

characters were first deciphered, and how numerous are the armies and the caravans which, for thousands of years, have passed and repassed without ever divining their import!

The basin of the Mediterranean, more especially in its varied northern peninsulas, certainly constituted the starting point of the intellectual and political culture of those nations who now possess what we may hope is destined to prove an imperishable and daily increasing treasure of scientific knowledge and of creative artistic powers, and who have spread civilization, and, with it, servitude at first, but subsequently freedom, over another hemisphere. Happily, in our hemisphere, under the favor of a propitious destiny, unity and diversity are gracefully blended together. The elements taken up have been no less heterogeneous in their nature than in the affinities and transformations effected under the influence of the sharply-contrasting peculiarities and individual characteristics of the several races of men by whom Europe has been peopled. Even beyond the ocean, the reflection of these contrasts may still be traced in the colonies and settlements which have already become powerful free states, or which, it is hoped, may still develop for themselves an equal amount of political freedom.

The Roman dominion, in its monarchical form under the Cæsars, considered according to its area,* was certainly exceeded in absolute magnitude by the Chinese empire under the dynasty of Thsin and the Eastern Han (from thirty years before to one hundred and sixteen years after our era), by the Mongolian empire under Genghis Khan, and by the present area of the Russian empire in Europe and Asia; but, with the single exception of the Spanish monarchy—as long as it extended over the new world—there has never been combined under one scepter a greater number of countries favored by climate, fertility, and position, than those comprised under the Roman empire from Augustus to Constantine.

This empire, extending from the western extremity of Europe to the Euphrates, from Britain and part of Caledonia to Gætulia and the confines of the Libyan desert, manifested not

* The superficial area of the Roman empire under Augustus is calculated by Professor Berghaus, the author of the excellent *Physical Atlas*, at rather more than 400,000 geographical square miles (according to the boundaries assumed by Heeren, in his *Geschichte der Staaten des Alterthums.*, s. 403-470), or about one fourth greater than the extent of 1,600,000 square miles assigned by Gibbon, in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. i., chap. i., p. 39, but which he indeed gives as a very uncertain estimate.