

Chapter VII.

THE MEDES AND PERSIANS.

(C. 553-333 B.C.)

THE people who had brought about the fall of the earliest civilized powers of the Eastern World consisted of two kindred races, the Medes and Persians, of which the Medes were the first to establish an empire for themselves. This fell an easy prey to the fierce attacks of the tribe known as the Persians, and the two races soon became one people—the people of the “Medes and Persians.”

They differed in many respects from the inhabitants of Egypt on the one hand, and from those of Assyria and Babylonia on the other, and were much more closely akin to the European and Hindu nations. Originally, no doubt, they were wandering tribes, moving about with their flocks and herds wherever they were tempted by good pasturage and water; and hence, from the earliest times, they were worshippers of Nature in her various forms.

Their nature-worship was full of poetry and imagination. The fleecy clouds moving across the sky were to their minds flocks of sheep, which sometimes stayed to pour their milk, in the form of rain, upon the earth when it was thirsty. Or they called the rain-