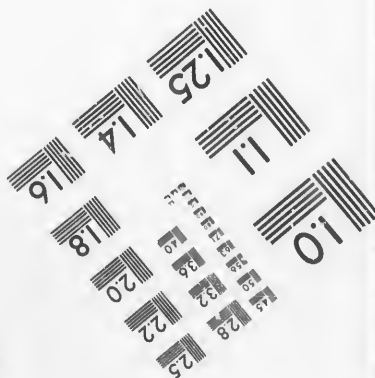
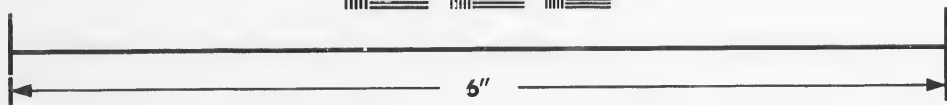
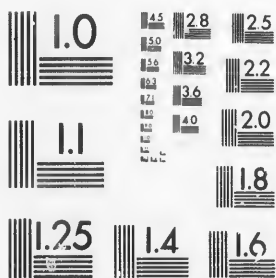


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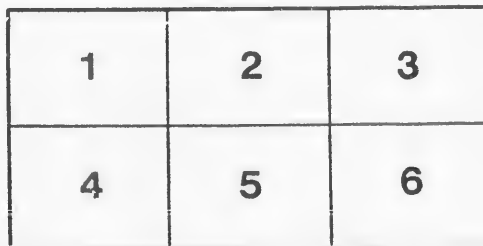
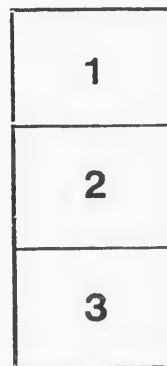
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THE CONNECTION



BETWEEN

LITERATURE AND COMMERCE.

IN TWO ESSAYS,

READ BEFORE

The Literary and Historical Society of Toronto.

BY W. SCOTT BURN, ESQ.

PUBLISHED FOR THE SOCIETY.

TORONTO:

H. & W. ROWSELL.

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THE CONNECTION BETWEEN
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ESSAY I.

WHEN I was asked to read before the Literary and Historical Society, an essay upon this subject, I thought that it was far too complicated to be considered in one, or even two, essays. But, upon reflection, I considered that, though I might not be able to stretch out before you every link of the chain which connects literature and commerce, I might yet be able to unfold it here and there. If, from being done hurriedly, this be done imperfectly, I must rely upon your kindness for my excuse.

To understand rightly the connection between literature and commerce, we ought to examine it in different lights. We shall do this most easily, if we take it up from two points of view, corresponding to the two meanings which the word literature usually bears in our language.

Dr. Johnson defines literature to mean "learning, a desire of knowledge;" or, in other words, the acquirement of those attainments which can be gained only by active studiousness of mind, and the possession of such feelings, by the community around us, as will lead society to appreciate those attainments. But literature may also be understood to mean what we more generally call *belles lettres*, or, the art of polishing and fitting together those ideas which this active studiousness of mind has already put in our possession. These two significations of the word may with great propriety be considered separately, because each refers to a distinct working of the mind; and, also, because we may discover that the influence which commerce exerts upon literature, when taken in the first sense, will by no means apply when it is understood in the second. By making the division, we shall at all events secure to ourselves a halting place where we may rest, and afterwards pursue our journey at leisure.

If, then, we take up the first grand division of our subject, we shall find that even this must be considered with reference to three several epochs in the history of the human race. These three are,—the infancy of society—the progress of society, rapidly accelerating, as it proceeds to its full development—and the tranquil repose of society after this full development has taken place.

As to the first of these three:—There can be no doubt that commerce has a vast influence upon literature during the infancy of society, if indeed we can imagine that literature, in its early stage, could exist for any length of time, without that conflict of national minds, which can be produced by other causes, but which commerce alone can perpetuate.

Man, while wandering in scattered tribes, or collected in separate and widely detached patriarchal governments, was essentially the same being as we see him now, in crowded societies, and amid the intermingling of nations. He had the same lofty aspirations, the same anxiety to approach nearer to that higher state of intelligence which his own feelings

everywhere tell him was, at one time, his proper state of existence,—he had the same thirst of knowledge which we have now.

But how was this knowledge to be acquired? How, after the signal and miraculous dispersion of the human race, was he to obtain it? What stock of knowledge did he carry with him at the commencement of his wanderings, and how was that stock to be increased? How was it even to be preserved?

The curious have long felt an interest in conjecturing what were the scientific attainments of man at the time of this first dispersion,—I shall scarcely hint at them here, but shall probably recur to the subject. That Noah possessed a large share of the knowledge of the antediluvian age, we may readily believe, and we well know that that knowledge was of an importance which it has puzzled many scientific men to account for. The building of the ark was in itself an exploit which the polished Greeks or Romans could hardly have accomplished. The working in brass and iron, the number and kind of musical instruments in use before the deluge, exhibit a progress in science which can hardly be explained except on the supposition of a divine revelation. The researches which are now making in Egypt, give us glimpses of antediluvian civilization, which, while they surprise us, do at the same time, most strangely connect the early progress of art in that wonderful country with antediluvian tradition. In the records which are discovered in their tombs, we find traces that inscriptions which were graven upon stone before the deluge, had been read and commented upon by their learned men within the range of their records; and it has now become a matter of enquiry among philosophers whether their first Hermes was not a being of the former world—was not Tubalcain, or Noah, or even Adam himself.

Be this, however, as it may; let the extent of knowledge before the deluge have been what it might, and let it or let it not be, that portions of this knowledge were scattered among the descendants of Noah after the dispersion. Let us, without reference to the original stock of knowledge, at once examine what the progress of each tribe would have been had it remained, isolated and unconnected, in the region to which it had wandered, and then let us compare this with what we know to have been its progress when it established a communication with other tribes.

In their isolated state, they would settle down with the full possession of their traditionary knowledge, whatever that was, and with an earnest desire to apply it to the necessities of their new position. They would proceed to till the ground, and to hunt the forest for food for themselves and their families. And here would be their first attempt at originality. They would now find a climate differing in some respects from that which they had left—a climate favourable to the growth of other plants, or requiring a different mode of culture for those to which they had been accustomed. They would find the forests tenanted by a different race of animals, requiring to be attacked by unwonted stratagems, and capable of being applied to different purposes of food or raiment. They would find that the face of nature was changed, and it would be necessary for them to alter the whole economy of their lives. If they had brought with them a love of letters, or of music, or a fondness for poetry, they would gradually blend the allusions, the comparisons, the aspirations, which were natural to their old life, with new ones drawn from the scenes which were now around them, till they accustomed themselves to a tone of thinking peculiar to their position, and distinctive of themselves.

And the same thing would follow in the case of every particular tribe which wandered to a distance from its fellows. If its migrations led it to a settlement in a mountainous country, in one full of sublime scenery, filled with the more grand wonders of nature's works, the ideas of its people would correspond with external nature; they would delight in stern grandeur of thought—their religion would be severe, but pure.

If their wanderings led them to places, delighting in a genial warmth of climate, glowing under a brilliant sun, filled with exuberant vegetation, and blessed with a soil which produced the necessaries of life with little labour, they would, from the very want of any necessity for exertion, become indolent and sensual; their thoughts, literature and religion, would become voluptuous like themselves.

Thus, throughout the inhabited world, would gradually be formed, various communities of men, differing materially in their modes of action and habits of thought: retaining, indeed, the remembrance of the same great truths, but making these assume different appearances, according to the kind of drapery with which they shrouded them. How would they proceed in the progress of intelligence, if they remained separate? and how would they be acted upon by communication with other tribes? How would they proceed without commerce? or how would they proceed with commerce, which, in such a situation, would be the only inducement to a regular intercourse?

If they remained in seclusion, they would work upon their own stock of ideas, both natural and traditionary, till they had made every discovery which was required by their necessities, or was wanted for their comfort. They would master every progressive difficulty, till they could erect buildings sufficient for their accommodation, and would cultivate the ground till it produced the greatest crops. They would encourage such a reciprocation of thought as would amuse them in their dwellings, and they would arrange such a plan of religion as would satisfy their longings for immortality. When they had accomplished this, they would work within a circle upon their mental stock; they would attempt to beautify what their peculiar principles had already established, but they could not proceed to any amendment which involved an addition to these principles; they would have no comprehension of the possibility of higher results, and would therefore never attempt to obtain them.

But how different would it be, were the different tribes brought into communication with each other! A common veneration for the residence or burial place of their original ancestors, might lead them to resort to it, and to meet there during a casual or a periodical pilgrimage; or the lingering feelings of relationship might lead them to track out the way for visits from one to another. Such feelings might lead them to track out the way, but what except commerce could induce them so to trace and make plain the path, that it would become the traversed road of general communication? If the intercourse proceeded simply from feelings of relationship, these would become more feeble during every succeeding generation; if from reverence, that would decay. Their own mountains, or their own forests, would, to their own estimation, increase in sanctity; and the birth place, or the burial ground, of their own children or immediate parents, would be more regarded than those of persons who were fading from their recollection.

But in these primeval visits, they would soon find much that was different from what they themselves possessed. They would find that dif-

ference of climate had led other tribes to prosecute arts which were different from theirs—to produce articles which, though contrived upon the call of a differing necessity, yet if combined with what they themselves possessed, would add to their comforts. They would find that each could exchange with the other something that was useful, and that each would be benefitted by the exchange. They would find that their intercourse was profitable, as well as agreeable; and they would repeat their visits with more frequency, and continue them for a longer time, as they began to produce a greater quantity or variety of articles, or acquired an inclination for higher or more varied elegancies.

During these repeated visits, they would gradually form a more intimate acquaintanceship. They would begin to talk of something more than mere business. They would acquaint each other with new discoveries in science, and they would recite to each other the songs and the annals of their respective countries. They would continually find that these communications elicited something that was new, something that was unknown to one or the other; their stock of knowledge would be increased, their minds would not now reason in a circle upon the same ideas, but would become expanded, in proportion to the wider vision which was opened to their view.

It is only upon some such supposition that we can at all account for man making a progressive advance from a state of nature to one of varied knowledge, or acquiring a taste for literature. Without mutual communication, which necessarily includes commerce, they would advance only so far as necessity urged them; when necessity was satisfied, they would spend the rest of their time either in torpor or voluptuousness; in torpor, if the climate was severe; in voluptuousness, if it was genial.

If we look around us, and consider the situation in which every secluded country has been found when first discovered by Europeans, we shall obtain a strong confirmation of this theory. Mexico, and Peru, are exceptions in this new continent, as Egypt and India were in the old; and if I have time, we shall probably find that there are peculiarities regarding these countries, which will clearly justify us in treating them as exceptions. But look in any other direction, and what shall we see? In what state were the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, when their shores were first imprinted with the footsteps of the white man? Living in full enjoyment of the most delightful climate in the world, they procured their food with little labour, and consequently had ample leisure for meditation, and improvement. But to what purpose was this leisure employed? They learned to construct their slight dwellings with neatness, to cultivate their gardens to advantage, to inclose and divide their fields, and to make some kind of roads or paths across their country. This was as far as any of them had advanced, and by far the greater number were much behind even this degree of improvement. Of science, they had none; their religion was voluptuous, their morals depraved.

In other islands, not enjoying such advantages of climate, the mental progress was much the same, though the character of the people was different; as they procured their food with greater difficulty, so their powers of exertion were greater; they had more hardihood of disposition, their religion was more severe and cruel in its rites, and even cannibalism was common among them.

The islands in the Eastern Ocean present similar results. We can hardly say that these islanders have been discovered by us in a secluded

state of original nature, for we cannot tell how far the ancient Indian, Arabian, Chinese, and Egyptian commerce may have extended among them. But as this had ceased long before our visits, we found everywhere but few traces of its effects: if we except the mixing up of mysterious dogmas of imported religion with their own traditions, and the practice of piracy, which was almost the only purpose to which they applied their acquired knowledge of navigation.

Let us turn to the continental world, and compare the condition of the migratory tribes, with that of those countries where commerce has encouraged and maintained a fixed and industrious population. We find the latter advanced to various degrees of science and art; we find all of them looking to something beyond mere nourishment for enjoyment; and though the progress of some may be slow, yet, even in the most tardy of them, do we find a creeping march towards improvement. If we look at the former, we find that to this day they possess the knowledge of nothing more than is requisite to procure their own subsistence. The Kamptschdale, the Laplander, and the Esquimaux, to whose cheerless countries no caravan ever travels, are sunk nearly as low as we can suppose humanity to fall. The wandering Arab beholds the rapid passage of caravans with as little effect upon his habits as the feet of the camels have upon the moving sands of the desert. The roaming Indian cares nothing about intercourse with white men, except to procure fire arms, with which to continue the chase, or perpetuate his murderous feuds with his fellows; or, what is worse, to procure materials for debasing intoxication. And thus will it be in whatever direction we turn our view.

I now proceed to the second branch of this subject, which is, the connection between literature and commerce, during the progress of society; when it is proceeding, with a pace rapidly accelerating as it advances, to its full development. And here, I believe we shall naturally come to the conclusion, that, as in its infancy no progress could be made in learning, or in acquiring the love of learning, without commerce; so neither could the progress of art, nor the inclination to admire it, be fully developed.

As an instance of this, I would allude as briefly as I can to India and Egypt; which countries I have already named as exceptions to our general survey of mankind. I would also allude to China, the early history of which seems to entitle it also to a position different from that of the rest of the world; but hardly, as I think, from all that we have yet learned, to be considered an exception upon the same grounds.

From the very commencement of Scripture history, we find India and Egypt not hinted at obscurely, but plainly pointed out as renowned seats of learning and civilization; and this more than two thousand years before the birth of our Saviour. And every successive discovery which is made by modern research, not only proves that such must have been the case, but pours a flood of light upon general history as related in the Old Testament. Not only do we now know that Egypt must, at the early period which is therein mentioned, have been in a position fully as advanced as is there represented, but some of the most singular events in patriarchal history, are found to have been there painted or graven, as if for our information. For example: there has been found in one of the tombs, a pictorial representation of Joseph delivering to the Governor of the land of Goshen, the royal order that the Israelites should occupy that land. Joseph is represented in his full robes and official wig, with the

governor kneeling before him, (thereby proving the assertion of Scripture that Joseph was the Prime Minister of Pharaoh) and receiving the written order, while Joseph points to his father Jacob, and to his brethren. The whole transaction is explained in hieroglyphic scrolls. And all this happened, and was thus recorded seventeen hundred years before Christ.

But it is not so much to the early date at which these countries were civilized, as to the peculiar nature of their civilization and learning, that I would direct your attention. It is probable that India and Egypt were in advance of all Europe and Asia in science and art, but to the extent, the depth, and the abstraction of their science, and to the variety of their arts, that I would ask you to look. It is a matter of much controversy, whether civilization proceeded from India to Egypt, or from Egypt to India, but an enquiry of that kind can have no place here at present. We know very well that their early civilization and religion were intimately connected, if they were not the same; for the Sepoy troops, whom Sir David Baird conducted across the desert to Egypt, to attack Buonaparte, fell down before the idols in the ancient Egyptian temples, saying that these were their gods also.

Taking them indiscriminately, we are astonished to find that but one or two nations on the whole face of the globe were, within four hundred years after the deluge, in so peculiar a position. We find and now know since the learned have been able to read their inscriptions, that within this short time after the deluge, these people had erected temples and porticos, and excavated vast halls, all either covered or filled with sculptures; the buildings, the halls, and the decorations excelling in stupendous power and finish, everything which has since been executed. We know that most of the wonders of Upper Egypt must have been finished more than three thousand four hundred years ago; and that the pyramids and labyrinth cannot be much later than three thousand two hundred years since. We know that for the erection of these buildings, they must have possessed a knowledge of mechanics greater than even we possess. We know that their quarrying was conducted upon the most scientific principles, and we even find distinct remains of that vaunted discovery of modern times, the railroad; by which alone they were enabled to transport immense blocks of stone across the desert, from the neighbourhood of the Red Sea. We find, in their paintings of the same date, representations of almost every art with which we are now acquainted, and of many of which we are still ignorant; in chemistry we know that they excelled, and we find convincing proofs of their knowledge of mesmerism, that new wonder or scandal of the present day.

But more than this, we find in these very temples, and constructed at the same early period, planispheres, and astronomical tablets; which prove the perfection to which they had carried the kindred sciences of mathematics and astronomy. In short, we must begin to be in doubt of the extent of our own attainments, and to feel uncertain, whether in this our age of boasted illumination, we have not yet something to learn which was familiar to the sages of more than three thousand years ago.

Again, as to religion, we find evident traces in the Hindoo mythology, of a clear tradition of the Trinity in Unity, and of the incarnation of one member of the Godhead; a tradition gradually obscured, and at last obliterated, by multiplied incumbrances of superstitious rites.

From a fair consideration of all these wonders, I was inclined to make these countries an exception to our general examination of the infancy of

society; and I did so upon the ground, that these prodigies of early civilization cannot, as I said before, be accounted for, except on the supposition that the immediate ancestors of these people carried with them after the dispersion, a greater proportion of antediluvian knowledge and tradition, than those of any others. It was with this view that I hinted in the commencement of this essay, at the astonishing extent of knowledge which had been acquired before the deluge, and at the connection of early Egyptian art with this grand depository. I have here increased my description of Egyptian art, because the signal decay of science in India and Egypt, will of itself almost make good my position, that commerce is equally necessary to the advancement of art, as for its commencement.

And here I must also call to my aid the early history of China, now becoming better understood. We find that in this most curious country science flourished at a singularly early period. We know that they had discovered the properties and use of the magnetic needle, eleven hundred years before Christ, or nearly two thousand three hundred years before it was known in Europe. We also know that nearly two thousand years ago, they had discovered the nature of gunpowder, and had applied it to the more elegant use of making varied fireworks; and we are certain, also, that they discovered the art of printing, and had applied it to the multiplication of books, nearly one thousand years ago.

How comes it, that shortly after this period, the Chinese, having already made such wonderful advances in science, and having also made that grand discovery which has in Europe been the main cause of a rapid dissemination of knowledge, should all of a sudden pause as if panic struck, and remain motionless, if not retrograding, ever since? How comes it, also, that the progress of learning did, in more wonderful Egypt, likewise make a pause and stand still two thousand or two thousand five hundred years ago; and did so continue for many generations before its extinction. How comes it that in India the word learning is little more than an echo from the walls of her temples.

From our more perfect acquaintance with Chinese history, we now find that they were not always the secluded people which they have latterly become. We know that they did not always shun the intercourse of foreign nations. On the contrary, we find that during the more ancient periods of their history, they were essentially a commercial people; that their ships navigated the ocean to a great distance; that they spread themselves abroad, peopled colonies, and founded settlements. We find that they were an enterprising people, full of mental activity; and that while they accumulated wealth, they also increased in knowledge. During all this period, they went on, making discovery after discovery, till their knowledge arrived at the striking results which I have already mentioned. But with the growth of their riches, there came an increased number of rapacious enemies. The Tartar tribes, who lived on their northern frontier, were fierce and harassed them by frequent attacks, till, wearied by the repeated annoyance, they built a wall skirting the whole empire, as a preventative of invasion. This wall still remains as one of the wonders of the world; but unfortunately, while it shut the Tartars out, it had an equal tendency to prevent the stimulating influence of foreign ideas from coming in. They remained shut up, like monks in a cloister, and could hear of the world and its doings, only from a distance. About the same time, their whole empire became distracted by intestine broils, and the quarrels of multiplied competitors for the crowns of those petty kingdoms

into which it then became divided—maritime enterprise diminished, and even became gradually disliked. From this period, their whole literature stood still. They did not lose the discoveries of their ancestors, but they made no new ones. They began to reason within their own circle, and gradually forgot how to step beyond it.

In Egypt, we find distinct traces of the same progress, and the same decline. We know that in early times they were, and must have been, a highly commercial people. We can almost trace the route by which the caravans marched to the Valley of Nile, and by which they departed from it in opposite directions. We have distinct accounts of their harbours on the Red Sea, and many hints of the wonderful trade which was there carried on. We have proofs of an intimate trading connection between them and the Phœnicians, and can hardly account for the elevation of these last, except by presuming such a connection. It was during this time of mental activity that their discoveries in science were made, and that their wonderful works of art were produced. But after a time, irruptions of barbarous tribes from the desert overran their country, and either drove the population away, or trampled it down. With the true feeling of nomadic barbarians, these invaders despised commerce, so that the very word merchant became a term of reproach, and the calling of a seafaring man an abomination. Fortunately, however, they had a reverence for the priestly office, and seem to have spared the clergy, and left the greater part of their property untouched.

Among these, therefore, a knowledge of the past was still for a long time preserved, but it was knowledge confined within prison walls; the mass of the people could now neither understand nor admire it. The acquisition of it was not followed by fresh honours; they were not stimulated from without, and consequently lost all energy within. A wandering foreigner occasionally came, to learn, to reverence and to admire; but the general use of it was gone, and it gradually but surely decayed.

ESSAY II.

We may with great safety presume that the decay of literature in India was produced by nearly the same causes as in Egypt. India was, from the earliest ages, by far too wealthy not to be a tempting spoil for the barbarous nations by which she was surrounded. These made one irruption after another till they succeeded, as in Egypt, in confining the whole learning of the country to the priestly order; who, not being stimulated to exertion by a reading and enterprising people around them, gradually neglected the acquisition of any attainments, except those which could enable them to work upon the superstitious fears of the population, and turn those fears to their own advantage.

In China the position of literary men was somewhat different from what it was in India. The Chinese are, and have been, a reading people. They are incited to study by the desire of power, and of the acquisition of that wealth which the possession of power enables them to accumulate. They have, therefore, preserved their acquirements, though they have not added to them. But the Hindoos are not so. The mass of the people, fettered by the trammels of caste, have no other aim than to tread in the

footsteps of their forefathers; and even the Brahmins, during very many generations, had no hope that they could rise in society by the possession of learning. There was no demand for literary attainments, and therefore the wish to acquire them gradually ceased. Circumstances are now again changing, and the encouragement now offered to native learning, may again resuscitate the genius of India.

Before I proceed to the progress of literature in ancient and modern Europe, I would make a few remarks upon the position of Mexico and Peru; which countries, in the beginning of these essays, I classed with Egypt and India, as exceptions to our general course of reasoning. I excepted Egypt and India, because I cannot account for the high civilization which these countries attained at so very early a period, except by supposing that their first ancestors did, on the general dispersion, carry with them a greater portion of antediluvian knowledge than was possessed by the founders of other nations. I regard Mexico and Peru as exceptions likewise, because it is very evident that the extraordinary people who were, in all probability, their teachers, were in some way or other, to us as yet unaccountable, connected with early Indian and Egyptian art.

When Mexico and Peru were first discovered, their inhabitants were found in possession of almost all the useful arts; they had made astonishing progress in architecture, having not only succeeded in erecting such dwellings as were necessary for their shelter and comfort, but in rearing palaces and lofty temples. They made roads, bridges, and canals. Their form of government was settled, its arrangements pervaded the whole frame of their society. They had a regular police, and even an establishment of post couriers, for the transmission of intelligence; and yet there was nothing so distinctive in the appearance of these people, as to make it at all probable that they were a separate race from the other red men who were found all around them, both on the continent and in the islands, and who were still in comparative barbarism. They had traditions that in former wars they had driven from these very lands a former and more ancient people, whom they called builders, or architects; some of their more ancient buildings were said to have been erected by that race, and not by themselves.

By the rude and avaricious adventurers, who first discovered and conquered those countries, these traditions were recorded with but little enquiry into their correctness; in our own days, however, their accuracy has been fully proved. Throughout Central America, in a position between Mexico and Peru, immense architectural remains have been discovered; but when erected, is as yet a matter of conjecture. These remains, like those in Upper Egypt and in India, are, almost entirely, those of gigantic temples. The ponderous masonry is the same, the walls, statues, and pillars, are covered with hieroglyphics. The knowledge of chemistry which this unknown people possessed, must have been equal to that of Egypt; for the colours, with which their drawings were painted, are as fresh as any which have been discovered among the Egyptian tombs; and this although exposed to a climate of greater moisture. The manner, also, in which these wonderful buildings are arranged, most strangely connects those that planned and built them, with the early inhabitants of the Eastern Old World.

For example: the great temple at Palenque is found to correspond exactly, in the size and height of its terraces, in the number and arrangement of its courts and porticos, and in many other particulars, with the

dimensions of Solomon's temple at Jerusalem. Many of their other buildings bear striking resemblances to ancient erections in Egypt and India; and, on the whole, the coincidences are so extraordinary, that a very clever author in the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, did some years ago make out, to his own satisfaction, that these buildings were erected by descendants of the Canaanites, driven from Judea by Joshua; who, after a pilgrimage through the wilds of Tartary and North America, had finally settled down in Yucatan. Others supposed them to have been erected by the lost tribes of Israel. The connection with India, Egypt and Palestine, is evident; but I would rather refer its cause to the great extent of commercial enterprise among the peculiar people of these early ages, than have recourse to the supposition that a whole nation could employ ages and generations in traversing desert regions, and, after the expiration of all those ages, arrive in this far distant land, with all their knowledge fresh as from a recent teacher, and entire as if recorded and carried with them on tablets of brass.

It is to be hoped, that a key to these hieroglyphics of Central America, will soon be found; and that we shall be able to read them, as we now do those of Egypt. When we can do this, and not till then, will we acquire an insight into the early history of those who composed them; but the existence of such a people, and upon such a spot, gives a derivation to the arts and learning of Mexico and Peru, which is sufficiently singular and precise, to justify me in reckoning these countries exceptions to the general course of our reasoning.

After these remarks, which have run out to a greater length than I intended to have allowed them, I shall proceed to make a few remarks upon the connection between literature and commerce during the early progress of civilization in Europe. And here our attention must first be turned to the early civilization of the Greeks, a people, the combined elegance and originality of whose literature are regarded even at this day as something which has yet to be attempted, rather than as any thing which has been equalled. We must then turn to that of the Romans, and shall probably find, that commerce had great influence in producing the marked difference of national mind in the two countries.

It is impossible to enter now into details of the early Grecian commerce; our time will not allow it, and it would hardly be necessary for our purpose, even if it did. The connection of early Greece with those countries which we found to have been the very focus of early commerce and civilization, is clearly proved, by the fact that Cærops, the first king of Athens, was an Egyptian,—Pelops of Mycenæ, a Phrygian prince,—and that Cadmus introduced written characters from the Phœnicians. These facts prove that a familiar communication took place between Greece and the countries from which these rulers came. Another proof of the energy of commercial spirit among the Greeks, is to be found in the fact, that they established colonies everywhere within the range of their maritime enterprise; not colonies consisting of a conquered town or province, and dignified with that name as a matter of favour, as the Romans did; but real settlements, peopled by their people, and speaking their language. And this colonization, though commencing in so early an age, that the difference of pronunciation, which was produced by distance and change of climate, gradually increased till it formed distinct dialects of the mother tongue, was yet continued, till the parent states had lost their greatness. We find them with important settlements in the

south of Italy; we also find them taking such complete possession of Asia Minor, and extending their arts and influence so far into the interior as to press upon the Persian monarchy, and render it a matter of political necessity that the rulers of that vast empire should attempt to cut down the main stem, that they might disencumber themselves from the branches. We cannot, upon any other supposition, account for their Persian wars; or for the expedition of Xerxes, otherwise apparently so wild and unnecessary.

The high polish to which the Greeks brought the arts of literature, sculpture and architecture, must be accounted for by other causes; but it is easy to see how this habit of commercial activity should, by producing a constant stimulus of fresh ideas, urge them on to make discovery after discovery, improvement after improvement, and even to create that constant craving for something new, which was so characteristic of them that it passed into an ancient by-word. We know that their learned men travelled to the East to study at the most celebrated schools of philosophy which were still taught by the priests in those countries; and we can easily imagine how the vast mental activity which, on their return, they found prevailing among their countrymen, would induce them to display and make the most of their acquired knowledge. We can easily imagine how it would lead them to complete those systems of philosophy, of which they had obtained the rudiments in the East—how it would stimulate them to original thinking, till they produced new systems of their own.

We find that this was the course they actually took. They imported the knowledge of the East, and they carefully polished and worked up every part of it which was suitable for effect on the masses. They made immense progress in metaphysics, rhetoric, mathematics, and every other science which is dependent upon pure reasoning; gaining little ground, however, and it is a most singular fact in the philosophy of the mind, in those enquiries which depend for their successful prosecution upon careful and repeated practical experiment. They made little progress in chemistry, astronomy, and some other branches of natural philosophy.

And here I would remark, in passing, that the mental tendency among the Greeks was quite different from that of the Eastern people. The aim of Eastern philosophy, was distinctiveness; while that of the Greek was abstraction. The Egyptians erred, by carrying the desire of distinctiveness too far; the Greeks, by extending their abstract reasoning to subjects to which it did not apply. The people of the East were never satisfied, till they made an important truth apparent to their senses. No sooner did they make a discovery than they set to work to symbolize it—to attempt to draw it down from heaven, and make it apparent to the eye and the touch. They ransacked all animate and inanimate nature, for fancied resemblances to those ideas of the beautiful or great, which their philosophy had made plain to their intellect. The flower, the tree, or the animal in which the resemblance was found, became an emblem; from an emblem, it passed gradually among the vulgar, into an actual personification; until, by the extension of this process, we can account for the otherwise incomprehensible multiplication of objects of idolatrous worship among them. Their train of thinking was essentially symbolic, their language was the same—this still continues to be a striking peculiarity of Eastern style—presenting nature in such graceful extravagance, as even yet to captivate us in infancy, and delight us in age.

The Greeks, again, were never satisfied with the mere possession of a

positive and certain truth; no sooner did they make a discovery of any such, than they began to resolve it into its principles,—to split it into abstractions. They deprived it of its individuality, and generalized a theory from it; a habit of thought which, carried to the extreme, produces results equally disastrous, though differing in kind from the errors of the East. The latter multiplied representations of truth, till truth itself was lost and smothered among its representatives. The former went on abstracting till there was no certainty of any truth whatever.

It would be very interesting to investigate whence this counter current of mind took its rise among the Greeks,—whether it was derived from a previous philosophy of which we are now ignorant, or was produced by their peculiar habits and position. Its effect was very early apparent in the overthrow of all ancient and universally received principles of government. Monarchy was discarded, republican institutions were established upon the specious pretence that they were more consonant to the nature and dignity of man; and *vox populi vox dei* was made an axiom in philosophy. To this new system, we owe much that is noble in character and active in exertion, combined with incessant vicissitudes, frequent re-actions in public affairs, great virtues, and great crimes.

So attractive did the Greeks make this system of government, that more or less of it has been mixed up with every European constitution to this day. The East continued in the implicit observance of their traditionary mode of rule, which, by their excessive attachment to it, frequently degenerated into tyranny of a very bad description—the tyranny of the palace—of the minions who ruled the sovereign by crouching to him. And yet look where we will, whether to the early days of ancient empires, or to the state of every newly discovered country—look around the world—read the records of old discoveries, and examine the details of new ones—look where you will, and observe society in its original elements, nowhere will you find anything but the original form of patriarchal government, combined perhaps with the ruling power of chiefs, or elders. We find everywhere, that the masses of mankind were ruled by some authority independent of themselves; nowhere do we find an instance of such republican institutions as we see among the Greeks. So that we may safely say, that if there be any ground for the axiom that *vox populi est vox dei*, there is stronger reason for concluding that this *vox totius mundi* is the actual handwriting on the wall—the *vox dei* engraven with the principles of order upon the hearts of men.

If we turn to the ancient Romans, we shall find, that instead of embracing commerce with the heartiness and zeal which the Greeks did, it was held in contempt among them; and that those of its operations which were indispensable to society, were entrusted to persons of inferior rank. To be a merchant, would have been degradation to a patrician. The march of conquest brought them in continued and advancing connection with other countries, and the productions of those countries were regularly imported into their capital; but this was done by underlings, or strangers; and the commercial spirit never became part and parcel of the Roman character. At no period of their history could the Romans have resorted to their wooden walls, as the Athenians did.

We accordingly find that the spirit of intellectual research, never did at any time exist among the Romans as a people. With the productions of new countries, those who were disposed to study acquired a knowledge of the arts and sciences which flourished in these countries. With the

conquest of Greece the learned Romans became acquainted with her philosophy; but this philosophy was studied among them as the solace of a learned and luxurious leisure, rather than as something generally important to be understood, and in which the public mind desired instruction. It was a thing to be pondered over, to be embellished, to be the subject of conversation among friends of the same class; but the mass of the people knew little of it. These, paid and fed at public cost as Roman citizens, were not stimulated to mental activity by the never ceasing energies of commerce.

And therefore it was, that the Romans were not an inventive people. They acquired the philosophy of the Greeks, but were not thereby stimulated to make fresh discoveries. They treasured what they possessed, and they polished it to brightness; they invented no new system, but they attempted to combine several old systems into one. They retained the architecture which they had received from the Greeks, added some ornaments to give it a more luxurious appearance, and blended the original orders into one new one: the composite. They received the poetry and history of the Greeks, and in their ingenious leisure they imitated and rivalled their masters; but except in the satirical poem, itself a resource to enliven indolent luxury, they produced no new style. In metaphysics, they advanced very little; but in criticism they made great progress. The Greek mind was inventive, throughout all grades of its society; that of the Latins, was studious and reflective among those classes which had wealth and leisure. And this difference proceeded, as I believe, from the fact that the Greeks were a commercial people, while the Romans were not.

In continuing these observations, I shall pass over the period of barbarism and decay which spread over Europe during what is called the dark ages. The accumulated wisdom of former times was then nearly lost, and with it, commerce and even the art of navigation were almost forgotten. After this, the first stimulus to the general mind of Europe was certainly given by the crusades, that wondrous result of excited religion, which, by precipitating Europe upon Asia, brought the pupils once more to the residence of their former teachers. The first effects which this sudden contact had upon the rude inhabitants of the west, were wonder at the novelty of eastern manners, and admiration of the riches, the arts and the architecture which were there displayed. After wonder and admiration, came the desire of continued possession, and of regular communication. Constant intercourse produced a rivalry among European nations, to produce in the greatest quantity, or of the highest excellence, those manufactures which could be exchanged to the best advantage for the jewels, the silks and the spices of the East.

Thus was the first stimulus given to that commercial activity, which has ever since become a pervading feature of European society. To this are we to attribute the origin of that general ferment of mind, which has ever since distinguished Europe from one end to the other.

We find, accordingly, that literature first began to dawn, and the arts to flourish, in the very places where this new commerce was begun. We find the Italian republics embarking largely in the trade of the East, and we find them also first in the race of literature; we find poets and philosophers, painters and sculptors, start up among them. We find the same improvement gradually spreading in the very track of this commercial spirit, and to the very places where its effects were greatest. The Italian mer-

chants found that woollen goods, the staple commodity of the cold north of Europe, were nearly, if not quite, the most important exchangeable material in the East, and they ransacked the north to find them. Large woollen manufactories were established in Flanders. Bruges and Ghent rose to eminence as commercial stations, and there also did literature and art first flourish. The further progress of European commerce is matter of modern history, and is so well known that I need not trespass further upon your time by describing it in detail, but shall proceed at once to consider the third branch of my subject, which was, the connection between literature and commerce during the tranquil repose consequent upon the full development of society.

Here, also, shall we find, that commerce acts as an engine necessary to keep the human mind stimulated to exertion. With the full development of society comes the diffusion of wealth, with wealth comes the desire of luxurious ease, and luxurious ease passes naturally into indolence. Were this tendency to remain unchecked, exertion of mind would become hateful; the desire of acquiring knowledge would be lost, or cultivated only as subsidiary to ornament and the gratification of the senses. A retrograde movement would commence, science would be frittered away into elegant quibbles, and literature dwindle down to nothing more important than a sonnet or a madrigal. But here the commercial spirit steps in and arrests the progress of decay; it keeps society in constant motion, elevating the low and depressing the lofty, filling every rank with new claimants for distinction, and keeping all on the watch that they may not, during a season of forgetfulness, be elbowed out of the way, and lose their position. By this constant movement throughout the whole framework of human membership, it gradually and more and more spreads knowledge of every kind before the eyes of individuals, increasing the stock of their acquirements, bringing them nearer and nearer to the position of those above them. If men of learning would now keep the eminence which they have previously gained, they must deepen their researches, must increase their discoveries; they must keep adding to the rapidly accumulating fund of knowledge, if they would wish to be looked up to as before.

Something approaching to this effect is produced by extensive wars and distant foreign conquest, but the effect of these is transitory. Their immediate consequence is to rouse the public mind, and to bring it more in contact with a fresh, and perhaps novel chain of ideas; but when these ideas have become incorporated with the former supply, the torpor of repose again takes place, and the re-action of indolence commences. Neither, if we discard commerce, do I see anything which can be employed as its substitute in keeping alive the mental activity of a great country.

I shall now proceed to make a few remarks upon the connection between commerce and belles lettres, which forms the last branch of our subject. In these I shall be as brief as possible, because this essay has, like the former, expanded to a greater size than I would have wished or you have desired. I have also been tempted to step rather frequently aside from my direct path, and must make the more haste to reach the end of my journey. Many of the observations which I have now to make may seem to be forestalled already, or merely to be corollaries to the positions which I have previously attempted to establish.

From my previous remarks it is evident, that I look upon commerce as a grand moving power to stimulate the desire for fresh acquisitions in

literature. These acquisitions will be given to the public in language more or less refined as the age in which the authors live is more or less civilized. In a rude age they will be delivered in language coarse, but nervous and terse: in a polished one, they will be clothed with elegance suitable to the general refinement. But commerce has little direct agency in bringing about the refinement, while the refinement has a powerful effect in guiding and altering the current of thought. In the case of a very barbarous people brought suddenly into contact with one of advanced civilization, the refinement of the latter will be to the former something to imitate and assume, as we would copy the cut of a coat, and put on one of the same fashion; while the ideas which this refinement clothes, are something to startle the mind, either to ponder upon, or to stir it up from its inmost depths.

Commerce incessantly brings a stock of raw material to the mart of literature, as the industry of the miner extracts ores of precious metal from the bowels of the earth. The polishing of those ideas must, like the burnishing of the precious metals, be done by other hands; be planned and carried out by minds imbued with a different spirit. Energy must be the characteristic of the one; ease and quiet of the other.

It may be said that commerce, by accelerating the diffusion of wealth, has a powerful effect in affording the means of enjoying that ease which is necessary for the final polish of literature. It undoubtedly has so, but so equally have war and conquest. We find among the Romans immense fortunes derived from conquest and the government of conquered countries; fortunes surpassing anything which we read of among the Greeks. And we find that this accumulation of wealth produced among them the very same effect which it does under other circumstances—a polish of manners, and a high finish to every work of learning as a necessary passport to popularity.

One striking effect certainly does however follow from the continued prosecution of commerce during an age of intellectual refinement. It prevents polish from becoming the one thing essential—the all in all—from being the thing sought for, instead of the garment in which to clothe the object of search with more perfect elegance. It prevents the accessory from taking the place of the principal—it tends to keep everything in literature in its proper place. By keeping up activity of mind, it constantly presents knowledge and goodness, and those only, as the grand aims of human intellect. It prevents the judgment from being satisfied with tinsel in place of pure gold.

I have ventured to support these opinions by a course of argument which has been rather too desultory in its progress, but if I have brought you to agree with me, I think we shall all conclude that the connection between literature and commerce is most important; we shall conclude that commerce is absolutely necessary to promote the growth and disseminate the first germs of literature; that it is a stimulus highly important in forwarding its rapid and yet vigorous growth, and that it is of the same use as the training-rod and pruning-knife of the gardener, in preventing the full-grown plant from exhausting itself by a superfluity of gaudy blossoms, which would impede, if they did not entirely prevent, the growth and maturity of good fruit.

FINIS.



