

route he sent a fleet down the Indus to explore the passage thence to the mouth of the Euphrates. Not satisfied with the route by the valley of the latter river, he resolved to bring the wealth of India to Europe by the Red Sea and the Nile. He, therefore, fixed on the western mouth of that stream as the site of the city which was to perpetuate the memory of his name and his political sagacity.

Antiochus the Great, Tamerlane, and Nadir Shah, all sought, like the famous general above-mentioned, to enrich their kingdoms by fostering commerce with India and the countries beyond; and what privileges they could not secure from Eastern nations by request, they endeavoured to extort by force of arms. In the Persian era a large trade was carried on between Greek cities in the Black Sea and Scythia, north and east, from Siberia to India. Different caravan routes were used from time to time; cities sprung up at the extremities of these routes, and extensive depôts were established at intervals on the way. A chain of mercantile peoples extended at a very remote day from China and India to the Black Sea and the countries in the Mediterranean. Gold was then so plentiful that iron was accounted more valuable, and armour, bridle-bits, and vessels were plated with it.

Mahomet, who in early life was a shrewd merchant, authorised his followers to associate objects of commerce with their religious pilgrimages to Mecca; and the astonishing spread of their faith in the eastern parts of Asia was greatly indebted to this cause. Vast caravans of pilgrims from the distant regions of the East, as well as from the shores of the Atlantic, travelled to Mecca, and the profitable disposal of their wares at this *religious mart* gave a considerable impetus to commerce by sea and land. In the Holy City were exposed for sale the chintzes and muslins of Bengal, the shawls of Cashmere, the spices of Malabar, the diamonds of Golconda, the pearls of Kilcare, the cinnamon of Ceylon, the nutmegs and cloves of the Moluccas, and the silks of China.

The Arabians, under Caliph Omar, experienced a remarkable improvement in their condition from the same potent influence. From barbarian hordes, violent robbers, "dwellers in tents," and despisers of civilisation, they became patrons of art, contributors to science and literature, and founders of cities. So highly did they esteem mercantile relations with the East that they built Bassorah to protect their monopoly of Eastern trade; and it is significant that their overwhelming power as conquerors and as propagators of religion was contemporaneous with their being exclusive carriers between China and Europe. Their trade was universal in the Indian Archipelago, and their vessels plied from the Persian Gulf to all the ports of China. The Saracens were so numerous at one period in Canton that the Emperor granted his sanction to their having a *culi*