is thus interposed between the 'highland' and 'lowland' deserts, [3] participates, curiously enough, in both characters. Where the belt of sand is intersected by the valley of the Nile, no marked change of elevation occurs; and the continuous low desert is merely interrupted by a few miles of green and cultivable surface, the whole of which is just as smooth and as flat as the waste on either side of it. But it is otherwise at the more eastern interruption. Then the verdant and productive country divides itself into two tracts, running parallel to each other, of which the western presents features, not unlike those that characterize the Nile valley, but on a far larger

scale; while the eastern is a lofty mountain region, consisting for the most part of five or six parallel ranges, and mounting in many places far above the level of perpetual snow.

"It is with the western or plain tract that we are here concerned. Between the outer limits of the Syro-Arabian desert and the foot of the great mountain range of Kurdistan and Luristan intervenes a territory long famous in the world's history, and the chief site of three out of the five empires of whose history, geography, and antiquities, it is proposed to treat in the present volumes. Known to the Jews as Aram-Naharaim, or 'Syria of the two rivers'; to the Greeks and Romans as Mesopotamia, or 'the between-river country'; to the Arabs as Al-Jezireh, or 'the island,' this district has always taken its name from the streams which constitute its most striking feature, and to which, in fact, it owes its existence. If it were not for the two great rivers—the Tigris and Euphrates—with their tributaries, the more northern part of the Mesopotamian lowland would in no respect differ from the Syro-Arabian desert on which it adjoins, and which, in latitude, elevation, and general geological character, it exactly resembles. Towards the south the importance of the rivers is still greater; for of Lower Mesopotamia it may be said, with more truth than of Egypt, [4] that it is 'an acquired land,' the actual 'gift' of the two streams which wash it on either side; being as it is, entirely a recent formation—a deposit which the streams have made in the shallow waters of a gulf into which they have flowed for many ages. [5]

[Pg 4] "The division, which has here forced itself upon our notice, between the Upper and the Lower Mesopotamian country, is one very necessary to engage our attention in connection with ancient Chaldæa. There is no reason to think that the term Chaldæa had at any time the extensive signification of Mesopotamia, much less that it applied to the entire flat country between the desert and the mountains. Chaldæa was not the whole, but a part, of the great Mesopotamian plain; which was ample enough to contain within it three or four considerable monarchies. According to the combined testimony of geographers and historians, [6] Chaldæa lay towards the south, for it bordered upon the Persian Gulf, and towards the west, for it adjoined Arabia. If we are called upon to fix more accurately its boundaries, which, like those of most countries without

strong natural frontiers, suffered many fluctuations, we are perhaps entitled to say that the Persian Gulf on the south, the Tigris on the east, the Arabian desert on the west, and the limit between Upper and Lower Mesopotamia on the north, formed the natural bounds, which were never greatly exceeded, and never much infringed upon. These boundaries are for the most part tolerably clear, though the northern only is invariable. Natural causes, hereafter to be mentioned more particularly, are perpetually varying the course of the Tigris, the shore of the Persian Gulf and the line of demarcation between the sands of Arabia and the verdure of the Euphrates valley. But nature has set a permanent mark, half way down the Mesopotamian lowland, by a difference of a geological structure, which is very conspicuous. Near Hit on the Euphrates, and a little below Samarah on the Tigris, [7] the traveller who descends the streams, bids adieu to a somewhat waving and slightly elevated plain of secondary formation, and enters on the dead flat and low level of the new alluvium. The line thus formed is marked and invariable; it constitutes the only natural division between the upper and lower portions of the [Pg 5] valley; and both probability and history point to it as the actual boundary between Chaldæa and her northern neighbour." [8]

Whether the two States had independent and separate life, or whether, as in after years, one of the two had, by its political and military superiority reduced the other to the condition of a vassal, the line of demarcation was constant, a line traced in the first instance by nature and rendered more rigid and ineffaceable by historical developments. Even when Chaldæa became nominally a mere province of Assyria, the two nationalities remained distinct. Chaldæa was older than Assyria. The centres of her civil life were the cities built upon the alluvial lands between the thirty-first and thirty-third degree of latitude. The most famous of these cities was Babylon. Those whom we call Assyrians, a people who rose to power and glory at a much more recent date, drew the seeds of their civilization from their more precocious neighbour.

These expressions, Assyria and Chaldæa, are now employed in a sense far more precise than they ever had in antiquity. For Herodotus Babylonia was a mere district of Assyria; [9] in his time both States were comprised in the Persian Empire, and had no distinct

existence of their own. Pliny calls the whole of Mesopotamia Assyria. [10] Strabo carries the western frontier of Assyria as far as Syria. [11] To us these variations are of small importance. The geographical and historical nomenclature of the ancients was never clearly defined. It was always more or less of a floating quantity, especially for those countries which to Herodotus or Diodorus, to Pliny or to Tacitus, were dimly perceptible on the extreme limits of their horizon.

It would, however, be easy to show that in assigning a more definite value to the terms in question—a proceeding in which we have the countenance of nearly every modern historian—we do not detach them from their original acceptation; at most we give them more constancy and precision than the colloquial language of the Greeks and Romans demanded. [12] The expressions [Pg 6] *Khasdim* and *Chaldæi* were used in the Bible and by classic authors mainly to denote the inhabitants of Babylon and its neighbourhood; and we find Strabo attaching with precision the name *Aturia*, which is nothing but a variant upon Assyria, to that district watered and bounded by the Tigris in which Nineveh was situated. [13] Our only aim is to adopt, once for all, such terms as may be easily understood by our readers, and may render all confusion impossible between the two kingdoms, between the people of the north and those of the south.

In order to define Assyria exactly we should have to determine its frontiers, and that we can only do approximately. As the nation grew its territory extended in certain directions. To the east, however, where the formidable rampart of the Zagros forbade all progress, no such extension took place. Those lofty and precipitous chains which we now call the mountains of Kurdistan, were only to be crossed in two or three places, and by passes which during their few months of freedom from snow and floods gave access to the high-lying plains of Media. These narrow defiles might well be traversed by an army in a summer campaign, but neither dwellings nor cultivated lands could invade such a district with success; at most they could take possession of the few spots of fertile soil which lay at the mouth of the lateral valleys; such, for example, was the plain of Arbeles which was watered by the great Zab before its junction with the Tigris. Towards the south there was no natural barrier, but in

that direction all development was hindered by the density of the Chaldee population which was thickly spread over the country above Babylon and about the numerous towns and villages which looked towards that city as their capital. To the north, on the other hand, the wide terraces which mounted like steps from the plains of Mesopotamia to the mountains of Armenia offered an ample field for expansion. To the west there was still more room. Little by little rural and urban life overflowed the valley of the Tigris into that of the Chaboras or Khabour, the principal affluent of the Euphrates, until at last it reached the banks of the great western river itself. In all Northern Mesopotamia, between the hills of the Sinjar and the last slopes of Mount Masius, the Assyrians encountered only nomad tribes whom they could drive when they chose into the Syrian [Pg 7] desert. Over all that region the remains of artificial mounds have been found which must at one time have been the sites of palaces and cities. In some cases the gullies cut in their flanks by the rain discover broken walls and fragments of sculpture whose style is that of the Ninevite monuments. [14]

In the course of their victorious career the Assyrians annexed several other states, such as Syria and Chaldæa, Cappadocia and Armenia, but those countries were never more than external dependencies, than conquered provinces. Taking Assyria proper at its greatest development, we may say that it comprised Northern Mesopotamia and the territories which faced it from the other bank of the Tigris and lay between the stream and the lower slopes of the mountains. The heart of the country was the district lying along both sides of the river between the thirty-fifth and thirty-seventh degree of latitude, and the forty-first and forty-second degree of longitude, east. The three or four cities which rose successively to be capitals of Assyria were all in that region, and are now represented by the ruins of Khorsabad, of Kouyundjik with Nebbi-Younas, of Nimroud, and of Kaleh-Shergat. One of these places corresponds to *Ninos*, as the Greeks call it, or Nineveh, the famous city which classic writers as well as Jewish prophets looked upon as the centre of Assyrian history.

To give some idea of the relative dimensions of these two states Rawlinson compares the surface of Assyria to that of Great Britain, while that of Chaldæa must, he says, have been equal in extent to

the kingdom of Denmark. [15] This latter comparison seems below the mark, when, compass in hand, we attempt to verify it upon a modern map. The discrepancy is caused by the continual encroachments upon the sea made by the alluvial deposits from the two great rivers. Careful observations and calculations have shown that the coast line must have been from forty to forty-five leagues farther north than it is at present when the ancestors of the Chaldees first appeared upon the scene. [16] Instead of flowing together as they do now to form what is called the *Shat-el-Arab*, the Tigris and Euphrates then fell into the sea at points some twenty leagues apart in a gulf which extended [Pg 8] eastwards as far as the last spurs thrown out by the mountains of Iran, and westwards to the foot of the sandy heights which terminate the plateau of Arabia. "The whole lower part of the valley has thus been made, since the commencement of the present geological period, by deposits from the Tigris, the Euphrates, and such minor streams as the Adhem, the Gyndes, the Choaspes, streams which, after having long enjoyed an independent existence and having contributed to drive back the waters into which they fell, have ended by becoming mere feeders of the Tigris." [17] We see, therefore, that when Chaldæa received its first inhabitants it was sensibly smaller than it is to-day, as the district of which Bassorah is now the capital and the whole delta of the Shat-el-Arab were not yet in existence.

NOTES:

[1] Berosus, fragment No. 1, in the *Essai de Commentaire sur les Fragments cosmogoniques de Bérose d'après les Textes cunéiformes et les Monuments de l'Art Asiatique* of François Lenormant (Maisonneuve, 1871, 8vo.).

[2] *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World; or, The History, Geography, and Antiquities of Chaldæa, Assyria, Babylon, Media, and Persia. Collected and Illustrated from Ancient and Modern Sources*, by George Rawlinson. Fourth edition, 3 vols., 8vo., with Maps and Illustrations (Murray, 1879).

[3] Humboldt, *Aspects of Nature*, vol. i. pp. 77, 78. — R.

[4] Herodotus, ii. 5.

[5] Loftus's *Chaldæa and Susiana*, p. 282. — R.

[6] See Strabo, xvi. 1, § 6; Pliny, H.N. vi. 28; Ptolemy, v. 20; Berosus, pp. 28, 29. — R.

[7] Ross came to the end of the alluvium and the commencement of the secondary formation in lat. 34°, long. 44° (*Journal of Geographical Society*, vol. ix. p. 446). Similarly, Captain Lynch found the bed of the Tigris change from pebbles to mere alluvium near Khan Iholigch, a little above its confluence with the Aahun (*Ib.* p. 472). For the point where the Euphrates enters on the alluvium, see Fraser's *Assyria and Mesopotamia*, p. 27. — R.

[8] Rawlinson. *The Five Great Monarchies, &c.*, vol. i., pp. 1-4. As to the name and boundaries of Chaldæa, see also Guignaut, *La Chaldée et les Chaldéens*, in the *Encyclopédie Moderne*, vol. viii.

[9] Herodotus, i. 106, 192; iii. 92.

[10] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* vi. 26.

[11] Strabo, xvi. i. § 1.

[12] *Genesis* xi. 28 and 31; *Isaiah* xlvii. 1; xiii. 19, &c.; Diodorus ii. 17; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* vi. 26; the Greek translators of the Bible rendered the Hebrew term Khasdim by Χαλδαιοι; both forms seem to be derived from the same primitive word.

[13] Strabo, xvi. i. 1, 2, 3.

[14] Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i. pp. 312, 315; *Discoveries*, p. 245.

[15] Rawlinson, *Five Great Monarchies*, vol. i. pp. 4, 5.

[16] Loftus, in the *Journal of the Geographical Society*, vol. xxvi. p. 142; *Ib.*, Sir Henry Rawlinson, vol. xxvii. p. 186.

[17] Maspero, *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, p. 137.

§ 2. — *Nature in the Basin of the Euphrates and Tigris.*

The inundation of the Nile gives renewed life every year to those plains of Egypt which it has slowly formed, and so it is with the Tigris and Euphrates. Lower Mesopotamia is entirely their creation, and if the time were to come when their vivifying streams were no longer to irrigate its surface, it would very soon be changed into a monotonous and melancholy desert. It hardly ever rains in Chal-

dæa. [18] There are a few showers at the changes of the season, and, in winter, a few days of heavy rain. During the summer, for long months together, the sky remains inexorably blue while the temperature is hot and parching. In winter, clouds are almost as rare; but winds often play violently over the great tracts of unbroken country. When these blow from the south they soon lose their warmth and humidity at the contact of a soil which, but a short while ago, was at the bottom of the sea, and is, therefore, in many places still strongly impregnated with salt which acts as a refrigerant. [19] Again, when the north wind comes down from the snowy summits of Armenia or Kurdistan, it is already cold enough, so that, during the months of December and January, it often happens that the mercury falls below freezing point, even in Babylonia. At daybreak the [Pg 9] waters of the marshes are sometimes covered with a thin layer of ice, and the wind increases the effect of the low temperature. Loftus tells us that he has seen the Arabs of his escort fall benumbed from their saddles in the early morning. [20]

It is, then, upon the streams, and upon them alone, that the soil has to depend for its fertility; all those lands to which they never reach are doomed to barrenness and death. It is fortunate for the prosperity of the country through which they flow, that the Tigris and Euphrates swell and rise annually from their beds, not indeed like the Nile, almost on a stated day, but ever in the same season, about the commencement of spring. Without these periodical floods many parts of the plain of Mesopotamia would be beyond the reach of irrigation, but their regular occurrence allows water to be stored in sufficient quantities for use during the months of drought. To obtain the full advantage of this precious capital, the inhabitants must, however, take more care and expend more labour than is necessary in Egypt. The rise of the Euphrates and of the Tigris is neither so slow nor so regular as that of the Nile. The waters do not spread so gently over the soil, neither do they stay upon it so long; [21] since they have been abandoned to themselves as they are at present, a great part of them are lost, and, far from rendering a service to agriculture, they turn vast regions into dangerous hot-beds of infection.

It was to the west of the double basin that the untoward effects of the territorial conformation were chiefly felt. The valley of the Eu-

phrates is not like that of the Nile, a canal hollowed out between two clearly marked banks. From the northern boundary of the alluvial plain to the southern, the slope is very slight, while from east to west, from the plains of Mesopotamia to the foot of the Arabian plateau, there is also an inclination. When the river is in flood the right bank no longer exists. Where it is [Pg 10] not raised and defended by dykes, the waters flow over it at more than one point. They spread through large breaches into a sort of hollow where they form wide marshes, such as those which stretch in these days from the country west of the ruins of Babylon almost to the Persian Gulf. In the parching heat of the summer months the mud blackens, cracks, and exhales miasmatic vapours, so that a long acclimatization, like that of the Arabs, is necessary before one can live in the region. Some of these Arabs live in forests of reeds like those represented in the Assyrian bas-reliefs. [22]

Their huts of mud and rushes rise upon a low island in the marshes; and all communication with neighbouring tribes and with the town in which they sell the product of their rice-fields, is carried on by boats. The brakes are more impenetrable than the thickest underwood, but the natives have cut alleys through them, along which they impel their large flat-bottomed *teradas* with poles. [23] Sometimes a sudden rise of the river will raise the level of these generally stagnant waters by a yard or two, and during the night the huts and their inhabitants, men and animals together, will be sent adrift. Two or three villages have been destroyed in this fashion amid the complete indifference of the authorities. The tithe-farmer may be trusted to see that the survivors pay the taxes due from their less fortunate neighbours.

The masters of the country could, if they chose, do much to render the country more healthy, more fertile, more capable of supporting a numerous population. They might direct the course of the annual floods, and save their excess. When the land was managed by a proprietary possessing intelligence, energy, and foresight, it had, especially in minor details, a grace and picturesque beauty of its own. When every foot of land was carefully cultivated, when the two great streams were thoroughly kept in hand, their banks and those of the numerous canals intersecting the plains were overhung with palms. The eye fell with pleasure upon the tall trunks with

their waving plumes, upon the bouquets of broad leaves with their centre of yellow dates; upon the cereals and other useful and ornamental plants growing under their gentle shade, and forming a carpet [Pg 11] for the rich and sumptuous vegetation above. Around the villages perched upon their mounds the orchards spread far and wide, carrying the scent of their orange trees into the surrounding country, and presenting, with their masses of sombre foliage studded with golden fruit, a picture of which the eye could never grow weary.

No long series of military disasters was required to destroy all this charm; fifty years, or, at most, a century, of bad administration was enough. [24] Set a score of Turkish pachas to work, one after the other, men such as those whom contemporary travellers have encountered at Mossoul and Bagdad; with the help of their underlings they will soon have done more harm than the marches and conflicts of armies. There is no force more surely and completely destructive than a government which is at once idle, ignorant, and corrupt.

With the exception of the narrow districts around a few towns and villages, where small groups of population have retained something of their former energy and diligence, Mesopotamia is now, during the greater part of the year, given over to sterility and desolation. As it is almost entirely covered with a deep layer of vegetable earth, the spring clothes even its most abandoned solitudes with a luxuriant growth of herbs and flowers. Horses and cattle sink to their bellies in the perfumed leafage, [25] but after the month of May the herbage withers and becomes discoloured; the dried stems split and crack under foot, and all verdure disappears except from the river-banks and marshes. Upon these wave the feathery fronds of the tamarisk, and in the stagnant or slowly moving water which fills all the depressions of the soil, aquatic plants, water-lilies, rushes, papyrus, and gigantic reeds spring up in dense masses, and make the low-lying country look like a vast prairie, whose native freshness even the sun at its zenith has no power to destroy. Everywhere else nature is as [Pg 12] dreary in its monotony as the vast sandy deserts which border the country on the west. In one place the yellow soil is covered with a dried, almost calcined, stubble; in another, with a grey dust which rises in clouds before the slightest

breeze; in the neighbourhood of the ancient townships it has received a reddish hue from the quantity of broken and pulverized brick with which it is mixed. These colours vary in different places, but from Mount Masius to the shores of the Persian Gulf, from the Euphrates to the Tigris, the traveller is met almost constantly by the one melancholy sight—of a country spreading out before him to the horizon, in which neglect has gone on until the region which the biblical tradition represents as the cradle of the human race has been rendered incapable of supporting human life. [26]

The physiognomy of Mesopotamia has then been profoundly modified since the fall of the ancient civilization. By the indolence of man it has lost its adornments, or rather its vesture, in the ample drapery of waving palms and standing corn that excited the admiration of Herodotus. [27] But the general characteristics and leading contours of the landscape remain what they were. Restore in thought one of those Babylonian structures whose lofty ruins now serve as observatories for the explorer or passing traveller. Suppose yourself, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, seated upon the summit of the temple of Bel, some hundred or hundred and twenty yards above the level of the plain. At such a height the smiling and picturesque details which were formerly so plentiful and are now so rare, would not be appreciated. The domed surfaces of the woods would seem flat, the varied cultivation, the changing colours of the fields and pastures would hardly be distinguished. You would be struck then, as you are struck to-day, by the extent [Pg 13] and uniformity of the vast plain which stretches away to all the points of the compass.

In Assyria, except towards the south where the two rivers begin to draw in towards each other, the plains are varied by gentle undulations. As the traveller approaches the northern and eastern frontiers, chains of hills, and even snowy peaks, loom before him. In Chaldæa there is nothing of the kind. The only accidents of the ground are those due to human industry; the dead level stretches away as far as the eye can follow it, and, like the sea, melts into the sky at the horizon.

#### NOTES

[18] Herodotus, i. 193: Ἡ δὲ γῆ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων ἕεται μὲν ὀλιγοῖ

[19] Loftus, *Susiana and Chaldæa*, i. vol. 8vo. 1857, London, p. 73.

[20] Loftus, *Susiana and Chaldæa*, p. 73; Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 146 (i. vol. 8vo. 1853).

[21] Herodotus, exaggerates this difference, but it is a real one. "The plant," he says, "is nourished and the ears formed by means of irrigation from the river. For this river does not, as in Egypt, overflow the cornlands of its own accord, but is spread over them by the hand or by the help of engines," i. 193. [Our quotations are from Prof. Rawlinson's *Herodotus* (4 vols. 8vo. 1875; Murray); Ed.] The inundations of the Tigris and Euphrates do not play so important a rôle in the lives of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, as that of the Nile in those of the Egyptians.

[22] Layard, *A Second Series of the Monuments of Nineveh*, plate 27 (London, oblong folio, 1853).

[23] Layard, *Discoveries*, pp. 551-556; Loftus, *Chaldæa and Susiana*, chap. x.

[24] Layard (*Discoveries*, pp. 467, 468 and 475) tells us what the Turks "have made of two of the finest rivers in the world, one of which is navigable for 850 miles from its mouth, and the other for 600 miles."

[25] Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i. p. 78 (1849). "Flowers of every hue enamelled the meadows; not thinly scattered over the grass as in northern climes, but in such thick and gathering clusters that the whole plain seemed a patch-work of many colours. The dogs as they returned from hunting, issued from the long grass dyed red, yellow, or blue, according to the flowers through which they had last forced their way."

[26] Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. pp. 68-75.

[27] Herodotus, i. 193. "Of all the countries that we know, there is none which is so fruitful in grain. It makes no pretension indeed, of growing the fig, the olive, the vine, or any other trees of the kind; but in grain it is so fruitful as to yield commonly two hundredfold, and when the production is greatest, even three hundredfold. The blade of the wheat plant and barley is often four fingers in breadth. As for millet and the sesame, I shall not say to what height they

grow, though within my own knowledge; for I am not ignorant that what I have already written concerning the fruitfulness of Babylonia, must seem incredible to those who have never visited the country.... Palm trees grow in great numbers over the whole of the flat country, mostly of the kind that bears fruit, and this fruit supplies them with bread, wine, and honey."

§ 3.—*The Primitive Elements of the Population.*

The two great factors of all life and of all vegetable production are water and warmth, so that of the two great divisions of the country we have just described, the more southern must have been the first inhabited, or at least, the first to invite and aid its inhabitants to make trial of civilization.

In the north the two great rivers are far apart. The vast spaces which separate them include many districts which have always been, and must ever be, very difficult of irrigation, and consequently of cultivation. In the south, on the other hand, below the thirty-fourth degree of latitude, the Tigris and Euphrates approach each other until a day's march will carry the traveller from one to the other; and for a distance of some eighty leagues, ending but little short of the point of junction, their beds are almost parallel. In spite of the heat, which is, of course, greater than in northern Mesopotamia, nothing is easier than to carry the blessings of irrigation over the whole of such a region. When the water in the rivers and canals is low, it can be raised by the aid of simple machines, similar in principle to those we described in speaking of Egypt. [28]

It is here, therefore, that we must look for the scene of the first attempts in Asia to pass from the anxious and uncertain life of the fisherman, the hunter, or the nomad shepherd, to that of the sedentary husbandman, rooted to the soil by the pains he has taken to improve its [Pg 14] capabilities, and by the homestead he has reared at the border of his fields. In the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis we have an echo of the earliest traditions preserved by the Semitic race of their distant origin. "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." [29] The *land* of Shinar is the Hebrew name of what we call Chaldæa. There is no room for mistake. When the sacred writer wishes to tell us the origin of human society, he