

colonies and conquests; amongst which Carthage reared her proud head, rivalling Rome, the future empress of the world, and holding in subjection tributary monarchies of Africa. But the deserts of that country forbad the progress of armies: and Nature seemed to have set bounds to ambition. Africa is the only continent which never was conquered; and Alexander needed not to have sighed for other worlds. Hence it is also the most savage of all the continents, and being unknown in war, is also unknown in peace. Oceans of sand which permit no navigation, and where the ship of the desert, as the camel has been called, faintly plods his way in the scanty and weary caravan, are impassable to armies with their necessary waggons and provisions; exposed besides, from their very numbers, to the hurricanes of sand, affording in an instant death and a grave. A portion of the army of Cambyzes, on their attempting a passage to one of the Oases, or fertile isles, that emerge from the sandy sea, was devoured by this new tempest; and only a moment interposed between the appearance of a pompous army, and that of a hill of sand, which covered for ever the joyous and victorious battalions. Africa may thus for ages continue unknown, unconquered, uncivilized, may continue her sale of slaves with the Mahometans, if not with the Christians; which affords however, as human life is only the choice of evils, some alleviation to the former horrors of internal warfare, in which the captive was reserved as the favourite food of the conqueror; and the unborn infant was the turtle and venison of the Jaga. Even in China, in the ninth century, it appears from the Mahometan travellers that human flesh was sold in the markets; while we find no trace of such barbarism among the nations mentioned in the Scripture, the most ancient of written records; which, with many other circumstances, leads to an inference that civilisation irradiated from the centre of Asia; and that it would be vain to seek for its commencement in China, or even Hindostan, especially as the latter country was divided into small kingdoms, so late as the age of Alexander, and seems to have imbibed its small portion of the sciences from its intercourse with Egypt on the south, from the Persian conquests on the north, which may even have imparted the Sanscrit, a sacred and classical language, like the Latin in Europe, and which late enquiries seem to evince to be a branch of the ancient Persian or Gothic. The Grecian kingdom of Bactria may also have diffused some rays of science among the Hindoos; while their ancient Bramins and Gymnosophists resembled the Magi of the Persians, or pretended priests and magicians, common among all barbarous nations, who supply the want of knowledge by artifice, or operate delusions by some skill in what is called natural magic.

Having thus attempted to establish the progress and centre of discovery by conquest, which led to the most certain and permanent effects; it will be proper to assume with more detail the progress of ancient discovery by commerce, which led to a faint view of