

Chapter VI.

THE SECOND EMPIRE OF BABYLONIA.

(626-539 B.C.)

DURING the days in which Assyria, beset by foreign foes, was tottering to her destruction, an active and ambitious soldier, named Nabopolassar, who was acting as viceroy in Babylon, suddenly threw off the bonds that bound him to the Assyrian king, and declared the independence of Babylonia.

Under his strong rule this ancient kingdom became once more an important empire, small indeed, and enjoying but a brief period of prosperity, but managing, nevertheless, to compress into that time—barely a century—an immense amount of glorious achievement.

This new empire was established, however, not by the Babylonians themselves, but by a race called the Chaldæans, from the Sea Lands south of Mesopotamia, which, by bringing in fresh life and energy into the more ancient land, gave her a new and vigorous existence.

This had not lasted for more than about twenty years, when Necho, king of Egypt, realizing her growing importance, determined to annex the upstart little empire at one blow. But Nebuchadnezzar, son of the Babylonian king, not only beat his army at Karkemish, but pursued the fugitives into Egypt in a way that