

and its vicinity to Egypt, and to a European sea-basin, gives it signal advantages in a political no less than a commercial point of view. In the central parts of the Arabian Peninsula lived the tribe of the Hedschaz, a noble and valiant race, unlearned, but not wholly rude, imaginative, and, at the same time, devoted to the careful observation of all the processes of free nature manifested in the ever-serene vault of heaven and on the surface of the earth. This people, after having continued for thousands of years almost without contact with the rest of the world, and advancing chiefly in nomadic hordes, suddenly burst forth from their former mode of life, and, acquiring cultivation from the mental contact of the inhabitants of more ancient seats of civilization, converted and subjected to their dominion the nations dwelling between the Pillars of Hercules and the Indus, to the point where the Bolor chain intersects the Hindoo-Coosh. They maintained relations of commerce as early as the middle of the ninth century simultaneously with the northern countries of Europe, with Madagascar, Eastern Africa, India, and China; diffused languages, money, and Indian numerals, and founded a powerful and long-enduring communion of lands united together by one common religion. In these migratory advances great provinces were often only temporarily occupied. The swarming hordes, threatened by the natives, only rested for a while, according to the poetical diction of their own historians, "like groups of clouds which the winds ere long will scatter abroad." No other migratory movement has presented a more striking and instructive character; and it would appear as if the depressive influence manifested in circumscribing mental vigor, and which was apparently inherent in Islamism, acted less powerfully on the nations under the dominion of the Arabs than on Turkish races. Persecution for the sake of religion was here, as every where, even among Christians, more the result of an unbounded, dogmatizing despotism than the consequence of any original form of belief or any religious contemplation existing among the people. The anathemas of the Koran are especially directed against superstition and the worship of idols among races of Aramæic descent.*

* Hence the contrast between the tyrannical measures of Motewekkil, the tenth calif of the house of the Abbassides, against Jews and Christians (Joseph von Hammer, *Ueber die Länderverwaltung unter dem Chalifate*, 1835, s. 27, 85, und 117), and the mild tolerance of wiser rulers in Spain (Conde, *Hist. de la Dominacion de los Arabes en España*, t. i., 1820, p. 67). It should also be remembered that Omar, after the taking of Jerusalem, tolerated every rite of Christian worship, and con-