I. Antiquity and Islam.

Three events formed the Occidental world as it is to-day: the Renaissance, the discovery of the new world, and the Reformation. These episodes refer to entirely different spheres of the development of civilization and are usually considered unannexed, i.e. each is treated as a completely closed chapter of history. The fact that, historically speaking, one immediately followed the other, should have suggested the question of whether or not an internal connection existed between them.

If the question about the causality had only been raised, the people would doubtless have recognized that there was not only a deep seated common cause for these events of world history, but also that these periods themselves were only acts in the great drama which could be entitled "Europe's Fight for the Goods of the Levant." The natural setting for this play was the Mediterranean Sea and, for several reasons, the Northern part of Italy in the 15th century.

Is it by chance that the small peninsula of Europe, which stretches out in front of Asia and where to-day more than a quarter of the population of the earth is pressed together, again and again pushed forward into Asia which has been much more favored climatically? Is it by chance that Egypt was the one country in early antiquity which was more hostile to foreigners than any other — she forbade the mariners of the Mediterranean Sea to go beyond Naucratis? Is there no reason why the Phoenicians carefully kept the secrets of the sea routes and "generously" permitted the Egyptians to sail up the Red Sea
with one, and only one ship? Why had the Macedonian Alexander not consented to wear the crown of the Great Persian king and to be venerated as the son of the Egyptian god Ammon? Why did he have a tendency to approach India? Was it the dreams of a young man to conquer the world? Perhaps — or was it not rather the legendary wealth of India, the 20th satrapy of the Persian empire, which had to pay 360 talents of gold powder annually as a tribute to the first Darius? 1) If India appeared fabulous to the Europeans, so much more fabulous did she appear to the Indians themselves — the rivers of their country not only washed gold ashore, but also yielded pearls and gems 2). The Egyptians and the Phoenicians wanted to monopolize the Levant trade. But in the person of Alexander, Europe for the first time actively held out her hand to Asia.

After the lost battle of Pharsalus, Pompey fled to Egypt — a fugitive refugee asking for the right of sanctuary. But is was an action contrary to all rules of ancient hospitality, when, immediately after his landing in Egypt, he was slain by Ptolemy. What had been the motive for this murder?

Pompey, one of the few economically gifted great Romans had, some time before, mapped out the idea to remove the Levant trade from Alexandria and to direct it from India to the Caspian Sea and the ancient Greek colonies 3). However, as soon as the Egyptians laid hold of his person, he had to pay with his life for this bold plan. The Levant trade had become the keystone for the important position of Alexandria 4), and no price was too high — not even the violation of the sacred bond of hospitality — to keep this hegemony in the Oriental trade, which in those times was only impaired by the Syrian-Mesopotamian road, if the Euphrates river was used. If Pompey’s plan had been realized, then perhaps Rome — which slowly dropped to the level of an administrative city — would have at a much earlier time given up its position as a metropolis of the empire to Byzantium, which later on became the center of the Levant trade.

The more the Mediterranean civilization expanded to the

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1) Herodotus, Historiae, III, 94.
2) Birt, p. 197.
3) Canale, I, p. 300, 308.
4) ibid., p. 284: the main emporium of the Roman empire.