

ELLEN C. CLAYTON

**THE HISTORY
OF FEMALE
WARRIORS**

Ellen C. Clayton

The History of Female Warriors

From the Mythological Ages to the Present Era

Published by

MUSAICUM

Books

- Advanced Digital Solutions & High-Quality eBook
Formatting -

musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info

2020 OK Publishing

EAN 4064066392918

Table of Contents

[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 2](#)

Volume 1

[Table of Contents](#)

Table of Contents

- I.
- II.
- III.
- IV.
- V.
- VI.
- VII.
- VIII.
- IX.
- X.

I.

Table of Contents

Mythology.—Warlike Goddesses.—The Amazons.—The Sarmatians.—The Machlyes and Auses.—The Zaveces.—More Modern Tribes of Amazons in Asia and Africa.

WERE it not for fear of Mrs. Grundy, whose awful visage is to the modern Briton what the Gorgon's head was to the ancient Greek, it might be said that Popular Prejudice is the deaf, deformed sister of Justice. Popular Prejudice makes up her mind on certain subjects, and is grandly unconscious of any fault within herself; ignorant that she is deaf, and that she is morally blind, although able to see every petty object that passes within her range. Popular Prejudice, like her stately cousin, Mrs. Grundy, arranges fixed rules of etiquette, of conduct, even of feeling, and never pardons the slightest infringement of the lines she marks out. A man may lay down his life for "an idea," but if it be outside the ramparts of Popular Prejudice, he does so as a rebel, maybe a fool. A man may have high aspirations, but if by the breadth of a hair's line they run not parallel with the views of Popular Prejudice, let him be anathema maranatha, let him be bound in chains, away with him to outer darkness, to the company of the few who share his—"crotchets."

Whisper it not in Gath that a woman should dare ever to transgress the lines laid down by Popular Prejudice. A woman is a subordinate accident in Creation, quite an afterthought, a supplementary notion, a postscript, though

Humour might laughingly say, much like the famous postscript to a lady's letter. Man (though he is permitted to include in his superb all-comprehensive identity, Woman) is big, strong, noble, intellectual: a Being. Woman is small, weak, seldom noble, and ought not to be conscious of the significance of the word Intellectual.

The exception is supposed to prove the rule. A woman may be forgiven for defying Popular Prejudice, if she is very pretty, very silly, and very wicked. Popular Prejudice has the natural instinct of yielding to any little weakness that may be imagined to flatter a Man. But Popular Prejudice is superbly angry with a woman who is perhaps not pretty, yet ventures to claim good sense and personal will, and who may be innately good. Popular Prejudice is the fast friend of lean-faced Envy; and woe betide the woman (or even the man) who would presume to sit down at the board of these allies uninvited.

Popular Prejudice, having decided that woman is a poor, weak creature, credulous, easily influenced, holds that she is of necessity timid; that if she were allowed as much as a voice in the government of her native country, she would stand appalled if war were even hinted at. If it be proved by hard facts that woman is not a poor, weak creature, then she must be reprimanded as being masculine. To brand a woman as being masculine, is supposed to be quite sufficient to drive her cowering back to her 'broidery-frame and her lute.

Popular Prejudice abhors hard facts, and rarely reads history. Yet nobody can deny that facts are stubborn things, or that the world rolls calmly round even when wars,

rumours of wars, revolutions, and counter-revolutions, are raging in every quarter and sub-division of its surface.

War is, undoubtedly, a horrid alternative to the average woman, and she shrinks from it—as the average man shrinks. But, walking down the serried ranks of history, we find strange records of feminine bravery; as we might discover singular instances of masculine cowardice, if we searched far enough.

As argumentation is unpleasant and unprofitable, be it counted only idle pastime gathering a handful of memories from the playground of history.

Opinion among the ancients on all subjects was as fairly divided as it has been among moderns. Naturally, however, in that uncivilised stage of the world's development, men and women inclined more towards brute force than they now do. Plato, the Athenian philosopher, lamented that the lives of women should be wasted in domestic, and sometimes servile, duties; arguing that if the girls were trained like the boys, in athletic sports and warlike exercises, and were taught to endure fatigue, they would soon cease to be the weaker sex, and could not only fight as well as their lords and masters, but might take the command of armies and fleets.

But though the counsels of the great Athenian were followed in many things, they were entirely declined on this question. His countrymen, even in cases of the direst necessity, were loth to swell their ranks with female recruits; and it was only during the degenerate days of the Empire that Rome publicly authorised the combats of women in the amphitheatre.

Very few people deny that woman did, occasionally, fight in olden times. All nations, from the rudest barbarians to those most advanced in civilisation, hold this belief. An old Chinese tradition says that but for the wisdom of certain mandarins in days gone by, the weaker sex might possibly be now the stronger in the Celestial Empire. Once upon a time, so the story runs, the Chinese women, discontented with the unequal share accorded to them in the government, rose in rebellion. The revolt so very nearly became a revolution that the Emperor and his ministers, to prevent a recurrence of the danger, decreed that henceforth the feet of girls throughout China should be bandaged in such a way as to put it out of their power ever again to take the field as warriors. And thus, says the fable, originated the famous Golden Lilies.

The ancients were all familiar with the idea of women sometimes exchanging the spindle and distaff for the spear and shield. Not only did they believe their goddesses to take part occasionally in the battles of mortals, but the supreme direction of military affairs was assigned to a female, as Goddess of War; and this deity, combining wisdom and courage, frequently proved more than a match for the brutal if not blundering God of Battles. "Which, indeed," observes Pope, "is no more than just, since wisdom is generally averse to entering into warlike contests at all; yet when engaged, it is likely to triumph over brute force, and to bear off the laurels of the day." No general amongst the ancients would have dared to enter an enemy's country, besiege a city, or risk an engagement without first sacrificing to the Goddess of War.

All nations alike held the same belief. The Egyptians offered sacrifices to Neith, the Goddess of War, Philosophy, and Wisdom, to whom lions were subject, and whose fitting emblem was the vulture. The Greeks and Romans adored Minerva, the Thunderer's armour-clad daughter: and Bellona, sister, or perhaps wife of Mars, whose chariot she was said to drive through the din and tumult of the fight, lashing the foaming horses with a bloody scourge. And Victoria, whose name denotes her office, was so greatly honoured both in Greece and Rome, that Hiero, King of Syracuse, to flatter the Romans, once sent them an idol figure of this goddess, three hundred and twenty pounds in weight, made of solid gold; while the Egyptians, who worshipped her under the name of Naphte, represented her in the form of an eagle, because that bird is the strongest of aerial warriors, and invariably victorious over all the feathered race. The Brahmins, who claim an antiquity as great as, or greater than, Egypt, worshipped, and still worship, Durga, or Katyayini, whose ten arms and hands, each of which grasps a warlike weapon or emblem, prove how formidable a foe she is believed to have been. Our ancient British forefathers prayed to Andate, or Andraste, Goddess of Victory, and called upon her in their hour of need. The northern races, Goths, Vandals, Germans, who over-ran Europe during the decline of the Roman Empire, assigned a somewhat analogous place in their mythology to the Valkyrias, or Disas—

"Those dread maids, whose hideous yell
Maddens the battle's bloody swell."

These beautiful women were believed to take a leading part in every battle fought on earth. Mounted on swift steeds, armed with helmets and mail, drawn swords in their hands, they rode wildly over the field to select those heroes destined by Odin for the slaughter, and lead them to Valhalla, the Paradise of the Brave.

Nor is the belief in warlike goddesses confined to the Old World. When Cortez entered Mexico, he found the subjects of Montezuma worshipping, amongst other deities, all more or less repulsive to the eye, a horrid basalt monster named Teoyamiqui, Goddess of War. She was supposed to be wife of the equally terrible Huitzilopochtli, or Tlacahuepancuexcotzin, the Mexican Mars. Like the Valkyrias, her chief duty was to conduct those warriors who fell in defence of the gods to the house of the Sun, the Elysium or Valhalla of the Mexicans, where she transformed them into humming-birds.

The present age is a decidedly sceptical one.

It is the fashion nowadays to sneer at the traditions venerated by our grandfathers. Those chapters in the world's history which have not been *proved* by *facts*, have passed, in the opinion of many well educated people, into the category of fable and nursery-rhyme. The early histories of Greece and Rome, and of our own country too, are now taken, if taken at all, *cum grano salis*. King Arthur, Hengist and Horsa, and many another hero of whom we were once so proud, have been cast, by most matter-of-fact writers, on the same dusty shelf with Achilles and Hector, Romulus and Remus, side by side with Jupiter and Mercury, Jack the Giant-Killer and Blue Beard. Scarcely anybody in our days is

so credulous as to believe that the Amazons ever existed. "Amongst barbarous nations," observes Gibbon, "women have often combated by the side of their husbands; but it is almost impossible that a society of Amazons could have existed in the old or new world." His opinion has been endorsed by most subsequent writers, some of whom are even more positive in their expressions of incredulity.

Ancient writers are divided on the question. Strabo denies that there ever was or could have been such a community, and adds, to believe in their existence we must suppose "in those days the women were men and the men women." Plutarch, more moderate, half believes they did exist, but doubts most of their marvellous achievements, which, he thinks, "clearly resemble fable and fiction." Amongst those who speak for the defence, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Justin, and Quintus Curtius stand prominently forward.

Their origin, as related by Justin, though curious, is far from being impossible or even improbable in the remote days when they lived. Some years previous to the reign of Ninus, king of Assyria, two young princes of the Scythian blood-royal, Hylinos and Scolopitos, being driven from their native country by a faction of the nobility, induced several hundred young men and women to emigrate with them. After a toilsome march through barren wilds they settled at last in Cappadocia, on the rugged banks of the Thermodon. This little river, which now bears the name of Termeh or Karmili, falls into the Black Sea, between Trebisonde and Sinope.

For a number of years, the new-comers carried on a species of border warfare with the natives of the Themiscyreaean plains—stealing their cattle, tearing up their corn, destroying their homes by fire and sword. At last the aborigines surprised and massacred the male settlers, by means of an ambush. The wives of the latter, having now no one to whom they could look for protection, armed themselves and expelled the foe from their territory.

From this time they laid aside all thoughts of marriage, "calling it slavery and not matrimony." And, to enforce this law, it is said, they murdered a few men who had escaped the fury of the natives in the general massacre. The Amazons were thenceforth forbidden even to speak to men, save during certain days in the year. At the appointed time, throwing aside their military character, they visited the surrounding nations, and were permitted, by special treaties, to depart again unmolested. Justin says they strangled all their male children directly they were born; Diodorus, that they distorted their limbs; while Philostratus and others affirm that they sent them back, uninjured, to the fathers.

The girls were bred, like their mothers, "not in idleness, nor spinning, but in exercises of war, such as hunting and riding." In early childhood the right breast was burnt off, that they might, when grown up, be more easily able to bend the bow and hurl the dart. From whence, some say, they derived the name of Amazon, which is formed of two Greek words, signifying "wanting a breast." Bryant, the antiquarian, rejects this theory, and suggests, though with

less probability, that the name comes from Zon, the Sun, which was the national object of worship.

The bow was their favourite weapon, and from constant practice they acquired such proficiency as to equal, if not surpass the Scythians and Parthians, who were the most skilful archers of ancient times. With the Greeks and Romans it was not uncommon to speak of a very superior bow or quiver as "Amazonian."

The nation soon became formidable, and in due time grew famous throughout the world. At one time the dominion of the Amazons extended over the entire of Asia Minor and Ionia, besides a great part of Italy. So renowned did they at last become, that Jobates, king of Lycia, commanded Bellerophon to effect their subjugation, feeling certain that the hero would never return; great indeed was his astonishment to see the redoubtable conqueror of the Chimera return victorious, and he no longer hesitated to confess the divine origin of the hero. It is said that Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, was married to an Amazon named Sphynx when he carried letters from Egypt to Greece, about 1550 B.C.

Lampedo and Marpesia were the first Amazon queens whose names became known beyond their own dominions. To give greater *éclat* to their numerous victories, they claimed to be daughters of the God Mars—a common expedient in the olden times. Taking it in turn to defend the frontier and invade foreign countries, they speedily conquered Iberia (Georgia), Colchis (Mingrelia), Albania, the Tauric Chersonese (the Crimea), and a great part of Asia.

To commemorate the achievements of Queen Marpesia during her passage over the craggy and snow-capped Caucasus, when every peak, every ridge was bravely defended by hordes of desperate mountaineers, the name of Mount Marpesia was bestowed upon one of the loftiest rocks.

It was Marpesia who founded Themiscyra, the capital of the Amazons, on the banks of the Thermodon. She adorned this city with many stately buildings, conspicuous amongst which was the royal palace. Many cities in Asia Minor owed their origin to the same queen—amongst others, Ephesus, Thyatira, Smyrna, and Magnesia.

On the death of Marpesia, who was surrounded by the barbarians during an expedition into Asia, and, together with her entire army, put to the sword, Orithya, Orseria, or Sinope, and her sister Antiope, or Hippolyte, ascended the throne. Orithya, the most famous of all the Amazon queens, inherited the beauty, together with the military skill of her mother, Marpesia. Under her rule the nation became so renowned, that Eurystheus, fancying he had at last found a task beyond the powers of Hercules, commanded the hero, as his ninth labour, to bring him the girdle of the Amazon queen. The hero succeeded, however.

Hercules, accompanied by Theseus, Castor and Pollux, and most of the young princes of Greece, sailed to the Euxine with a fleet of nine ships, landed at the mouth of the Thermodon, during the temporary absence of Orithya with the best part of the army, and gained an easy victory over Antiope, whose sister Menalippe he made prisoner; restoring

her to liberty in exchange for a suit of the royal armour, including, of course, the girdle.

Historians differ as to the expedition of Theseus. Some say he took away Hippolyte or Antiope, at the same time that Hercules captured her sister; others, however, relate that he undertook a separate voyage many years after that of Hercules, and carried Antiope to Greece, where he made her his queen. Plutarch, in his life of Theseus, gives many details of this latter expedition.

When Orithya heard of the invasion, and of the part which the Athenian prince had acted in it, she vowed not to rest till she was revenged. Calling her subjects together, she soon found herself at the head of many thousand warriors. At her entreaty, Sagillus, king of Scythia, furnished a squadron of horse, commanded by his nephew, Panasagorus. Passing through Colchis, over Mount Caucasus, and crossing an arm of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, which, tradition says, was frozen, the Amazons marched victoriously through Taurica, Thrace, Thessaly, Macedonia, Attica, and entered the city of Athens. A hard-fought battle in the streets—described in detail by old Plutarch—ended by the total rout of the Amazons, who were compelled to take refuge in the camp of the Scythians—the latter, in consequence of a quarrel, having taken no part in the engagement.

The fate of Orithya is unknown, and historians differ as to that of Antiope. Some say she fell in the battle by the hand of an Amazon, while fighting in the Athenian ranks, side by side with Theseus; but according to others, it was her

mediation which brought about a treaty of peace some four months later.

Theseus and the Amazon queen had a son named Hippolytus, or Demophoon, who afterwards ascended the throne of Athens.

That the Amazons survived this defeat is evident, since, years after this, we find the Phrygians imploring aid of Priam, king of Troy, against Myrene, queen of the Amazons. Little is known about this war, save that the queen lost her life, and was succeeded by the beautiful Penthesilea, who not only made peace with Priam, but led a chosen band of Amazons to the assistance of Troy when it was besieged by the Greeks. She arrived shortly after the death of Hector, and, some declare, seemed, in the eyes of the old king, destined to take the place of the deceased hero. New life was infused into the dejected Trojans. But, alas! their joy was short-lived. The morning after her arrival Penthesilea fell by the hand of the invincible Achilles, who, struck by her exquisite beauty, repented too late of what he had done. The sarcastic Thersites jeered and derided, as usual, till the hero, in a fury, turned on the sneering old wretch and slew him. Diomedes, enraged at the death of his mocking old comrade, dragged the corpse of the Amazon queen from the camp, and flung it into the Scamander.

Pliny ascribes the invention of the battle-axe to this queen.

After the death of Penthesilea we learn nothing of the Amazons until the days of Alexander the Great. When that conqueror arrived at Zadracarta, the capital of Hyrcania, about the year B.C. 330, he is said to have been visited by an

Amazon queen named Minithya, or Thalestris, who—like another Queen of Sheba—having heard of his mighty achievements, travelled through many lands to see him, followed by an army of female warriors. After staying thirteen days she returned home, greatly disappointed with the personal appearance of the Macedonian king, who, contrary to her expectations, proved, 'tis said, to be a little man.

This is the last we ever hear of the great female nation. Some Roman authors affirm that the Amazons, in alliance with the Albanians, fought most valiantly in a battle against Pompey the Great, B.C. 66. But the only ground for this assertion consisted in the fact that some painted shields and buskins were found on the battle-field.

If we may believe Herodotus, the Sauromatæ, or Sarmatians, in Scythia, were descended from the Amazons. This historian relates how, after a victory gained by the Greeks over the Amazons near the Thermodon, the victors distributed their prisoners into three ships, and set sail for Greece. Once upon the open sea, the captives rose upon their guards and put them to death. Being totally ignorant of navigation and the management of sails, oars, or rudder, they resigned themselves to the mercy of winds and waves. They were carried to the Palus Mæotis (the Sea of Azof), where the liberated Amazons resumed their arms, sprang on shore, and meeting a stud of horses, mounted them, and commenced plundering the natives.

The people, ignorant alike of the dress, the language, or the country of the invaders, supposed them to be a body of young men. A sanguinary battle, however, led to mutual

explanations. The Amazons consented to accept an equal number of young Scythians as husbands; but afraid that their habits would never assimilate with those of the mothers and sisters of their husbands—for the Scythian women, so far from going to battle, passed their days in the wagons—resolved to seek out some desert land where they would be free to follow their own manners and customs. Crossing the Tanais (the Don), they travelled six days' journey east and north, and set up their homes in an uninhabited country. The nation increased greatly in the course of two or three centuries, and, even in the days of Herodotus, retained the habits of their progenitors. The women pursued the chase on horseback, sometimes with, sometimes without their husbands, and, dressed like men, they fought in battle.

No maiden was permitted to marry till she had first killed an enemy; "it sometimes, therefore, happens," quaintly adds the historian, "that many women die single at an advanced age." Hippocrates says they were condemned to single-blessedness till they had slain at least *three* enemies.

Yet, in spite of this, there was only one Sarmatian queen who became famous for her deeds on the battle-field. This was Amagia, whose husband, King Medosac, having given himself up to indolence and luxury, permitted the affairs of the nation to fall into disorder. At last Amagia took the reins of government into her own hands, received ambassadors, took the command of the army, went in person to reinforce the frontiers with troops, and not only repelled several invasions but even made some incursions into foreign countries to assist such of her allies as were in peril. Very

soon she became an important personage, and was more than once chosen as mediatrix by the various petty monarchs of the Chersonese.

As a ruler, Queen Amagia had not her equal in those days throughout Scythia. Her judgments were sound; and both as a general and as a governor, she was respected by all. Her justice was severe and unbending, and untempered with mercy.

The African Amazons, who are said to have existed for some centuries prior to those of Thermodon, were not, like the latter, a community of women only, but the men were kept in close subjection to their better-halves, by whom they were treated as women are usually treated in barbarous countries. While the women conducted the government or fought with their neighbours, the men staid at home, attending to the household duties. They were not permitted, under any circumstances, to serve as soldiers or hold any public office. The girls were not allowed to marry till they had served a certain number of years in the army; and, like the Asiatic Amazons, one breast was burnt off.

This nation, Diodorus tells us, originally dwelt on a large island called Hesperia, on the western coast of Africa. This isle, which, the historian says, abounded "with all sorts of fruit trees," is supposed to have been one of the Canaries. The climate was then, as now, delicious, the soil more than ordinarily fertile, and the natives possessed "many herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats."

The Amazons, more warlike than their neighbours, speedily conquered the entire island; and, crossing into

Africa, subdued great part of Numidia and founded a large city named Chersonesus, in the Tritonis Morass. This gigantic fen was situated near the Atlantic Ocean, under the shadow of the lofty Mount Atlas.

When Queen Merina ascended the throne, she determined to accomplish mightier deeds than her ancestors. Assembling an army of thirty thousand foot and two thousand horse, dressed in coats of mail made from the skins of large serpents, she passed into Africa, conquered the Atlantides, the Gorgons, and many another nation, and formed an alliance with Orus, King of Egypt, the son of Isis. After making war successfully on the Arabians she conquered Syria and Cilicia, and the tribes around Mount Taurus, who, says Diodorus, "were both men of strong bodies and stout hearts"; marched through Phrygia, and passed along the shores of the Mediterranean, founding several cities, one of which she named after herself, and the others after her principal captains. Crossing to the Greek Archipelago, where she conquered Lesbos and other isles, Merina founded the city of Mitylene, and named it after her sister, who accompanied the expedition.

Shortly after the return of the Amazons to Africa, Mompsus, a refugee from the court of Lycurgus, king of Thrace, and Sipylus, a banished Scythian, invaded the dominions of Merina. The queen was slain in the first battle, together with many thousand Amazons; and the rest of her subjects, after bravely contending in several engagements with the invaders, retired, it is said, into Lybia.

We also read that Egee, another queen of the African Amazons, also raised a large army, with which she invaded

Asia. Being opposed by Laomedon, King of Troy (who was afterwards conquered by Hercules), she defeated his troops in several actions, and took a quantity of valuable plunder. While re-passing the sea a storm arose, and Egee perished with her entire army.

The nation was finally extirpated by Hercules when he undertook his journey into Africa, and erected the famous Pillars.

Herodotus mentions two Libyan tribes, the Machlyes and Auses, dwelling on the shores of Lake Tritonis, who trained their girls to the use of arms. Once a year, at the festival of Minerva, their patron-goddess, the maidens of each tribe formed themselves into two hostile armies, and attacked each other before the temple with sticks and stones, contending for the victory with the most desperate valour. On the conclusion of this *sham* fight, the most beautiful of the survivors was presented with a magnificent suit of armour and a sword, and, amidst the noisiest acclamations from the spectators, escorted in a chariot triumphantly round the lake.

The Zaveces, another African tribe mentioned by the same historian, employed their wives and daughters to drive their war-chariots on the day of battle, thus placing them in the front of the battle.

From what certain modern travellers have reported, it would seem that even as lately as the eighteenth century the legend of the Amazons still held its ground in various

parts of Asia and Africa. Father Archangel Lamberti, a Neapolitan monk, who travelled through Mingrelia in the seventeenth century, was told that a warlike and ruthless nation, amongst whom were several female warriors, dwelt somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Caucasus. They were often at war with the Calmuc Tartars and the various tribes living near them. Lamberti was even shown some suits of armour taken from the corpses of these warlike women, together with their bows and arrows and brass-spangled buskins.

The Chevalier Chardin (a Huguenot jeweller, knighted by Charles II. of England), in travelling through Persia, between 1663 and 1680, was told that a powerful nation of Amazons dwelt to the north of the kingdom of Caket. The monarchs of the latter country, which was situated in the neighbourhood of the Caucasus, subjected these Amazons for a time, though they afterwards regained their liberty. The people of the Caucasus, and the Calmucs were always at war with these Amazons, and never sought to make peace or form any treaties, for they knew the warlike women had neither religion, laws, nor honour. Sir John, however, adds that he never met with anybody who had been in their country.

Juan de los Sanctos, an early Portuguese traveller, in speaking of a kingdom named Damut, in Ethiopia, mentions a numerous tribe entirely composed of women, who had adopted (or perhaps retained) the habits of the ancient Amazons. The exercise of arms and the pastime of the chase were their principal occupations in times of peace, but their chief business and pleasure was war. They burnt off the right breast as soon as the girls were old enough to

bear it; and, as a rule, they passed their lives in a state of celibacy, the queen setting a rigid example. Those who married did not rear their male children, but sent them back to the fathers. The neighbouring sovereigns esteemed themselves only too fortunate when they could secure the alliance of this people; and so far from seeking to destroy them, more than once aided them when they were attacked by others. This tribe was finally subjugated, says the Portuguese friar, by the successors of Prester John, the kings of Abyssinia.

II.

Table of Contents

Semiramis, Queen of Assyria—Harpalyce, daughter of Lycurgus, King of Thrace—Atalanta (Argonautic Expedition)—Camilla, Queen of the Volscians—Tomyris, Queen of the Massagetæ—Telesilla the Poetess—The Two Artemisias (I. and II.) Queens of Caria—Mania, Governess of Æolia—Cratesipolis of Sicyon—Arsinoe, Queen of Egypt.

SEMIRAMIS is the earliest female warrior of whose existence there is any certainty. But even her history is intermingled with much of fable and idle tradition. The exact period at which she reigned has never been positively determined. The following dates, assigned to her reign by various historians, ancient and modern, as compared by the antiquarian Bryant, show the diversity of opinion amongst chronologists upon the subject.

	B.C.
According to Syncellus, she lived	2177
Petavius makes the time	2060
Helvicus	2248
Eusebius	1984
Mr. Jackson	1964

Archbishop Usher	1215
Philo Biblius Sanchoniathan (apud <u>Euseb.</u>)	1200
Herodotus (about)	713

"What credit," indignantly asked the learned Bryant, "can be given to the history of a person, the time of whose life cannot be ascertained within 1535 years?"

The early life of this famous woman is enveloped in one of those mythological legends in which the ancients loved to shroud the origin of their heroes and heroines. According to tradition she was the natural daughter of Derceto, a Philistine goddess, and while yet a babe, was left to perish by her cruel mother in a wood near Ascalon, in Syria. But, as Romulus and Remus were suckled by a wolf, so doves came and fed the future queen. The birds were observed and followed by the neighbouring peasants; and Simma, or Sisona, chief shepherd of the Assyrian king, having no children of his own, adopted the babe, and gave her the name of Semiramis, a Syrian word signifying doves, or pigeons.

At the early age of thirteen or fourteen, Semiramis was married to Menon, one of the principal officers of the king, who saw her at the hut of Sisona while inspecting the royal flocks. Captivated by her surpassing beauty and charming conversation, Menon induced her to return with him to Nineveh, the capital. For some months she was kept a close prisoner in her husband's palace; but her influence soon ruled paramount, and all restraints were removed. Two or

three years passed thus, during which time Semiramis bore her husband two sons, Hypates and Hydaspes.

When Ninus invaded Media, Semiramis, who only waited for some opportunity to distinguish herself, insisted upon accompanying her husband, who, as one of the principal courtiers, held an important command in the invading army. The campaign was at first an uninterrupted series of successes. One city fell after another before the Assyrian hosts. But the army was suddenly checked in its onward career of victory before the impregnable walls of Bactria. The city was defended with such obstinate bravery that Ninus at last resolved to retreat. But Semiramis presented herself before the assembled council of war, proposed an assault on the citadel, and offered to lead, in person, the storming party.

When the decisive moment arrived, Semiramis proved herself fully equal to the emergency. Amidst volleys of arrows and showers of stones, before which the bravest men turned pale, she led the forlorn hope to the foot of the citadel. Animating all by her courage, shaming cowards by the thought that a young and lovely woman was sharing, nay, braving, the same dangers as themselves, the intrepid heroine rushed up the scaling ladder, and was the first to reach the battlements. A struggle ensued, short, but fierce, and in a few moments the golden standard of Assyria floated from the walls. The capital of Media had fallen.

The king, violently smitten with love for the brave girl, earnestly besought her husband to give her up. He even offered his own royal sister, Sosana, in exchange. But promises and threats were alike vain; and Ninus, in a fury,

cast Menon into prison. Here, after being deprived of sight, the wretched husband terminated his existence with his own hands.

Ninus married the young widow; and after their return to Nineveh, she bore him a son called Ninyas.

'Tis said Ninus paid very dear for his marriage. Semiramis, by her profuse liberality, soon attached the leading courtiers to her interest. She then solicited the king, with great importunity, to place the supreme power in her hands for five days. Ninus at last yielded to her entreaties; and, as his reward, was cast into prison, and put to death—either immediately, or after languishing some years.

To cover the meanness of her origin, and to immortalise her name, Semiramis now applied her mind to great enterprises. If she did not, as some suppose, found Babylon the Great, she adorned it with beautiful and imposing edifices, and made it worthy to be called "the Golden City."

Not satisfied with the vast empire left by Ninus, she enlarged it by successive conquests. Great part of Ethiopia succumbed to her power; and during her stay in this country she consulted the Oracle of Jupiter-Ammon as to how long she had to live. The answer was, that she should not die until conspired against by her son; and that, after her death, part of Asia would pay her divine honours.

Her last and most famous expedition was the war with India. For this campaign she raised an army of more than ordinary dimensions. Ctesias puts down the number at three million foot, fifty thousand horse, and war-chariots in proportion; but this is, no doubt, a slight exaggeration. The chief strength of the Indians lay in their countless myriads of

elephants. Semiramis, unable to procure these animals in sufficient numbers, caused several thousand camels to be accoutred like elephants.

Shahbrohates, King of India, on receiving intelligence of her hostile approach, sent ambassadors to inquire her motive for invading his dominions. She returned a haughty answer; and, on reaching the Indus, she erected a bridge of boats and attempted to cross. The passage was disputed, and although the Indians at last retreated, the victory was more disastrous to the Assyrians than many a defeat.

But Semiramis, carried away by the blind infatuation which guided all her movements in this war, marched into the heart of the country. The king, who fled deceitfully to bring about a second engagement further from the river, faced about, and the two armies again closed in deadly combat. The counterfeit elephants could not long sustain the attack of the genuine animals, who, crushing every obstacle under foot, soon scattered the Assyrian army. Semiramis performed prodigies of bravery to rally her broken forces, and fought with as little regard for her own safety as though she had been the meanest soldier in the army. Shahbrohates, perceiving the queen engaged in the thick of the fight, rode forward and twice wounded her. The rout soon became general, and the royal heroine, convinced at last that nothing further could be done, gave the rein to her horse, whose swiftness soon placed her beyond the reach of the enemy.

On reaching the Indus a scene of the most terrible disorder ensued. In the wild terror which possessed the minds of all, officers and soldiers crowded together on to

the bridge, without the slightest regard for rank or discipline. Thousands were trampled under foot, crushed to death, or flung into the river. When Semiramis and all who could save themselves had crossed over, the bridge was destroyed. The Indian king, in obedience to an oracle, ordered his troops not to cross the river in pursuit.

Semiramis was the only sovereign amongst the ancients, except Alexander the Great, who ever carried a war beyond the Indus.

Some time after her return to Babylon, the queen discovered that her son, Ninyas, was conspiring against her. Remembering now the oracle of Jupiter-Ammon, and believing that her last days were approaching, Semiramis voluntarily abdicated the throne. Some chroniclers give a different version of the story, relating that the queen was slain by her son, and this latter account, though disbelieved by most historians, is the popular story.

Semiramis lived sixty-two years, out of which she reigned forty-two. It is said the Athenians afterwards worshipped her under the form of a dove.

The early lives of Harpalyce and Atalanta, the first known female warriors who were natives of Greece, resemble in some respects that of Semiramis. It appears to have been a favourite custom, during the primitive ages, to have children nursed by birds or beasts. Harpalyce, daughter of Harpalycus, or Lycurgus, king of the Amymnæans, in Thrace, having lost her mother during infancy, was fed with the milk of cows and horses. Her father trained her in every manly and warlike exercise, riding, racing, hurling the dart,