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ANCIENT COMMERCE.

From a very interesting work recently published by Messrs. Harper, entitled "Letters from the Old World by a Lady of New York," we extract the following brief and florid review of ancient commerce. Commencing with Tyre, the writer says:—"Its harbor still remains, but is choked up with sand. A single brig and a few small fishing vessels riding at anchor, are but poor representatives of the great commercial marine of ancient Sidon. We did not dismount from our horses, but rode through and around the town, and lingered awhile on a sand-bank, in the centre of the port, musing on the various mutations in the state of nations, occasioned by the fluctuating nature of foreign commerce, or, rather, the constant and progressive shifting of its principle seats from East to West.

"Since the first Canaanite cedar bark was launched from this rock, bearing the 'foys' of Babylon to the isles of Chittim, down to the present day, when countries far beyond the lost Atlantis send proud navies to shake with their thunders the rocks of Lebanon, and the wandering descendants of Zidon stand in mute astonishment gazing at the dashing steamer as she whirls past their shores, the seats of commerce have ever been changing.

"Ever since the trident of the ocean was first forged for Zidon, and wielded so gloriously by Hiram of Tyre, how much lustre it has shed on successive nations down to our day!

"Eluding the grasp of the insatiate Persian, it passed with the unfortunate Queen Dido over to Africa. During the minority of the infant Carthage, ere she had strength to hold it firmly, it was borrowed by other states.

"First, Agamemnon, 'of many isles and of all Argos king,' cherished the boon until wrested from his hand by the power of Corinth. With the Athenian its abode was short but glorious. The flag of Attica waved in every port.

"The sceptre next dwelt with Syracuse, until she came in collision with the increasing strength of Carthage. Never before had the trident been the emblem of so much power, magnificence and wealth, as it was during the brilliant era of the Punic state.—Rome never reached the acme of her power until she wrested the trident from the hands of her rival; her power was not the result of commerce, but of an organized system of military depredation and plunder, and her naval ascendancy served merely as the medium to spread far and wide the iron grapples of despotism, and to drag home in chains captive kings to grace her triumphs.

"Without a reciprocal commerce, the wealth of the world flowed in upon her; and when full unto repletion, the scramble for the 'spoils' brought on civil strife at home and weakness abroad.

"When her glory was tarnished and her wealth dissipated, having neither agriculture, manufactures nor commerce, to fall back upon, her power declined.

"The god of ocean and seas, during this long alliance with the god of war, placed his trident at the prow of every Roman galley, which, like the forked lightning, dispensed death and destruction around the world, until his own dominions were tainted with the victims of human folly and unholly ambition. Mars, sated with victory, flushed with pride, and gorged with wealth, held the sceptre so feebly that it fell from his hand into the grasp of the next wily demagogue nearest the throne, who, not thinking that it was 'chief' enough to have served under such a 'glory,' sought to maintain himself on his giddy pinnacle by bestowing his country's treasures on those myrmidons beneath him who should best serve him in his utmost need.

"The nation's wealth and power becoming the prize and prey of a few, her honor and glory were neglected by the many; Neptune was insulted, and his admirers were contemned.

"The angry god, seizing his trident, plunged once more into the deepest recesses of his marine abode, there to brood over his folly for having wasted so many ages in alliance with war and rapine, and withheld his protection from his legitimate offspring, Commerce. As the once great Rome declined, so each separate state, no longer held in bondage, launched upon the waters; but their attempts were weak. Ages rolled on, and no great maritime power appeared. The sceptre of the sea was nowhere to be found. At last the lion of St. Mark, from his amphibious abode, described the long-lost talisman. The repentant god permits its seizure, and sends it greeting to his future spouse, by the winged breeze.

"Perched on the Rialto, he displays the sign as an earnest of the future prosperity and power of the infant state. Sweeping a broad circle round the sea-girt city of fishermen, and touching with the magic wand their humble cottages, at once are seen to rise her palaces, and proud arcades to fill her every channel, freighted with the treasures of the east, and the wealth of the west.

"Satisfied, the winged lion alighted on the trophy pillar of St. Mark, and at each annual of the ring, when Venice renewed her vows to her ocean lord, he gave away the bride.

"While reciting the deeds of the lords of the Rialto, let us not forget the bold navigators of Genoa la Superba, or the merchant princes of La bella Firenze, the ancestors of Columbus and Americus. The god, now no longer to be confined to narrow bays and land-locked waters, with one bound cleared the Pillars of Hercules, and attained the ocean sea.

"Here, on the nearest main, he discovered the descendants of Zidon, who inhabited the shores of Turkish. These the god inspired with the adventurous spirit of Phoenicia's earliest sons, and a De Gama was chosen to lead new enterprises. The treasures of India were no longer to dribble through a hundred insignificant channels, in a hundred insignificant ways, one half of each always absorbed by the scorched and thirsty deluge through which they passed; running

the gauntlet of the rapacious Turk, the faithless Arab, and the insatiate Egyptian; but in future were destined to flow in one uninterrupted stream through the ocean wave.

"The inquiring spirit of the West was no longer to be baffled in fruitless attempts to penetrate to the dominions of 'Prester John,' through the phalanx of barbarians who stood sentinel over the ancient routes of commerce.

"The proud ensign of Don Vasco, unfurled to the breeze with the motto of 'Free Trade and Sailor's Rights,' floated over the heads of the modern Argonauts. Hereafter, the gold of Cobi, the spices of Cathay, the perfumes of Hydrantia, the chintzes of Calicut, and the golden fleece of Serica, were to be laid at the feet of the daughters of Europe, enhanced in value only by the merited and well-earned rewards of their adventurous sons.

"De Gama's enterprise being crowned with success, the doom of Venice and her eastern colonies were sealed. Let us, however, never forget this obscure and almost forgotten page of history. Let us of the west teach it to our sons, that they may remember and admire the noble expiring efforts of the commercial and political sages of the Rialto and the Piazza. Their wisdom and sagacity taught them, that unless some bold demonstration was promptly made the empire of St. Mark must fall. A plan was submitted to the Cerebus who guarded the passes of the Nile and Red Sea, to permit the ancient canal of the Pharaohs to be reopened, and commerce to flow through it, as in its waters, subject only to a small but sure transit duty; and the vessels of the island city to sail without interruption to India and home; thus securing for ages a certain income for Egypt, and a continued prosperity to Venice, which might have lasted to this day.

"But the proud Osmannic, the ignorant, self-conceited and opinionated Pharaoh of the day, vetoed the project for his country's good, and the petition of the resident merchants was spurned from his footstool as a dangerous symptom of foreign influence.

"The canal of the Pharaohs still remains under the sands of the deserts, and Egypt soon became what it now is; the arteries of the island city have become choked up, and Venice a by-word.

"The great highway of nations once opened to the farther East, the nations of the utmost West all strove for the prize it offered. The mynheer's amphibious capitals raised their proud heads above the fens of Holland, and became the marts of the Western World, the seats of learning and science, of religion and laws.

"And when, in the progressive order of things, the sceptre was to leave her, her mantle fell upon the shoulders of the ocean queen, the triune kingdom of the isles. The Babylonish garments which adorned the proud Semiramis in her best estate, or the robes, and fine linen, and Tyrian purple which decked King Solomon in all his glory, never imparted a tithe of the lustre which, by this newly-acquired ornament, the British throne was destined to acquire.

"Need I refer you to the voluminous pages of England's history, and follow her crescent fortunes up to the full orb of her meridian splendor? The veriest tyro can count the gradations upon his fingers, from Magna Charter to old Queen Bess, from Flodden Field to Waterloo, from the Spanish Armada to the day of Aboukir.

"As Van Tromp, with the broom at the mast-head, swept clean the channels of the North, so did Nelson cause the besom of destruction to annihilate, from 'Indus to the pole' the enemies of British commerce.—Then

"The battle of the Nile
Shall be foremost on the file;

as long as

"Britannia rules the main."

"But another cycle of commercial and naval grandeur is fast approximating toward its final conclusion. The resplendent era of Old England's glory is growing dim; her sun has passed its zenith, and already casts its oblique rays upon the white cliffs of Albion. The spirit of the fatherland, descending upon its offspring, causes the 'Star of the West' to be a herald of glad tidings unto the nations. Then

"Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise;

and, as long as

"The star-spangled banner shall wave o'er the foe,"

may we and our children never forget, that wherever commerce has been cherished, it has raised a tower of strength and a pillar of glory, the dread of tyrants and the joy of the oppressed.

"The blood of our patriotic fathers was shed around this altar of our national pride. The soil has scarce yet absorbed the life-streams that flowed in its defence; the spirits of the departed are yet hovering around the holy fire which they bound themselves in 'sacred honor,' ever to keep burning, to see if their sons are faithful to the trust they delegated to them.

"May its light be a beacon that shall continue to rally all good men and true, and the glare of its flame be a terror to all such 'roaring lions' as would seek to extinguish the living source of our independence and the palladium of our liberties.

"Call me enthusiast if you will; but I beg you to remember that, ages ere this became 'Holy Land' to the Christian world, events here took place, the influence of which has been felt throughout the world, and which gave an impulse to the human mind such as nothing of the same nature has ever equalled. Civilization, wealth, and refinement have been carried to the uttermost ends of the earth by systems of colonization and commerce, which took their initiative from the spot where I am now writing. Say not that I would raise up here from the stones of the fallen altars of Moloch a temple unto Mammon, and fall down to worship at its shrine. No! a holier and purer feeling is inspired by these reflections, when I consider that you and I are fathers, in our modern state, bound to place before our sons the best models from the earliest times down to our own."

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY AND RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHERN AND ANTARCTIC REGIONS, DURING THE YEARS 1839-43. BY CAPTAIN SIR JAMES CLARK ROSS, R. N. Two Vols. Murray.

We welcome one more addition to a literature of which Englishmen have great reason to be proud. Setting aside their scientific claims, our records of Voyage and Discovery, are also a record of enterprise and endurance, of resolute perseverance, and of complete moral as well as physical courage, which we take to be peculiar to English seamen.

The expedition described in these volumes was suggested in 1833 by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and had for its chief object a series of magnetic observations in certain latitudes with a view to ascertain the three elements of horizontal direction, dip, and intensity, or their theoretical equivalents. The President and Council of the Royal Society having seconded the suggestion (in which Sir John Herschel had been the principal mover,) Lord Melbourne's Government consented to the undertaking; fitted up two vessels of 370 and 310 tons, the Erebus and Terror, with each a complement of sixty-four men; placed them under command of Sir James Ross, Commander F. Crozier acting as Capt. of the Terror; and directed that in the intervals of magnetic observations at various points fully indicated in the instructions for the expedition, Captain Ross should endeavor to penetrate to the south magnetic Pole, or at least to ascertain its position, should examine the Antarctic seas in the highest latitude he could reach; and should pursue such other objects of discovery in that direction as in his discretion he might deem advisable. Capt. Ross was absent four years; and has described the progress and results of his expedition, with eminent clearness, unaffectedness, and ability, in these volumes.

From the nature of the scientific inquiries which formed its main object, it is necessarily, in much of its details, less popular and striking than other former and less restricted expeditions. But the most exciting trials and dangers will attend even the direst pursuit of science in Polar regions, and enough of even this popular element is contained in the volumes to give variety and relief to their scientific disclosures. Captain Ross made three cruises to the extreme southern latitudes, in each case with interesting and valuable results; but his most important discoveries (though not his most striking adventures) seem to have been limited to the last five months of the first voyage.

He sailed September, 1839, apparently better equipped than any previous expedition for purposes of scientific investigation. It would be inappropriate to our columns, and interest our readers very little, if we dwelt on what men of science will find the leading attraction of Capt. Ross's narrative. We shall simply say that the observations on meteorology and magnetism at all the various points—on the strength and direction of ocean currents, and their degrees of depth—and on matters of curious scientific interest connected with the line of mean temperature—are very ample throughout, and lucidly set forth. And having added that in the departments of zoology, geology, and botany (as to which other and elaborate works in connection with the expedition will very speedily be published,) several discoveries of no mean value will be found recorded by Captain Ross and the various officers who had charge of these departments,—we shall proceed to indicate, briefly, the principal features of what may be termed the more popular portion of Capt. Ross's voyage and adventure.

At the close of 1840, and in the first four months of '41, the most notable discoveries of the first voyage were made. The ships got into what is called the pack ice of the Antarctic regions in January, and had to force their way through a belt of floating ice two hundred miles in width. After five days' struggle they emerged into the sea beyond, and steered their way towards the southern pole. The scenery of the land which then came within view, with its eternal snow-covered mountains, is admirably described; and as they coast along, eager with hopes to reach the Pole, and naming the various heights with the names of friends, statesmen, kindred, and philosophers in their enterprise, the narrative is animated and beautiful. The discovery of this great southern continent is to us the most striking incident of the volumes. The ceremony of taking possession of it is thus described:

"We found the shores of the mainland completely covered with ice projecting into the sea, and the heavy surf along its edge forbade any attempt to land upon it; a strong tide carried us rapidly along between this ice-bound coast and the islands amongst heavy masses of ice, so that our situation was for some time most critical; for all the exertions our people could use were insufficient to stem the tide. But taking advantage of a narrow opening that appeared in the ice, the boats were pushed through it, and we got into an eddy under the lee of the islands, and landed on a beach of large loose stones and stranded masses of ice. The weather by this time had put on a most threatening appearance, the breeze was freshening fast, and the anxious circumstances under which we were placed, together with the recal-flag flying at the ship's mast head, which I had ordered Lieut. Bird to hoist if necessary, compelled us to hasten our operations.

"The ceremony of taking possession of these newly-discovered lands, in the name of our Most Gracious Sovereign, Queen Victoria, was immediately proceeded with: and on planting the flag of our country amidst the hearty cheers of our party, we drank to the health, long life, and happiness of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness Prince Albert. The island was named Possession Island. It is situated in lat. 71° 56', and long. 171° 7'E., composed entirely of igneous rocks, and only accessible on its western side. We saw not the smallest appearance of vegetation, but inconceivable myriads of penguins completely and densely covered the

whole surface of the island, along the ledges of the precipices, and even to the summits of the hills, attacking us vigorously as we waded through their ranks, and pecking at us with their sharp beaks, disputing possession; which, together with their loud coarse notes, and the insupportable stench from the deep bed of guano which had been forming for ages, and which may at some period be valuable to the agriculturists of our Australasian colonies, made us glad to get away again, after having loaded our boats with geological specimens and penguins. Owing to the heavy surf on the beach, we could not tell whether the water was ebbing or flowing; but there was a strong tide running to the south, between Possession Island and the main land, and the Terror had some difficulty to avoid being carried by it against the land ice. Future navigators should therefore be on their guard in approaching the coast at this place.

"After a long and heavy pull we regained our ships only a short time before so thick a fog came on, with a strong northerly breeze, that to have been a few minutes later would have rendered our return to the ship impossible, and compelled us to have borne away for the shore, again, to take up our quarters with the penguins, until the ships could have again approached it with safety. The weather obliged us now to stand out to sea. At night we had high winds with constant snow, and not meeting with any icebergs or loose ice, we kept the ships under easy sail, waiting a change of weather.

"Some few whales and large flocks of Cape pigeons were seen; but the elegant white petrel, which seldom goes to any distance from the main pack, had, to our great satisfaction, quite deserted us.

The progress along this continent, however, underwent sudden interruption. It was unexpectedly closed by two volcanic mountains, one extinct, and one in tremendous activity; and by a sheer wall of ice, two hundred feet high, and supposed to be more than a thousand feet thick, along which they sailed for nearly five hundred miles without seeing a vestige of opening outlet. The volcanic mountains, incomparably grander than Etna or Hecla, were, with admirable appropriateness, named after the ships—Mount Erebus and Mount Terror.

With what reluctance such a man as Sir James Ross would turn away at this point, within less than a hundred and sixty miles of their search (the Pole), we need hardly be told. But it was impossible to stay beyond February, by which time they had traced the coast line of their discovery from the 79th degree of latitude; had explored as far as possible the eternal barrier of ice; had settled the position of the Pole; and had named their new continent Victoria Land.

"We were at this time in lat. 76° 12' S., long. 164° E.; the magnetic dip 88° 40', and the variation 109° 24' E. We were therefore only one hundred and sixty miles from the pole.

"Had it been possible to have found a place of security upon any part of this coast where we might have wintered, in sight of the brilliant burning mountain, and at so short a distance from the magnetic pole, both of those interesting spots might easily have been reached by travelling parties in the following spring; but all our efforts to effect that object proved quite unsuccessful; and although our hopes of complete attainment were not realised, yet it was some satisfaction to know that we had approached the pole some hundreds of miles nearer than any of our predecessors; and from the multitudes of observations that were made in so many different directions from it, its position may be determined with nearly as much accuracy as if we had actually reached the spot itself.

"It was nevertheless painfully vexatious to behold at an easily accessible distance under other circumstances the range of mountains in which the pole is placed, and to feel how nearly that chief object of our undertaking had been accomplished; and but few can understand the deep feelings of regret with which I felt myself compelled to abandon the perhaps too ambitious hope I had so long cherished of being permitted to plant the flag of my country on both the magnetic poles of our globe; but obstacles which presented themselves being of so insurmountable a character was some degree of consolation, as it left us no grounds for self-reproach, and as we bowed in humble acquiescence to the will of Him who had so defined the boundary of our researches, with grateful hearts we offered up our thanksgivings for the large measure of success which he had permitted to reward our exertions. Some amongst us even still indulged a feeble hope, that to the westward of the Admiralty Mountains, which we knew trended so suddenly to the westward, we might find the coast turn to the southward, and by following it we might yet approach the pole more nearly; but we could not conceal from ourselves that from the late period of the season and the early setting in of the winter, we were in this case hoping against hope.

"The range of mountains in the extreme west, which, if they be of equal elevation with Mount Erebus, were not less than fifty leagues distant, and therefore undoubtedly the seat of the southern magnetic pole, was distinguished by the name of His Royal Highness Prince Albert, who had been graciously pleased to express a warm interest in the success of our expedition.

"The whole of the great southern land we had discovered, and whose continuity we had traced from the seventieth to the seventy-ninth degree of latitude, received the name of our Most Gracious Sovereign Queen Victoria, as being the earliest and most remote southern discovery since Her Majesty's accession to the throne.

The second voyage (starting again from Van Diemen's Land) was less memorable in respect to discoveries, but more striking from the dangers undergone. But for the extraordinary state of efficiency and preparation to which the ships had been brought, the end must have been disastrous. They fell into a pack of ice through which they had to work their way for upwards of a thousand

miles; were drifted about in it by several violent storms; were forced to move along with floes of ice like fenders between the ships, to avoid the possibility of their parting company; and narrowly escaped going down in a terrible gale. We give a brief passage from Capt. Ross's striking description of this terrible time:

"To prevent the ships separating during the fog, it was necessary to keep fast to the heavy piece of ice which we had between them as a fender, and, with a reduced amount of sail on them, we made some way through the pack: as we advanced in this novel mode to the south-west, we found the ice became more open, and the westerly swell increasing as the wind veered to the N. W. at midnight, we found it impossible any longer to hold on by the ice-piece. All our hawsers breaking in succession, we made sail on the ships, and kept company during the thick fog by