

A City of Wonders and Wickedness

THE king of Babylon had beaten Nineveh. But he didn't stop with that. He wanted his Babylon to be as great as Nineveh had been. So he went on conquering other lands to the left and right until Babylon, in its turn, became the leader and ruler of other countries. Was Babylon, also, in its turn, to fall, as Nineveh had fallen?

When at last the king of Babylon died, he left his vast empire to his son. Now, the king's son was not called John or James or Charles or anything simple like that. It was—Nebuchadnezzar, and I wonder if his father called him by all that long name or shortened it to a nickname like “Neb,” for instance, or “Chad,” or perhaps “Nezzar.” This is the way Nebuchadnezzar wrote his name, for he used cuneiform writing. How would you like to write your name in such a queer way?



Name of Nebuchadnezzar in cuneiform writing.

Nebuchadnezzar set to work and made the city of Babylon the largest, the most magnificent and the most wonderful city of that time and perhaps of any time. The city was in the shape of a square and covered more ground than the two largest cities in the world to-day—New York and London—put together. He surrounded it with a wall fifty times as high as a man—fifty times—whew!—and so broad that a chariot could be driven along on the top, and in this wall he made one hundred huge brass gates. The Euphrates River flowed under the wall, across the city, and out under the wall on the other side.

Nebuchadnezzar could not find any one in Babylon who was beautiful enough to be his queen. The Babylonian girls must have felt pretty bad—or mad—about that. So he went to Media, the country that had helped his father conquer Nineveh. There he found a lovely princess, and so he married her and brought her home to Babylon.

Now, Media was a land of hills and mountains, whilst Babylon was on level ground and without even a hill in sight. Nebuchadnezzar's queen found Babylonia so flat and uninteresting that she became homesick, and she longed for her own country with its wild mountain scenery. So, just to please her and keep her contented Nebuchadnezzar set to work and *built* a hill for her, but the queer thing was he built it on top of the roof of his palace! On the sides of this hill he made beautiful gardens, and these gardens he planted not only with flowers but also with trees, so that his queen might sit in the shade and enjoy herself. These were called Hanging Gardens. The Hanging Gardens and the tremendous walls were known far and wide as one of the Seven Wonders of the world.

Would you like to know what the other Wonders were?

Well, the pyramids in Egypt were one; the magnificent statue of Jupiter at Olympia, where the Olympic Games were held, was another—so those with the Hanging Gardens make three.

Nebuchadnezzar believed in idols like those terrible monsters the Phenicians worshiped. The Jews away off in Jerusalem believed in one God. Nebuchadnezzar wanted the Jews to worship his gods, but they would not. He also wanted them to pay him taxes, and they would not. So he sent his armies to Jerusalem, destroyed that city, burnt the beautiful Temple that Solomon had built, and brought the Jews and all their belongings to Babylon. There in Babylon Nebuchadnezzar kept the Jews prisoners, and there in Babylon the Jews remained prisoners for fifty years.

Babylon had become not only the most magnificent city in the world; it had become also the most wicked. The people of Babylon gave themselves up to the wildest pleasures. Their only thought seemed to be, “Let's eat, drink, and be merry”; they thought nothing of the morrow; the more wicked the pleasure the more they