

## Chapter XVIII.

## THE MOHAMMEDAN EMPIRE.

(570-1453 A.D.)

WE must now glance at the story of an empire which once again brought the Eastern World into touch with the West through the conquests of a people known as the Mohammedans. It was in the remote country of Arabia that they had their birth as a religious sect, and about the year 570 that their founder first saw the light. Mohammed was of humble origin, and until the age of twenty-five had neither position nor influence in his own land. At that time he became the servant of a rich widow, and served her so faithfully that she fell in love with him, and eventually they were married. This gave Mohammed the opportunity he wanted; but not until he was forty years old did he begin his actual campaign against the religion of his fellow-countrymen, which differed little from that which had existed in the days of Cyrus the Persian.

His chief doctrine was that there was but one God, and that he, as His prophet, had been sent to teach men how they should live according to God's will. As in the case of the first great Teacher of Christianity, the "common people heard him gladly;" but the men of importance in his own city, Mecca, soon saw that the overthrow of their religion, which was centred