

We shall now turn our attention to the other great center of ancient life, Mesopotamia. We have already noticed the similarities and the differences between the geographical situation of Mesopotamia and that of Egypt. In the earliest period, Egypt was a center of a life of greater importance than that of Mesopotamia. In later times, the power of Mesopotamia overshadowed that of Egypt, but even in the earliest times, Mesopotamia was a center of culture of great prominence and had an influence upon all the surrounding countries, even upon Egypt itself.

One hundred years ago, very little was known about ancient Egypt, but far less was known about ancient Mesopotamia. In Egypt there were imposing ruins above ground which had been observed occasionally by travellers all through the ages. In Mesopotamia such remains above ground were almost non-existing. The very location of the great cities of ancient Mesopotamia was unknown. Nineveh was completely unknown and the site of Babylon was disputed. There were no great temples or palaces to show that a great civilization had ever existed in ancient times in this valley. The nearest thing of the kind was a good deal further east, in Persia. Persia is a high plateau land to the east of Mesopotamia. It is not quite as devoid of stones as Mesopotamia and building could be more easily done in stone. In Mesopotamia, the great part of the buildings were made of brick, the outer part of which crumbled away in the damp climate. In Persia, forty miles northeast of Shiraz is a range of hills composed of dark gray limestone, called Mt. Rachmet. In front of this ridge there rises above the plain a large terrace like platform. A wall had been built in front of this platform in ancient times, levelled off at the top and great palaces and temples had been built on top of it. During the Middle Ages various European travellers had visited this and had admired the great remains at this place. They contained