

concerning it in America, that its originator is commonly supposed to have derived his fortune from it, whereas the loss was £800,000, a heavy reverse in those days, and one that nearly ruined him.

With the return of peace and the withdrawal of the British blockading squadron from New York, Mr. Astor's consignments to England and China were resumed, and were continued until his retirement from commercial activity in 1827. At the beginning of this century he commenced buying plots of land on New York Island, having an early prescience of the growth of the city by which it is now almost covered. These purchases were made with such judgment in the line of approaching expansion as frequently to be sold again after a few years for double or treble what he had paid for them. With enlarged means these acquisitions of real estate assumed larger proportions, and took in whole farms, which gradually became covered with houses. To show that this species of farming as practised with discrimination was not in vain, it may be mentioned that one of these farms, purchased in 1811 for £900, is now worth, with its improvements, £1,400,000. An amusing notion prevalent in America is that by some queer rule of his descendants no purchase has ever been or ever can be parted with. As a matter of fact the Estate books record the sale of hundreds of plots of land during the entire century, and it should require no extraordinary acumen to perceive that so silly and narrow-minded a rule could only be imagined by very silly and narrow-minded people.

Mr. Astor's early domestic life was as simple as were all his surroundings during those primitive and provincial days. Two years after his arrival he married, and was soon able to live in a house of his own—the first, we are told, that he possessed. His wife, who had been brought up in New York during the revolutionary period, and who, upon the withdrawal of the British garrison, saw General Washington ride in upon his famous white charger, was a devoted and loving helpmate through storm and sunshine. Anxieties and cares were rarely wanting, and my great-grandfather's rise to fortune was due to none of the happy windfalls and favouring chances popularly associated with those early years: the first half of his life was an arduous struggle in which adversity and disappointment only stimulated to further self-improvement and to a broader and profounder study of the world. As time passed he was frequently consulted by the United States Treasury upon financial subjects, and was in correspondence upon monetary questions with Henry Clay, James Monroe, Thomas Jefferson, President Madison and Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury. In 1816 he was appointed a director of the Bank of the United States. He detested the shams and insincerities and pettifoggings whereby one who is approached by many beggars and by not a few rogues is often made to see the less attractive aspect of human nature. His only extravagance was in acquisition of news and information of use in his operations over the globe, a comical instance of which was his receiving intelligence from Montreal by special relays of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, December 24th, 1814, whereby peace was restored between Great Britain and the United States, two days before it was known to the American Government to which he had the gratification of making its announcement.

From 1820 to 1822, and from 1829 to 1834, Mr. Astor resided in Europe. Soon after arriving on the Continent he visited his native village of Waldorf, where from the first provision had been made for his surviving relatives, and which he afterwards endowed with an asylum for its infirm and destitute. How familiar and yet how different must the scenes of his forlorn boyhood have appeared, with their humble surroundings, whither his ancestor, Jean Jacques d'Astorg, a French Huguenot, had fled, upon the Revocation of the Edict of