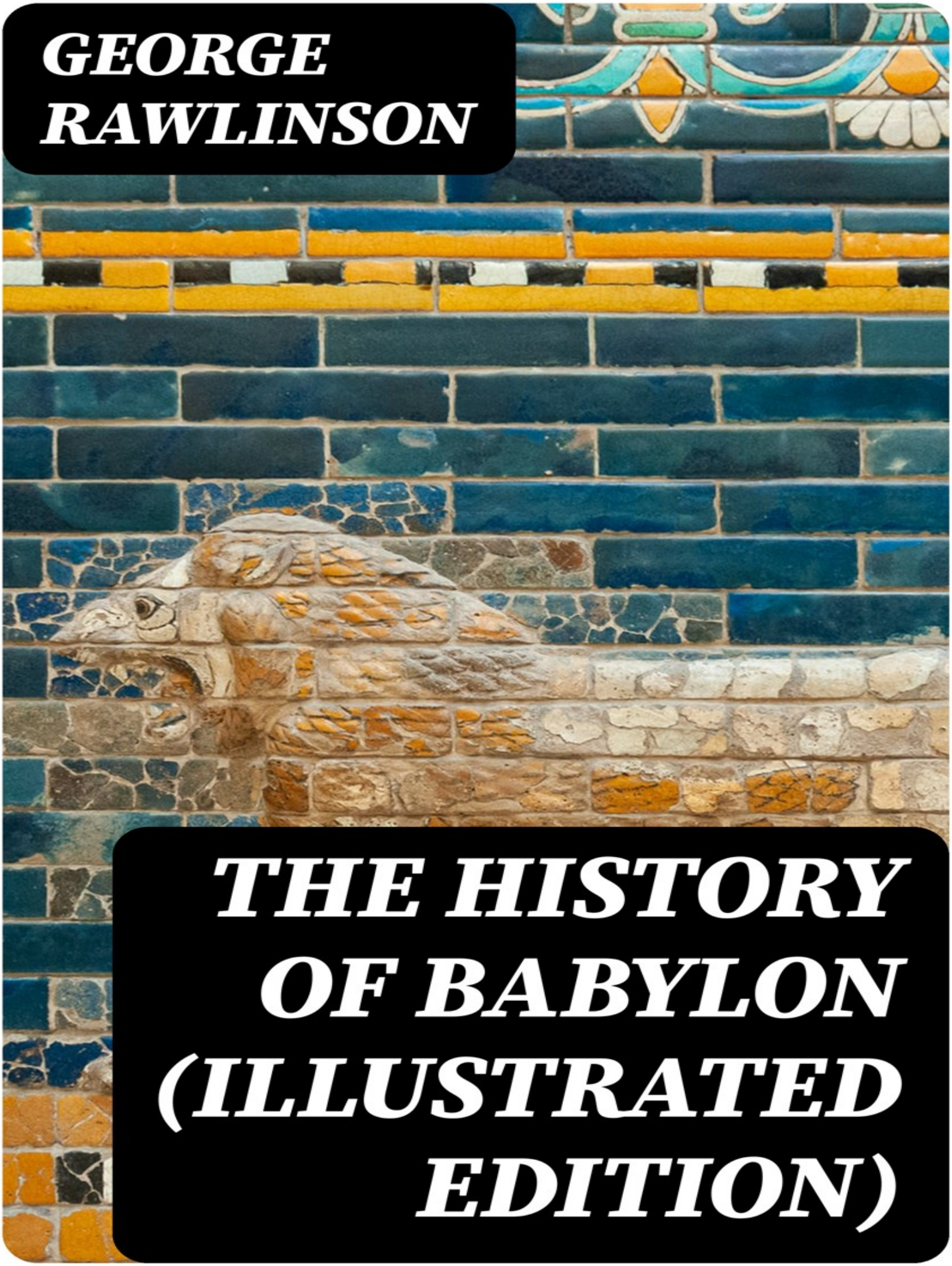

GEORGE RAWLINSON

# THE HISTORY OF BABYLON (ILLUSTRATED EDITION)

George Rawlinson

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EAN 8596547392736

DigiCat, 2022
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# Chapter I. Extent of the Empire

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> “Behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great; the tree grew and was strong: and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth.”—Dan. iy. 10, 11.

The limits of Babylonia Proper, the tract in which the dominant power of the Fourth Monarchy had its abode, being almost identical with those which have been already described under the head of Chaldaea, will not require in this place to be treated afresh, at any length. It needs only to remind the reader that Babylonia Proper is that alluvial tract towards the mouth of the two great rivers of Western Asia—the Tigris and the Euphrates—which intervenes between the Arabian Desert on the one side, and the more eastern of the two streams on the other. Across the Tigris the country is no longer Babylonia, but Cissia, or Susiana—a distinct region, known to the Jews as Elam—the habitat of a distinct people. Babylonia lies westward of the Tigris, and consists of two vast plains or flats, one situated between the two rivers, and thus forming the lower portion of the “Mesopotamia” of the Greeks and Romans—the other interposed between the Euphrates and Arabia, a long but narrow strip along the right bank of that abounding river. The former of these two districts is shaped like an ancient amphora, the mouth extending from Hit to Samarah, the

neck lying between Baghdad and Ctesiphon on the Tigris, Mohammed and Mosaib on the Euphrates, the full expansion of the body occurring between Serut and El Khithr, and the pointed base reaching down to Kornah at the junction of the two streams. This tract, the main region of the ancient Babylonia, is about 320 miles long, and from 20 to 100 broad. It may be estimated to contain about 18,000 square miles. The tract west of the Euphrates is smaller than this. Its length, in the time of the Babylonian Empire, may be regarded as about 350 miles, its average width is from 25 to 30 miles, which would give an area of about 9000 square miles. Thus the Babylonia of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar may be regarded as covering a space of 27,000 square miles—a space a little exceeding the area of the Low countries.

The small province included within these limits—smaller than Scotland or Ireland, or Portugal or Bavaria—became suddenly, in the latter half of the seventh century B.C., the mistress of an extensive empire. On the fall of Assyria, about B.C. 625, or a little later, Media and Babylonia, as already observed, divided between them her extensive territory. It is with the acquisitions thus made that we have now to deal. We have to inquire what portion exactly of the previous dominions of Assyria fell to the lot of the adventurous Nabopolassar, when Nineveh ceased to be—what was the extent of the territory which was ruled from Babylon in the latter portion of the seventh and the earlier portion of the sixth century before our era?

Now the evidence which we possess on this point is threefold. It consists of certain notices in the Hebrew

Scriptures, contemporary records of first-rate historical value; of an account which strangely mingles truth with fable in one of the books of the Apocrypha; and of a passage of Berosus preserved by Josephus in his work against Apion. The Scriptural notices are contained in Jeremiah, in Daniel, and in the books of Kings and Chronicles. From these sources we learn that the Babylonian Empire of this time embraced on the one hand the important country of Susiana or Elymais (Elam), while on the other it ran up the Euphrates at least as high as Carchemish, from thence extending westward to the Mediterranean, and southward to, or rather perhaps into, Egypt. The Apocryphal book of Judith enlarges these limits in every direction. That the Nabuchodonosor of that work is a reminiscence of the real Nebuchadnezzar there can be no doubt. The territories of that monarch are made to extend eastward, beyond Susiana, into Persia; northward to Nineveh; westward to Cilicia in Asia Minor; and southward to the very borders of Ethiopia. Among the countries under his sway are enumerated Elam, Persia, Assyria, Cilicia, Coele-Syria, Syria of Damascus, Phoenicia, Galilee, Gilead, Bashan, Judsea, Philistia, Goshen, and Egypt generally. The passage of Berosus is of a more partial character. It has no bearing on the general question of the extent of the Babylonian Empire, but, incidentally, it confirms the statements of our other authorities as to the influence of Babylon in the West. It tells us that Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Egypt, were subject to Nabopolassar, and that Nebuchadnezzar ruled, not only over these countries, but also over some portion of Arabia.

From these statements, which, on the whole, are tolerably accordant, we may gather that the great Babylonian Empire of the seventh century B.C. inherited from Assyria all the southern and western portion of her territory, while the more northern and eastern provinces fell to the share of Media. Setting aside the statement of the book of Judith (wholly unconfirmed as it is by any other authority), that Persia was at this time subject to Babylon, we may regard as the most eastern portion of the Empire the district of Susiana, which corresponded nearly with the modern Khuzistan and Luristan. This acquisition advanced the eastern frontier of the Empire from the Tigris to the Bakhtiyari Mountains, a distance of 100 or 120 miles. It gave to Babylon an extensive tract of very productive territory, and an excellent strategic boundary. Khuzistan is one of the most valuable provinces of modern Persia. It consists of a broad tract of fertile alluvium, intervening between the Tigris and the mountains, well watered by numerous large streams, which are capable of giving an abundant irrigation to the whole of the low region. Above this is Luristan, a still more pleasant district, composed of alternate mountain, valley, and upland plain, abounding in beautiful glens, richly wooded, and full of gushing brooks and clear rapid rivers. Much of this region is of course uncultivable mountain, range succeeding range, in six or eight parallel lines, as the traveller advances to the north-east; and most of the ranges exhibiting vast tracts of bare and often precipitous rock, in the clefts of which snow rests till midsummer. Still the lower flanks of the mountains are in general cultivable, while the valleys teem with orchards and gardens, and the plains

furnish excellent pasture. The region closely resembles Zagros, of which it is a continuation. As we follow it, however, towards the south-east into the Bakhtiyari country, where it adjoins upon the ancient Persia, it deteriorates in character; the mountains becoming barer and more arid, and the valleys narrower and less fertile.

All the other acquisitions of Babylonia at this period lay towards the west. They consisted of the Euphrates valley, above Hit; of Mesopotamia Proper, or the country about the two streams of the Bilik and the Khabour; of Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, Idumasa, Northern Arabia, and part of Egypt. The Euphrates valley from Hit to Balis is a tract of no great value, except as a line of communication. The Mesopotamian Desert presses it closely upon the one side, and the Arabian upon the other. The river flows mostly in a deep bed between cliffs of marl, gypsum, and limestone, or else between bare hills producing only a few dry sapless shrubs and a coarse grass; and there are but rare places where, except by great efforts, the water can be raised so as to irrigate, to any extent, the land along either bank. The course of the stream is fringed by date-palms as high as Anah, and above is dotted occasionally with willows, poplars, sumacs, and the unfruitful palm-tree. Cultivation is possible in places along both banks, and the undulating country on either side affords patches of good pasture. The land improves as we ascend. Above the junction of the Khabour with the main stream, the left bank is mostly cultivable. Much of the land is flat and well-wooded, while often there are broad stretches of open ground, well adapted for pasturage. A considerable population seems in

ancient times to have peopled the valley, which did not depend wholly or even mainly on its own products, but was enriched by the important traffic which was always passing up and down the great river.

Mesopotamia Proper, or the tract extending from the head streams of the Khabour about Mardin and Nisibin to the Euphrates at Bir, and thence southwards to Karkesiyeh or Circesium, is not certainly known to have belonged to the kingdom of Babylon, but may be assigned to it on grounds of probability. Divided by a desert or by high mountains from the valley of the Tigris, and attached by means of its streams to that of the Euphrates, it almost necessarily falls to that power which holds the Euphrates under its dominion. The tract is one of considerable extent and importance. Bounded on the north by the range of hills which Strabo calls Mons Masius, and on the east by the waterless upland which lies directly west of the middle Tigris, it comprises within it all the numerous affluents of the Khabour and Bilik, and is thus better supplied with water than almost any country in these regions. The borders of the streams afford the richest pasture, and the whole tract along the flank of Masius is fairly fertile. Towards the west, the tract between the Khabour and the Bilik, which is diversified by the Abd-el-Aziz hills, is a land of fountains. “Such,” says Ibn Haukal, “are not to be found elsewhere in all the land of the Moslems, for there are more than three hundred pure running brooks.” Irrigation is quite possible in this region; and many remains of ancient watercourses show that large tracts, at some distance from the main streams, were formerly brought under cultivation.

Opposite to Mesopotamia Proper, on the west or right bank of the Euphrates, lay Northern Syria, with its important fortress of Carchemish, which was undoubtedly included in the Empire. This tract is not one of much value. Towards the north it is mountainous, consisting of spurs from Amanus and Taurus, which gradually subside into the desert a little to the south of Aleppo. The bare, round-backed, chalky or rocky ranges, which here continually succeed one another, are divided only by narrow tortuous valleys, which run chiefly towards the Euphrates or the lake of Antioch. This mountain tract is succeeded by a region of extensive plains, separated from each other by low hills, both equally desolate. The soil is shallow and stony; the streams are few and of little volume; irrigation is thus difficult, and, except where it can be applied, the crops are scanty. The pistachio-nut grows wild in places; Vines and olives are cultivated with some success; and some grain is raised by the inhabitants; but the country has few natural advantages, and it has always depended more upon its possession of a carrying trade than on its home products for prosperity.

West and south-west of this region, between it and the Mediterranean, and extending southwards from Mount Amanus to the latitude of Tyre, lies Syria Proper, the Coele-Syria of many writers, a long but comparatively narrow tract of great fertility and value. Here two parallel ranges of mountains intervene between the coast and the desert, prolific parents of a numerous progeny of small streams. First, along the line of the coast, is the range known as Libanusin the south, from lat. 33° 20’ to lat. 34° 40’, and as Bargylus in the north, from lat. 34° 45’ to the Orontes at

Antioch, a range of great beauty, richly wooded in places, and abounding in deep glens, foaming brooks, and precipices of a fantastic form. More inland is Antilibanus, culminating towards the south in Hermon, and prolonged northward in the Jebel Shashabu, Jebel Biha, and Jebel-el-Ala, which extends from near Hems to the latitude of Aleppo. More striking than even Lebanon at its lower extremity, where Hermon lifts a snowy peak into the air during most of the year, it is on the whole inferior in beauty to the coast range, being bleaker, more stony, and less broken up by dells and valleys towards the south, and tamer, barer, and less well supplied with streams in its more northern portion. Between the two parallel ranges lies the “Hollow Syria,” a long and broadish valley, watered by the two streams of the Orontes and the “Litany” which, rising at no great distance from one another, flow in opposite directions, one hurrying northwards nearly to the flanks of Amanus, the other southwards to the hills of Galilee. Few places in the world are more, remarkable, or have a more stirring history, than this wonderful vale. Extending for above two hundred miles from north to south, almost in a direct line, and without further break than an occasional screen of low hills, it furnishes the most convenient line of passage between Asia and Africa, alike for the journeys of merchants and for the march of armies. Along this line passed Thothines and Barneses, Sargon, and Sennacherib, Neco and Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander and his warlike successors, Pompey, Antony, Kaled, Godfrey of Bouillon; along this must pass every great army which, starting from the general seats of power in Western Asia, seeks conquests

in Africa, or which, proceeding from Africa, aims at the acquisition of an Asiatic dominion. Few richer tracts are to be found even in these most favored portions of the earth’s surface. Towards the south the famous El-Bukaa is a land of cornfields and vineyards, watered by numerous small streams which fall into the Litany. Towards the north El-Ghab is even more splendidly fertile, with a dark rich soil, luxuriant vegetation, and water in the utmost abundance, though at present it is cultivated only in patches immediately about the towns, from fear of the Nusairiyeh and the Bedouins.

View of the Lebanon range.

Parallel with the southern part of the Coele-Syrian valley, to the west and to the east, were two small but important tracts, usually regarded as distinct states. Westward, between the heights of Lebanon and the sea, and extending

somewhat beyond Lebanon, both up and down the coast, was Phoenicia, a narrow strip of territory lying along the shore, in length from 150 to 180 miles, and in breadth varying from one mile to twenty. This tract consisted of a mere belt of sandy land along the sea, where the smiling palm-groves grew from which the country derived its name, of a broader upland region along the flank of the hills, which was cultivated in grain, and of the higher slopes of the mountains which furnished excellent timber. Small harbors, sheltered by rocky projections, were frequent along the coast. Wood cut in Lebanon was readily floated down the many streams to the shore, and then conveyed by sea to the ports. A narrow and scanty land made commerce almost a necessity. Here accordingly the first great maritime nation of antiquity grew up. The Phoenician fleets explored the Mediterranean at a time anterior to Homer, and conveyed to the Greeks and the other inhabitants of Europe, and of Northern and Western Africa, the wares of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt. Industry and enterprise reaped their usual harvest of success; the Phoenicians grew in wealth, and their towns became great and magnificent cities. In the time when the Babylonian Empire came into being, the narrow tract of Phoenicia—smaller than many an English county—was among the most valuable countries of Asia; and its possession was far more to be coveted than that of many a land whose area was ten or twenty times as great.

Eastward of Antilibanus, in the tract between that range and the great Syrian desert, was another very important district—the district which the Jews called “Aram-Dammesek,” and which now forms the chief part of the

Pashalik of Damascus. From the eastern flanks of the Antilibanus two great and numerous smaller streams flow down into the Damascene plain, and, carrying with them that strange fertilizing power which water always has in hot climates, convert the arid sterility of the desert into a garden of the most wonderful beauty. The Barada and Awaaj, bursting by narrow gorges from the mountain chain, scatter themselves in numerous channels over the great flat, intermingling their waters, and spreading them out so widely that for a circle of thirty miles the deep verdure of Oriental vegetation replaces the red hue of the Hauran. Walnuts, planes, poplars, cypresses, apricots, orange-trees, citrons, pomegranates, olives, wave above; corn and grass of the most luxuriant growth, below. In the midst of this great mass of foliage the city of Damascus “strikes out the white arms of its streets hither and thither” among the trees, now hid among them, now overtopping them with its domes and minarets, the most beautiful of all those beautiful towns which delight the eye of the artist in the East. In the south-west towers the snow-clad peak of Hermon, visible from every part of the Damascene plain. West, north-west, and north, stretches the long Antilibanus range, bare, gray, and flat-topped, except where about midway in its course, the rounded summit of Jebel Tiniyen breaks the uniformity of the line. Outside the circle of deep verdure, known to the Orientals as El Merj (“the Meadow”), is a setting or framework of partially cultivable land, dotted with clumps of trees and groves, which extend for many miles over the plain. To the Damascus country must also be reckoned those many charming valleys of Hermon and

Antilibanus which open out into it, sending their waters to increase its beauty and luxuriance, the most remarkable of which are the long ravine of the Barada, and the romantic Wady Halbon, whose vines produced the famous beverage which Damascus anciently supplied at once to the Tyrian merchant-princes and to the voluptuous Persian kings.

Below the Coelo-Syrian valley, towards the south, came Palestine, the Land of Lands to the Christian, the country which even the philosopher must acknowledge to have had a greater influence on the world's history than any other tract which can be brought under a single ethnic designation. Palestine—etymologically the country of the Philistines—was somewhat unfortunately named. Philistine influence may possibly have extended at a very remote period over the whole of it; but in historical times that warlike people did but possess a corner of the tract, less than one tenth of the whole—the low coast region from Jamnia to Gaza. Palestine contained, besides this, the regions of Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea, to the west of the Jordan, and those of Ituraea, Trachonitis, Bashan, and Gilead, east of that river. It was a tract 140 miles long, by from 70 to 100 broad, containing probably about 11,000 square miles. It was thus about equal in size to Belgium, while it was less than Holland or Hanover, and not much larger than the principality of Wales, with which it has been compared by a recent writer.

The great natural division of the country is the Jordan valley. This remarkable depression, commencing on the west flank of Hermon, runs with a course which is almost due south from lat. 33° 25' to lat. 31° 47', where it is

merged in the Dead Sea, which may be viewed, however, as a continuation of the valley, prolonging it to lat. 31° 8’. This valley is quite unlike any other in the whole world. It is a volcanic rent in the earth’s surface, a broad chasm which has gaped and never closed up. Naturally, it should terminate at Merom, where the level of the Mediterranean is nearly reached. By some wonderful convulsion, or at any rate by some unusual freak of Nature, there is a channel opened out from Merom, which rapidly sinks below the sea level, and allows the stream to flow hastily, down and still down, from Merom to Gennesareth, and from Gennesareth to the Dead Sea, where the depression reaches its lowest point, and the land, rising into a ridge, separates the Jordan valley from the upper end of the Gulf of Akabah. The Jordan valley divides Palestine, strongly and sharply, into two regions. Its depth, its inaccessibility (for it can only be entered from the highlands on either side down a few steep watercourses), and the difficulty of passing across it (for the Jordan has but few fords), give it a separating power almost equal to that of an arm of the sea. In length above a hundred miles, in width varying from one mile to ten, and averaging some five miles, or perhaps six, it must have been valuable as a territory, possessing, as it does, a rich soil, abundant water, and in its lower portion a tropical climate.

On either side of the deep Jordan cleft lies a highland of moderate elevation, on the right that of Galilee, Samaria, and Judsea, on the left that of Ituraea, Bashan, and Gilead. The right or western highland consists of a mass of undulating hills, with rounded tops, composed of coarse

gray stone, covered, or scarcely covered, with a scanty soil, but capable of cultivation in corn, olives, and figs. This region is most productive towards the north, barer and more arid as we proceed southwards towards the desert. The lowest portion, Judaea, is unpicturesque, ill-watered, and almost treeless; the central, Samaria, has numerous springs, some rich plains, many wooded heights, and in places quite a sylvan appearance; the highest, Galilee, is a land of water-brooks, abounding in timber, fertile and beautiful. The average height of the whole district is from 1500 to 1800 feet above the Mediterranean. Main elevations within it vary from 2500 to 4000 feet. The axis of the range is towards the East, nearer, that is, to the Jordan valley than to the sea. It is a peculiarity of the highland that there is one important break in it. As the Lowland mountains of Scotland are wholly separated from the mountains of the Highlands by the low tract which stretches across from the Frith of Forth to the Frith of Clyde, or as the ranges of St. Gall and Appenzell are divided off from the rest of the Swiss mountains by the flat which extends from the Rhine at Eagatz to the same river at Waldshut, so the western highland of Palestine is broken in twain by the famous “plain of Esdraelon,” which runs from the Bay of Acre to the Jordan valley at Beth-Shean or Scythopolis.

East of the Jordan no such depression occurs, the highland there being continuous. It differs from the western highland chiefly in this—that its surface, instead of being broken up into a confused mass of rounded hills, is a table-land, consisting of a long succession of slightly undulating plains. Except in Trachonitis and southern Ituraea, where the

basaltic rock everywhere crops out, the soil is rich and productive, the country in places wooded with fine trees, and the herbage luxuriant. On the west the mountains rise almost precipitously from the Jordan valley, above which they tower to the height of 3000 or 4000 feet. The outline is singularly uniform; and the effect is that of a huge wall guarding Palestine on this side from the wild tribes of the desert. Eastward the tableland slopes gradually, and melts into the sands of Arabia. Here water and wood are scarce; but the soil is still good, and bears the most abundant crops.

Finally, Palestine contains the tract from which it derives its name, the low country of the Philistines, which the Jews called the *Shephelah*, together with a continuation of this tract northwards to the roots of Carmol, the district known to the Jews as “Sharon,” or “the smooth place.” From Carmol to the Wady Sheriah, where the Philistine country ended, is a distance of about one hundred miles, which gives the length of the region in question. Its breadth between the shore and the highland varies from about twenty-five miles, in the south, between Gaza and the hills of Dan, to three miles, or less, in the north, between Dor and the border of Manasseh. Its area is probably from 1400 to 1500 square miles, This low strip is along its whole course divided into two parallel belts or bands-the first a flat sandy tract along the shore, the Ramleh of the modern Arabs; the second, more undulating, a region of broad rolling plains rich in corn, and anciently clothed in part with thick woods, watered by reedy streams, which flow down from the great highland. A valuable tract is this entire plain, but greatly exposed to ravage. Even the sandy belt will grow fruit-trees;

and the towns which stand on it, as Gaza, Jaffa, and Ashdod, are surrounded with huge groves of olives, sycamores, and palms, or buried in orchards and gardens, bright with pomegranates and orange-trees. The more inland region is of marvellous fertility. Its soil is a rich loam, containing scarcely a pebble, which yields year after year prodigious crops of grain—chiefly wheat—without manure or irrigation, or other cultivation than a light ploughing. Philistia was the granary of Syria, and was important doubly, first, as yielding inexhaustible supplies to its conqueror, and secondly as affording the readiest passage to the great armies which contended in these regions for the mastery of the Eastern World.

South of the region to which we have given the name of Palestine, intervening between it and Egypt, lay a tract, to which it is difficult to assign any political designation. Herodotus regarded it as a portion of Arabia, which he carried across the valley of the Arabah and made abut on the Mediterranean. To the Jews it was “the land of the south”—the special country of the Amalekites. By Strabo’s time it had come to be known as Idumsea, or the Edomite country; and under this appellation it will perhaps be most convenient to describe it here. Idumasa, then, was the tract south and south-west of Palestine from about lat. 31° 10’. It reached westward to the borders of Egypt, which were at this time marked by the Wady-el-Arish, southward to the range of Sinai and the Elanitic Gulf, and eastward to the Great Desert. Its chief town was Petra, in the mountains east of the Arabah valley. The character of the tract is for the most part a hard gravelly and rocky desert; but

occasionally there is good herbage, and soil that admits of cultivation; brilliant flowers and luxuriantly growing shrubs bedeck the glens and terraces of the Petra range; and most of the tract produces plants and bushes on which camels, goats, and even sheep will browse, while occasional palm groves furnish a grateful shade and an important fruit. The tract divides itself into four regions—first, a region of sand, low and flat, along the Mediterranean, the Shephelah without its fertility; next, a region of hard gravelly plain intersected by limestone ridges, and raised considerably above the sea level, the Desert of El-Tin, or of “the Wanderings;” then the long, broad, low valley of the Arabah, which rises gradually from the Dead Sea to an imperceptible watershed, and then falls gently to the head of the Gulf of Akabah, a region of hard sand thickly dotted with bushes, and intersected by numerous torrent courses; finally a long narrow region of mountains and hills parallel with the Arabah, constituting Idumsea Proper, or the original Edom, which, though rocky and rugged, is full of fertile glens, ornamented with trees and shrubs, and in places cultivated in terraces. In shape the tract was a rude square or oblong, with its sides nearly facing the four cardinal points, its length from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Akabah being 130 miles, and its width from the Wady-el-Arish to the eastern side of the Petra mountains 120 miles. The area is thus about 1560 square miles.

Beyond the Wady-el-Arish was Egypt, stretching from the Mediterranean southwards a distance of nearly eight degrees, or more than 550 miles. As this country was not, however, so much a part of the Babylonian Empire as a

dependency lying upon its borders, it will not be necessary to describe it in this place.

One region, however, remains still unnoticed which seems to have been an integral portion of the Empire. This is Palmyrene, or the Syrian Desert—the tract lying between Coelo-Syria on the one hand and the valley of the middle Euphrates on the other, and abutting towards the south on the great Arabian Desert, to which it is sometimes regarded as belonging. It is for the most part a hard sandy or gravelly plain, intersected by low rocky ranges, and either barren or productive only of some sapless shrubs and of a low thin grass. Occasionally, however, there are oases, where the fertility is considerable. Such an oasis is the region about Palmyra itself, which derived its name from the palm groves in the vicinity; here the soil is good, and a large tract is even now under cultivation. Another oasis is that of Karyatein, which is watered by an abundant stream, and is well wooded, and productive of grain. The Palmyrene, however, as a whole possesses but little value, except as a passage country. Though large armies can never have traversed the desert even in this upper region, where it is comparatively narrow, trade in ancient times found it expedient to avoid the long detour by the Orontes Valley, Aleppo, and Bambuk, and to proceed directly from Damascus by way of Palymra to Thapsaeus on the Euphrates. Small bands of light troops also occasionally took the same course; and the great saving of distance thus effected made it important to the Babylonians to possess an authority over the region in question.

Such, then, in its geographical extent, was the great Babylonian Empire. Reaching from Luristan on the one side to the borders of Egypt on the other, its direct length from east to west was nearly sixteen degrees, or about 980 miles, while its length for all practical purposes, owing to the interposition of the desert between its western and its eastern provinces, was perhaps not less than 1400 miles. Its width was very disproportionate to this. Between Zagros and the Arabian Desert, where the width was the greatest, it amounted to about 280 miles; between Amanus and Palmyra it was 250; between the Mons Masius and the middle Euphrates it may have been 200; in Syria and Idumsea it cannot have been more than 100 or 160. The entire area of the Empire was probably from 240,000 to 250,000 square miles—which is about the present size of Austria. Its shape may be compared roughly to a gnomon, with one longer and one shorter arm.

It added to the inconvenience of this long straggling form, which made a rapid concentration of the forces of the Empire impossible, that the capital, instead of occupying a central position, was placed somewhat low in the longer of the two arms of the gnomon, and was thus nearly 1000 miles removed from the frontier province of the west. Though in direct distance, as the crow flies, Babylon is not more than 450 miles from Damascus, or more than 520 from Jerusalem, yet the necessary detour by Aleppo is so great that it lengthens the distance, in the one case by 250, in the other by 380 miles. From so remote a centre it was impossible for the life-blood to circulate very vigorously to the extremities.

The Empire was on the whole fertile and well-watered. The two great streams of Western Asia—the Tigris and the Euphrates—which afforded an abundant supply of the invaluable fluid to the most important of the provinces, those of the south-east, have already been described at length; as have also the chief streams of the Mesopotamian district, the Belik and the Khabour. But as yet in this work no account has been given of a number of important rivers in the extreme east and the extreme west, on which the fertility, and so the prosperity, of the Empire very greatly depended. It is proposed in the present place to supply this deficiency.

The principle rivers of the extreme east were the Choaspes, or modern Kerkhah, the Pasitigris or Eulseus, now the Kuran, the Hedyphon or Hedypnus, now the Jerahi, and the Oroatis, at present the Tab or Hindyan. Of these, the Oroatis, which is the most eastern, belongs perhaps more to Persia than to Babylon; but its lower course probably fell within the Susianian territory. It rises in the mountains between Shiraz and Persepolis, about lat. 29° 45’, long. 52° 35’ E.; and flows towards the Persian Gulf with a course which is north-west to Failiyun, then nearly W. to Zehitun, after which it becomes somewhat south of west to Hindyan, and then S.W. by S. to the sea. The length of the stream, without counting lesser windings, is 200 miles; its width at Hindyan, sixteen miles above its mouth, is eighty yards, and to this distance it is navigable for boats of twenty tons burthen. At first its waters are pure and sweet, but they gradually become corrupted, and at Hindyan they are so brackish as not to be fit for use. The Jerahi rises from

several sources in the Kuh Margun, a lofty and precipitous range, forming the continuation of the chain of Zagros. about long. 50° to 51°, and lat. 31° 30’. These head-streams have a general direction from N.E. to S.W. The principal of them is the Kurdistan river, which rises about fifty miles to the north-east of Babahan and flowing south-west to that point, then bends round to the north, and runs north-west nearly to the fort of Mungasht, where it resumes its original direction, and receiving from the north-east the Abi Zard, or “Yellow River”—a delightful stream of the coldest and purest water possible—becomes known as the Jerahi, and carries a large body of water as far as Fellahiyeh or Dorak. Near Dorak the waters of the Jerahi are drawn off into a number of canals, and the river is thus greatly diminished; but still the stream struggles on, and proceeds by a southerly course towards the Persian Gulf, which it enters near Gadi in long. 48° 52’. The course of the Jerahi, exclusively of the smaller windings, is about equal in length to that of the Tab or Hindyan. In volume, before its dispersion, it is considerably greater than that river. It has a breadth of about a hundred yards before it reaches Babahan, and is navigable for boats almost from its junction with the Abi Zard. Its size is, however, greatly reduced in its lower course, and travellers who skirt the coast regard the Tab as the more important river.

The Kuran is a river very much exceeding in size both the Tab and the Jerahi. It is formed by the junction of two large streams—the Dizful river and the Kuran proper, or river of Shuster. Of these the Shuster stream is the more eastern. It rises in the Zarduh Kuh, or “Yellow Mountain,” in lat. 32°,

long. 51°, almost opposite to the river Isfahan. From its source it is a large stream. Its direction is at first to the southeast, but after a while it sweeps round and runs considerably north of west; and this course it pursues through the mountains, receiving tributaries of importance from both sides, till, near Akhili, it turns round to the south, and, cutting at a right angle the outermost of the Zagros ranges, flows down with a course S.W. by S. nearly to Sinister, where, in consequence of a bund or dam thrown across it, it bifurcates, and passes in two streams to the right and to the left of the town. The right branch, which earned commonly about two thirds of the water, proceeds by a tortuous course of nearly forty miles, in a direction a very little west of south, to its junction with the Dizful stream, which takes place about two miles north of the little town of Bandi-kir. Just below that town the left branch, called at present Abi-Gargar, which has made a considerable bend to the east, rejoins the main stream, which thenceforth flows in a single channel. The course of the Kuran from its source to its junction with the Dizful branch, including main windings, is about 210 miles. The Dizful. branch rises from two sources, nearly a degree apart, in lat. 33° 30’. These streams run respectively south-east and south-west, a distance of forty miles, to their junction near Bahrein, whence their united waters flow in a tortuous course, with a general direction of south, for above a hundred miles to the outer barrier of Zagros, which they penetrate near the Diz fort, through a succession of chasms and gorges. The course of the stream from this point is south-west through the hills and across the plain, past