

Chapter IX.

THE HEBREWS.

(C. 2200-66 B.C.)

THE story of the Hebrew people has been told once for all in the historical books of the Bible, and we must only notice here the main points in the sacred records. Small as their country was, the Hebrews, like the Phœnicians, can never be entirely omitted from the story of the great empires of the world, partly because of their close connection with the latter, partly because of the very important influence they have had upon both ancient and modern civilization.

We see them at one period emerging from the land of Chaldæa, a tiny tribe under the leadership of Abraham, whose early home had been "Ur of the Chaldees."

Some centuries later they are found in bondage in the land of Egypt, under the iron hand of that Rameses of whom we have already read. From thence they escape under the leadership of a great lawgiver, Moses, who gives them a "constitution" strikingly like that of Hammurabi of Babylonia in some respects. Then, about ten centuries before Christ, their little land of Canaan is ruled by kings, one of whom, Rehoboam, loses the confidence of his people, and causes a division in the country which results in the establishment of the rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

