

There was yet another obstacle to the origin and growth of missions, well nigh prohibitory, and resident in the fact that for nearly a hundred years after the rise of the Reformation Protestant peoples possessed no point of contact with the heathen world. Hence the existence of any widely extended and deplorable moral darkness was a mere matter of hearsay and untested theory. All navigation to distant parts of the world, all commerce, all colonization were exclusively in the hands of such zealous servitors of Rome as Portugal and Spain. Because Catholics saw with their own eyes they also felt, and sent out missionaries in abundance. It was not until after the destruction of the Spanish Armada and the rapid decline of those powers behind the Pyrenees that Protestant England, Holland, and Denmark stepped forward to the first rank as rulers of the ocean. But a few years more elapsed before colonies were planted at Jamestown, at Plymouth, and on Manhattan Island, while factories were opened in South Africa, Asia, and the Indies, both East and West. And when thus finally the supreme naval and commercial hegemony passed into Protestant hands, it was the Lord's sure token that the pure Gospel was about to fly abroad.

Then, in due season, followed yet other and even more astounding victories for the rising faith of Luther, and these chiefly through British valor and aggressive enterprise. It was nothing less than one of the greatest epochs in human history, especially in relation to the career of all English-speaking people, and the publishing of the message of salvation to all mankind, when almost in the same year Clive conquered at Plassey and Wolfe at Quebec, and thus 200,000,000 Hindus were brought into closest intercourse with English Christians, and the French were driven from this continent to make room for the speedy rise of a "Greater Britain," which should fairly rival the mother country as an ardent evangelizer, and continually provoke her to Gospel good works.

One more step of a similar character remained to be taken, nor was it long delayed. Since the generation which followed Columbus, and Magellan, and the Cabots there had been a strange and long-continued apathy with regard to carrying forward to completion the discovery of unknown regions. Little progress was made in that direction save by a few like Barentz, and Tasman, and Behring, until Captain Cook's three famous voyages (1769-79). In particular he turned the attention of the civilized world to such continental land spaces as Australia and New Zealand and New Guinea, and brought to light in the vast and hitherto untraversed expanse of the Pacific, the South Seas of a century since, islands innumerable, such as the Society, the Friendly, and the Sandwich groups. We can little understand the great stir that was made, the boundless enthusiasm that was kindled by his achievements. The deeds of our Livingstone and Stanley were received coldly by comparison; and the impulse directly given to the cause of missions was immediate and very great. Two facts in evidence of this must suffice. It was the reading of Cook's nar-