

home to escape a stepmother's ill usage. He set out on foot for the Rhine, and pausing for a last look at the familiar scenes he was to behold no more for many years, made three valuable resolves to which he adhered through life—to be honest, to be industrious, and never to gamble. Arrived in London, he lodged for four years at the house of an elder brother, and having during that interval acquired the English language, embarked for the New World, towards whose broadening field of opportunity he felt himself irresistibly attracted, and where he had the premonition of great fortune.

Upon reaching New York he at once busied himself in the fur trade, to whose vast developments his thoughtful attention had been directed by a fellow-countryman, and wherein immense profits were being realised. He entered upon this occupation with unremitting vigour, and in a dozen years had diverted some of the most profitable markets from his competitors, and was at the head of a business branching to Albany, Buffalo, Plattsburg and Detroit. He established his central office at New York, where he diligently cultivated a merchant's habits in regularity and method, in the knowledge of accounts, and in the mastery of the minutest details of his affairs. He rose early, lived frugally, laboured with indefatigable activity, and soon had considerable means at command. He was a keen judge of the men employed either at his counting-room, or as traders with the Indians, and—himself the most painstaking of them all—required from each the best of which he was capable.

The furs, when delivered, were shipped to England, the vessels returning with English manufactures; and it was not long before he was able to buy a ship of his own, and in the following year a second. Before the end of the century he had, to quote his own expression, "a million dollars afloat," which represented a fleet of a dozen vessels. He was the first merchant in America to conceive the idea of habitually circumnavigating the globe, sending supercargoes with American furs to England, thence carrying British wares to China, and returning with tea. For about twenty-five years his ships sailed round the world, some going eastward and some westward, each voyage occupying two years more or less. These incessant departures were directed from the New York counting-room, which in those days of sailing packets, with commercial restrictions now unknown, with inevitable delays and accidents, without telegraphs, and with but irregular postal communication, demanded the most comprehensive foresight and sagacity in the organisation and conduct of each successive venture. Mr. Astor tells us that it was his habit to meditate at leisure upon his projects, and to elaborate their minutest details, but that once set in motion they were urged forward without fear or hesitation, *and without advice*.

During the first years of his life in America, the development of the commercial establishment Mr. Astor was building up called for his frequent presence among the Indian tribes with which the fur trade was carried on. He was obliged to be his own agent at the frontier trading stations, making agreements for the delivery of large quantities of furs; and as his dealings multiplied, it was no less necessary to regulate the affairs of his agencies. In later life he often spoke with enthusiasm of the incidents and adventures of this period of his career. It is easy to place before one's imagination the grandeur of the scenes he then beheld in their primeval beauty. Through the forests of Lower Canada, of New York and Michigan, he walked, guided by *coureurs des bois*, sometimes the first European explorer of their recesses. He traversed the Great Lakes with a band of Ontario *voyageurs*, and shot the Sault Sainte Marie in a birch canoe with a couple of Indians. He visited encampments on the