

ment to the mental culture of the mass of the people. It is not my object in the present work to give a characteristic sketch of the far-extended and variously-developed literature of the Arabs, or to distinguish the elements that spring from the hidden depths of the organization of races, and the natural unfolding of their character, from those which are owing to external inducements and accidental controlling causes. The solution of this important problem belongs to another sphere of ideas, while our historical considerations are limited to a fragmentary enumeration of the various elements which have contributed, in mathematical, astronomical, and physical science, toward the diffusion of a more general contemplation of the universe among the Arabs.

Alchemy, magic, and mystic fancies, deprived by scholastic phraseology of all poetic charm, corrupted here, as elsewhere, in the Middle Ages, the true results of inquiry; but still the Arabs have enlarged the views of nature, and given origin to many new elements of knowledge, by their indefatigable and independent labors, while, by means of careful translations into their own tongue, they have appropriated to themselves the fruits of the labors of earlier cultivated generations. Attention has been justly drawn to the great difference existing in the relations of civilization between immigrating Germanic and Arabian races.\* The former became cultivated after their immigration; the latter brought with them from their native country not only their religion, but a highly-polished language, and the graceful blossoms of a poetry which has not been wholly devoid of influence on the Provençals and Minnesingers.

The Arabs possessed remarkable qualifications alike for appropriating to themselves, and again diffusing abroad, the seeds of knowledge and general intercourse, from the Euphrates to the Guadalquivir, and to the south of Central Africa. They exhibited an unparalleled mobility of character, and a tendency to amalgamate with the nations whom they conquered, wholly at variance with the repelling spirit of the Israelitish castes, while, at the same time, they adhered to their national character, and the traditional recollections of their original home, notwithstanding their constant change of abode. No other race presents us with more striking examples of extensive land journeys, undertaken by private individuals, not only for purposes of trade, but also with the view of collecting in-

\* Heinrich Ritter, *Gesch. der Christlichen Philosophie*, th. iii., 1844, p. 669-676.