

# ARABS AND TURKS.

## THE MOHAMMEDAN ARABS.

Until the age of Mohammed, born 569, the Peninsula of Arabia is known to history mainly through the spices and incense which it exported from the earliest times. Although relatively unknown, the coasts of Arabia possessed a high degree of civilization. The Bedouin or wandering Arabs of the interior desert were then, as now, barbarian, and are to be distinguished then, as now, from the settled and commercial Arabs.

From contact with Christians and Jews, the Arabs gradually became superior to their original paganism, and this progress was formulated and made general by Mohammed, a self-styled prophet.

**The Mohammedan era** is calculated from the year A. D. 622, when the prophet was driven for the time being to fly from Mecca (the "Hegira"), but also found the faith and constancy of his followers equal to the test thus imposed on them. He died ten years later.

**His cardinal doctrine** was the belief in one God, in opposition to the previous Arab polytheism; but submission to the will of God was conceived by him and by his followers in a way which led to stagnant indifference to the evil Christians are bidden to combat. Many objectionable, and some laudable doctrines and teachings were advanced by this man. As in all other human religions, this one also exhibits its good or evil aspect according to the individual or national temperament and surroundings. It is known that Mohammed himself was subject to epileptic fits, which he conceived to be divinely inspired trances, and it is not necessary to suppose him a conscious impostor. His teachings, given out in disjointed and fragmentary utterances, and written down on palm leaves and pieces of bone in his lifetime, were collected after his death in the Koran.

**The personality and self-confidence of Mohammed** inspired his nation with a zeal for its new faith which launched it on the most remarkable religious war known to history. All nations were to become converts or be put to the sword, except Jews and Christians, "the peoples of the Book." These, according to the Koran, were to be allowed life and liberty if they paid tribute.