

CLEVELAND'S VOYAGES, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

The character of the citizens of New England for enterprise and industry is very generally acknowledged. Being, for the most part, obliged to seek their own fortunes, they are early accustomed to the endurance of privations, and, to those industrious and frugal habits which lead to competence and wealth. In the pursuit of that independence of which all are more or less desirous, there have been instances of daring enterprise, of persevering determination, of disregard of fatigue and suffering, which are very remarkable; but which pass unobserved from their frequency, no less than from the unobtrusive habits of the actor.

A simple account of such enterprises, drawn from journals and letters written at the time the events therein related occurred, is here given to the public.

More than forty-five years have elapsed since the first of the voyages here narrated was undertaken; and more than twenty since the completion of the last. It is apparent that they possess but in a small degree the power to interest that would have been excited had they been published at the period of their performance; yet this delay in their publication may, on some considerations, enhance their value. It may be interesting to the young merchant to trace some of the great revolutions in the commerce of the world which have occurred within the above-named periods; and those of advanced age may be induced to recur to by-gone days, with pleasing, even if accompanied with melancholy associations.

For several years preceding the date of the first of my voyages, the merchants of the United States, and particularly those of Salem, carried on an active and lucrative commerce with the Isles of France and Bourbon, which was continued up to the period of the conquest of those islands by the British, since which it has nearly ceased. That important product of our country, cotton, which is now its greatest and most valuable article of export, employing a greater amount of tonnage than any other, was then unknown as an article of export from the United States; and the little required for the consumption of our domestic fabrics was imported from Demerara, Surinam, and the West India Islands. The trade to the north-west coast of America,

which, for about twenty-five years, was actively and almost exclusively pursued from Boston, on an extensive scale, and to great advantage, has for some years been abandoned, from the scarcity and high price of furs, caused by the competition of the Russians, who have gradually advanced their posts far to the south of those places where my cargo was collected, and where they were not then seen. The sealing voyages, which were prosecuted most actively from New Haven, Norwich, and Stonington, principally to the Island of Massafuera, and by which sudden and large fortunes were made, have, for many years past, been productive of little comparative advantage to the few yet engaged in them, and this in consequence of the animal's being almost annihilated.

Our cargoes from China, which were formerly paid for in these furs, and in Spanish dollars, are now procured for bills on England, for opium, and for European and American fabrics. The cotton and silk manufactures of India constituted formerly, almost exclusively, the cargoes of our ships from Calcutta, which were paid for in Spanish dollars, and which generally yielded large profits. At this time our cotton fabrics are so much better and cheaper, as entirely to have superseded the importation of those; and most of the articles which now compose a cargo from Calcutta, excepting saltpetre and bandanas, were then scarcely known there as articles of export to this country. Bills on England in payment for these cargoes, as well as for those laden at other ports of India, have been substituted for Spanish dollars, which formerly were indispensable to the prosecution of this trade.

When I first visited the ports of Brazil, of Chili, of Peru, of Mexico, and of California, they had been for ages, and were then, so exclusively used for their own respective flags, that the admittance of one of a foreign nation was granted only on the most palpable evidence of a necessity which it would be inhuman not to attend. When admitted, no individual belonging to the vessel was permitted to land, or to walk the streets of the city, without the disagreeable encumbrance of a soldier following him; hence the difficulty of obtaining information, and consequently the meagre accounts given of the manners and customs of those nations.

The revolutions in those countries which have