

The history of the contemplation of the universe embraces the enumeration of all the means which have brought nations into closer contact with one another, rendered larger portions of the earth more accessible, and thus extended the sphere of human knowledge. One of the most important of these means was the opening of a road of communication from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean by means of the Nile. At the point where the scarcely-connected continents present a line of bay-like indentations, the excavation of a canal was begun, if not by Sesostris (Rameses Miamoun), to whom Aristotle and Strabo ascribe the undertaking, at any rate by Neku, although the work was relinquished in consequence of the threatening oracular denunciations directed against it by the priests. Herodotus saw and described a canal completed by Darius Hystaspes, one of the Achæmenidæ, which entered the Nile somewhat above Bubastus. This canal, after having fallen into decay, was restored by Ptolemy Philadelphus in so perfect a manner that, although (notwithstanding the skillful arrangement of sluices) it was not navigable at all seasons of the year, it nevertheless contributed to facilitate Ethiopian, Arabian, and Indian commerce at the time of the Roman dominion under Marcus Aurelius, or even as late as Septimius Severus, and, therefore, a century and a half after its construction. A similar object of furthering international communication through the Red Sea led to a zealous prosecution of the works necessary for forming a harbor in Myos Hormos and Berenice, which was connected with Coptos by means of an admirably made artificial road.\*

All these various mercantile and scientific enterprises of the Lagides were based on an irrepressible striving to acquire new territories and penetrate to distant regions, on an idea of connection and unity, and on a desire to open a wider field of action by their commercial and political relations. This direction of the Hellenic mind, so fruitful in results, and which had been long preparing in silence, was manifested, under its

itself called Hippalus, and a portion of the Erythrean or Indian Ocean was known as the Sea of Hippalus. Letronne, in the *Journal des Savans*, 1818, p. 405; Reinaud, *Relation des Voyages dans l'Inde*, t. i., p. xxx.

\* See the researches of Letronne on the construction of the canal between the Nile and the Red Sea, from the time of Neku to the Calif Omar, or during an interval of more than 1300 years, in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, t. xxvii., 1841, p. 215-235. Compare, also, Letronne, *De la Civilisation Egyptienne depuis Psammitichus jusqu'à la conquête d'Alexandre*, 1845, p. 16-19.