ASSYRIA

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CHAPTER VI. Chronology and History

Media . . . quam ante regnum Cyri superlovis et incrementa Persidos legimus Asiae reginam totius.--Amm. Marc, xxiii. 6.

The origin of the Median nation is wrapt in a profound obscurity. Following the traces which the Zendavesta offers, taking into consideration its minute account of the earlier Arian migrations, its entire omission of any mention of the Medes, and the undoubted fact that it was nevertheless by the Medes and Persians that the document itself was preserved and transmitted to us, we should be naturally led to suppose that the race was one which in the earlier times of Arian development was weak and insignificant, and that it first pushed itself into notice after the ethnological portions of the Zendavesta were composed, which is thought to have been about B.C. 1000. Quite in accordance with this view is the further fact that in the native Assyrian annals, so far as they have been, recovered, the Medes do not make their appearance till the middle of the ninth century B.C., and when they appear are weak and unimportant, only capable of opposing a very slight resistance to the attacks of the Ninevite kings. The natural conclusion from these data would appear to be that until about B.C. 850 the Median name was unknown in the world, and that previously, if Medes existed at all, it was either as a sub-tribe of some other Arian race, or at any rate as a tribe too petty and insignificant to obtain mention either on the part of native or of foreign historians. Such early insignificance and late development of what ultimately becomes the dominant tribe of a race is no strange or unprecedented phenomenon to the historical inquirer; on the contrary, it is among the facts with which he is most familiar, and would admit of ample illustration, were the point worth pursuing, alike from the history of the ancient and the modern world.

But, against the conclusion to which we could not fail to be led by the Arian and Assyrian records, which agree together so remarkably, two startling notices in works of great authority but of a widely different character have to be set. In the Toldoth Beni Noah, or "Book of the Generation of the Sons of Noah," which forms the tenth chapter of Genesis, and which, if the work of Moses, was probably composed at least as early as B.C. 1500, we find the Madai--a word elsewhere always signifying "the Medes"--in the genealogy of the sons of Japhet. The word is there conjoined with several other important ethnic titles, as Gomer, Magog, Javan, Tubal, and Meshech; and there can be no reasonable doubt that it is intended to designate the Median people. If so, the people must have had already a separate and independent existence in the fifteenth century B.C., and not only so, but they must have by that time attained so much distinction as to be thought worthy of mention by a writer who was only bent on affiliating the more important of the nations known to him.

The other notice is furnished by Berosus. That remarkable historian, in his account of the early dynasties of his native Chaldaea, declared that, at a date anterior to B.C. 2000, the Medes had conquered Babylon by a sudden inroad, had established a monarchy there, and had held possession of the city and neighboring territory for a period of 224 years. Eight kings of their race had during that interval occupied the Babylonian throne,

It has been already observed that this narrative must represent a fact. Berosus would not have gratuitously invented a foreign conquest of his native land; nor would the earlier Babylonians, from whom he derived his materials, have forged a tale which was so little flattering to their national vanity. Some foreign conquest of Babylon must have taken place about the period named; and it is certainly a most important fact that Berosus should call the conquerors Medes. He may no doubt have been mistaken about an event so ancient; he may have misread his authorities, or he may have described as Medes a people of which he really knew nothing except that they had issued from the tract which in his own time bore the name of Media. But, while these axe mere possibilities, hypotheses to which the mind resorts in order to escape a difficulty, the hard fact remains that he has used the word; and this fact, coupled with the mention of the Medes in the book of Genesis, does certainly raise a presumption of no inconsiderable strength against, the view which it would be natural to take if the Zendavesta and the Assyrian annals were our solo authorities on the subject. It lends a substantial basis to the theories of those who regard the Medes as one of the principal primeval races; who believe that they were well known to the Semitic inhabitants of the Mesopotamian valley as early as the twenty-third century before Christ--long ere Abraham left Ur for Harran; and that they actually formed the dominant power in Western Asia for more than two centuries, prior to the establishment of the first Chaldaean kingdom.

And if there are thus distinct historical grounds for the notion of an early Median development, there are not wanting these obscurer but to many minds more satisfactory proofs wherewith comparative philology and ethnology are wont to illustrate and confirm the darker passages of ancient history. Recent linguistic research has clearly traced among the Arba Lisun, or, "Four Tongues" of ancient Chaldaea, which are so often mentioned on the ancient monuments, an Arian formation, such as would naturally have been left in the country, if it had been occupied for some considerable period by a dominant Arian power. The early Chaldaean ideographs have often several distinct values; and when this is the case, one of the powers is almost always an Arian name of the object represented. Words like nir, "man", ar, "river," (compare the names Aras, Araxes, Endanus, Rha, Rhodanus, etc., the Slavonic rika, "river," etc.), san, "sun," (compare German Sonne, Slavonic solnce, English "sun," Dutch zon, etc.), are seemingly Arian roots; and the very term "Arian" (Ariya, "noble") is perhaps contained in the name of a primitive Chaldaean monarch, "Arioch, king of Ellasar." There is nothing perhaps in these scattered traces of Arian influence in in Lower Mesopotamia at a remote era that points very particularly to the Medes; but at any rate they harmonize with the historical account that has reached us of early Arian power in these parts, and it is important that they should not be ignored when we are engaged in considering the degree of credence that is to be awarded to the account in question.

Again, there are traces of a vast expansion, apparently at a very early date, of the Median race, such as seems to imply that they must have been a great nation in Western Asia long previously to the time of the Iranic movements in Bactria and the adjoining regions. In the Matieni of Zagros and Cappadocia, in the Sauro-matae (or Northern Medes) of the country between the Palus Maeotis and the Caspian, in the Maetae or Maeotae of the tract about the mouth of the Don, and in the Maedi of Thrace, we have seemingly remnants of a great migratory host which, starting from the mountains that overhang Mesopotamia, spread itself into the regions of the north and the north-west at a time which does not admit of being definitely stated, but which is clearly anti-historic. Whether these races generally retained any tradition of their origin, we do not know; but

a tribe which in the time of Herodotus dwelt still further to the west than even the Maedi--to wit, the Sigynnae, who occupied the tract between the Adriatic and the Danube--had a very distinct belief in their Median descent, a belief confirmed by the resemblance which their national dress bore to that of the Medes. Herodotus, who relates these facts concerning them, appends an expression of his astonishment at the circumstance that emigrants from Media should have proceeded to such a distance from their original home; how it had been brought about he could not conceive. "Still," he sagaciously remarks, "nothing is impossible in the long lapse of ages."

A further argument in favor of the early development of Median power, and the great importance of the nation in Western Asia at a period anterior to the ninth century, is derivable from the ancient legends of the Greeks, which seem to have designated the Medes under the two eponyms of Medea and Andromeda. These legends indeed do not admit of being dated with any accuracy; but as they are of a primitive type, and probably older than Homer, we cannot well assign them to an age later than b.c. 1000. Now they connect the Median name with the two countries of Syria and Colchis, countries remote from each other, and neither of them sufficiently near the true Median territory to be held from it, unless at a time when the Medes were in possession of something like an empire. And, even apart from any inferences to be drawn from the localties which the Greek Myths connect with the Medes, the very fact that the race was known to the Greeks at this early date--long before the movements which brought them into contact with the Assyrians--would seem to show that there was some remote period--prior to the Assyrian domination--when the fame of the Medes was great in the part of Asia known to the Hellenes, and that they did not first attract Hellenic notice (as, but for the Myths, we might have imagined) by the conquests of Cyaxarea. Thus, on the whole it would appear that we must acknowledge two periods of Median prosperity, separated from each other by a lengthy interval, one anterior to the rise of the Cushite empire in Lower Babylonia, the other parallel with the decline and subsequently to the fall of Assyria.

Of the first period it cannot be said that we possess any distinct historical knowledge. The Median dynasty of Berosus at Babylon appears, by recent discoveries, to have represented those Susianian monarchs who bore sway there from B.C. 2286 to 2052. The early Median preponderance in Western Asia, if it is a fact, must have been anterior to this, and is an event which has only left traces in ethnological names and in mythological speculations.

Our historical knowledge of the Medes as a nation commences in the latter half of the ninth century before our era. Shalmaneser II.--probably the "Shalman" of Hosea,--who reigned from B.C. 859 to B.C. 824--relates that in his twenty-fourth year (B.C. 885), after having reduced to subjection the Zimri, who held the Zagros mountain range immediately to the east of Assyria, and received tribute from the Persians, he led an expedition into Media and Arazias, where he took and destroyed a number of the towns, slaying the men, and carrying off the spoil. He does not mention any pitched battle; and indeed it would seem that he met with no serious resistance. The Medes whom he attacks are evidently a weak and insignificant people, whom he holds in small esteem, and regards as only deserving of a hurried mention. They seem to occupy the tract now known as Ardelan--a varied region containing several lofty ridges, with broad plains lying between them.

It is remarkable that the time of this first contact of Media with Assyria--a contact taking place when Assyria was in her prime, and Media was only just emerging from a long period of weakness and obscurity--is almost exactly that which Ctesias selects as a day of the great revolution whereby the Empire of

the East passed from the hands of the Shemites into those of the Arians. The long residence of Otesias among the Persians, gave him a bias toward that people, which even extended to their close kin, the Medes. Bent on glorifying these two Arian races, he determined to throw back the commencement of their empire to a period long anterior to the true date; and, feeling specially anxious to cover up their early humiliation, he assigned their most glorious conquests to the very century, and almost to the very time, when they were in fact suffering reverses at the hands of the people over whom he represented them as triumphant. There was a boldness in the notion of thus inverting history which almost deserved, and to a considerable extent obtained, success. The "long chronology" of Ctesias kept its ground until recently, not indeed meeting with universal acceptance, but on the whole predominating over the "short chronology" of Herodotus; and it may be doubted whether anything less than the discovery that the native records of Assyria entirely contradicted Ctesias would have sufficed to drive from the field his figment of early Median dominion.

The second occasion upon which we hear of the Medes in the Assyrian annals is in the reign of Shalmanoser's son and successor, Shamas-Vul. Here again, as on the former occasion, the Assyrians were the aggressors. Shamas-Vul invaded Media and Arazias in his third year, and committed ravages similar to those of his father, wasting the country with fire and sword, but not (it would seem) reducing the Medes to subjection, or even attempting to occupy their territory. Again the attack is a mere raid, which produces no permanent impression.

It is in the reign of the son and successor of Shamas-Vul that the Medes appear for the first time to have made their submission and accepted the position of Assyrian tributaries. A people which was unable to offer effectual resistance when the Assyrian levies invaded their country, and which had no means of retaliating upon their foe or making him suffer the evils that he inflicted, was naturally tempted to save itself from molestation by the payment of an annual tribute, so purchasing quiet at the expense of honor and independence. Towards the close of the ninth century B.C. the Medes seem to have followed the example set them very much earlier by their kindred and neighbors, the Persians, and to have made arrangements for an annual payment which should exempt their territory from ravage. It is doubtful whether the arrangement was made by the whole people. The Median tribes at this time hung so loosely together that a policy adopted by one portion of them might be entirely repudiated by another. Most probably the tribute was paid by those tribes only which boarded on Zagros, and not by those further to the east or to the north, into whose territories the Assyrian arms has not yet penetrated.

No further change in the condition of the Medes is known to have occurred until about a hundred years later, when the Assyrians ceased to be content with the semi-independent position which had been hitherto allowed them, and determined on their more complete subjugation. The great Sargon, the assailant of Egypt and conqueror of Babylon, towards the middle of his reign, invaded Media with a large army, and having rapidly overrun the country, seized several of the towns, and "annexed them to Assyria," while at the same time he also established in new situations a number of fortified posts. The object was evidently to incorporate Media into the empire; and the posts wore stations in which a standing army was placed, to overawe the natives and prevent them from offering an effectual resistance. With the same view deportation of the people on a large scale seems to have been practised and the gaps thus made in the population were filled up--wholly or in part--by the settlement in the Median cities of Samaritan captives. On the country thus re-organized and re-arranged a tribute of a new character was

laid. In lieu of the money payment hitherto exacted, the Medes were required to furnish annually to the royal stud a number of horses. It is probable that Media was already famous for the remarkable breed which is so celebrated in later times; and that the horses now required of her by the Assyrians were to be of the large and highly valued kind known as "Nisaean."

The date of this subjugation is about B.C. 710. And here, if we compare the Greek accounts of Median history with those far more authentic ones which have reached us through the Assyrian contemporary records, we are struck by a repetition of the same device which came under our notice more than a century earlier--the device of covering up the nation's disgraces at a particular period by assigning to that very date certain great and striking successes. As Ctesias's revolt of the Medes under Arbaces and conquest of Nineveh synchronizes nearly with the first known ravages of Assyria within the territories of the Medes, so Herodotus's revolt of the same people and commencement of their monarchy under Deioces falls almost exactly at the date when they entirely lose their independence. As there is no reason to suspect Herodotus either of partiality toward the Medes or of any wilful departure from the truth, we must regard him as imposed upon by his informants, who were probably either Medes or Persians. These mendacious patriots found little difficulty in palming their false tale upon the simple Halicarnassian, thereby at once extending the antiquity of their empire and concealing its shame behind a halo of fictitious glory.

After their subjugation by Sargon the Medes of Media Magna appear to have remained the faithful subjects of Assyria for sixty or seventy years. During this period we find no notices of the great mass of the nation in the Assyrian records: only here and there indications occur that Assyria is stretching out her arms towards the more distant and outlying tribes, especially those of Azerbijan, and compelling them to acknowledge her as mistress. Sennacherib boasts that early in his reign, about B.C. 702, he received an embassy from the remoter parts of Media--"parts of which the kings his fathers had not even heard"--which brought him presents in sign of submission, and patiently accepted his yoke. His son, Esar-haddon, relates that, about his tenth year (B.C. 671) he invaded Bikni or Bikan, a distant province of Media, "whereof the kings his fathers had never heard the name;" and, attacking the cities of the region one after another, forced them to acknowledge his authority. The country was held by a number of independent chiefs, each bearing sway in his own city and adjacent territory. These chiefs have unmistakably Arian names, as Sitriparna or Sitraphernes, Eparna or Orphernes, Zanasana or Zanasanes, and Eamatiya or Ramates. Esar-haddon says that, having entered the country with his army, he seized two of the chiefs and carried them off to Assyria, together with a vast spoil and numerous other captives. Hereupon the remaining chiefs, alarmed for their safety, made their submission, consenting to pay an annual tribute, and admitting Assyrian officers into their territories, who watched, if they did not even control, the government.

We are now approaching the time when Media seems to have been first consolidated into a monarchy by the genius of an individual. Sober history is forced to discard the shadowy forms of kings with which Greek writers of more fancy than judgment have peopled the darkness that rests upon the "origines" of the Medes. Arbaces, Maudaces, Sosarmus, Artycas, Arbianes, Artseus, Deioces--Median monarchs, according to Ctesias or Herodotus, during the space of time comprised within the years B.C. 875 and 655--have to be dismissed by the modern writer without a word, since there is reason to believe that they are mere creatures of the imagination, inventions of unscrupulous romancers, not men who once walked the earth. The list of Median kings in Ctesias, so

far as it differs from the list in Herodotus, seems to be a pure forgery--an extension of the period of the monarchy by the conscious use of a system of duplication. Each king, or period, in Herodotus occurs in the list of Ctesias twice--a transparent device, clumsily cloaked by the cheap expedient of a liberal invention of names. Even the list of Herodotus requires curtailment. His Deioces, whose whole history reads more like romance than truth--the organizer of a powerful monarchy in Media just at the time when Sargon was building his fortified posts in the country and peopling with his Israelite captives the old "cities of the Medes"--the prince who reigned for above half a century in perfect peace with his neighbors, and who, although contemporary with Sargon, Sennacherib, Esar-haddon, and As-shur-bani-pal--all kings more or less connected with Media--is never heard of in any of their annals, must be relegated to the historical limbo in which repose so many "shades of mighty names;" and the Herodotean list of Median kings must at any rate, be thus far reduced. Nothing is more evident than that during the flourishing period of Assyria under the great Sargonidae above named there was no grand Median kingdom upon the eastern flank of the empire. Such a kingdom had certainly not been formed up to B.C. 671, when Esar-haddon reduced the more distant Medes, finding them still under the government of a number of petty chiefs. The earliest time at which we can imagine the consolidation to have taken place consistently with what we know of Assyria is about B.C. 760, or nearly half a century later than the date given by Herodotus.

The cause of the sudden growth of Media in power about this period, and of the consolidation which followed rapidly upon that growth, is to be sought, apparently, in fresh migratory movements from the Arian head-quarters, the countries east and south-east of the Caspian. The Cyaxares who about the year B.C. 632 led an invading host of Medes against Nineveh, was so well known to the Arian tribes of the north-east that, when in the reign of Darius Hystaspis a Sagartian raised the standard of revolt in that region he stated the ground of his claim to the Sagartian throne to be descent from Cyaxares. This great chief, it is probable, either alone, or in conjunction with his father (whom Herodotus calls Phraortes), led a fresh emigration of Arians from the Bacterian and Sagartian country to the regions directly east of the Zagros mountain chain; and having thus vastly increased the strength of the Arian race in that quarter, set himself to consolidate a mountain kingdom capable of resisting the great monarchy of the plain. Accepted, it would seem, as chief by the former Arian inhabitants of the tract, he proceeded to reduce the scattered Scythic tribes which had hitherto held possession of the high mountain region. The Zimri, Minni, Hupuska, etc., who divided among them the country lying between Media Proper and Assyria, were attacked and subdued without any great difficulty; and the conqueror, finding himself thus at the head of a considerable kingdom, and no longer in any danger of subjugation at the hands of Assyria, began to contemplate the audacious enterprise of himself attacking the Great Power which had been for so many hundred years the terror of Western Asia. The supineness of Asshur-bani-pal, the Assyrian king, who must at this time have been advanced in years, encouraged his aspirations; and about B.C. 634, when that monarch had held the throne for thirty-four years, suddenly, without warning, the Median troops debouched from the passes of Zagros, and spread themselves over the rich country at its base, Alarmed by the nearness and greatness of the peril, the Assyrian king aroused himself, and putting himself at the head of his troops, marched out to confront the invader. A great battle was fought, probably somewhere in Adiabene, in which the Medes were completely defeated: their whole army was cut to pieces; and the father of Cyaxares was among the slain. Such was the result of the first Median expedition

against Nineveh. The assailants had miscalculated their strength. In their own mountain country, and so long as they should be called upon to act only on the defensive, they might be right in regarding themselves as a match for the Assyrians; but when they descended into the plain, and allowed their enemy the opportunity of manoeuvering and of using his war chariots, their inferiority was marked. Cyaxares, now, if not previously, actual king, withdrew awhile from the war, and, convinced that all the valor of his Medes would be unavailing without discipline, set himself to organize the army on a new system, taking a pattern from the enemy, who had long possessed some knowledge of tactics. Hitherto, it would seem, each Median chief had brought into the field his band of followers, some mounted, some on foot, foot and horse alike armed variously as their means allowed them, some with bows and arrows, some with spears, some perhaps with slings or darts; and the army had been composed of a number of such bodies, each chief keeping his band close about him. Cyaxares broke up these bands, and formed the soldiers who composed them into distinct corps, according as they were horsemen or footmen, archers, slingers, or lancers. He then, having completed his arrangements at his ease, without disturbance (so far as appears) from the Assyrians, felt himself strong enough to renew the war with a good prospect of success. Collecting as large an army as he could, both from his Arian and his Scythic subjects, he marched into Assyria, met the troops of Asshur-bani-pal in the field, defeated them signally, and forced them to take refuge behind the strong works which defended their capital. He even ventured to follow up the flying foe and commence the siege of the capital itself; but at this point he was suddenly checked in his career of victory, and forced to assume a defensive attitude, by a danger of a novel kind, which recalled him from Nineveh to his own country.

The vast tracts, chiefly consisting of grassy plains, which lie north of the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian, and the Jaxartes Syhun river, were inhabited in ancient times by a race or races known to the Asiatics as Saka, "Scythians." These people appear to have been allied ethnically with many of the more southern races, as with the Parthians, the Iberians, the Alarodians, the tribes of the Zagros chain, the Susianians, and others. It is just possible that they may have taken an interest in the warfare of their southern brethren, and that, when Cyaxares brought the tribes of Zagros under his yoke, the Scyths of the north may have felt resentment, or compassion, If this view seem too improbable, considering the distance, the physical obstacles, and the little communication that there was between nations in those early times, we must suppose that by a mere coincidence it happened that the subjugation of the southern Scyths by Cyaxares was followed within a few years by a great irruption of Scyths from the trans-Caucasian region. In that case we shall have to regard the invasion as a mere example of that ever-recurring law by which the poor and hardy races of Upper Asia or Europe are from time to time directed upon the effete kingdoms of the south, to shake, ravage, or overturn them, as the case may be, and prevent them from stagnating into corruption.

The character of the Scythians, and the general nature of their ravages, have been described in a former portion of this work. If they entered Southern Asia, as seems probable, by the Daghestan route, they would then have been able to pass on without much difficulty, through Georgia into Azerbijan, and from Azerbijan into Media Magna, where the Medes had now established their southern capital. Four roads lead from Azerbijan to Hamadan or the Greater Ecbatana, one through Menjil and Kasvin, and across the Caraghan Hills; a second through Miana, Zenjan, and the province of Khamseh; a third by the valley of the Jaghetu, through Chukli and Tikan-Teppeh; and a fourth through Sefer-Khaneh and Sennah. We cannot say

which of the four the invaders selected; but, as they were passing southwards, they met the army of Cyaxares, which had quitted Nineveh on the first news of their invasion, and had marched in hot haste to meet and engage them. The two enemies were not ill-matched. Both were hardy and warlike, both active and full of energy; with both the cavalry was the chief arm, and the bow the weapon on which they depended mainly for victory. The Medes were no doubt the better disciplined; they had a greater variety of weapons and of soldiers; and individually they were probably more powerful men than the Scythians; but these last had the advantage of numbers, of reckless daring, and of tactics that it was difficult to encounter. Moreover, the necessity of their situation in the midst of an enemy's country made it imperative on them to succeed, while their adversaries might be defeated without any very grievous consequences. The Scytho had not come into Asia to conquer so much as to ravage; defeat at their hands involved damage rather than destruction; and the Medes must have felt that, if they lost the battle, they might still hope to maintain a stout defence behind the strong walls of some of their towns. The result was such as might have been expected under these circumstances. Madyes, the Scythian leader, obtained the victory, Cyaxares was defeated, and compelled to make terms with the invader. Retaining his royal name, and the actual government of his country, he admitted the suzerainty of the Scyths, and agreed to pay them an annual tribute. Whether Media suffered very seriously from their ravages, we cannot say. Neither its wealth nor its fertility was such as to tempt marauders to remain in it very long. The main complaint made against the Scythian conquerors is that, not content with the fixed tribute which they had agreed to receive, and which was paid them regularly, they levied contributions at their pleasure on the various states under their sway, which were oppressed by repeated exactions. The injuries suffered from their marauding habits form only a subordinate charge against them, as though it had not been practically felt to be so great a grievance. We can well imagine that the bulk of the invaders would prefer the warmer and richer lands of Assyria, Mesopotamia, and Syria; and that, pouring into them, they would leave the colder and less wealthy Media comparatively free from ravage.

The condition of Media and the adjacent countries under the Scythians must have nearly resembled that of almost the same regions under the Seljukian Turks during the early times of their domination. The conquerors made no fixed settlements, but pitched their tents in any portion of the territory that they chose. Their horses and cattle were free to pasture on all lands equally. They were recognized as the dominant race, were feared and shunned, but did not greatly interfere with the bulk of their subjects. It was impossible that they should occupy at any given time more than a comparatively few spots in the wide tract which they had overrun and subjugated; and, consequently, there was not much contact between them and the peoples whom they had conquered. Such contact as there was must no doubt have been galling and oppressive. The right of free pasture in the lands of others is always irksome to those who have to endure it, and, even where it is exercised with strict fairness, naturally leads to quarrels. The barbarous Scythians are not likely to have cared very much about fairness. They would press heavily upon the more fertile tracts, paying over-frequent visits to such spots, and remaining in them till the region was exhausted. The chiefs would not be able to restrain their followers from acts of pillage; redress would be obtained with difficulty; and sometimes even the chiefs themselves may have been sharers in the injuries committed. The insolence, moreover, of a dominant race so coarse and rude as the Scyths must have been very hard to bear; and we can well understand that the various nations which had to endure the yoke must

have looked anxiously for an opportunity of shaking it off, and recovering their independence.

Among these various nations, there was probably none that fretted and winced under its subjection more than the Medes. Naturally brave and high-spirited, with the love of independence inherent in mountaineers, and with a well-grounded pride in their recent great successes, they must have chafed daily and hourly at the ignominy of their position, the postponement of their hopes, and the wrongs which they continually suffered. At first it seemed necessary to endure. They had tried the chances of a battle, and had been defeated in fair fight--what reason was there to hope that, if they drew the sword again, they would be more successful? Accordingly they remained quiet but, as time went on, and the Scythians dispersed themselves continually over a wider and a wider space, invading Assyria, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and again Armenia and Cappadocia, everywhere plundering and marauding, conducting sieges, fighting battles, losing men from the sword, from sickness, from excesses, becoming weaker instead of stronger, as each year went by, owing to the drain of constant wars--the Medes by degrees took heart. Not trusting, however, entirely to the strength of their right arms, a trust which had failed them once, they resolved to prepare the way for an outbreak by a stratagem which they regarded as justifiable. Cyaxares and his court invited a number of the Scythian chiefs to a grand banquet, and, having induced them to drink till they were completely drunk, set upon them when they were in this helpless condition, and remorselessly slew them all.

This deed was the signal for a general revolt of the nation. The Medes everywhere took arms, and, turning upon their conquerors, assailed them with a fury the more terrible because it had been for years repressed. A war followed, the duration and circumstances of which are unknown; for the stories with which Ctesias enlivened this portion of his history can scarcely be accepted as having any foundation in fact. According to him, the Parthians made common cause with the Scythians on the occasion, and the war lasted many years; numerous battles were fought with great loss to both sides; and peace was finally concluded without either party having gained the upper hand. The Scyths were commanded by a queen, Zarina or Zarinsea, woman of rare beauty, and as brave as she was fair; who won the hearts, when she could not resist the swords, of her adversaries. A strangely romantic love-tale is told of this beauteous Amazon. It is not at all clear what region Ctesias supposes her to govern. It has a capital city, called Koxanace (a name entirely unknown to any other historian or geographer), and it contains many other towns of which Zarina was the foundress. Its chief architectural monument was the tomb of Zarina, a triangular pyramid, six hundred feet high, and more than a mile round the base, crowned by a colossal figure of the queen made of solid gold. But--to leave these fables and return to fact--we can only say with certainty that the result of the war was the complete defeat of the Scythians, who not only lost their position of pre-eminence in Media and the adjacent countries, but were driven across the Caucasus into their own proper territory. Their expulsion was so complete that they scarcely left a trace of their power or their presence in the geography or ethnography of the country. One Palestine city only, as already observed, and one Armenian province retained in their names a lingering memory of the great inroad which but for them would have passed away without making any more permanent mark on the region than a hurricane or a snowstorm. How long the dominion of the Scyths endured is a matter of great uncertainty. It was no doubt the belief of Herodotus that from their defeat of Cyaxares to his treacherous murder of their chiefs was a period of exactly twenty-eight years. During the whole of this space he regarded them as the undisputed lords of Asia. It was not till the

twenty-eight years were over that the Medes were able, according to him, to renew their attacks on the Assyrians, and once more to besiege Nineveh. But this chronology is open to great objections. There is strong reason for believing that Nineveh fell about B.C. 625 or 624; but according to the numbers of Herodotus the fall would, at the earliest, have taken place in B.C. 602. There is great unlikelihood that the Scyths, if they had maintained their rule for a generation, should not have attracted some distinct notice from the Jewish writers. Again, if twenty-eight out of the forty years assigned to Cyaxares are to be regarded as years of inaction, all his great exploits, his two sieges of Nineveh, his capture of that capital, his conquest of the countries north and west of Media as far as the Halys, his six years' war in Asia Minor beyond that river, and his joint expedition with Nebuchadnezzar into Syria, will have to be crowded most improbably into the space of twelve years, two or three preceding and ten or nine following the Scythian domination. These and other reasons lead to the conclusion, which has the support of Eusebius, that the Scythian domination was of much shorter duration than Herodotus imagined. It may have been twenty-eight years from the original attack on Media to the final expulsion of the last of the invaders from Asia--and this may have been what the informants of Herodotus really intended--but it cannot have been very long after the first attack before the Medes began to recover themselves, to shake off the fear which had possessed them and clear their territories of the invaders. If the invasion really took place in the reign of Cyaxares, and not in the lifetime of his father, where Eusebius places it, we must suppose that within eight years of its occurrence Cyaxares found himself sufficiently strong, and his hands sufficiently free, to resume his old projects, and for the second time to march an army into Assyria.

The weakness of Assyria was such as to offer strong temptations to an invader. As the famous inroad of the Gauls into Italy in the year of Rome 365 paved the way for the Roman conquests in the peninsula by breaking the power of the Etruscans, the Umbrians, and various other races, so the Scythic incursion may have, really benefited, rather than injured, Media, by weakening the great power to whose empire she aspired to succeed. The exhaustion of Assyria's resources at the time is remarkably illustrated by the poverty and meanness of the palace which the last king, Saracus, built for himself at Calah. She lay, apparently, at the mercy of the first bold assailant, her prestige lost, her army dispirited or disorganized, her defences injured, her high spirit broken and subdued.

Cyaxaros, ere proceeding to the attack, sent, it is probable, to make an alliance with the Susianians and Chaldaeans. Susiana was the last country which Assyria had conquered, and could remember the pleasures of independence. Chaldaea, though it had been now for above half a century an Assyrian fief, and had borne the yoke with scarcely a murmur during that period, could never wholly forget its old glories, or the long resistance which it had made before submitting to its northern neighbor. The overtures of the Median monarch seem to have been favorably received; and it was agreed that an army from the south should march up the Tigris and threaten Assyria from that quarter, while Cyaxares led his Medes from the east, through the passes of Zagros against the capital. Rumor soon conveyed the tidings of his enemies' intentions to the Assyrian monarch, who immediately made such a disposition of the forces at his command as seemed best calculated to meet the double danger which threatened him. Selecting from among his generals the one in whom he placed most confidence--a man named Nabopolassar, most probably an Assyrian--he put him at the head of a portion of his troops, and sent him to Babylon to resist the enemy who was advancing from the sea. The command of his main army he reserved for himself, intending

to undertake in person the defence of his territory against the Medes. This plan of campaign was not badly conceived; but it was frustrated by an unexpected calamity, Nabopolassar, seeing his sovereign's danger, and calculating astutely that he might gain more by an opportune defection from a falling cause than he could look to receive as the reward of fidelity, resolved to turn traitor and join the enemies of Assyria. Accordingly he sent an embassy to Cyaxares, with proposals for a close alliance to be cemented by a marriage. If the Median monarch would give his daughter Amuhia (or Amyitis) to be the wife of his son Nebuchadnezzar, the forces under his command should march against Nineveh and assist Cyaxares to capture it. Such a proposition arriving at such a time was not likely to meet with a refusal. Cyaxares gladly came into the terms; the marriage took place; and Nabopolassar, who had now practically assumed the sovereignty of Babylon, either led or sent a Babylonian contingent to the aid of the Medes.

The siege of Nineveh by the combined Medes and Babylonians was narrated by Ctesias at some length. He called the Assyrian king Sardanapalus, the Median commander Arbaces, the Babylonian Belesis. Though he thus disguised the real names, and threw back the event to a period a century and a half earlier than its true date, there can be no doubt that he intended to relate the last siege of the city, that which immediately preceded its complete destruction. He told how the combined army, consisting of Persians and Arabs as well as of Medes and Babylonians, and amounting to four hundred thousand men, was twice defeated with great loss by the Assyrian monarch, and compelled to take refuge in the Zagros chain--how after losing a third battle it retreated to Babylonia--how it was there joined by strong reinforcements from Bactria, surprised the Assyrian camp by night, and drove the whole host in confusion to Nineveh--how then, after two more victories, it advanced and invested the city, which was well provisioned for a siege and strongly fortified. The siege, Ctesias said, had lasted two full years, and the third year had commenced--success seemed still far off--when an unusually rainy season so swelled the waters of the Tigris that they burst into the city, sweeping away more than two miles of the wall. This vast breach it was impossible to repair; and the Assyrian monarch, seeing that further resistance was vain, brought the struggle to an end by burning himself, with his concubines and eunuchs and all his chief wealth, in his palace.

Such, in outline, was the story of Ctesias. If we except the extent of the breach which the river is declared to have made, it contains no glaring improbabilities. On the contrary, it is a narrative that hangs well together, and that suits both the relations of the parties and the localities. Moreover, it is confirmed in one or two points by authorities of the highest order. Still, as Ctesias is a writer who delights in fiction, and as it seems very unlikely that he would find a detailed account of the siege, such as he has given us, in the Persian archives, from whence he professed to derive his history, no confidence can be placed in those points of his narrative which have not any further sanction. All that we know on the subject of the last siege of Nineveh is that it was conducted by a combined army of Medes and Babylonians, the former commanded by Cyaxares, the latter by Nabopolassar or Nebuchadnezzar, and that it was terminated, when all hope was lost, by the suicide of the Assyrian monarch. The self-immolation of Saracus is related by Abydenus, who almost certainly follows Berosus in this part of his history. We may therefore accept it as a fact about which there ought to be no question. Actuated by a feeling which has more than once caused a vanquished monarch to die rather than fall into the power of his enemies, Saracus made a funeral pyre of his ancestral palace, and lighted it with his own hand.

One further point in the narrative of Ctesias we may suspect to contain a true representation. Ctesias declared the cause of

the capture to have been the destruction of the city wall by an unexpected rise of the river. Now, the prophet Nahum, in his announcement of the fate coming on Nineveh, has a very remarkable expression, which seems most naturally to point to some destruction of a portion of the fortifications by means of water. After relating the steps that would be taken for the defence of the place, he turns to remark on their fruitlessness, and says: "The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved; and Huzzab is led away captive; she is led up, with her maidens, sighing as with the voice of doves, smiting upon their breasts." Now, we have already seen that at the northwest angle of Nineveh there was a sluice or floodgate, intended mainly to keep the water of the Khosrsu, which ordinarily filled the city moat, from flowing off too rapidly into the Tigris, but probably intended also to keep back the water of the Tigris, when that stream rose above its common level. A sudden and great rise of the Tigris would necessarily endanger this gate, and if it gave way beneath the pressure, a vast torrent of water would rush up the moat along and against the northern wall, which may have been undermined by its force, and have fallen in. The stream would then pour into the city; and it may perhaps have reached the palace platform, which being made of sun-dried bricks, and probably not cased with stone inside the city, would begin to be "dissolved." Such seems the simplest and best interpretation of this passage, which, though it is not historical, but only prophetical, must be regarded as giving an importance that it would not otherwise have possessed to the statement of Ctesias with regard to the part played by the Tigris in the destruction of Nineveh.

The fall of the city was followed by a division of the spoil between the two principal conquerors. While Cyaxares took to his own share the land of the conquered people, Assyria Proper, and the countries dependent on Assyria towards the north and north-west, Nabopolassar was allowed, not merely Babylonia, Chaldaea, and Susiana, but the valley of the Euphrates and the countries to which that valley conducted. Thus two considerable empires arose at the same time cut of the ashes of Assyria--the Babylonian towards the south and the south-west, stretching from Luristan to the borders of Egypt, the Median towards the north, reaching from the salt desert of Iran to Amanus and the Upper Euphrates. These empires were established by mutual consent; they were connected together, not merely by treaties, but by the ties of affinity which united their rulers; and, instead of cherishing, as might have been expected, a mutual suspicion and distrust, they seem to have really entertained the most friendly feelings towards one another, and to have been ready on all emergencies to lend each other important assistance. For once in the history of the world two powerful monarchies were seen to stand side by side, not only without collision, but without jealousy or rancor. Babylonia and Media were content to share between them the empire of Western Asia: the world was, they thought, wide enough for both; and so, though they could not but have had in some respects conflicting interests, they remained close friends and allies for more than half a century.

To the Median monarch the conquest of Assyria did not bring a time of repose. Wandering bands of Scythians were still, it is probable, committing ravages in many parts of Western Asia. The subjects of Assyria, set free by her downfall, were likely to use the occasion for the assertion of their independence, if they were not immediately shown that a power of at least equal strength had taken her place, and was prepared to claim her inheritance. War begets war; and the successes of Cyaxares up to the present point in his career did but whet his appetite for power, and stimulate him to attempt further conquests. In brief but pregnant words Herodotus informs us that Cyaxares "subdued to himself all Asia above the Halys." How much he may include in this expression,

it is impossible to determine; but, _prime facie_, it would seem at least to imply that he engaged in a series of wars with the various tribes and nations which intervened between Media and Assyria on the one side and the river Halys on the other, and that he succeeded in bringing them under his dominion. The most important countries in this direction were Armenia and Cappadocia. Armenia, strong in its lofty mountains, its deep gorges, and its numerous rapid rivers--the head-streams of the Tigris, Euphrates, Kur, and Aras--had for centuries resisted with unconquered spirit the perpetual efforts of the Assyrian kings to bring it under their yoke, and had only at last consented under the latest king but one to a mere nominal allegiance. Cappadocia had not even been brought to this degree of dependence. It had lain beyond the furthest limit whereto the Assyrian arms had ever reached, and had not as yet come into collision with any of the great powers of Asia. Other minor tribes in this region, neighbors of the Armenians and Cappadocians, but more remote from Media, were the Ibenans, the Colchians, the Moschi, the Tibareni, the Mares the Macrones, and the Mosynoeci. Herodotus appears to have been of opinion that all these tribes, or at any rate all but the Colchians, were at this time brought under by Cyaxares who thus extended his dominions to the Caucasus and the Black Sea upon the north, and upon the east to the Kizil Irmak or Halys.

It is possible that the reduction of these countries under the Median yoke was not so much a conquest as a voluntary submission of the inhabitants to the power which alone seemed strong enough to save them from the hated domination of the Scyths. According to Strabo, Armenia and Cappadocia were the regions where the Scythic ravages had been most severely felt. Cappadocia had been devastated from the mountains down to the coast; and in Armenia the most fertile portion of the whole territory had been seized and occupied by the invaders, from whom it thenceforth took the name of Sacassene, the Armenians and Cappadocians may have found the yoke of the Scyths so intolerable as to have gladly exchanged it for dependence on a comparatively civilized people. In the neighboring territory of Asia Minor a similar cause had recently exercised a unifying influence, the necessity of combining to resist Cimmerian immigrants having tended to establish a hegemony of Lydia over the various tribes which divided among them the tract west of the Halys. It is evidently not improbable that the sufferings endured at the hands of the Scyths may have disposed the nations east of the river to adopt the same remedy and that, so soon as Media had proved her strength, first by shaking herself free of the Scythic invaders and then conquering Assyria. the tribes of these parts accepted her as at once their mistress and their deliverer.

Another quite distinct cause may also have helped to bring about the result above indicated. Parallel with the great Median migration from the East under Cyaxares, or Phraortes (?), his father, an Arian influx had taken place into the countries between the Caspian and the Halys. In Armenia and Cappadocia during the flourishing period of Assyria, Turanian tribes had been predominant. Between the middle and the end of the seventh century these tribes appear to have yielded the supremacy to Arians. In Armenia, the present language which is predominantly Arian, ousted the former Turaman tongue which appears in the cuneiform inscriptions of Van and the adjacent regions. In Cappadocia, the Moschi and Tibareni had to yield their seats to a new race--the Katapatuka, who were not only Arian but distinctly Medo-Persic, as is plain from their proper names, and from the close connection of their royal house with that of the kings of Persia. This spread of the Arians into the countries lying between the Caspian and the Halys must have done much to pave the way for Median supremacy over those regions. The weaker Arian tribes of the north would have been proud of their southern

brethren, to whose arms the queen of Western Asia had been forced to yield, and would have felt comparatively little repugnance in surrendering their independence into the hands of a friendly and kindred people.

Thus Cyaxares, in his triumphant progress to the north and the north-west, made war, it is probable, chiefly upon the Scyths, or upon them and the old Turanian inhabitants of the countries, while by the Arians he was welcomed as a champion come to deliver them from a grievous oppression. Ranging themselves under his standard, they probably helped him to expel from Asia the barbarian hordes which had now for many years tyrannized over them; and when the expulsion was completed, gratitude or habit made them willing to continue in the subject position which they had assumed in order to effect it. Cyaxares within less than ten years from his capture of Nineveh had added to his empire the fertile and valuable tracts of Armenia and Cappadocia--never really subject to Assyria--and may perhaps have further mastered the entire region between Armenia and the Caucasus and Euxine.

The advance of their western frontier to the river Halys, which was involved in the absorption of Cappadocia into the Empire, brought the Medes into contact with a new power--a power which, like Media, had been recently increasing in greatness, and which was not likely to submit to a foreign yoke without a struggle. The Lydian kingdom was one of great antiquity in this part of Asia. According to traditions current among its people, it had been established more than seven hundred years at the time when Cyaxares pushed his conquests to its borders. Three dynasties of native kings--Atyadse, Heraclidse, and Mermnadae--had successively held the throne during that period. The Lydians could repeat the names of at least thirty monarchs who had borne sway in Sardis, their capital city, since its foundation. They had never been conquered.

In the old times, indeed, Lydus, the son of Atys, had changed the name of the people inhabiting the country from Maeonians to Lydians--a change which to the keen sense of an historical critic implies a conquest of one race by another. But to the people themselves this tradition conveyed no such meaning; or, if it did to any, their self-complacency was not disturbed thereby, since they would hug the notion that they belonged not to the conquered race but to the conquerors. If a Ramcsos or a Sesostris had ever penetrated to their country, he had met with a brave resistance, and had left monuments indicating his respect for their courage. Neither Babylon nor Assyria had ever given a king to the Lydians--on the contrary, the Lydian tradition was, that they had themselves sent forth Belus and Ninus from their own country to found dynasties and cities in Mesopotamia. In a still more remote age they had seen their colonists embark upon the western waters, and start for the distant Hesperia, where they had arrived in safety, and had founded the great Etruscan nation. On another occasion they had carried their arms beyond the limits of Asia Minor, and had marched southward to the very extremity of: Syria, where their general, Ascalus, had founded a great city and called it after his name.

Such were the Lydian traditions with respect to the more remote times. Of their real history they seem to have known but little, and that little did not extend further back than about two hundred years before Cyaxares. Within this space it was certain that they had had a change of dynasty, a change preceded by a long feud between their two greatest houses, which were perhaps really two branches of the royal family. The Heraclidae had grown jealous of the Mermnadae, and had treated them with injustice; the Mormnadae had at first sought their safety in flight, and afterwards, when they felt themselves strong enough, had returned, murdered the Heraclide monarch, and placed their chief, Gyges, upon the

throne. With Gyges, who had commenced his reign about B.C. 700, the prosperity of the Lydians had greatly increased, and they had begun to assume an aggressive attitude towards their neighbors. Gyges' revenue was so great that his wealth became proverbial, and he could afford to spread his fame by sending from his superfluity to the distant temple of Delphi presents of such magnificence that they were the admiration of later ages. The relations of his predecessors with the Greeks of the Asiatic coast had been friendly, Gyges changed this policy, and, desirous of enlarging his seaboard, made war upon the Greek maritime towns, attacking Miletus and Smyrna without result, but succeeding in capturing the Ionic city of Colophon. He also picked a quarrel with the inland town of Magnesia, and after many invasions of its territory compelled it to submission. According to some, he made himself master of the whole territory of the Troad, and the Milesians had to obtain his permission before they could establish their colony of Abydos upon the Hellespont. At any rate he was a rich and puissant monarch in the eyes of the Greeks of Asia and the islands, who were never tired of celebrating his wealth, his wars, and his romantic history.

The shadow of calamity had, however, fallen upon Lydia towards the close of Gyges' long reign. About thirty years before the Scythians from the Steppe country crossed the Caucasus and fell upon Media, the same barrier was passed by another groat horde of nomads. The Cimmerians, probably a Celtic people, who had dwelt hitherto in the Tauric Chersonese and the country adjoining upon it, pressed on by Scythic invaders from the East, had sought a vent in this direction. Passing the great mountain barrier either by the route of Mozdok--the Pylas Caucasiae--or by some still more difficult track towards the Euxine, they had entered Asia Minor by way of Cappadocia and had spread terror and devastation in every direction. Gyges, alarmed at their advance, had placed himself under the protection of Assyria, and had then confidently given them battle, defeated them, and captured several of their chiefs. It is uncertain whether the Assyrians gave him any material aid, but evident that he ascribed his success to his alliance with them. In his gratitude he sent an embassy to Asshur-bani-pal, king of Assyria, and courted his favor by presents and by sending him his Cimmerian captives. Later in his reign, however, he changed his policy, and, breaking with Assyria, gave aid to the Egyptian rebel, Psammetichus, and helped him to establish his independence. The result followed which was to be expected. Assyria withdrew her protection; and Lydia was left to fight her own battles when the great crisis came. Carrying all before them, the fierce hordes swarmed in full force into the more western districts of Asia Minor; Paphlagonia, Phrygia, Bithynia, Lydia, and Ionia were overrun; Gyges, venturing on an engagement, perished; the frightened inhabitants generally shut themselves up in their walled towns, and hoped that the tide of invasion might sweep by them quickly and roll elsewhere; but the Cimmerians, impatient and undisciplined as they might be, could sometimes bring themselves to endure the weary work of a siege, and they saw in the Lydian capital a prize well worth an effort. The hordes besieged Sardis, and took it, except the citadel, which was commandingly placed and defied all their attempts. A terrible scene of carnage must have followed. How Lydia withstood the blow, and rapidly recovered from it, is hard to understand; but it seems certain that within a generation she was so far restored to vigor as to venture on resuming her attacks upon the Greeks of the coast, which had been suspended during her period of prostration. Sadyattes, the son of Ardys, and grandson of Gyges, following the example of his father and grandfather, made war upon Miletus; and Alyattes, his son and successor, pursued the same policy of aggression. Besides pressing Miletus, he besieged and took Smyrna, and ravaged the territory of Clazomenae.

But the great work of Alyattes' reign, and the one which seems to have had the most important consequences for Lydia, was the war which he undertook for the purpose of expelling the Cimmerians from Asia Minor. The hordes had been greatly weakened by time, by their losses in war, and, probably by their excesses; they had long ceased to be formidable; but they were still strong enough to be an annoyance. Alyattes is said to have "driven them out of Asia," by which we can scarcely understand less than that he expelled them from his own dominions and those of his neighbors--or, in other words, from the countries which had been the scenes of their chief ravages--Paphlagonia, Bithynia, Lydia, Phrygia, and Cilicia. But, to do this, he must have entered into a league with his neighbors, who must have consented to act under him for the purposes of war, if they did not even admit the permanent hegemony of his country. Alyattes' success appears to have been complete, or nearly so; he cleared Asia Minor of the Cimmerians; and having thus conferred a benefit on all the nations of the region and exhibited before their eyes his great military capacity, if he had not actually constructed an empire, he had at any rate done much to pave the way for one.

Such was the political position in the regions west and south of the Halys, when Cyaxares completed his absorption of Cappadocia, and looking across the river that divided the Cappadocians from the Phrygians, saw stretched before him a region of great fertile plains, which seemed to invite an invader. A pretext for an attack was all that he wanted, and this was soon forthcoming. A body of the nomad Scyths--probably belonging to the great invasion, though Herodotus thought otherwise--had taken service under Cyaxares, and for some time served him faithfully, being employed chiefly as hunters. A cause of quarrel, however, arose after a while; and the Scyths, disliking their position or distrusting the intentions of their lords towards them, quitted the Median territory, and, marching through a great part of Asia Minor, sought and found a refuge with Alyattes, the Lydian king. Cyaxares, upon learning their flight, sent an embassy to the court of Sardis to demand the surrender of the fugitives; but the Lydian monarch met the demand with a refusal, and, fully understanding the probable consequences, immediately prepared for war.

Though Lydia, compared to Media, was but a small state, yet her resources were by no means inconsiderable. In fertility she surpassed almost every other country of Asia Minor, which is altogether one of the richest regions in the world. At this time she was producing large quantities of gold, which was found in great abundance in the Pactolus, and probably in the other small streams that flowed down on all sides from the Tmolus mountain-chain. Her people were at once warlike and ingenious. They had invented the art of coining money, and showed considerable taste in their devices. , They claimed also to have been the inventors of a number of games, which were common to them with the Greeks. According to Herodotus, they were the first who made a livelihood by shop-keeping. They were skilful in the use of musical instruments, and had their own peculiar musical mode or style, which was in much favor among the Greeks, though condemned as effeminate by some of the philosophers. At the same time the Lydians were not wanting in courage or manliness. They fought chiefly on horseback, and were excellent riders, carrying long spears, which they managed with great skill. Nicolas of Damascus tells us that even under the Heraclido kings, they could muster for service cavalry to the number of 30,000. In peace they pursued with ardor the sports of the field, and found in the chase of the wild boar a pastime which called forth and exercised every manly quality. Thus Lydia, even by herself, was no contemptible enemy; though it can hardly be supposed that, without help from others, she would have proved a match for the Great Median Empire.

But such help as she needed was not wanting to her. The rapid strides with which Media had advanced towards the west had no doubt alarmed the numerous princes of Asia Minor, who must have felt that they had a power to deal with as full of schemes of conquest as Assyria, and more capable of carrying her designs into execution. It has been already observed that the long course of Assyrian aggressions developed gradually among the Asiatic tribes a tendency to unite in leagues for purposes of resistance. The circumstances of the time called now imperatively for such a league to be formed, unless the princes of Asia Minor were content to have their several territories absorbed one after another into the growing Median Empire. These princes appear to have seen their danger. Cyaxares may perhaps have, declared war specially against the Lydians, and have crossed the Halys professedly in order to chastise them; but he could only reach Lydia through the territories of other nations, which he was evidently intending to conquer on his way; and it was thus apparent that he was activated, not by anger against a particular power, but by a general design of extending his dominions in this direction. A league seems therefore to have been determined on. We have not indeed any positive evidence of its existence till the close of the war; but the probabilities are wholly in favor of its having taken effect from the first. Prudence would have dictated such a course; and it seems almost implied in the fact that a successful resistance was made to the Median attack from the very commencement. We may conclude therefore that the princes of Asia Minor, having either met in conclave or communicated by embassies, resolved to make common cause, if the Medes crossed the Halys; and that, having already acted under Lydia in the expulsion of the Cimmerians from their territories, they naturally placed her at their head when they coalesced for the second time.

Cyaxares on his part, was not content to bring against the confederates merely the power of Media. He requested and obtained a contingent from the Babylonian monarch, Nabopolassar, and may not improbably have had the assistance of other allies also. With a vast army drawn from various parts of inner Asia, he invaded the territory of the Western Powers, and began his attempt at subjugation. We have no detailed account of the war; but we learn from the general expressions of Herodotus that the Median monarch met with a most stubborn resistance; numerous engagements were fought with varied results; sometimes the Medes succeeded in defeating their adversaries in pitched battles; but sometimes, and apparently as often, the Lydians and their allies gained decided victories over the Medes. It is noted that one of the engagements took place by night, a rare occurrence in ancient (as in modern) times. The war had continued six years, and the Medes had evidently made no serious impression, when a remarkable circumstance brought it suddenly to a termination. The two armies had once more met and were engaged in conflict, when, in the midst of the struggle, an ominous darkness fell upon the combatants and filled them with superstitious awe. The sun was eclipsed, either totally or at any rate considerably, so that the attention of the two armies was attracted to it; and, discontinuing the fight, they stood to gaze at the phenomenon. In most parts of the East such an occurrence is even now seen with dread--the ignorant mass believe that the orb of day is actually being devoured or destroyed, and that the end of all things is at hand--even the chiefs, who may have some notion that the phenomenon is a recurrent one, do not understand its cause, and participate in the alarm of their followers. On the present occasion it is said that, amid the general fear, a desire for reconciliation seized both armies. Of this spontaneous movement two chiefs, the foremost of the allies on either side, took advantage. Syennesis, king of Cilicia, the first known monarch of his name, on the part of Lydia, and a prince whom Herodotus calls "Labynetus of Babylon"--

probably either Nabopolassar or Nebuchadnezzar--on the part of Media, came forward to propose an immediate armistice; and, when the proposal was accepted on either side, proceeded to the more difficult task of arranging terms of peace between the contending parties. Since nothing is said of the Scythians, who had been put forward as the ostensible grounds of quarrel, we may presume that Alyattes retained them. It is further clear that both he and his allies preserved undiminished both their territories and their independence. The territorial basis of the treaty was thus what in modern diplomatic language is called the status quo; matters, in other words, returned to the position in which they had stood before the war broke out. The only difference was that Cyaxares gained a friend and an ally where he had previously had a jealous enemy; since it was agreed that the two kings of Media and Lydia should swear a friendship, and that, to cement the alliance, Alyattes should give his daughter Aryenis in marriage to Astyages, the son of Cyaxares. The marriage thus arranged took place soon afterwards, while the oath of friendship was sworn at once. According to the barbarous usages of the time and place, the two monarchs, having met and repeated the words of the formula, punctured their own arms, and then sealed their contract by each sucking from the wound a portion of the other's blood.

By this peace the three great monarchies of the time--the Median, the Lydian, and the Babylonian--were placed on terms, not only of amity, but of intimacy and (if the word may be used) of blood relationship. The Crown Princes of the three kingdoms had become brothers. From the shores of the Aegean to those of the Persian Gulf, Western Asia was now ruled by interconnected dynasties, bound by treaties to respect each other's rights, and perhaps to lend each other aid in important conjunctures, and animated, it would seem, by a real spirit of mutual friendliness and attachment. After more than five centuries of almost constant war and ravage, after fifty years of fearful strife and convulsion, during which the old monarchy of Assyria had gone down and a new Empire--the Median--had risen up in its place, this part of Asia entered upon a period of repose which stands out in strong contrast with the long term of struggle. From the date of the peace between Alyattes and Cyaxares (probably B.C. 610), for nearly half a century, the three kingdoms of Media, Lydia, and Babylonia remained fast friends, pursuing their separate courses without quarrel or collision, and thus giving to the nations within their borders a rest and a refreshment which they must have greatly needed and desired.

In one quarter only was this rest for a short time disturbed. During the troublous period the neighboring country of Egypt, which had recovered its freedom, and witnessed a revival of its ancient prosperity, under the Psamatik family, began once more to aspire to the possession of those provinces which, being divided off from the rest of the Asiatic continent by the impassable Syrian desert, seems politically to belong to Africa almost more than to Asia. Psamatik I., the Psammetichus of Herodotus, had commenced an aggressive war in this quarter, probably about the time that Assyria was suffering from the Median and then from the Scythian inroads. He had besieged for several years the strong Philistine town of Ashdod, which commands the coast-route from Egypt to Palestine, and was at this time a most important city. Despite a resistance which would have wearied out any less pertinacious assailant, he had persevered in his attempt, and had finally succeeded in taking the place. He had thus obtained a firm footing in Syria; and his successor was, able, starting from this vantage-ground, to overrun and conquer the whole territory. About the year B.C. 608, Neco, son of Psamatik I., having recently ascended the throne, invaded Palestine with a large army, met and defeated Josiah, king of Judah, near Megiddo in the great plain of Esdraelon, and, pressing forward through Syria to the Euphrates, attacked and took

Carchemish, the strong city which guarded the ordinary passage of the river. Idumea, Palestine, Phoenicia, and Syria submitted to him, and for three years he remained in undisturbed possession of his conquest. Then, however, the Babylonians, who had received these provinces at the division of the Assyrian Empire, began to bestir themselves. Nebuchadnezzar marched to Carchemish, defeated the army of Neco, recovered all the territory to the border of Egypt, and even ravaged a portion of that country. It is probable that in this expedition he was assisted by the Medes. At any rate, seven or eight years afterwards, when the intrigues of Egypt had again created disturbances in this quarter, and Jehoiakim, the Jewish king, broke into open insurrection, the Median monarch sent a contingent, which accompanied Nebuchadnezzar into Judaea, and assisted him to establish his power firmly in South-Western Asia.

This is the last act that we can ascribe to the great Median king. He can scarcely have been much less than seventy years old at this time; and his life was prolonged at the utmost three years longer. According to Herodotus, he died B.C. 593, after a reign of exactly forty years, leaving his crown to his son Astyages, whose marriage with a Lydian princess was above related.

We have no sufficient materials from which to draw out a complete character of Cyaxares. He appears to have possessed great ambition, considerable military ability, and a rare tenacity of purpose, which gained him his chief successes. At the same time he was not wanting in good sense, and could bring himself to withdraw from an enterprise, when he had misjudged the fitting time for it, or greatly miscalculated its difficulties. He was faithful to his friends, but thought treachery allowable towards his enemies. He knew how to conquer, but not how to organize, an empire; and, if we except his establishment of Magism, as the religion of the state, we may say that he did nothing to give permanency to the monarchy which he founded. He was a conqueror altogether after the Asiatic model, able to wield the sword, but not to guide the pen, to subdue his contemporaries to his will by his personal ascendency over them, but not to influence posterity by the establishment of a kingdom, or of institutions, on deep and stable foundations. The Empire, which owed to him its foundation, was the most shortlived of all the great Oriental monarchies, having begun and ended within the narrow space of three score and ten years--the natural lifetime of an individual.

Astyages, who succeeded to the Median throne about B.C. 593, had neither his father's enterprise nor his ability. Born to an empire, and bred up in all the luxury of an Oriental Court, he seems to have been quite content with the lot which fortune appeared to have assigned him, and to have coveted no grander position. Tradition says that he was remarkably handsome, cautious, and of an easy and generous temper. Although the anecdotes related of his mode of life at Ecbatana by Herodotus, Xenophon, and Nicolas of Damascus, seem to be for the most part apocryphal, and at any rate come to us upon authority too weak to entitle them to a place in history, we may perhaps gather from the concurrent, descriptions of these three writers something of the general character of the Court over which he presided. Its leading features do not seem to have differed greatly from those of the Court of Assyria. The monarch lived secluded, and could only be seen by those who asked and obtained an audience. He was surrounded by guards and eunuchs, the latter of whom held most of the offices near the royal person. The Court was magnificent in its apparel, in its banquets, and in the number and organization of its attendants. The courtiers wore long flowing robes of many different colors, amongst which red and purple predominated, and adorned their necks with chains or collars of gold, and their wrists with bracelets of the same precious metal. Even the horses on

which they rode had sometimes golden bits to their bridles. One officer of the Court was especially called "the King's Eye;" another had the privilege of introducing strangers to him; a third was his cupbearer; a fourth his messenger. Guards torch-bearers, serving-men, ushers, and sweepers, were among the orders into which the lower sort of attendants were divided; while among the courtiers of the highest rank was a privileged class known as "the King's table-companions". The chief pastime in which the Court indulged was hunting. Generally this took place in a park or "paradise" near the capital; but sometimes the King and Court went out on a grand hunt into the open country, where lions, leopards, bears, wild boars, wild asses, antelopes, stags, and wild sheep abounded, and, when the beasts had been driven by beaters into a confined space, despatched them with arrows and javelins.

Prominent at the Court, according to Herodotus, was the priestly caste of the Magi. Held in the highest honor by both King and people, they were in constant attendance, ready to expound omens or dreams, and to give their advice on all matters of state policy. The religious ceremonial was, as a matter of course, under their charge; and it is probable that high state offices were often conferred upon them. Of all classes of the people they were the only one that could feel they had a real influence over the monarch, and might claim to share in his sovereignty.

The long reign of Astyages seems to have been almost undisturbed, until just before its close, by wars or rebellions. Eusebius indeed relates that he, and not Cyaxares, carried on the great Lydian contest; and Moses of Chorene declares that he was engaged in a long struggle with Tigranes, an Armenian king. But little credit can be attached to these statements, the former of which contradicts Herodotus, while the latter is wholly unsupported by any other writer. The character which Cyaxares bore among the Greeks was evidently that of an unwarlike king. If he had really carried his arms into the heart of Asia Minor, and threatened the whole of that extensive region with subjugation, we can scarcely suppose that he would have been considered so peaceful a ruler. Neither is it easy to imagine that in that case no classical writer--not even Ctesias--would have taxed Herodotus with an error that must have been so flagrant. With respect to the war with Tigranes, it is just possible that it may have a basis of truth; there may have been a revolt of Armenia from Astyages under a certain Tigranes, followed by an attempt at subjugation. But the slender authority of Moses is insufficient to establish the truth of his story, which is internally improbable and quite incompatible with the narrative of Herodotus.

There are some grounds for believing that in one direction Astyages succeeded in slightly extending the limits of his empire. But he owed his success to prudent management, and not to courage or military skill. On the north-eastern frontier, occupying the low country now known as Talish and Ghilan, was a powerful tribe called Cadusians, probably of Arian origin, which had hitherto maintained its independence. This would not be surprising, if we could accept the statement of Diodorus that they were able to bring into the field 200,000 men. But this account, which probably came from Ctesias, and is wholly without corroboration from other writers, has the air of a gross exaggeration; and we may conclude from the general tenor of ancient history that the Cadusians were more indebted to the strength of their country, than to either their numbers or their prowess, for the freedom and independence which they were still enjoying. It seems that they were at this time under the government of a certain king, or chief, named Aphernes, or Onaphernes. This ruler was, it appears, doubtful of his position, and, thinking it could not be long maintained, made overtures of surrender to Astyages, which were gladly entertained by that monarch. A secret treaty was concluded to the satisfaction of both

parties; and the Cadusians, it would seem, passed under the Medes by this arrangement, without any hostile struggle, though armed resistance on the part of the people, who were ignorant of the intentions of their chieftain, was for some time apprehended.

The domestic relations of Astyages seem to have been unhappy. His "marriage de convenance" with the Lydian princess Aryenis, if not wholly unfruitful, at any rate brought him no son; and, as he grew to old age, the absence of such support to the throne must have been felt very sensibly, and have caused great uneasiness. The want of an heir perhaps led him to contract those other marriages of which we hear in the Armenian History of Moses--one with a certain Anusia, of whom nothing more is known; and another with an Armenian princess, the loveliest of her sex, Tigrania, sister of the Armenian king, Tigranes. The blessing of male offspring was still, however, denied him; and it is even doubtful whether he was really the father of any daughter or daughters. Herodotus, and Xenophon, indeed give him a daughter Mandane, whom they make the mother of Cyrus; and Ctesias, who denied in the most positive terms the truth of this statement, gave him a daughter, Amytis, whom he made the wife, first of Spitaces the Mede, and afterwards of Cyrus the Persian. But these stories, which seem intended to gratify the vanity of the Persians by tracing the descent of their kings to the great Median conqueror, while at the same time they flattered the Medes by showing them that the issue of their old monarchs was still seated on the Arian throne, are entitled to little more credit than the narrative of the Shahnameh, which declares that Iskander (Alexander) was the son of Darab (Darius) and of a daughter of Failakus (Philip of Macedon). When an oriental crown passes from one dynasty to another, however foreign and unconnected, the natives are wont to invent a relationship between the two houses, which both parties are commonly quite ready to accept; as it suits the rising house to be provided with a royal ancestry, and it pleases the fallen one and its partisans to see in the occupants of the throne a branch of the ancient stock--a continuation of the legitimate family. Tales therefore of the above-mentioned kind are, historically speaking, valueless; and it must remain uncertain whether the second Median monarch had any child at all, either male or female.

Old age was now creeping upon the sonless king. If he was sixteen or seventeen years old at the time of his contract of marriage with Aryenis, he must have been nearly seventy in B.C. 558, when the revolt occurred which terminated both his reign and his kingdom. It appears that the Persian branch of the Arian race, which had made itself a home in the country lying south and south-east of Media, between the 32nd parallel and the Persian gulf, had acknowledged some subjection to the Median kings during the time of their greatness. Dwelling in their rugged mountains and high upland plains, they had however maintained the simplicity of their primitive manners, and had mixed but little with the Medes, being governed by their own native princes of the Achasmenian house, the descendants, real or supposed, of a certain Achajmenes. These princes were connected by marriage with the Cappadocian kings; and their house was regarded as one of the noblest in Western Asia. What the exact terms were upon which they stood with the Median monarch is uncertain. Herodotus regards Persia as absorbed into Media at this time, and the Achsemenidse as merely a good Persian family. Nicolas of Damascus makes Persia a Median satrapy, of which Atradates, the father of Cyrus, is satrap, Xenophon, on the contrary, not only gives the Achajmenidae their royal rank, but seems to consider Persia as completely independent of Media; Moses of Chorene takes the same view, regarding Cyrus as a great and powerful sovereign during the reign of Astyages. The native records lean towards the view of Xenophon and Moses. Darius declares that eight of his race had been kings before himself, and

makes no difference between his own royalty and theirs. Cyrus calls himself in one inscription "the son of Cambyses, the powerful king." It is certain therefore that Persia continued to be ruled by her own native monarchs during the whole of the Median period, and that Cyrus led the attack upon Astyages as hereditary Persian king. The Persian records seem rather to imply actual independence of Media; but as national vanity would prompt to dissimulation in such a case, we may perhaps accord so much weight to the statement of Herodotus, and to the general tradition on the subject, as to believe that there was some kind of acknowledgment of Median supremacy on the part of the Persian kings anterior to Cyrus, though the acknowledgment may have been not much more than a formality and have imposed no onerous obligations. The residence of Cyrus at the Median Court, which is asserted in almost every narrative of his life before he became king, inexplicable if Persia was independent, becomes thoroughly intelligible on the supposition that she was a great Median feudatory. In such cases the residence of the Crown Prince at the capital of the suzerain is constantly desired, or even required by the superior Power, which sees in the presence of the son and heir the best security against disaffection or rebellion on the part of the father.

It appears that Cyrus, while at the Median Court, observing the unwarlike temper of the existing generation of the Medes, who had not seen any actual service, and despising the personal character of the monarch, who led a luxurious life, chiefly at Ecbatana, amid eunuchs, concubines, and dancing-girls, resolved on raising the standard of rebellion, and seeking at any rate to free his own country. It may be suspected that the Persian prince was not actuated solely by political motives. To earnest Zoroastrians, such as the Achgemenians are shown to have been by their inscriptions, the yoke of a Power which had so greatly corrupted, if it had not wholly laid aside, the worship of Ormazd, must have been extremely distasteful; and Cyrus may have wished by his rebellion as much to vindicate the honor of his religion--as to obtain a loftier position for his nation. If the Magi occupied really the position at the Median Court which Herodotus assigns to them--if they "were held in high honor by the king, and shared in his sovereignty"--if the priest-ridden monarch was perpetually dreaming and perpetually referring his dreams to the Magian seers for exposition, and then guiding his actions by the advice they tendered him, the religious zeal of the young Zoroastrian may very naturally have been aroused, and the contest into which he plunged may have been, in his eyes, not so much a national struggle as a crusade against the infidels. It will be found hereafter that religious fervor animated the Persians in most of those wars by which they spread their dominion. We may suspect, therefore, though it must be admitted we cannot prove, that a religious motive was among those which led them to make their first efforts after independence.

According to the account of the struggle which is most circumstantial, and on the whole most probable, the first difficulty which the would-be rebel had to meet and vanquish was that of quitting the Court. Alleging that his father was in weak health, and required his care, he requested leave of absence for a short time; but his petition was refused on the flattering ground that the Great King was too much attached to him to lose sight of him even for a day. A second application, however, made through a favorite eunuch after a certain interval of time, was more successful; Cyrus received permission to absent himself from Court for the next five months; whereupon, with a few attendants, he left Ecbatana by night, and took the road leading to his native country.

The next evening Astyages, enjoying himself as usual over his wine, surrounded by a crowd of his concubines, singing-girls, and dancing-girls, called on one of them for a

song. The girl took her lyre and sang as follows: "The lion had the wild boar in his power, but let him depart to his own lair; in his lair he will wax in strength, and will cause the lion a world of toil; till at length, although the weaker, he will overcome the stronger." The words of the song greatly disquieted the king, who had been already made aware that a Chaldaean prophecy designated Cyrus as future king of the Persians. Repenting of the indulgence which he had granted him, Astyages forthwith summoned an officer into his presence, and ordered him to take a body of horsemen, pursue the Persian prince, and bring him back, either alive or dead. The officer obeyed, overtook Cyrus, and announced his errand; upon which Cyrus expressed his perfect willingness to return, but proposed, that, as it was late, they should defer their start till the next day. The Medes consenting, Cyrus feasted them, and succeeded in making them all drunk; then mounting his horse, he rode off at full speed with his attendants, and reached a Persian outpost, where he had arranged with his father that he should find a body of Persian troops. When the Medes had slept off their drunkenness, and found their prisoner gone, they pursued, and again overtaking Cyrus, who was now at the head of an armed force, engaged him. They were, however, defeated with great loss, and forced to retreat, while Cyrus, having beaten them off, made good his escape into Persia.

When Astyages heard what had happened, he was greatly vexed; and, smiting his thigh, he exclaimed, "Ah! fool, thou knewest well that it boots not to heap favors on the vile; yet didst thou suffer thyself to be gulled by smooth words; and so thou hast brought upon thyself this mischief. But even now he shall not get off scot-free." And instantly he sent for his generals, and commanded them to collect his host, and proceed to reduce Persia to obedience. Three thousand chariots, two hundred thousand horse, and a million footmen (!) were soon brought together; and with these Astyages in person invaded the revolted province, and engaged the army which Cyrus and his father Cambyses had collected for defence. This consisted of a hundred chariots, fifty thousand horsemen, and three hundred thousand light-armed foot, who were drawn up in in front of a fortified town near the frontier. The first day's battle was long and bloody, terminating without any decisive advantage to either side; but on the second day Astyages, making skilful use of his superior numbers, gained a great victory. Having detached one hundred thousand men with orders to make a circuit and get into the rear of the town, he renewed the attack; and when the Persians were all intent on the battle in their front, the troops detached fell on the city and took it, almost before its defenders were aware. Cambyses, who commanded in the town, was mortally wounded and fell into the enemy's hands. The army in the field, finding itself between two fires, broke and fled towards the interior, bent on defending Pasargadse, the capital. Meanwhile Astyages, having given Cambyses honorable burial, pressed on in pursuit.

The country had now become rugged and difficult. Between Pasargadse and the place where the two days' battle was fought lay a barrier of lofty hills, only penetrated by a single narrow pass. On either side were two smooth surfaces of rock, while the mountain towered above, lofty and precipitous. The pass was guarded by ten thousand Persians. Recognizing the impossibility of forcing it, Astyages again detached a body of troops, who marched along the foot of the range till they found a place where it could be ascended, when they climbed it and seized the heights directly over the defile. The Persians upon this had to evacuate their strong position, and to retire to a lower range of hills very near to Pasargadge. Here again there was a two days' fight. On the first day all the efforts of the Medes to ascend the range (which, though low, was steep, and covered with thickets of wild olive) were fruitless. Their enemy met them, not merely with the ordinary weapons, but with great masses of

stone, which they hurled down with crushing force upon their ascending columns. On the second day, however, the resistance was weaker or less effective Astyages had placed at the foot of the range, below his attacking columns, a body of troops with orders to kill all who refused to ascend, or who, having ascended, attempted to quit the heights and return to the valley. Thus compelled to advance, his men fought with desperation, and drove the Persians before them up the slopes of the hill to its very summit, where the women and children had been placed for the sake of security. There, however, the tide of success turned. The taunts and upbraidings of their mothers and wives restored the courage of the Persians; and, turning upon their foe, they made a sudden furious charge. The Medes, astonished and overborne, were driven headlong down the hill, and fell into such confusion that the Persians slew sixty thousand of them. Still Astyages did not desist from his attack. The authority whom we have been following here to a great extent fails us, and we have only a few scattered notices from which to reconstruct the closing scenes of the war. It would seem from these that Astyages still maintained the offensive, and that there was a fifth battle in the immediate neighborhood of Pasargadse, wherein he was completely defeated by Cyrus, who routed the Median army, and pressing upon them in their flight, took their camp. All the insignia of Median royalty fell into his hands; and, amid the acclamations of his army, he assumed them, and was saluted by his soldiers "King of Media and Persia." Meanwhile Astyages had sought for safety in flight; the greater part of his army had dispersed, and he was left with only a few friends, who still adhered to his fortunes. Could he have reached Ecbatana, he might have greatly prolonged the struggle; but his enemy pressed him close; and, being compelled to an engagement, he not only suffered a complete defeat, but was made prisoner by his fortunate adversary. By this capture the Median monarchy was brought abruptly to an end. Astyages had no son to take his place and continue the struggle. Even had it been otherwise, the capture of the monarch would probably have involved his people's submission. In the East the king is so identified with his kingdom that the possession of the royal person is regarded as conveying to the possessor all regal rights. Cyrus, apparently, had no need even to besiege Ecbatana; the whole Median state, together with its dependencies, at once submitted to him, on learning what had happened. This ready submission was no doubt partly owing to the general recognition of a close connection between Media and Persia, which made the transfer of empire from the one to the other but slightly galling to the subjected power, and a matter of complete indifference to the dependent countries. Except in so far as religion was concerned, the change from one Iranic race to the other would make scarcely a perceptible difference to the subjects of either kingdom. The law of the state would still be "the law of the Medes and Persians." Official employments would be open to the people of both countries. Even the fame and glory of empire would attain, in the minds of men, almost as much to the one nation as the other. If Media descended from her preeminent rank, it was to occupy a station only a little below the highest, and one which left her a very distinct superiority over all the subject races.

If it be asked how Media, in her hour of peril, came to receive no assistance from the great Powers with which she had made such close alliances--Babylonia and Lydia--the answer would seem to be that Lydia was too remote from the scene of strife to lend her effective aid, while circumstances had occurred in Babylonia to detach that state from her and render it unfriendly. The great king, Nebuchadnezzar, had he been on the throne, would undoubtedly have come to the assistance of his brother-in-law, when the fortune of war changed, and it became evident that his crown was in danger. But Nebuchadnezzar had died in B.V. 561, three

years before the Persian revolt broke out. His son, Evil-Merodach, who would probably have maintained his father's alliances, had survived him but two years: he had been murdered in B.C. 559 by a brother-in-law, Nergalsharezer or Neriglissar, who ascended the throne in that year and reigned till B.C. 555. This prince was consequently on the throne at the time of Astyages' need. As he had supplanted the house of Nebuchadnezzar, he would naturally be on bad terms with that monarch's Median connections; and we may suppose that he saw with pleasure the fall of a power to which pretenders from the Nebuchadnezzar family would have looked for support and countenance.

In conclusion, a few words may be said on the general character of the Median Empire, and the causes of its early extinction.

The Median Empire was in extent and fertility of territory-equal if not superior to the Assyrian. It stretched from Rhages and the Carmanian desert on the east to the river Halys upon the west, a distance of above twenty degrees, or about 1,300 miles. From north to south it was comparatively narrow, being confined between the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Caspian, on the one side, and the Euphrates and Persian Gulf on the other. Its greatest width, which was towards the east, was about nine, and its least, which was towards the west, was about four degrees. Its area was probably not much short of 500,000 square miles. Thus it was as large as Great Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal put together.

In fertility its various parts were very unequal. Portions of both Medias, of Persia, of Armenia, Iberia, and Cappadocia, were rich and productive; but in all these countries there was a large quantity of barren mountain, and in Media Magna and Persia there were tracts of desert. If we estimate the resources of Media from the data furnished by Herodotus in his account of the Persian revenue, and compare them with those of the Assyrian Empire, as indicated by the same document, we shall find reason to conclude, that except during the few years when Egypt was a province of Assyria, the resources of the Third exceeded those of the Second Monarchy.

The weakness of the Empire arose chiefly from its want of organization. Nicolas of Damascus, indeed, in the long passage from which our account of the struggle between Cyrus and Astyages has been taken, represents the Median Empire as divided, like the Persian, into a number of satrapies but there is no real ground for believing that any such organization was practised in Median times, or to doubt that Darius Hystaspis was the originator of the satrapial system. The Median Empire, like the Assyrian, was a congeries of kingdoms, each ruled by its own native prince, as is evident from the case of Persia, where Cambyses was not satrap, but monarch. Such organization as was attempted appears to have been clumsy in the extreme. The Medes (we are told) only claimed direct suzerainty over the nations immediately upon their borders; remoter tribes they placed under these, and looked to them to collect and remit the tribute of the outlying countries. It is doubtful if they called on the subject nations for any contingents of troops. We never hear of their doing so. Probably, like the Assyrians, they made their conquests with armies composed entirely of native soldiers, or of those combined with such forces as were sent to their aid by princes in alliance with them.

The weakness arising from this lack of organization was increased by a corruption of manners, which caused the Medes speedily to decline in energy and warlike spirit. The conquest of a great and luxurious empire by a hardy and simple race is followed, almost of necessity, by a deterioration in the character of the conquerors, who lose the warlike virtues, and too often do not replace them by the less splendid virtues of peace. This tendency, which is fixed in the nature of things, admits of being checked for a while, or

rapidly developed, according to the policy and character of the monarchs who happen to occupy the throne. If the original conqueror is succeeded, by two or three ambitious and energetic princes, who engage in important wars and labor to extend their dominions at the expense of their neighbors, it will be some time before the degeneracy becomes marked. If, on the other hand, a prince of a quiet temper, self-indulgent, and studious of ease, come to the throne within a short time of the original conquests, the deterioration will be very rapid. In the present instance it happened that the immediate successor of the first conqueror was of a peaceful disposition, unambitious, and luxurious in his habits. During a reign which lasted at least thirty-five years he abstained almost wholly from military enterprises; and thus an entire generation of Medes grew up without seeing actual service, which alone makes the soldier. At the same time there was a general softening of manners. The luxury of the Court corrupted the nobles, who from hardy mountain chieftains, simple if not even savage in their dress and mode of life, became polite courtiers, magnificent in their apparel, choice in their diet, and averse to all unnecessary exertion. The example of the upper classes would tell on the lower, though not perhaps to any very large extent. The ordinary Mede, no doubt, lost something of his old daring and savagery; from disuse he became inexpert in the management of arms; and he was thus no longer greatly to be dreaded as a soldier. But he was really not very much less brave, nor less capable of bearing hardships, than before; and it only required a few years of training to enable him to recover himself and to be once more as good a soldier as any in Asia.

But in the affairs of nations, as in those of men, negligence often proves fatal before it can be repaired. Cyrus saw his opportunity, pressed his advantage, and established the supremacy of his nation, before the unhappy effects of Astyages' peace policy could be removed. He knew that his own Persians possessed the military spirit in its fullest vigor; he felt that he himself had all the qualities of a successful loader; he may have had faith in his cause, which, he would view as the cause of Ormazd against Ahriman, of pure Religion against a corrupt and debasing nature-worship. His revolt was sudden, unexpected, and well-timed. He waited till Astyages was advanced in years, and so disqualified for command; till the veterans of Cyaxares were almost all in their graves; and till the Babylonian throne was occupied by a king who was not likely to afford Astyages any aid. Ho may not at first have aspired to do more than establish the independence of his own country. But when the opportunity of effecting a transfer of empire offered itself, he seized it promptly; rapidly repeating his blows, and allowing his enemy no time to recover and renew the struggle. The substitution of Persia for Media as the ruling power in Western Asia was due less to general causes than to the personal character of two men. Had Astyages been a prince of ordinary vigor, the military training of the Medes would have been kept up; and in that case they might easily have hold their own against all comers. Had their training been kept up, or had Cyrus possessed no more than ordinary ambition and ability, either he would not have thought of revolting, or he would have revolted unsuccessfully. The fall of the Median Empire was due immediately to the genius of the Persian Prince; but its ruin was prepared, and its destruction was really caused, by the shortsightedness of the Median monarch.