

AN  
HISTORICAL DISQUISITION  
CONCERNING  
ANCIENT INDIA.

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SECTION III.

*Intercourse with India, from the Conquest of Egypt by the Mahomedans, to the Discovery of the Passage by the Cape of Good Hope, and the Establishment of the Portuguese Dominion in the East.*

ABOUT fourscore years after the death of Justinian, an event happened, which occasioned a revolution still more considerable in the intercourse of Europe with the East. Mahomet, by publishing a new religion, seems to have animated his countrymen with a new spirit, and to have called forth latent passions and talents into exertion. The greatest part of the Arabians, satisfied from the earliest times with national independence and personal liberty, tended their camels, or reared their palm-trees within the precincts of their own peninsula, and had little intercourse with the rest of mankind, unless when they sallied out to plunder a caravan, or to rob a traveller. In some districts, however, they had begun to add the labours

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of agriculture, and the business of commerce, to the occupations of pastoral life.\* These different orders of men, when prompted by the enthusiastic ardour with which the exhortations and example of Mahomet inspired them, displayed at once all the zeal of missionaries, and the ambition of conquerors. They spread the doctrine of their prophet, and extended the dominion of his successors, from the shores of the Atlantic to the frontier of China, with a rapidity of success to which there is nothing similar in the history of mankind.

A. C. 1640. Egypt was one of their earliest conquests; and as they settled in that inviting country, and kept possession of it, the Greeks were excluded from all intercourse with Alexandria, to which they had long resorted as the chief mart of Indian goods. Nor was this the only effect which the progress of the Mahomedan arms had upon the commerce of Europe with India. Prior to their invasion of Egypt, the Arabians had subdued the great kingdom of Persia, and added it to the empire of their Caliphs. They found their new subjects engaged in prosecuting that extensive trade with India, and the country to the east of it, the commencement and progress of which in Persia I have already mentioned; and they were so sensible of the great advantages derived from it, that they became desirous to partake of them. As the active powers of the human mind, when roused to vigorous exertions in one line, are most capable of operating with force in other directions; the

Arabians, from impetuous warriors, soon became enterprising merchants. They continued to carry on the trade with India in its former channel from the Persian Gulf, but it was with that ardour which characterizes all the early efforts of Mahomet's followers. In a short time they advanced far beyond the boundaries of ancient navigation, and brought many of the most precious commodities of the East directly from the countries which produced them. In order to engross all the profit arising from the sale of them, the Caliph Omar,\* a few years after the conquest of Persia, founded the city of Bassora, on the western banks of the great stream formed by the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris, with a view of securing the command of these two rivers, by which goods imported from India were conveyed into all parts of Asia. With such discernment was the situation chosen, that Bassora soon became a place of trade hardly inferior to Alexandria.

THIS general information with respect to the trade of the Arabians with India, which is all that can be derived from the historians of that period, is confirmed and illustrated by the Relation of a Voyage from the Persian Gulf towards the East, written by an Arabian merchant in the year of the Christian era eight hundred and fifty-one, about two centuries after Persia was subjected to the Caliphs, and explained by the Commentary

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\* Herbel. Biblioth. Orient. artic. *Basrah*. Abul Pharas. Hist. Dynast. p. 113.

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of another Arabian, who had likewise visited the eastern parts of Asia.\* This curious Relation, which enables us to fill up a chasm in the history of mercantile communication with India, furnishes materials for describing more in detail the extent of the Arabian discoveries in the East, and the manner in which they made them.

THOUGH some have imagined that the wonderful property of the magnet, by which it communicates such virtue to a needle, or slender rod of iron, as to make it point towards the poles of the earth, was known in the East long before it was observed in Europe, it is manifest, both from the Relation of the Mahomedan merchant, and from much concurring evidence, that not only the Arabians, but the Chinese, were destitute of this faithful guide, and that their mode of navigation was not more adventurous than that of the Greeks and Romans.† They steered servilely along the coast, seldom stretching out to sea so far as to lose sight of land; and as they shaped their course in this timid manner, their mode of reckoning was defective, and liable to the same errors which I observed in that of the Greeks and Romans.‡

NOTWITHSTANDING these disadvantages, the progress of the Arabians towards the east extended far beyond the Gulf of Siam, the boun-

\* See NOTE XXXVII. † Relation, p. 2, 3, &c.

‡ Renaudot. Inquiry into the Time when the Mahomedans first entered China, p. 143.

dary of European navigation. They became acquainted with Sumatra, and the other islands of the great Indian Archipelago, and advanced as far as the city of Canton in China. Nor are these discoveries to be considered as the effect of the enterprising curiosity of individuals; they were owing to a regular commerce carried on from the Persian Gulf with China, and all the intermediate countries. Many Mahomedans, imitating the example of the Persians described by Cosmas Indicopleustes, settled in India and the countries beyond it. They were so numerous in the city of Canton, that the emperor (as the Arabian authors relate) permitted them to have a Cadi or judge of their own sect, who decided controversies among his countrymen by their own laws, and presided in all the functions of religion.\* In other places proselytes were gained to the Mahomedan faith, and the Arabian language was understood and spoken in almost every sea-port of any note. Ships from China and different places of India traded in the Persian Gulf,† and by the frequency of mutual intercourse, all the nations of the East became better acquainted with each other.‡

A STRIKING proof of this is the new information concerning China and India we receive from the two authors I have mentioned. They point out the situation of Canton, now so well known to Europeans, with a considerable degree of exact-

\* Relation, 7. Remarks, p. 19. Inquiry, p. 171, &c.

† See NOTE XXXVIII. ‡ Relation, p. 8.

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ness. They take notice of the general use of silk among the Chinese. They are the first who mention their celebrated manufacture of porcelain, which, on account of its delicacy and transparency, they compare to glass.\* They describe the tea-tree, and the mode of using its leaves; and from the great revenue which was levied (as they inform us) from the consumption of it, tea seems to have been as universally the favourite beverage of the Chinese in the ninth century, as it is at present.†

EVEN with respect to those parts of India which the Greeks and Romans were accustomed to visit, the Arabians had acquired more perfect information. They mention a great empire established on the Malabar Coast, governed by monarchs whose authority was paramount to that of every power in India. These monarchs were distinguished by the appellation of *Balchara*, a name yet known in India,‡ and it is probable that the Samorin, or Emperor of Calicut, so frequently mentioned in the accounts of the first voyages of the Portuguese to India, possessed some portion of their dominions. They celebrate the extraordinary progress which the Indians had made in astronomical knowledge; a circumstance which seems to have been little known to the Greeks and Romans, and assert that in this branch of science they were far superior to the most en-

\* See NOTE XXXIX. † Relation, p. 21. 25.

‡ Herbelot, artic. *Hend. & Belhar.*

lightened nations of the East, on which account their sovereign was denominated the King of Wisdom.\* Other peculiarities in the political institutions, the mode of judicial proceedings, the pastimes and the superstitions of the Indians, particularly the excruciating mortifications and penances of the faquirs, might be produced as proofs of the superior knowledge which the Arabians had acquired of the manners of that people.

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THE same commercial spirit, or religious zeal, which prompted the Mahomedans of Persia to visit the remotest regions of the East, animated the Christians of that kingdom. The Nestorian churches planted in Persia, under the protection first of its native sovereigns, and afterwards of its conquerors the Caliphs, were numerous, and governed by respectable ecclesiastics. They had early sent missionaries into India, and established churches in different parts of it, particularly, as I have formerly related, in the island of Ceylon. When the Arabians extended their navigation as far as China, a more ample field, both for their commerce and their zeal, opened to their view. If we may rely on the concurring evidence of Christian authors, in the East as well as in the West, confirmed by the testimony of the two Mahomedan travellers, their pious labours were attended with such success, that in the ninth and tenth centuries the number of Christians in

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\* Relation, p. 37. 58.

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India and China was very considerable.\* As the churches in both these countries received all their ecclesiastics from Persia, where they were ordained by the *Catholicos*, or Nestorian Primate, whose supremacy they acknowledged, this became a regular channel of intercourse and intelligence; and to the combined effect of all these circumstances, we are indebted for the information we receive from the two Arabian writers,† concerning those regions of Asia which the Greeks and Romans never visited.

BUT while both the Mahomedan and Christian subjects of the Caliphs continued to extend their knowledge of the East, the people of Europe found themselves excluded almost entirely from any intercourse with it. To them the great port of Alexandria was now shut, and the new lords of the Persian Gulf, satisfied with supplying the demand for Indian commodities in their own extensive dominions, neglected to convey them, by any of the usual channels, to the trading towns on the Mediterranean. The opulent inhabitants of Constantinople, and other great cities of Europe, bore this deprivation of luxuries, to which they had been long accustomed, with such impatience, that all the activity of commerce was exerted, in order to find a remedy for an evil which they deemed intolerable. The difficulties which were to be surmounted in order to accomplish this, afford the most striking proof of the high estima-

\* See NOTE XL.

† Relation, p. 39.



tion in which the commodities of the East were held at that time. The silk of China was purchased in Chensi, the westernmost province of that empire, and conveyed thence by a caravan, in a march of eighty or a hundred days, to the banks of the Oxus, where it was embarked, and carried down the stream of that river to the Caspian. After a dangerous voyage across that sea, and ascending the river Cyrus as far as it is navigable, it was conducted by a short land carriage of five days to the river Phasis,\* which falls into the Euxine or Black Sea. Thence, by an easy and well known course, it was transported to Constantinople. The conveyance of commodities from that region of the East now known by the name of Indostan, was somewhat less tedious and oporose. They were carried from the banks of the Indus by a route early frequented, and which I have already described, either to the river Oxus, or directly to the Caspian, from which they held the same course to Constantinople.

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IT is obvious, that only commodities of small bulk, and of considerable value, could bear the expense of such a mode of conveyance; and in regulating the price of those commodities, not only the expense, but the risk and danger of conveying them, were to be taken into account. In their journey across the vast plain extending from Samarcand to the frontier of China, caravans were exposed to the assaults and depredations of

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\* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vi. c. 17.

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the Tartars, the Huns, the Turks, and other roving tribes which infest the north-east of Asia, and which have always considered the merchant and traveller as their lawful prey; nor were they exempt from insult and pillage in their journey from the Cyrus to the Phasis, through the kingdom of Colchis, a country noted, both in ancient and in modern times, for the thievish disposition of its inhabitants. Even under all these disadvantages, the trade with the East was carried on with ardour. Constantinople became a considerable mart of Indian and Chinese commodities, and the wealth which flowed into it in consequence of this, not only added to the splendour of that great city, but seems to have retarded, for some time, the decline of the empire of which it was the capital.

As far as we may venture to conjecture, from the imperfect information of contemporary historians, it was chiefly by the mode of conveyance which I have described, perilous and operose as it was, that Europe was supplied with the commodities of the East, during more than two centuries. Throughout that period the Christians and Mahomedans were engaged in almost uninterrupted hostilities, prosecuted with all the animosity which rivalship for power, heightened by religious zeal, naturally excites. Under circumstances which occasioned such alienation, commercial intercourse could hardly subsist; and the merchants of Christendom either did not resort at all to Alexandria and the ports of Syria, the

ancient staples for the commodities of the East, after they were in possession of the Mahomedans; or if the love of gain, surmounting their abhorrence of the Infidels, prompted them to visit the marts which they had long frequented, it was with much caution and distrust.

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WHILE the difficulties of procuring the productions of the East were thus augmented, the people of Europe became more desirous of obtaining them. About this time some cities of Italy, particularly Amalphi and Venice, having acquired a greater degree of security or independence than they formerly possessed, began to cultivate the arts of domestic industry, with an ardour and ingenuity uncommon in the middle ages. The effect of these exertions was such an increase of wealth, as created new wants and desires, and formed a taste for elegance and luxury, which induced them to visit foreign countries in order to gratify it. Among men in this stage of their advancement, the productions of India have always been held in high estimation, and from this period they were imported into Italy in larger quantities, and came into more general use. Several circumstances which indicate this revival of a commercial spirit, are collected by the industrious Muratori; and from the close of the seventh century, an attentive observer may discern faint traces of its progress.\*

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\* Antiquit. Ital. medij Ævi, ii. 400. 408. 410. 883. 885. 894. Rer. Ital. Script. ii. 487. Histoire du Commerce de la Russie, par M. Scherer, tom. i. p. 11, &c.

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EVEN in enlightened ages, when the transactions of nations are observed and recorded with the greatest care, and the store of historical materials seems to be abundantly ample, so little attention has been paid to the operations of commerce, that every attempt towards a regular deduction of them has been found an undertaking of the utmost difficulty. The era, however, to which I have conducted this Disquisition, is one of the periods in the annals of mankind concerning which history furnishes most scanty information. As it was chiefly in the Greek empire, and in some cities of Italy, that any efforts were made to procure the commodities of India, and the other regions of the East, it is only from the historians of those countries we can expect to find any account of that trade. But from the age of Mahomet, until the time when the Comneni ascended the throne of Constantinople, a period of more than four centuries and a half, the Byzantine history is contained in meagre chronicles, the compilers of which seldom extended their views beyond the intrigues in the palace, the factions in the theatre, or the disputes of theologians. To them the monkish annalists of the different states and cities of Italy, during the same period, are, if possible, far inferior in merit; and in the early accounts of those cities which have been most celebrated for their commercial spirit, we search with little success for the origin or nature of that trade\* by which they

\* See NOTE XLI.

first rose to eminence. It is manifest, however, from the slightest attention to the events which happened in the seventh and eighth centuries, that the Italian states, while their coasts were continually infested by the Mahomedans, who had made some settlements there, and had subjected Sicily almost entirely to their dominion, could not trade with much confidence and security in Egypt and Syria. With what implacable hatred Christians viewed Mahomedans, as the disciples of an impostor, is well known; and as all the nations which professed the Christian faith, both in the East and West, had mingled the worship of angels and saints with that of the Supreme Being, and had adorned their churches with pictures and statues; the true Moslems considered themselves as the only assertors of the unity of God, and beheld Christians of every denomination with abhorrence, as idolaters. Much time was requisite to soften this mutual animosity, so far as to render intercourse in any degree cordial.

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MEANWHILE a taste for the luxuries of the East continued not only to spread in Italy, but, from imitation of the Italians, or from some improvement in their own situation, the people of Marseilles and other towns of France on the Mediterranean, became equally fond of them. But the profits exacted by the merchants of Amalphi or Venice, from whom they received those precious commodities, were so exorbitant as prompted them to make some effort to supply their own demands. With this view, they not only opened

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a trade with Constantinople, but ventured at times to visit the ports of Egypt and Syria.\* This eagerness of the Europeans, on the one hand, to obtain the productions of India, and on the other hand, considerable advantages which both the Caliphs and their subjects derived from the sale of them, induced both so far to conceal their reciprocal antipathy, as to carry on a traffic manifestly for their common benefit. How far this traffic extended, and in what mode it was conducted by these new adventurers, the scanty information which can be gathered from contemporary writers does not enable me to trace with accuracy. It is probable, however, that this communication would have produced insensibly its usual effect, of familiarizing and reconciling men of hostile principles and discordant manners to one another, and a regular commerce might have been established gradually between Christians and Mahomedans, upon such equal terms, that the nations of Europe might have received all the luxuries of the East by the same channels in which they were formerly conveyed to them, first by the Tyrians, then by the Greeks of Alexandria, next by the Romans, and at last by the subjects of the Constantinopolitan empire.

BUT whatever might have been the influence of this growing correspondence, it was prevented from operating with full effect by the Crusades, or expeditions for the recovery of the Holy Land,

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\* Mem. de Literat. tom. xxxvii. p. 467, &c. 483.

which, during two centuries, occupied the professors of the two rival religions, and contributed to alienate them more than ever from each other. I have, in another work,\* contemplated mankind while under the dominion of this frenzy, the most singular, perhaps, and the longest continued, of any that occurs in the history of our species; and I pointed out such effects of it upon government, upon property, upon manners and taste, as were suited to what were then the objects of my inquiry. At present my attention is confined to observe the commercial consequences of the Crusades, and how far they contributed to retard or to promote the conveyance of Indian commodities into Europe.

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To fix an idea of peculiar sanctity to that country which the Author of our religion selected as the place of his residence while on earth, and in which he accomplished the redemption of mankind, is a sentiment so natural to the human mind, that, from the first establishment of Christianity, the visiting of the holy places in Judea was considered as an exercise of piety, tending powerfully to awaken and to cherish a spirit of devotion. Through succeeding ages, the practice continued and increased in every part of Christendom. When Jerusalem was subjected to the Mahomedan empire, and danger was added to the fatigue and expense of a distant pilgrimage,

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\* Hist. of Charles V. vol. i. p. 26. edit. 1787.

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the undertaking was viewed as still more meritorious. It was sometimes enjoined as a penance to be performed by heinous transgressors; it was more frequently a duty undertaken with voluntary zeal; and in both cases it was deemed an expiation for all past offences. From various causes, which I have elsewhere enumerated,\* these pious visits to the Holy Land multiplied amazingly during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Not only individuals in the lower and middle ranks of life, but persons of superior condition, attended by large retinues, and numerous caravans of opulent pilgrims, resorted to Jerusalem.

IN all their operations, however, men have a wonderful dexterity in mingling some attention to interest with those functions which seem to be most purely spiritual. The Mahomedan caravans, which, in obedience to the injunctions of their religion, visit the holy temple of Mecca, are not composed, as I shall hereafter explain more fully, of devout pilgrims only, but of merchants, who, both in going and returning, are provided with such an assortment of goods, that they carry on a considerable traffic.† Even the Faquirs of India, whose wild enthusiasm seems to elevate them above all solicitude about the concerns of this world, have rendered their frequent pilgrimages subservient to their interest, by trading in

\* Hist. of Charles V. vol. i. p. 27. 285.

† Viagi di Ramusio, vol. i. p. 151, 152.



every country through which they travel.\* In like manner, it was not by devotion alone that such numerous bands of Christian pilgrims were induced to visit Jerusalem. To many of them commerce was the chief motive of undertaking that distant voyage; and, by exchanging the productions of Europe for the more valuable commodities of Asia, particularly those of India, which at that time were diffused through every part of the Caliph's dominions, they enriched themselves, and furnished their countrymen with such an additional supply of eastern luxuries, as augmented their relish for them.†

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BUT how faint soever the lines may be, which, prior to the Crusades, mark the influence of the frequent pilgrimages to the East upon commerce, they became so conspicuous after the commencement of these expeditions, as to meet the eye of every observer. Various circumstances concurred towards this, from an enumeration of which it will appear, that, by attending to the progress and effects of the Crusades, considerable light is thrown upon the subject of my inquiries. Great armies, conducted by the most illustrious princes and nobles of Europe, and composed of men of the most enterprising spirit in all the kingdoms of it, marched towards Palestine, through countries far advanced beyond those which they left

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\* See NOTE XLII.

† Gul. Tyr. lib. xvii. c. 4. p. 933. ap. Gesta Dei per Francos.

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\* Gul. Tyr. lib. xiii. c. 5. Alb. Aquens. Hist. Hieros. ap. Gesta Dei, vol. i. p. 247.

by the historians of the Holy War, who, being mostly priests and monks, had their attention directed to objects very different from those relating to commerce, there is reason to believe, that both in Constantinople, while subject to the Franks, and in the ports of Syria, acquired by the Christians, the long established trade with the East continued to be protected and encouraged.

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BUT though commerce may have been only a secondary object with the martial leaders of the Crusades, engaged in perpetual hostilities with the Turks on one hand, and with the Soldans of Egypt on the other, it was the primary object with the associates in conjunction with whom they carried on their operations. Numerous as the armies were which assumed the cross, and enterprising as the fanatical zeal was with which they were animated, they could not have accomplished their purpose, or even have reached the seat of their warfare, without securing the assistance of the Italian states. None of the other European powers could either furnish a sufficient number of transports to convey the armies of the Crusaders to the coast of Dalmatia, whence they marched to Constantinople, the place of general rendezvous; or were able to supply them with military stores and provisions in such abundance as to enable them to invade a distant country. In all the successive expeditions, the fleets of the Genoese, of the Pisans, or of the Venetians, kept on the coast as the armies advanced by land, and supplying them from time

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to time with whatever was wanting, engrossed all the profits of a branch of commerce, which, in every age, has been extremely lucrative. It was with all the interested attention of merchants, that the Italians afforded their aid. On the reduction of any place in which they found it for their interest to settle, they obtained from the Crusaders valuable immunities of different kinds; freedom of trade; an abatement of the usual duties paid for what was imported and exported, or a total exemption from them; the property of entire suburbs in some cities, and of extensive streets in others; and a privilege granted to every person who resided within their precincts, or who traded under their protection, of being tried by their own laws, and by judges of their own appointment.\* In consequence of so many advantages, we can trace, during the progress of the Crusades, a rapid increase of wealth and of power in all the commercial states of Italy. Every port open to trade was frequented by their merchants, who, having now engrossed entirely the commerce of the East, strove with such active emulation to find new markets for the commodities which it furnished, that they extended a taste for them to many parts of Europe, in which they had hitherto been little known.

Two events happened, prior to the termination of the Holy War, which, by acquiring to the Venetians and Genoese the possession of several

provinces in the Greek empire, enabled them to supply Europe more abundantly with all the productions of the East. The first was the conquest of Constantinople in the year one thousand two hundred and four, by the Venetians, and the leaders of the fourth Crusade. An account of the political interests and intrigues which formed this alliance, and turned the hallowed arms destined to deliver the Holy City from the dominion of infidels against a Christian monarch, is foreign from the design of this Disquisition. Constantinople was taken by storm, and plundered by the confederates. An Earl of Flanders was placed on the Imperial throne. The dominions which still remained subject to the successors of Constantine were divided into four parts, one of which being allotted to the new emperor for supporting the dignity and expense of government, an equal partition of the other three was made between the Venetians and the chiefs of the Crusade. The former, who, both in concerting and in conducting this enterprise, kept their eyes steadily fixed on what might be most for the emolument of their commerce, secured the territories of greatest value to a trading people. They obtained some part of the Peloponnesus, at that time the seat of flourishing manufactures, particularly of silk. They became masters of several of the largest and best cultivated islands in the Archipelago,\* and established a chain of settle-

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\* Danduli Chronic. ap. Murat, Script. Rer. Ital. vol. xii. p. 323. Mar. Sanuto Vite de Duchi di Venez. Murat. vol. xxii. p. 532.

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ments, partly military and partly commercial, extending from the Adriatic to the Bosphorus. Many Venetians settled in Constantinople, and without obstruction from their warlike associates, little attentive to the arts of industry, they engrossed the various branches of trade which had so long enriched that capital. Two of these particularly attracted their attention; the silk trade, and that with India. From the reign of Justinian it was mostly in Greece, and some of the adjacent islands, that silk-worms, which he first introduced into Europe, were reared. The product of their labours was manufactured into stuffs of various kinds, in many cities of the empire. But it was in Constantinople, the seat of opulence and luxury, that the demand for a commodity of such high price was greatest, and there, of consequence, the commerce of silk naturally centered. In assorting cargoes for the several ports in which they traded, the Venetians had for some time found silk to be an essential article, as it continued to grow more and more into request in every part of Europe. By the residence of so many of their citizens in Constantinople, and by the immunities granted to them, they not only procured silk in such abundance, and on such terms, as enabled them to carry on trade more extensively and with greater profit than formerly, but they became so thoroughly acquainted with every branch of the silk manufacture, as induced them to attempt the establishment of it in their own dominions. The measures taken for this purpose by individuals, as well as the regulations

framed by the state, were concerted with so much prudence, and executed with such success, that in a short time the silk fabrics of Venice vied with those of Greece and Sicily, and contributed both to enrich the republic, and to enlarge the sphere of its commerce. At the same time the Venetians availed themselves of the influence which they had acquired in Constantinople, in order to improve their Indian trade. The capital of the Greek empire, besides the means of being supplied with the productions of the East, which it enjoyed in common with the other commercial cities of Europe, received a considerable portion of them by a channel peculiar to itself. Some of the most valuable commodities of India and China were conveyed over land, by routes which I have described, to the Black Sea, and thence by a short navigation to Constantinople. To this market, the best stored of any except Alexandria, the Venetians had now easy access, and the goods which they purchased there made an addition of great consequence to what they were accustomed to acquire in the ports of Egypt and Syria. Thus, while the Latin empire in Constantinople subsisted, the Venetians possessed such advantages over all their rivals, that their commerce extended greatly, and it was chiefly from them every part of Europe received the commodities of the East.

THE other event which I had in view, was the subversion of the dominion of the Latins in Constantinople, and the re-establishment of the

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Imperial family on the throne. This was effected after a period of fifty-seven years, partly by a transient effort of vigour, with which indignation at a foreign yoke animated the Greeks, and partly by the powerful assistance which they received from the republic of Genoa. The Genoese were so sensible of the advantages which the Venetians, their rivals in trade, derived from their union with the Latin emperors of Constantinople, that, in order to deprive them of these, they surmounted the most deep-rooted prejudices of their age, and combined with the schismatic Greeks to dethrone a monarch protected by the papal power, setting at defiance the thunders of the Vatican, which at that time made the greatest princes tremble. This undertaking, bold and impious as it was then deemed, proved successful. In recompense for their signal services, the gratitude or weakness of the Greek emperor, among other donations, bestowed upon the Genoese Pera, the chief suburb of Constantinople, to be held as a fief of the empire, together with such exemption from the accustomed duties on goods imported and exported, as gave them a decided superiority over every competitor in trade. With the vigilant attention of merchants, the Genoese availed themselves of this favourable situation. They surrounded their new settlement in Pera with fortifications. They rendered their factories on the adjacent coast places of strength.\* They were masters of the harbour of Constan-

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\* Niceph. Grégor. lib. xi. c. I. § 6. lib. xvii. c. 1. § 2.



tinople more than the Greeks themselves. The whole trade of the Black Sea came into their hands; and not satisfied with this, they took possession of part of the Chersonesus Taurica, the modern Crimea, and rendered Caffa, its principal town, the chief seat of their trade with the East, and the port in which all its productions, conveyed to the Black Sea by the different routes I have formerly described, were landed.\*

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IN consequence of this revolution, Genoa became the greatest commercial power in Europe; and if the enterprising industry and intrepid courage of its citizens had been under the direction of wise domestic policy, it might have long held that rank. But never was there a contrast more striking, than between the internal administration of the two rival republics of Venice and Genoa. In the former, government was conducted with steady systematic prudence; in the latter, it was consistent in nothing but a fondness for novelty, and a propensity to change. The one enjoyed a perpetual calm, the other was agitated with all the storms and vicissitudes of faction. The increase of wealth which flowed into Genoa from the exertions of its merchants, did not counterbalance the defects in its political constitution; and even in its most prosperous

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\* Foileta Hist. Genuens. ap. Græv. Thes. Antiq. Ital. i. 387. De Marinis de Genuens. Dignit. ib. 1486. Niceph. Greg. lib. xiii. c. 12. Murat. Annal. d'Ital. lib. vii. c. 351. See NOTE XLIII.

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state we may discern the appearance of symptoms which foreboded a diminution of its opulence and power.

As long, however, as the Genoese retained the ascendant which they had acquired in the Greek empire, the Venetians felt their commercial transactions with it to be carried on upon such unequal terms, that their merchants visited Constantinople seldom, and with reluctance; and in order to procure the commodities of the East in such quantities as were demanded in the various parts of Europe which they were accustomed to supply, they were obliged to resort to the ancient staples of that trade. Of these Alexandria was the chief, and the most abundantly supplied, as the conveyance of Indian goods by land through Asia, to any of the ports of the Mediterranean, was often rendered impracticable by the incursions of Turks, Tartars, and other hordes, which successively desolated that fertile country, or contended for the dominion of it. But under the military and vigorous government of the Soldans of the Mamelukes, security and order were steadily maintained in Egypt, and trade, though loaded with heavy duties, was open to all. In proportion to the progress of the Genoese in engrossing the commerce of Constantinople and the Black Sea,\* the Venetians found it more and more necessary to enlarge their transactions with Alexandria.

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\* See NOTE XLIV.

BUT such an avowed intercourse with infidels being considered, in that age, as unbecoming the character of Christians, the senate of Venice, in order to silence its own scruples, or those of its subjects, had recourse to the infallible authority of the Pope, who was supposed to be possessed of power to dispense with the rigorous observation of the most sacred laws, and obtained permission from him to fit out annually a specified number of ships for the ports of Egypt and of Syria.\* Under this sanction the republic concluded a treaty of commerce with the Soldans of Egypt, on equitable terms; in consequence of which the senate appointed one consul to reside in Alexandria, and another in Damascus, in a public character, and to exercise a mercantile jurisdiction, authorized by the Soldans. Under their protection, Venetian merchants and artisans settled in each of these cities. Ancient prejudices and antipathies were forgotten, and their mutual interests established, for the first time, a fair and open trade between Christians and Mahomedans.†

WHILE the Venetians and Genoese were alternately making those extraordinary efforts, in order to engross all the advantages of supplying Europe with the productions of the East, the republic of Florence, originally a commercial democracy, applied with such persevering vigour to

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\* See NOTE XLV.

† Sandi Storia Civile Veneziana, lib. v. c. 15. p. 248, &c.

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trade, and the genius of the people, as well as the nature of their institutions, were so favourable to its progress, that the state advanced rapidly in power, and the people in opulence. But as the Florentines did not possess any commodious sea-port, their active exertions were directed chiefly towards the improvement of their manufactures and domestic industry. About the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Florentine manufactures of various kinds, particularly those of silk and woollen cloth, appear from the enumeration of a well informed historian, to have been very considerable.\* The connexion which they formed in different parts of Europe, by furnishing them with the productions of their own industry, led them to engage in another branch of trade, that of banking. In this they soon became so eminent, that the money transactions of almost every kingdom in Europe passed through their hands, and in many of them they were intrusted with the collection and administration of the public revenues. In consequence of the activity and success with which they conducted their manufactures and money transactions, the former always attended with certain though moderate profit, the latter lucrative in an high degree, at a period when neither the interest of money, nor the premium on bills of exchange, were settled with accuracy, Florence became

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\* Giov. Villani Hist. Florent. ap. Murat. Script. Rer. Ital. vol. xiii. p. 823. Dell' Istorie Florentine, di Scip. Ammirato, lib. iv. p. 151. lib. viii. p. 299.

one of the first cities in Christendom, and many of its citizens extremely opulent. Cosmo di Medici, the head of a family which rose from obscurity by its success in trade, was reckoned the most wealthy merchant ever known in Europe;\* and in acts of public munificence, as well as of private generosity, in the patronage of learning, and in the encouragement of useful and elegant arts, no monarch of the age could vie with him. Whether the Medici, in their first mercantile transactions, carried on any commerce with the East, I have not been able to discover.† It is more probable, I should think, that their trade was confined to the same articles with that of their countrymen. But as soon as the common-wealth, by the conquest of Pisa, had acquired a communication with the ocean, Cosmo di Medici, who had the chief direction of its affairs, endeavoured to procure for his country a share in that lucrative commerce which had raised Venice and Genoa so far above all the other Italian states. With this view ambassadors were sent to Alexandria, in order to prevail with the Soldan to open that and the other ports of his dominions to the subjects of the republic, and to admit them to a participation in all the commercial privileges which were enjoyed by the Venetians. The negotiation terminated with such success, that the Florentines seem to have obtained some share in

A. C. 1405.

A. C. 1425.

\* Fr. Mich. Brutus Hist. Flor. p. 37. 62. Chron. Eugubinum ap. Murat. Script. Rer. Ital. vol. xiv. p. 1007. Denina Revol. d'Italie, tom. vi. p. 263, &c.

† See NOTE XLVI.

SECT. the Indian trade;\* and soon after this period we  
 III. find spices enumerated among the commodities  
 imported by the Florentines into England.†

IN some parts of this Disquisition concerning the nature and course of trade with the East, I have been obliged to grope my way, and often under the guidance of very feeble lights. But as we are now approaching to the period when the modern ideas, with respect to the importance of commerce, began to unfold, and attention to its progress and effects became a more considerable object of policy, we may hope to carry on what researches yet remain to be made, with greater certainty and precision. To this growing attention we are indebted for the account which Marino Sanudo, a Venetian nobleman, gives of the Indian trade, as carried on by his countrymen, about the beginning of the fourteenth century. They were supplied, as he informs us, with the productions of the East in two different ways. Those of small bulk and high value, such as cloves, nutmegs, mace, gems, pearls, &c. were conveyed from the Persian Gulf up the Tigris to Bassora, and thence to Bagdat, from which they were carried to some port on the Mediterranean. All more bulky goods, such as pepper, ginger, cinnamon, &c. together with some portion of the more valuable articles, were conveyed by the ancient route to the Red Sea, and thence across the desert, and down the Nile, to Alexandria. The

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\* See NOTE XLVII. † Hakluyt, vol. i. p. 193.

goods received by the former route were, as Sannudo observes, of superior quality, but from the tediousness and expense of a distant land carriage, the supply was often scanty; nor can he conceal (though contrary to a favourite project which he had in view when he wrote the treatise to which I refer) that, from the state of the countries through which the caravans passed, this mode of conveyance was frequently precarious and attended with danger.\*

It was in Alexandria only that the Venetians found always a certain and full supply of Indian goods; and as these were conveyed thither chiefly by water carriage, they might have purchased them at a moderate price, if the Soldans had not imposed upon them duties which amounted to a third part of their full value. Under this and every other disadvantage, however, it was necessary to procure them, as from many concurring circumstances, particularly a more extensive intercourse established among the different nations of Europe, the demand for them continued to increase greatly during the fourteenth century. By the irruptions of the various hostile tribes of Barbarians, who took possession of the greater part of Europe, that powerful bond by which the Romans had united together all the people of their vast empire was entirely dissolved, and such

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\* Mar. Sanuti *Secreta Fidelium Crucis*, p. 22, &c. ap. Bongarsium.

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discouragement was given to the communication of one nation with another, as would appear altogether incredible, if the evidence of it rested wholly upon the testimony of historians, and were not confirmed by what is still more authentic, the express enactment of laws. Several statutes of this kind, which disgrace the jurisprudence of almost every European nation, I have enumerated and explained in another work.\* But when the wants and desires of men multiplied, and they found that other countries could furnish the means of supplying and gratifying them, the hostile sentiments which kept nations at a distance from each other abated, and mutual correspondence gradually took place. From the time of the Crusades, which first brought people, hardly known to one another, to associate, and to act in concert during two centuries, in pursuit of one common end, several circumstances had co-operated towards accelerating this general intercourse. The people around the Baltic, hitherto dreaded and abhorred by the rest of Europe as pirates and invaders, assumed more pacific manners, and began now to visit their neighbours as merchants. Occurrences foreign from the subject of the present inquiry, united them together in the powerful commercial confederacy so famous in the middle ages, under the name of the Hanseatic League, and led them to establish the staple of their trade with the southern parts of Europe in Bruges. Thither the merchants of Italy, particularly those



of Venice, resorted ; and in return for the productions of the East, and the manufactures of their own country, they received not only the naval stores and other commodities of the north, but a considerable supply of gold and silver from the mines in various provinces of Germany, the most valuable and productive of any known at that time in Europe.\* Bruges continued to be the great mart or storehouse of European trade during the period to which my inquiries extend. A regular communication, formerly unknown, was kept up there among all the kingdoms into which our continent is divided ; and we are enabled to account for the rapid progress of the Italian states in wealth and power, by observing how much their trade, the source from which both were derived, must have augmented upon the vast increase in the consumption of Asiatic goods, when all the extensive countries towards the north-east of Europe were opened for their reception.

DURING this prosperous and improving state of Indian commerce, Venice received from one of its citizens such new information concerning the countries which produced the precious commodities that formed the most valuable article of its trade, as gave an idea of their opulence, their population, and their extent, which rose far above all the former conceptions of Europeans. From the time that the Mahomedans became masters

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\* Zimmerman's Polit. Survey of Europe, p. 102.

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of Egypt, as no Christian was permitted to pass through their dominions to the east,\* the direct intercourse of Europeans with India ceased entirely. The account of India by Cosmas Indicopleustes in the sixth century, is, as far as I know, the last which the nations of the west received from any person who had visited that country. But about the middle of the thirteenth century, the spirit of commerce, now become more enterprising, and more eager to discover new routes which led to wealth, induced Marco Polo, a Venetian of a noble family, after trading for some time in many of the opulent cities of the Lesser Asia, to penetrate into the more eastern parts of that continent, as far as to the court of the Great Khan on the frontier of China. During the course of twenty-six years, partly employed in mercantile transactions, and partly in conducting negotiations with which the Great Khan intrusted him, he explored many regions of the East which no European had ever visited.

HE describes the great kingdom of Cathay, the name by which China is still known in many parts of the East,† and travelled through it from Chambalu or Peking, on its northern frontier, to some of its most southern provinces. He visited different parts of Indostan, and is the first

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\* Sanuto, p. 23.

† Herbelot Bib. Orient. artic. *Khathai*. Stewart, Account of Thibet, Phil. Trans. lxxvii. 474. Voyage of A. Jinkinson, Hakluyt, i. 333.

who mentions Bengal and Guzzerat, by their present names, as great and opulent kingdoms. Besides what he discovered on his journeys by land, he made more than one voyage in the Indian Ocean, and acquired some information concerning an island which he calls Zipangri, or Cipango, probably Japan. He visited in person Java, Sumatra, and several islands contiguous to them, the island of Ceylon, and the coast of Malabar, as far as the Gulf of Cambay, to all which he gives the names that they now bear. This was the most extensive survey hitherto made of the East, and the most complete description of it ever given by any European; and, in an age which had hardly any knowledge of those regions but what was derived from the geography of Ptolemy, not only the Venetians, but all the people of Europe, were astonished at the discovery of immense countries open to their view beyond what had hitherto been reputed the utmost boundary of the earth in that quarter.\*

BUT while men of leisure and speculation occupied themselves with examining the discoveries of Marco Polo, which gave rise to conjectures and theories productive of most important consequences, an event happened that drew the attention of all Europe, and had a most conspicuous effect upon the course of that trade, the progress of which I am endeavouring to trace.

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\* See NOTE XLVIII.

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A. D. 1455.

THE event to which I allude, is the final conquest of the Greek empire by Mahomet II. and the establishing the seat of the Turkish government in Constantinople. The immediate effect of this great revolution was, that the Genoese residing in Pera, involved in the general calamity, were obliged not only to abandon that settlement, but all those which they had made on the adjacent sea-coast, after they had been in their possession near two centuries. Not long after, the victorious arms of the Sultan expelled them from Caffa, and every other place which they held in the Crimea.\* Constantinople was no longer a mart open to the nations of the West for Indian commodities, and no supply of them could now be obtained but in Egypt and the ports of Syria, subject to the Soldans of the Mamelukes. The Venetians, in consequence of the protection and privileges which they had secured by their commercial treaty with those powerful Princes, carried on trade in every part of their dominions with such advantage, as gave them a superiority over every competitor. Genoa, which had long been their most formidable rival, humbled by the loss of its possessions in the East, and weakened by domestic dissensions, declined so fast, that it was obliged to court foreign protection, and submitted alternately to the dominion of the Dukes of Milan and the Kings of France. In consequence of this diminution of their political power,

A. D. 1474.

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\* Folieta Hist. Genu. 602. 626. Murat. Annali d'Ital. ix. 451. *Calif - Digitized by Microsoft®*

the commercial exertions of the Genoese became less vigorous. A feeble attempt which they made to recover that share of the Indian trade which they had formerly enjoyed, by offering to enter into treaty with the Soldans of Egypt upon terms similar to those which had been granted to the Venetians, proved unsuccessful; and during the remainder of the fifteenth century, Venice supplied the greater part of Europe with the productions of the East, and carried on trade to an extent far beyond what had been known in those times.

THE state of the other European nations was extremely favourable to the commercial progress of the Venetians. England, desolated by the civil wars which the unhappy contest between the houses of York and Lancaster excited, had hardly begun to turn its attention towards those objects and pursuits to which it is indebted for its present opulence and power. In France, the fatal effects of the English arms and conquests were still felt, and the King had neither acquired power, nor the people inclination, to direct the national genius and activity to the arts of peace. The union of the different kingdoms of Spain was not yet completed: some of its most fertile provinces were still under the dominion of the Moors, with whom the Spanish monarchs waged perpetual war; and, except by the Catalans, little attention was paid to foreign trade. Portugal, though it had already entered upon that career of discovery which terminated with most

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splendid success, had not yet made such progress in it as to be entitled to any high rank among the commercial states of Europe. Thus the Venetians, almost without rival or competitor, except from some of the inferior Italian states, were left at liberty to concert and to execute their mercantile plans; and their trade with the cities of the Hanseatic League, which united the north and south of Europe, and which hitherto had been common to all the Italians, was now engrossed, in a great measure, by them alone.

WHILE the increasing demand for the productions of Asia induced all the people of Europe to court intercourse with the Venetians so eagerly, as to allure them, by various immunities, to frequent their sea-ports, we may observe a peculiarity in their mode of carrying on trade with the East, which distinguishes it from what has taken place in other countries in any period of history. In the ancient world, the Tyrians, the Greeks who were masters of Egypt, and the Romans, sailed to India in quest of those commodities with which they supplied the people of the West. In modern times, the same has been the practice of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English, and, after their example, of other European nations. In both periods loud complaints have been made, that in carrying on this trade every state must be drained of the precious metals, which, in the course of it, flow incessantly from the west to the east, never to return. From whatever loss might have been occasioned by this gradual but una-

voidable diminution of their gold and silver; (whether a real or only an imaginary loss, it is not incumbent upon me in this place to inquire or to determine), the Venetians were, in a great measure, exempted. They had no direct intercourse with India. They found in Egypt, or in Syria, warehouses filled with all the commodities of the East, imported by the Mahomedans; and from the best accounts we have with respect to the nature of their trade, they purchased them more frequently by barter than with ready money. Egypt, the chief mart for Indian goods, though a most fertile country, is destitute of many things requisite in an improved state of society, either for accommodation or for ornament. Too limited in extent, and too highly cultivated to afford space for forests; too level to have mines of the useful metals; it must be supplied with timber for building, with iron, lead, tin and brass, by importation from other countries. The Egyptians, while under the dominion of the Mamelukes, seem not themselves to have traded in the ports of any Christian state, and it was principally from the Venetians that they received all the articles which I have enumerated. Besides these, the ingenuity of the Venetian artists furnished a variety of manufactures of woollen cloths, silk stuffs of various fabric, camblets, mirrors, arms, ornaments of gold and silver, glass, and many other articles, for all which they found a ready market in Egypt and Syria. In return, they received from the merchants of Alexandria, spices of every kind, drugs, gems, pearls, ivory, cotton and silk, unwrought

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as well as manufactured, in many different forms, and other productions of the East, together with several valuable articles of Egyptian growth or fabric. In Aleppo, Baruth, and other cities, besides the proper commodities of India brought thither by land, they added to their cargoes the carpets of Persia, the rich wrought silks of Damascus, still known by the name taken from that city, and various productions of art and nature peculiar to Syria, Palestine, and Arabia. If at any time their demand for the productions of the East went beyond what they could procure in exchange for their own manufactures, that trade with the cities of the Hanseatic League which I have mentioned, furnished them, from the mines of Germany, with a regular supply of gold and silver, which they could carry with advantage to the markets of Egypt and Syria.

FROM a propensity, remarkable in all commercial states, to subject the operations of trade to political regulation and restraint, the authority of the Venetian government seems to have been interposed, both in directing the importation of Asiatic goods, and in the mode of circulating them among the different nations of Europe. To every considerable staple in the Mediterranean a certain number of large vessels, known by the name of *Galeons* or *Caracks*, was fitted out on the public account,\* and returned loaded with the

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\* Sabellicus, Hist. Rer. Venet. Dec. iv. lib. iii. p. 868. Denina Revol. d'Italie, tom. vi. 340. Microsoft®



richest merchandise, the profit arising from the sale of which must have been no slender addition to the revenue of the republic. Citizens, however, of every class, particularly persons of noble families, were encouraged to engage in foreign trade, and whoever employed a vessel of a certain burden for this purpose, received a considerable bounty from the state.\* It was in the same manner, partly in ships belonging to the public, and partly in those of private traders, that the Venetians circulated through Europe the goods imported from the East, as well as the produce of their own dominions and manufactures.

THERE are two different ways by which we may come at some knowledge of the magnitude of those branches of commerce carried on by the Venetians. The one, by attending to the great variety and high value of the commodities which they imported into Bruges, the storehouse from which the more northern nations of Europe were supplied. A full enumeration of these is given by a well-informed author, in which is contained almost every article deemed in that age essential to accommodation or to elegance.† The other, by considering the effects of the Venetian trade upon the cities admitted to a participation of its advantages. Never did wealth appear more conspicuously in the train of commerce. The citizens of Bruges, enriched by it, displayed in their

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\* Sandi Stor. Civ. Venez. lib. viii. 891.

† Lud. Guicciardini Descript. de Paesi Bassi, p. 173. ®

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dress, their buildings, and mode of living, such magnificence as even to mortify the pride and excite the envy of royalty.\* Antwerp, when the staple was removed thither, soon rivalled Bruges in opulence and splendour. In some cities of Germany, particularly in Augsburg, the great mart for Indian commodities in the interior parts of that extensive country, we meet with early examples of such large fortunes accumulated by mercantile industry, as raised the proprietors of them to high rank and consideration in the empire.

FROM observing this remarkable increase of opulence in all the places where the Venetians had an established trade, we are led to conclude, that the profit accruing to themselves from the different branches of it, especially that with the East, must have been still more considerable. It is impossible, however, without information much more minute than that to which we have access, to form an estimate of this with accuracy; but various circumstances may be produced to establish, in general, the justness of this conclusion. From the first revival of a commercial spirit in Europe, the Venetians possessed a large share of the trade with the East. It continued gradually to increase, and during a great part of the fifteenth century they had nearly a monopoly of it. This was productive of consequences attending all monopolies. Wherever there is no competition, and the merchant has it in his power to re-

\* See Note XLIX.

gulate the market, and to fix the price of the commodities which he vends, his gains will be exorbitant. Some idea of their magnitude, during several centuries, may be formed by attending to the rate of the premium or interest then paid for the use of money. This is undoubtedly the most exact standard by which to measure the profit arising from the capital stock employed in commerce; for, according as the interest of money is high or low, the gain acquired by the use of it must vary, and become excessive or moderate. From the close of the eleventh century to the commencement of the sixteenth, the period during which the Italians made their chief commercial exertions, the rate of interest was extremely high. It was usually twenty per cent, sometimes above that; and so late as the year one thousand five hundred, it had not sunk below ten or twelve per cent in any part of Europe.\* If the profits of a trade so extensive as that of the Venetians corresponded to this high value of money, it could not fail of proving a source of great wealth, both public and private.† The condition of Venice, accordingly, during the period under review, is described by writers of that age, in terms which are not applicable to that of any other country in Europe. The revenues of the republic, as well as the wealth amassed by individuals, exceeded whatever was elsewhere known. In the magnificence of their houses, in richness of furniture,

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\* Hist. of Charles V. vol. i. p. 401, &c.

† See NOTE L.

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in profusion of plate, and in every thing which contributed either towards elegance or parade in their mode of living, the nobles of Venice surpassed the state of the greatest monarchs beyond the Alps. Nor was all this display the effect of an ostentatious and inconsiderate dissipation; it was the natural consequence of successful industry, which, having accumulated wealth with ease, is entitled to enjoy it in splendour.\*

NEVER did the Venetians believe the power of their country to be more firmly established, or rely with greater confidence on the continuance and increase of its opulence, than towards the close of the fifteenth century, when two events (which they could neither foresee nor prevent) happened, that proved fatal to both. The one was the discovery of America: The other was the opening a direct course of navigation to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope. Of all occurrences in the history of the human race, these are undoubtedly among the most interesting; and as they occasioned a remarkable change of intercourse among the different quarters of the globe, and finally established those commercial ideas and arrangements which constitute the chief distinction between the manners and policy of ancient and of modern times, an account of them is intimately connected with the subject of this Disquisition, and will bring it to that period which I have fixed upon for its boundary. But as I have

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\* See NOTE LI.

related the rise and progress of these discoveries at great length in another work,\* a rapid view of them is all that is requisite in this place.

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THE admiration or envy with which the other nations of Europe beheld the power and wealth of Venice, led them naturally to inquire into the causes of this pre-eminence; and among these, its lucrative commerce with the East appeared to be by far the most considerable. Mortified with being excluded from a source of opulence, which to the Venetians had proved so abundant, different countries had attempted to acquire a share of the Indian trade. Some of the Italian states endeavoured to obtain admission into the ports of Egypt and Syria, upon the same terms with the Venetians; but either by the superior interest of the Venetians in the court of the Soldans, their negotiations for that purpose were rendered unsuccessful; or from the manifold advantages which merchants, long in possession of any branch of trade, have in a competition with new adventurers, all their exertions did not produce effects of any consequence.† In other countries, various schemes were formed with the same view. As early as the year one thousand four hundred and eighty, the inventive and enterprising genius of Columbus conceived the idea of opening a shorter and more certain communication with India, by holding a direct westerly course towards those

\* Hist. of America, Books I. and II.

† See NOTE LII.

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regions, which, according to Marco Polo and other travellers, extended eastward far beyond the utmost limits of Asia known to the Greeks or Romans. This scheme, supported by arguments deduced from a scientific acquaintance with cosmography, from his own practical knowledge of navigation, from the reports of skilful pilots, and from the theories and conjectures of the ancients, he proposed first to the Genoese his countrymen, and next to the King of Portugal, into whose service he had entered. It was rejected by the former from ignorance, and by the latter with circumstances most humiliating to a generous mind. By perseverance, however, and address, he at length induced the most wary and least adventurous court in Europe, to undertake the execution of his plan; and Spain, as the reward of this deviation from its usual cautious maxims, had the glory of discovering a new world, hardly inferior in magnitude to a third part of the habitable globe. Astonishing as the success of Columbus was, it did not fully accomplish his own wishes, or conduct him to those regions of the East, the expectation of reaching which was the original object of his voyage. The effects, however, of his discoveries were great and extensive. By giving Spain the possession of immense territories, abounding in rich mines, and many valuable productions of nature, several of which had hitherto been deemed peculiar to India, wealth began to flow so copiously into that kingdom, and thence was so diffused over Europe, as gradually awakened a general spirit of industry, and called forth

exertions, which alone must have soon turned the course of commerce into new channels.

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BUT this was accomplished more speedily, as well as more completely, by the other great event which I mentioned, the discovery of a new route of navigation to the East by the Cape of Good Hope. When the Portuguese, to whom mankind are indebted for opening this communication between the most remote parts of the habitable globe, undertook their first voyage of discovery, it is probable that they had nothing farther in view than to explore those parts of the coast of Africa which lay nearest to their own country. But a spirit of enterprisé, when roused and put in motion, is always progressive; and that of the Portuguese, though slow and timid in its first operations, gradually acquired vigour, and prompted them to advance along the western shore of the African continent, far beyond the utmost boundary of ancient navigation in that direction. Encouraged by success, this spirit became more adventurous, despised dangers which formerly appalled it, and surmounted difficulties which it once deemed insuperable. When the Portuguese found in the torrid zone, which the ancients had pronounced to be uninhabitable, fertile countries, occupied by numerous nations, and perceived that the continent of Africa, instead of extending in breadth towards the west, according to the opinion of Ptolemy, appeared to contract itself and to bend eastwards, more extensive prospects open-

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ed to their view, and inspired them with hopes of reaching India, by continuing to hold the same course which they had so long pursued.

AFTER several unsuccessful attempts to accomplish what they had in view, a small squadron sailed from the Tagus, under the command of Vasco de Gama, an officer of rank, whose abilities and courage fitted him to conduct the most difficult and arduous enterprises. From unacquaintance, however, with the proper season and route of navigation in that vast ocean through which he had to steer his course, his voyage was long and dangerous. At length he doubled that promontory, which for several years had been the object of terror and of hope to his countrymen. From that, after a prosperous navigation along the south-east of Africa, he arrived at the city of Melinda, and had the satisfaction of discovering there, as well as at other places where he touched, people of a race very different from the rude inhabitants of the western shore of that continent, which alone the Portuguese had hitherto visited. These he found to be so far advanced in civilization, and acquaintance with the various arts of life, that they carried on an active commerce, not only with the nations on their own coast, but with remote countries of Asia. Conducted by their pilots (who held a course with which experience had rendered them well acquainted) he sailed across the Indian Ocean, and landed at Calecut, on the coast of Malabar, on the twenty-second of May, one thou-



sand four hundred and ninety-eight, ten months and two days after his departure from the port of Lisbon.

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THE Samorin, or monarch of the country, astonished at this unexpected visit of an unknown people, whose aspect, and arms, and manners, bore no resemblance to any of the nations accustomed to frequent his harbours, and who arrived in his dominions by a route hitherto deemed impracticable, received them, at first, with that fond admiration which is often excited by novelty. But in a short time, as if he had been inspired with foresight of all the calamities now approaching India by this fatal communication opened with the inhabitants of Europe, he formed various schemes to cut off Gama and his followers. But from every danger to which he was exposed, either by the open attacks or secret machinations of the Indians, the Portuguese admiral extricated himself with singular prudence and intrepidity, and at last sailed from Calecut with his ships loaded, not only with the commodities peculiar to that coast, but with many of the rich productions of the eastern parts of India.

ON his return to Lisbon, he was received with the admiration and gratitude due to a man, who, by his superior abilities and resolution, had conducted to such a happy issue an undertaking of the greatest importance, which had long occupied the thoughts of his sovereign, and excited

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\* Asia de João de Barros, dec. i. lib. iv. c. 11. Castagneda, Hist. de l'Inde, trad. en François, lib. i. c. 2—28.

WHAT these revolutions were most likely to be, and how they would operate, were points examined with particular attention in the cities of Lisbon and of Venice, but with feelings very different. The Portuguese, founding upon the rights which, in that age, priority of discovery, confirmed by a papal grant, were supposed to confer, deemed themselves entitled to an exclusive commerce with the countries which they had first visited, began to enjoy by anticipation all the benefits of it, and to fancy that their capital would soon be what Venice then was, the great storehouse of eastern commodities to all Europe, and the seat of opulence and power. On the first intelligence of Gama's successful voyage, the Venetians, with the quick-sighted discernment of merchants, foresaw the immediate consequence of it to be the ruin of that lucrative branch of commerce which had contributed so greatly to enrich and aggrandize their country; and they observed this with more poignant concern, as they were apprehensive that they did not possess any effectual means of preventing, or even retarding, its operation.

THE hopes and fears of both were well founded. The Portuguese entered upon the new career opened to them with activity and ardour, and made exertions, both commercial and military, far beyond what could have been expected from a kingdom of such inconsiderable extent. All these were directed by an intelligent monarch, capable of forming plans of the greatest magni-<sup>③</sup>

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tude with calm systematic wisdom, and of prosecuting them with unremitting perseverance. The prudence and vigour of his measures, however, would have availed little without proper instruments to carry them into execution. Happily for Portugal, the discerning eye of Emanuel selected a succession of officers to take the supreme command in India, who, by their enterprising valour, military skill, and political sagacity, accompanied with disinterested integrity, public spirit, and love of their country, have a title to be ranked with the persons most eminent for virtue and abilities in any age or nation. Greater things perhaps were achieved by them than were ever accomplished in so short a time. Before the close of Emanuel's reign, twenty-four years only after the voyage of Gama, the Portuguese had rendered themselves masters of the city of Malacca, in which the great staple of trade carried on among the inhabitants of all those regions in Asia which Europeans have distinguished by the general name of the East Indies, was then established. To this port, situated nearly at an equal distance from the eastern and western extremities of these countries, and possessing the command of that strait by which they keep communication with each other,\* the merchants of China, of Japan, of every kingdom on the continent, of the Moluccas, and all the islands in the Archipelago, resorted from the East; and those

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\* Decad. de Carros, dec. i. lib. viii. c. 1. Osor. de reb. Eman. lib. vii. 213, &c.

of Malabar, of Ceylon, of Coromandel, and of Bengal, from the West. This conquest secured to the Portuguese great influence over the interior commerce of India, while, at the same time, by their settlements at Goa and Diu, they were enabled to engross the trade of the Malabar Coast, and to obstruct greatly the long-established intercourse of Egypt with India by the Red Sea. Their ships frequented every port in the East where valuable commodities were to be found, from the Cape of Good Hope to the river of Canton; and along this immense stretch of coast, extending upwards of four thousand leagues,\* they had established for the conveniency or protection of trade, a chain of forts or factories. They had likewise taken possession of stations most favourable to commerce along the southern coast of Africa, and in many of the islands which lie between Madagascar and the Moluccas. In every part of the East they were received with respect, in many they had acquired the absolute command. They carried on trade there without rival or controul; they prescribed to the natives the terms of their mutual intercourse; they often set what price they pleased on goods which they purchased; and were thus enabled to import from Indostan and the regions beyond it, whatever is useful, rare, or agreeable, in greater abundance, and of more various kinds, than had been known formerly in Europe.

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\* Hist. Gener. des Voyages, tom. i. p. 140.

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NOT satisfied with this ascendant which they had acquired in India, the Portuguese early formed a scheme, no less bold than interested, of excluding all other nations from participating of the advantages of commerce with the East. In order to effect this, it was necessary to obtain possession of such stations in the Arabian and Persian Gulfs, as might render them masters of the navigation of these two inland seas, and enable them both to obstruct the ancient commercial intercourse between Egypt and India, and to command the entrance of the great rivers which facilitated the conveyance of Indian goods, not only through the interior provinces of Asia, but as far as Constantinople. The conduct of the measures for this purpose was committed to Alphonso Albuquerque, the most eminent of all the Portuguese generals who distinguished themselves in India. After the utmost efforts of genius and valour, he was able to accomplish one-half only of what the ambition of his countrymen had planned. By wresting the island of Ormuz, which commanded the mouth of the Persian Gulf, from the petty princes, who, as tributaries to the monarchs of Persia, had established their dominion there, he secured to Portugal that extensive trade with the East which the Persians had carried on for several centuries. In the hands of the Portuguese, Ormuz soon became the great mart from which the Persian empire, and all the provinces of Asia to the west of it, were supplied with the productions of India; and a city which they built on that barren island,

destitute of water, was rendered one of the chief seats of opulence, splendour, and luxury in the Eastern World.\*

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THE operations of Albuquerque in the Red Sea were far from being attended with equal success. Partly by the vigorous resistance of the Arabian Princes whose ports he attacked, and partly by the damage his fleet sustained in a sea of which the navigation is remarkably difficult and dangerous, he was constrained to retire without effecting any settlement of importance.† The ancient channel of intercourse with India by the Red Sea still continued open to the Egyptians; but their commercial transactions in that country were greatly circumscribed and obstructed, by the influence which the Portuguese had acquired in every port to which they were accustomed to resort.

IN consequence of this, the Venetians soon began to feel that decrease of their own Indian trade which they had foreseen and dreaded. In order to prevent the farther progress of this evil, they persuaded the Soldan of the Mamelukes, equally alarmed with themselves at the rapid success of the Portuguese in the East, and no less interested to hinder them from engrossing that

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\* Osorius de reb. gestis Eman. lib. x. p. 274, &c. Travernier's Travels, book v. c. 23. Kœmpfer Amœnit. Exot. p. 756, &c.

† Osorius, lib. ix. p. 248, &c.

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commerce, which had so long been the chief source of opulence both to the monarchs and to the people of Egypt, to enter into a negotiation with the Pope and the King of Portugal. The tone which the Soldan assumed in this negotiation was such as became the fierce chief of a military government. After stating his exclusive right to the trade with India, he forewarned Julius II. and Emanuel, that if the Portuguese did not relinquish that new course of navigation by which they had penetrated into the Indian Ocean, and cease from encroaching on that commerce which from time immemorial had been carried on between the east of Asia and his dominions, he would put to death all the Christians in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, burn their churches, and demolish the holy sepulchre itself.\* This formidable threat, which, during several centuries, would have made all Christendom tremble, seems to have made so little impression, that the Venetians, as the last expedient, had recourse to a measure which, in that age, was deemed not only reprehensible but impious. They incited the Soldan to fit out a fleet in the Red Sea, and to attack those unexpected invaders of a gainful monopoly, of which he and his predecessors had long enjoyed undisturbed possession. As Egypt did not produce timber proper for building ships of force, the Venetians permitted the Soldan to cut it in their forests of Dalmatia, whence it was

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\* Osorius de rebus Eman. lib. iv. p. 110. edit. 1580. Asia de Barros, decad. i. lib. viii. c. 2. Microsoft®



conveyed to Alexandria, and then carried partly by water and partly by land to Suez. There twelve ships of war were built, on board of which a body of Mamelukes was ordered to serve, under the command of an officer of merit. These new enemies, far more formidable than the natives of India with whom the Portuguese had hitherto contended, they encountered with undaunted courage, and after some conflicts, they entirely ruined the squadron, and remained masters of the Indian Ocean.\*

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Soon after this disaster, the dominion of the Mamelukes was overturned, and Egypt, Syria, and Palestine were subjected to the Turkish empire by the victorious arms of Selim I. Their mutual interest quickly induced the Turks and Venetians to forget ancient animosities, and to co-operate towards the ruin of the Portuguese trade in India. With this view Selim confirmed to the Venetians the extensive commercial privileges which they had enjoyed under the government of the Mamelukes, and published an edict permitting the free entry of all the productions of the East, imported directly from Alexandria, into every part of his dominions, and imposing heavy duties upon such as were brought from Lisbon.†

\* Asia de Barros, dec. ii. lib. ii. c. 6. Lafitau, Hist. de Decouvertes des Portugais, i. 292, &c. Osor. lib. iv. p. 120.

† Sandi Stor. Civ. Venez. part ii. 901.; part iii. 432.

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BUT all these were unavailing efforts against the superior advantages which the Portuguese possessed in supplying Europe with the commodities of the East, in consequence of having opened a new mode of communication with it. At the same time, the Venetians, brought to the brink of ruin by the fatal League of Cambray, which broke the power and humbled the pride of the republic, were incapable of such efforts for the preservation of their commerce as they might have made in the more vigorous age of their government, and were reduced to the feeble expedients of a declining state. Of this there is a remarkable instance in an offer made by them to the King of Portugal, in the year one thousand five hundred and twenty-one, to purchase at a stipulated price all the spices imported into Lisbon, over and above what might be requisite for the consumption of his own subjects. If Emanuel had been so inconsiderate as to close with this proposal, Venice would have recovered all the benefit of the gainful monopoly which she had lost. But the offer met with the reception that it merited, and was rejected without hesitation.\*

THE Portuguese, almost without obstruction, continued their progress in the East, until they established there a commercial empire; to which, whether we consider its extent, its opulence, the slender power by which it was formed, or the

splendour with which the government of it was conducted, there had hitherto been nothing comparable in the history of nations. Emanuel, who laid the foundation of this stupendous fabric, had the satisfaction to see it almost completed. Every part of Europe was supplied by the Portuguese with the productions of the East; and if we except some inconsiderable quantity of them, which the Venetians still continued to receive by the ancient channels of conveyance, our quarter of the globe had no longer any commercial intercourse with India, and the regions of Asia beyond it, but by the Cape of Good Hope.

THOUGH from this period the people of Europe have continued to carry on their trade with India by sea, yet a considerable portion of the valuable productions of the East is still conveyed to other regions of the earth by land carriage. In tracing the progress of trade with India, this branch of it is an object of considerable magnitude, which has not been examined with sufficient attention. That the ancients should have had recourse frequently to the tedious and expensive mode of transporting goods by land, will not appear surprising, when we recollect the imperfect state of navigation among them: The reason of this mode of conveyance being not only continued, but increased in modern times, demands some explanation.

IF we inspect a map of Asia, we cannot fail to observe that the communication throughout all

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the countries of that great continent to the west of Indostan and China, though opened in some degree towards the south by the navigable rivers Euphrates and Tigris, and towards the north by two inland seas, the Euxine and Caspian, must be carried on in many extensive provinces wholly by land. This, as I have observed, was the first mode of intercourse between different countries, and during the infancy of navigation it was the only one. Even after that art had attained some degree of improvement, the conveyance of goods by the two rivers formerly mentioned, extended so little way into the interior country, and the trade of the Euxine and Caspian Seas were so often obstructed by the barbarous nations scattered along their shores, that partly on that account, and partly from the adherence of mankind to ancient habits, the commerce of the various provinces of Asia, particularly that with India and the regions beyond it, continued to be conducted by land.

THE same circumstances which induced the inhabitants of Asia to carry on such a considerable part of their commerce with each other in this manner, operated with still more powerful effect in Africa. That vast continent, which little resembles the other divisions of the earth, is not penetrated with inland seas, like Europe and Asia, or by a chain of lakes like North America, or opened by rivers (the Nile alone excepted) of extended navigation. It forms one uniform, continuous surface, between the various parts of

which there could be no intercourse from the earliest times, but by land. Rude as all the people of Africa are, and slender as the progress is which they have made in the arts of life, such a communication appears to have been early opened and always kept up. How far it extended in the more early periods to which my researches have been directed, and by what different routes it was carried on, I have not sufficient information to determine with accuracy. It is highly probable, that, from time immemorial, the gold, the ivory, the perfumes, both of the southern parts of Africa and of its more northern districts, were conveyed either to the Arabian Gulf or to Egypt, and exchanged for the spices and other productions of the East.

THE Mahomedan religion, which spread with amazing rapidity over all Asia, and a considerable part of Africa, contributed greatly towards the increase of commercial intercourse by land in both these quarters of the globe, and has given it additional vigour, by mingling with it a new principle of activity, and by directing it to a common centre. Mahomet enjoined all his followers to visit once in their lifetime the Caaba, or square building in the temple of Mecca, the immemorial object of veneration among his countrymen, not only on account of its having been chosen (according to their tradition) to be the residence of man at his creation,\* but because it was the first

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\* Abul-Ghazi Bayadur Khan, *Hist. Gen. des Tartars*, p. 15.

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spot on this earth which was consecrated to the worship of God.\* In order to preserve continually upon their minds a sense of obligation to perform this duty, he directed that in all the multiplied acts of devotion which his religion prescribes, true believers should always turn their faces towards that holy place.† In obedience to a precept solemnly enjoined and sedulously inculcated, large caravans of pilgrims assemble annually in every country where the Mahomedan faith is established. From the shores of the Atlantic on one hand, and from the most remote regions of the East on the other, the votaries of the Prophet advance to Mecca. Commercial ideas and objects mingle with those of devotion; the numerous camels‡ of each caravan are loaded with those commodities of every country which are of easiest carriage and most ready sale. The holy city is crowded, not only with zealous devotees, but with opulent merchants. During the few days they remain there, the fair of Mecca is the greatest, perhaps, on the face of the earth. Mercantile transactions are carried on in it to an immense value, of which the dispatch, the silence, the mutual confidence and good faith in conducting them, are the most unequivocal proof. The productions and manufactures of India form a capital article in this great traffic, and the cara-

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\* Ohsson Tableau General de l'Empire Othoman, tom. iii. p. 150, &c. 289. edit. 8vo.

† Herbelot Biblioth. Orient. artic. *Caaba & Keblah*.

‡ See NOTE LIII.

vans on their return disseminate them through every part of Asia and Africa. Some of these are deemed necessary, not only to the comfort, but to the preservation of life, and others contribute to its elegance and pleasure. They are so various as to suit the taste of mankind in every climate, and in different stages of improvement; and are in high request among the rude natives of Africa, as well as the more luxurious inhabitants of Asia. In order to supply their several demands, the caravans return loaded with the muslins and chintzes of Bengal and the Deccan, the shawls of Cachemire, the pepper of Malabar, the diamonds of Golconda, the pearls of Kilcare, the cinnamon of Ceylon, the nutmeg, cloves, and mace of the Moluccas, and an immense number of other Indian commodities.

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BESIDES these great caravans, formed partly by respect for a religious precept, and partly with a view to extend a lucrative branch of commerce, there are other caravans, and these not inconsiderable, composed entirely of merchants, who have no object but trade. These, at stated seasons, set out from different parts of the Turkish and Persian dominions, and proceeding to Indostan, and even to China, by routes which were anciently known, they convey by land carriage the most valuable commodities of these countries to the remote provinces of both empires. It is only by considering the distance to which large quantities of these commodities are carried, and

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III. out the aid of camels would have been impass-  
able, that we can form any idea of the magnitude  
of the trade with India by land, and are led to  
perceive, that in a Disquisition concerning the  
various modes of conducting this commerce, it is  
well entitled to the attention which I have be-  
stowed in endeavouring to trace it.\*

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\* See NOTE LIV.