

THE ORIENTAL TRADE

From the Beginning of History it has been the destruction of every People who have secured it.

When we get at the bottom of the argument of the imperialists we find that the sole object of the war in the Philippines is to secure the Oriental trade. They want an open door to China and the Philippine Islands for a base of operations. The great economist, Del Mar, has just written an article that goes to the bottom of this question. It takes an economist to do it. The very nature of his science causes him to make thorough research and investigation. This article is commended to the careful study of every man who expects to share in the coming great battle for the preservation of this government. There are enough indisputable facts in it to make the framework of a dozen speeches. Mr. Del Mar says:

It is not doubted that the acquisition of the Philippines would afford increased facilities for trading with the Orient. What is disputed is that the Oriental trade, that is to say, any more of it than can be transacted, as now, at arm's length, is desirable. The Oriental trade has ruined or weakened every nation of the west that succeeded in acquiring it, and it ruined them for precisely the same reasons in every case. Behind the Oriental trade there lie conditions and influences which the mere buccaster and peddler, however rich he may be, has never perceived. What those conditions and influences are it will be our task to mention.

If we are to believe the traditions of ancient India was invaded and an Oriental trade was established at one time or another by Persia, Babylon, Egypt, and the Greek states and colonies. The early chronology of these nations are so evidently apocryphal that no dependence can be placed upon the dates assigned to Ghenshid, Ninus, Sesostris, Bæchus, etc., all of whom are claimed to have invaded India. Archeology and coins are our only safe guide to dates, and these guides teach us that from the moment when direct intercourse with India was opened by these states from that moment they all began to decay. The date to which belonged the Indian articles or tokens found in the graves or upon the monuments of these ancient states—dates which have been determined approximately—was in every case the date when those states began to decay. This may be a mere coincidence, but if so it is a coincidence that has occurred with remarkable regularity.

Continuing ourselves to strictly historical times, Alexander, of Macedonia, invaded India and established an Oriental trade through Alexander about E. C. 326. Within a few years after this event his empire went to pieces. In B. C. 512 Silenus Nicator, of Syria, invaded India and established an Oriental trade through the Persian gulf. In B. C. 65, the Seleucidian empire came to an end. In B. C. 48 Julius Cæsar entered Egypt and reopened the ancient canal which united the Nile and the Red sea, thus establishing a short and direct water route to India. One hundred and twenty-five years later Pliny bequeathed to posterity his lamentations concerning the Oriental trade, which he complained was draining Rome of the precious met-

als merely to supply the silks and perfumes of the new and ruinous luxury to which this trade had given rise. But, in fact, there were other Oriental influences than silks or perfumes, or even the draining away of the precious metals which were sapping the foundations of Rome; influences which Pliny did not see, or else if he did see, he did not dare to mention them for fear of læse majestatis and death.

In the sixth century of our era the Norsemen established a republic in Novogorod which, in a short time, became so rich and powerful that its founders were able to boast that but two things could not be overturned, namely, "God and Novogorod the great." In the century following they opened trade with the Orient across the steppes of Tartary. When this object was accomplished it was precisely these two things that were overturned—the Norse conception of God and the Norse republic. The Norseman built the great cities of Julin and Vinet, they established a great fair at Wisby where myriads of oriental coin gathered by them in the eastern trade have lately been found; their commerce extended to Lunenburg, Bardewic and London; their ships monopolized the navigation of Northern Europe; they established the Hansa long before the Christian Hansa of the thirteenth century; they penetrated to Iceland and set up a republic in the western ocean; they ever reached America and established a colony on its distant shores, from one of whose members born in America was descended the sculptor Thorvaldisen. But what became of all this enterprise, daring, and struggle to plant the banner of liberty in the northern world? Simply nothing. Charlemagne destroyed their emporia; Julin, Vinet, Bardewic, and Lunenburg were razed to the ground; Novogorod was extinguished by the Tartars; the Baltic provinces were devastated by the Knights of Saint Mary, and even distant Iceland lost its liberty. Intercourse with India had so disturbed their religious convictions that no two tribes of Goths could be found to agree. There was no national coherence and the Gothic empire fell to rise no more. The achievements of the Norsemen are buried beneath the Teutonic legends; their sagas (for example the Nieblungen Lied) are turned to German poems, and their runes degraded to serve the purposes of monkish forgery.

In the seventh century there arose a great power in the west. During the course of little more than a single lifetime it deprived Rome of all its richest provinces and stretched its mighty arms from Cordova and Egypt in the west to Cahul in the east. From this date to the tenth century was the æge of the Arabian empire. Then the Moslems invaded India and established a direct overland trade with that country. In the tenth century both Cordova and Egypt succeded from the Caliphate, and the Arabian, one of the greatest empires of the world, rapidly hastened to decay. It was the same with Venice and Genoa, both of whom grasped a portion of the trade of the Orient in the thirteenth century and fell into decay during the fifteenth, not because they lost the trade—for this they did not loose until the sixteenth century—but for other reasons; reasons which we have yet to mention. In the course of little more than a century after their decadence commenced, these once rich and powerful states were almost forgotten.

Portugal comes next. In 1501 Americus Vesputci, on his outward voyage to America, met some of Cabral's ships returning from India by the sea route recently opened by De Gama. By one of these ships he sent home this famous prophesy: "Now will the spices go from Portugal to Italy and Alexandria, instead of from Alexandria to Portugal. So goes the world." Yet this trade, which promised so much to Portugal, proved to be the cause of her ruin. In 1702 she was obliged to sign the Methuen treaty which virtually made her a British province. Her wealth, her fame, her influence had irretrievably passed away. In 1831 she lost Brazil, a province that is larger than the United States. During the present year she has pawned her possessions in South Africa to her British creditors. She is in the bankruptcy court of nations, and may soon cease to exist altogether.

What Portugal sought by an eastern route, Spain sought by a western one. For more than half a century after the discovery of America the Spaniards eagerly sailed up every river which flowed into the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico to find a way to the Orient. In 1527 they established a regular trade between Acapulca and Manila. In 1597 Phillip II had the isthmus of Panama surveyed by Flemish engineers for a canal which was to connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans; but though this design was relinquished, the trade with the Philippines was conducted with the greatest energy. Both men, money and ships were lavishly devoted to the conquest of those islands which she was at last fain to sell for less than the anticipated profits of a single year's trade. For nearly three hundred years—the natural energy of the Spanish race was destroyed by two senseless pursuits. These were the acquisition of gold and silver in America and the prosecution of trade with the Orient. She has now been obliged to relinquish both.

In the sixteenth century the Netherlands threw off the Spanish yoke and established a republican government. The individual freedom and equality to which this revolution gave rise so stimulated the energies of her people that in a very brief time—aided by the tide of precious metals from America and the resulting rise of prices in Europe—Holland grew to become one of its richest and most powerful states. There the security of property was greatest, the rate of interest was the lowest, and the advance of internal improvements was the most rapid; so that Andrew Yarranton and other English writers of the period deemed it the highest service that they could perform for their country when they exhorted her to imitate the policy and tread in the footsteps of the brave Hollanders.

Not content with their own prosperity, or perhaps driven to undervalue it through the ambition or avidity of her princeps citizens, Holland, in the seventeenth century, went into the Oriental trade. In the course of two or three generations she was ruined. Fifty years after the Dutch East India Company was formed British jealousy organized an overwhelming fleet, and Van Tromp was obliged to strike his flag to Blake. Then followed the civil war and other misfortunes, until the strength of the republic being entirely broken, she welcomed a French army in 1793 and accepted a French crown in 1806. Four years later she became a province of the

French empire, though in 1813 she regained her independence she lost Belgium in 1830; and today she is a little monarchy somewhere in the north of Europe, bereft of all importance in the council of nations.

In arts, culture, wealth, and political influence the France of Louis XIV was confessedly the principal state of Europe. It was precisely at this juncture that—regardless of the various sources and circumstances out of which this pre-eminence had originated—France turned from her prosperous domestic industries to take part in the luckless strife for the Oriental trade. But the Oriental is not simply a trade, it means convoys, navies, islands, colonies, way-stations, flanking countries, buffer countries, diplomacy, intrigue, social intercourse with Orientals, subjection to the influence of Oriental thought and indeed many other things. France only discovered these requirements, obstacles, and influences when it was too late to provide for them; that is to say, after she had lost her Indian acquisitions at Pondicherry and the command of the Indian sea route at Abukir and Toulon.

Is France any longer the principal state in Europe? Is she the second or even the third or fourth of those resources which render a state powerful or respected? There can be but one answer to these questions and that answer is "no." It is too much to say that had France preserved the armadas and navies which she lost in an unavailing attempt to secure the Indian trade she would have retained to this day the proud position which she attained under the grande monarch, but which as it is, can be no more.

Lastly we come to Great Britain. The British East India Company was first chartered in 1600, but its trade was of no importance until after the Restoration and the Legislation of 18 Charles II, c. 5. By this act, and in order to render the Oriental trade profitable to the men who procured its passage, the Crown surrendered its control over the monetary system of England and relinquished it to private individuals, practically to the East India Company and the bank which the members of that company erected in London and falsely dubbed with the national name. This surrender by the crown was a surrender by the people, whose sole representative in respect of the coinage was and is still the crown. Its general effect has been to reduce the people to poverty. Down to the passage of this ill-fated act commercial panics and widespread failures were unknown. They have since occurred with a frequency that has gradually destroyed the yeomanry and small farmers, so that now the population of England consists chiefly of two classes; first, a new aristocracy, composed of courtiers, rich merchants, and successful manufacturers and second, a vast horde of indigent and degraded workmen. In order to retain India England has been obliged to make an enemy of every state in Europe. She has wrested Gibraltar from Spain, Malta and Corfu from Italy and Greece, and Egypt from Turkey. She has had to dominate the coast of Africa, drive the Boers from the cape, build a trans-continental railway through and fortify Canada, dominate Algiers, secure the Pamirs, conquer Burma and maintain vast fleets in all parts of the world. But far more serious than the extinction of her yeomanry, or the

expense of her colonies, conquests and navies, is the change which social intercourse with India has wrought in the religious thought and tendency of England herself. Little more than a century has passed since all England was in arms to put down what it had regarded as a menace to the Protestant religion. It has no longer any such feeling. It no longer cares what churches are erected, what ceremonial is prescribed or what rites are practiced. England has become irreligious.

This attitude comes not from toleration, but indifference. In England religion is dead and the churches are deserted. Neither the tambourines of the Salvation Army nor the protests of Mr. Kinsett can revive the Christian faith. Religion is dead in England, and it will die as completely in the United States from the moment that we permit ourselves to be seduced by the ill-omened Oriental trade and are drawn within the mysterious influence of Oriental thought.

Why? Because we shall then learn, as England has already learned, that the Orient is the mother of religion, a mother that knows but too well how to influence the superstition of her western offspring. Every British officer and soldier, every banker, every trader, who goes to India or China as a Christian returns an agnostic. Even our missionaries who go to convert are themselves converted, not indeed to Brahmanism or Buddhism, but to agnosticism. The Jesuit missionaries felt and confessed this influence two centuries ago; the protestant missionaries feel it, though they may not confess it today. The influence of the Orient upon British religious thought is so marked that it can be traced to all except the most remote parts of the British Isles. Everywhere we meet with Oriental societies, dissenting books, and agnostic journals. With few exceptions the entire metropolitan press is agnostic. Tyndal, Spencer, and Huxley are not exceptional examples of agnosticism. Like all leaders of thought they are somewhat a head of time; nevertheless they are true prophets, they voice the mental attitude of the masses, and that voice is against christianity.

In the quarter of a century the churches which already are deserted, will be replaced by lecture halls for "ethical" societies. The English have conquered India by force of arms, whilst India has conquered England with its mysterious lore and its venerable forms of thought. Theosophism is one phase of this Oriental influence; spiritualism is another; agnosticism, more widespread than both the others combined, is a third.

It is this intellectual influence of the Orient which has overcome and eventually weakened and destroyed every nation that has approached her from the west. They all profited in trade; they all were ruined by losing their religious ideals, and with this their moral code and social bond. Greece, Rome, and Arabia all lost their national religious in India; Great Britain is losing hers. Are the United States, in the sordid pursuit of "trade," willing to run a similar risk? One half of the energy and outlay necessary to procure and command a medium of trade with the Orient will con-

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