

for which they were paid by the audience. There were such narrators at the time of the Prophet, describing the heroic deeds of not only Arab warriors, but also the Iranian legendary hero Rustam and, perhaps, stories of great men belonging to the Roman and Greek nations were also included. The Prophet did not encourage poets, condemned story-tellers and abolished the gathering at Ukaz, but recommended and even persuaded his followers to acquire knowledge which has been repeatedly praised in the *Quran*, as for instance, in passages like the following :—

“We have given Abraham’s children the book and wisdom” (Chap. IV-54).

“Certainly God conferred a benefit upon the believers by raising among them a messenger and recites to them His communication and purifies and teaches wisdom.”

“Are those, who have knowledge, on an equality with those who have no knowledge?”

The Prophet is reported to have said:—

“To seek knowledge is duty for every Muslim man and woman.”

“Seek knowledge though if it is in China.”

There was no school in Medina or Mecca, but those who wanted to acquire knowledge, used to make a journey either to Syria or to Iran and Mesopotamia. The first known philosopher and physician of Mecca had studied medicine and philosophy in the college of Junde-Shahpur in South-West Iran. It was due to the recommendation of the Prophet that his young companions began to study under non-Muslims of Medina, and left their children under the care of a few learned men, who were available in that city. Therefore, among the next generation, there were a considerable number of literate young men. When the Muslims conquered Egypt, Syria and Iran, and came into contact with the civilized inhabitants of those countries, which had centres of learning, like those at Alexandria, Antioch, Edessa, Harran, Cæsarea and Junde-Shahpur and other places in Iran, and an established system of educa-

tion, the Arabs remained indifferent to them for a short time. They were content with the study of the *Quran*. The second Khalif appointed a number of learned men to lecture in mosques in the new cantonments of Kufa, Basra, Damascus and other places on Islamic teaching. These were called *Qass*, which means narrators, but instead of old legendary stories as told in Pre-Islamic days, they recited from the *Quran* and traditions of the Prophet. In this way, the mosque became not only a place for worship but also a centre of education. The number of such lecturers increased and became the nucleus of a future mosque *madrasas*. The Umayyad Khalifs had taken interest in some branches of science known to foreign nations. Moawiya, the first Khalif of the Umayyad dynasty, was fond of hearing legendary stories and his grandson Khaled was interested in logic and alchemy. Before the end of the Umayyad rule, Muslims had begun to study history, geography and astronomy, besides tradition, philosophy and theology. The Abbasid rule proved itself the golden period of Muslim learning. By this time, mosques had become places for public lectures not only on theology and tradition but also on other branches of art and science. Regular lectures were delivered by learned men. Basra and Kufa became two great centres of learning but were soon superseded by Baghdad. The poet and traveller Nasir Khusroe writes in the 5th century that the mosque at Cairo was daily visited by about five thousand men, to hear lectures on various subjects, but the main subjects of study were the *Quran*, tradition and theology. The system of teaching was based upon free lectures and discussions on the old dialectic method in vogue. A famous lecturer could find hundreds of pupils and thousands of people for his audience. Admission generally was free and without any restriction whatever. The Abbasid Khalifs not only encouraged learning but also enjoined public discussions and founded schools where, besides Arabic literature, theology, philology, grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, physics, astrology, astronomy