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PREFACE.

THE period which has elapsed since the first edition of this work appeared, has had a more important influence on the social and commercial progress of the world than any recorded in history, and in no part has this change been more evident than in the countries around the North Pacific Ocean.

Twenty years ago California was little more than the hunting ground of the Indians; its ports and chief places were only occupied by a few indolent half-breed Spaniards. British Columbia and its primeval forests had been untrodden by civilized man. Behring Sea had not then been visited by the whaling-fleet, which has since drawn such enormous treasures from its waters. Russian Tartary and its great river Amur, one of the largest in the world, were unknown. Japan was a sealed empire, and the various archipelagoes scattered over its surface, teeming with people, were only visited on rare occasions for the pearl oyster or *bihe-de-mar* they produced. How all this is changed, the brief notices scattered throughout this book will show.

The vast extension of steam navigation by the introduction of the screw propeller; the establishment of sub-oceanic telegraphy; the development of the gold fields of Western America and Australia, and the consequent growth of the State of California; the opening of the vast empires of China and Japan to the world's commerce; the union of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts by the railway across the isthmus of Panama, and the Pacific Railway to San Francisco; the transfer to the United States of the Russian Territory in America; the more perfect organisation and development of the commerce with the islands; with innumerable other evidences of progress in all quarters, have so altered our relations with the remote countries